

CRCA - CanRC

Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

Reports to GS 2022

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INTRODUCTION

We respectfully present to you the report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), covering the period since GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel).

When general synods make decisions regarding interchurch relationships, those decisions assume that all continues more or less as it has in the past. However, the Lord directs things as he wills, and in his wisdom, he subjected the entire world to a pandemic. The reactions of authorities around the world had huge implications for church life. Among others it meant that after March 2020 almost all broadest assemblies of our sister churches were either cancelled or postponed. Assemblies that were convened in 2021 could only be attended by those from churches abroad via video conferencing.

The work of the CRCA was thus impacted in two ways. First, the cancellation or postponement of broadest assemblies has meant less to report to GS 2022. For example, the quadrennial synod of the GGRI (Indonesia), planned for 2020, has yet to happen and the ICRC, planned for October 2021, was postponed to 2022. Second, restrictions on travel have meant that delegates were not sent in person to the broadest assemblies of the IRB (Brazil), the FCC and FCS (Scotland), KPCK (Korea), FRCSA (South Africa), FRCA (Australia), and RCNZ (New Zealand). A positive of this is that travel costs for the period 2019-2021 are way lower than normal. However, this does not weigh up against the reality that in-person presence is much better for exercising relationships. We continue to pray that unencumbered international travel will be possible again soon.

Regarding our reports, a few general pointers.

Rather than submit a single report, we are submitting multiple reports, there is a report for each (set of) mandate(s) the CRCA has. This is to ensure that every item receives its own agenda number at general synod. We hope this will reduce the risk of something being overlooked as inadvertently happened at GS 2019 with the section of the CRCA report dealing with the ICRC. To ensure that the reports continue to be seen as a single package, they are being presented in a single document.

Reports on Churches Abroad have tended to be long and, filled with acronyms and abbreviations, can be difficult to read. This reality was addressed in the run-up to GS 2019 by submitting most of the report in two formats. As that was received well, we do so again this time round. Each report thus consists of the following two sections:

A: a reader-friendly version of our activities, which briefly summarizes the relevant data along with our recommendations.

B: a more technical and detailed version of each topic covered in the first section.

In the digital version 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 this collection of reports.

Respectfully submitted,

O. Bouwman, H. de Boer, R.C. Janssen, A.J. Pol, H. Schouten, A. Witten, S.C. VanDam

1 **CURRENT RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP (EF)¹**

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

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

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

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

20

¹ GS 1992 Art. 50 and updated thereafter. Republished as Appendix 21 in GS 2019 Acts.

REPORT 1: GENERAL MANDATE

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

GS 2019 appointed the following seven brothers to the CRCA: Rev. Dr. R.C. Janssen (convenor), Rev. Dr. A.J. Pol, Rev. S.C. VanDam, Rev. A. Witten, Br. H. de Boer, Br. O. Bouwman, and Br. H. Schouten. Under normal circumstances, Rev. A. Witten and Br. O. Bouwman would retire after this synod, as both have served 3 consecutive terms on the committee. However, if GS 2022 adopts the recommendations of the CRCA-CCCNA report, the following factors come into play:

1. The number of consecutive terms can be 4 instead of the current practice of 3.
2. The total number of men involved in interchurch relations will reduce from the current 15 to 12.

As per current practice (GS 2013 art. 177, Part 1.4), a confidential recommendation regarding appointments will be submitted directly to GS 2022 at least 6 weeks before Synod convenes.

During the 2.5 years since GS 2019, the CRCA has met 10 times and will likely meet just once more after the publication of this report. Thankful use was made of video conferencing, not just because of the pandemic but also because 3 of the 7 CRCA members reside outside the Fraser Valley.

The CRCA has maintained contact with the other CanRC interchurch relations committee, the CCCNA. The CRCA and CCCNA are submitting a combined report as mandated by GS 2019 regarding the execution of Church Order article 50. We have appreciated the close cooperation we could enjoy with the CCCNA for the past few years.

In a sense the CRCA is the “face” of the CanRC to the outside world. As such we sometimes receive communications of various sorts from churches abroad. We do not report on every contact we have had. We note that since GS 2019, there has been no contact of note beyond those covered by GS 2019 mandates.

Practising interchurch relations globally requires finances. Our total costs for the 2.5 years in executing the decisions of GS 2019 comes to \$9,299.86. Costs have been low because of international travel restrictions since March 2020.

B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)

GS 2019 (art. 128) decided:

- 4.1 *To thank the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and those who assisted the committee in its work.*
- 4.2 *To thank br. J. VanLaar for his work and release him from the committee;*
- 4.3 *To expand the CRCA to seven members.*
- 4.4 *To give the CRCA approval to request relevant documentation per Consideration 3.6 from the church responsible for the archives of general synods.*
- 4.5 *To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*
 - 4.5.1 *To continue its contact with the churches abroad that synod has approved;*
 - 4.5.2 *To report on any contact received from a church that seeks contact with the CanRC;*
 - 4.5.3 *To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all expenses being submitted for committee work;*
 - 4.5.4 *To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*

1 *synod.*

2 GS 2019 (art. 151) appointed the following individuals to the CRCA:

3 **4. CRCA (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad)**

4 **4.1 Otto Bouwman (2022), Harry de Boer (2028), the Rev. Dr. Roelf C. (Karlo) Janssen (convener)**
5 **(2025), the Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol (2028), Henry Schouten (2025), the Rev. Carl VanDam (2025)**
6 **the Rev. Arend Witten (2022)**

7 **Overview of Activities**

8 With common accord the CRCA appointed br. O. Bouwman as its chairman and Rev. R.C. Janssen as
9 secretary. Both had served in these positions in the period 2016-2019 as well. The work was divided among
10 the CRCA members as follows:

| Country | Primary contact |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Australia / New Zealand | Rev. A. Witten |
| Brazil | H. Schouten |
| Indonesia | A.J. Pol |
| Korea | S.C. VanDam |
| The Netherlands | R.C. Janssen |
| Scotland | H. de Boer |
| South Africa | O. Bouwman |
| ICRC | R.C. Janssen |

11 The CRCA is at times assisted by “outsiders” in the execution of its mandates. With gratitude we mention
12 in particular the involvement of Br. G. Nordeman (The Netherlands) and Rev. Dr. J. VanVliet (South Africa).

13 The CRCA met on the following dates:

- 14 • In 2019 on June 18, October 2, and December 11
15 • In 2020 on February 26 and October 21
16 • In 2021 on January 13, April 19, July 30, September 2, and October 7.

17 One more meeting is planned for early 2022, with a view to nominations for new committee members.

18 Due to the geographic spread of CRCA members (in WA, BC, Manitoba, and Ontario), and due to
19 pandemic restrictions, most meetings were held via video conferencing. Some business was also conducted
20 via email.

21 All sister churches and other churches with whom we maintain contact were informed of the decisions
22 of GS 2019, specifically any decisions that regarded them.

23 **Interaction with other CanRC interchurch relations committees**

24 GS 2019 gave the CRCA and CCCNA a common mandate to provide GS 2022 with a report on how best
25 to execute CO article 50. The cooperation experienced in drafting this report has been excellent.
26 Communication between the two committees where that was necessary has also been good.

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

28 Regarding interaction with churches not part of a specific synod mandate, there is nothing to report.

29 **Finances**

30 The CRCA has maintained a record of its costs over the period since GS 2019. Br. H. Schouten was

1 appointed as verifier of claims and liaison with the General Fund treasurer. We are grateful to the treasurer,
2 sr. H. Kooiker, for the very prompt manner in which reimbursements are issued.

3 All the costs of CRCA relate to visits made in accordance with the various mandates given us by GS 2019.
4 We note that GS 2016 explicitly stated in a number of decisions that a sister church relationship cannot be
5 considered meaningful if we do not regularly send a delegation to the broadest assembly of a sister church
6 (e.g. GS 2016 art. 45 rec. 4.2.1). “Regularly” is understood to mean once every three years.

7 Our total costs for the period June 2019 – October 2021 come to: \$ 9,299.86.

8 **Appointments**

9 Between GS 2019 and GS 2021 the following brothers served on the CRCA.

| Name | Year appointed | Name | Year appointed |
|--------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| A. Witten | 2013 | H. Schouten | 2016 |
| O. Bouwman | 2013 | H. de Boer | 2019 |
| S.C. VanDam | 2016 | A.J. Pol | 2019 |
| R.C. Janssen | 2016 | | |

10 We note that if the recommendations of the CRCA-CCCNA report on the execution of CO article 50 are
11 adopted, this will impact appointments. That report recommends a merging of the CRCA-CCCNA and
12 reducing the 15 members of the CRCA (7) and CCCNA (8) to 12; and further that individuals be allowed to
13 serve for 4 successive three-year terms (not three as has been the practice until now).

14 If the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations are not adopted and the current structures are maintained, we
15 advise that Br. O. Bouwman and Rev. A. Witten, who have both served for 9 years, need not be reappointed.
16 We express gratitude for the years in which they have served.

17 GS 2019 increased the size of the CRCA from 6 to 7 members. If current structures are maintained there
18 will be no decrease in workload. For the sake of consistency in practices and for the sake of general
19 knowledge, it is important that every relationship the CanRC has with a church abroad is managed by a
20 member on the CRCA. Should synod decide to an increased number of relationships for the committee to
21 deal with, or an intensification of existing relationships, we note that this also means an increased workload.
22 We do recognize that it is not necessary for only CRCA members to be delegated to sister churches on behalf
23 of the CanRC.

24 Given experience with video conferencing, the location of CRCA members is not an issue.

25 The CRCA will be sending a confidential letter to Synod with recommendations of who could be
26 appointed to the CRCA to fill possible vacancies.

27 **Observations and Considerations**

28 We leave it with GS 2022 to determine what observations to make and considerations to note.

29 **Recommendations**

30 We advise Synod to deal first with the CRCA-CCCNA report, as the decision taken with respect to this
31 report impacts all the recommendations of this report, and some of the considerations.

32 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

33 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
34 per the general mandate recommended in that report.

1 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

2 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
3 follows:

- 4 1. To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
- 5 1.1 to continue its contact with the churches abroad that synod has approved;
 - 6 1.2 to report on any contact received from a church that seeks contact with the CanRC;
 - 7 1.3 to appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund all
8 expenses being submitted for committee work;
 - 9 1.4 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 2: AUSTRALIA (FRCA)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

Introduction

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

Brief description of the FRCA

Source of church data: Yearbook 2021 and website of the FRCA

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Location | <i>Australia with the largest concentration in Western Australia.</i> | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>Mostly GkV 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 & 1 home congregation</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>5120 members of whom 3053 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>Every 3 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary</i> | | |
| Website | http://frca.org.au/ | | |

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 3rd party ecclesiastical relationships.

Summary of the report

The FRCA take a close interest in the CanRC, monitoring discussions in the areas of liturgy and church polity and efforts at unity with the URCNA. The FRCA continue to explore establishing theological training in Australia, considering this need urgent.

The CRCA is **recommending** that EF with the FRCA be continued and that it 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. We are recommending that Synod encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) to continue contact with the deputyship for theological education in the FRCA to explore the feasibility and benefits of delivering theological education in Australia.

B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT

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

History of the Relationship

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

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)

GS 2019 (art. 117) decided:

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

Execution of this mandate in the period of summer 2019 to fall 2021

The decisions of GS 2019 regarding the FRCA were made known to the FRCA via letter. The CanRC rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Acts of GS 2019 and the Press Release were sent to the FRCA. Due to travel restrictions a delegate could not be sent to GS-FRCA 2021 held in Albany from June 14-23. In response to their invitation Rev. Arend Witten addressed the assembly via a pre-recorded video greeting. In the delegate address the FRCA were thanked for their continued support and involvement in CRTS. Rev. Witten informed them of new North America contact relationships (FRCNA and ARP) and the status of other interchurch relationships. The FRCA deputies had highlighted for GS-FRCA 2021 areas of discussion in the CanRC surrounding church polity and liturgy. This was acknowledged by the CanRC delegate, and it was affirmed that when there are significant differences in the interpretation of our church order they continue to be dealt with by major assemblies. Consultation and cooperation in supporting our Indonesian sister churches was encouraged and the various deputyships of the FRCA were invited to take up direct contact with the

1 corresponding CanRC committees. After the closing of GS-FRCA 2021 the CRCA reviewed the Acts.

2 **FRCA matters**

3 From the Acts of GS-FRCA 2021 we report the following.

4 **Canadian Reformed Churches**

5 GS-FRCA 2021 decided to continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established
6 rules. Synod stated that the CanRC “give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God,
7 maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order” and that “we value our bond with the CanRC”.

8 In reporting the FRCA deputies highlighted a number of areas of discussion in the CanRC. They
9 summarized decisions of recent CanRC major assemblies and public discussions in church magazines. These
10 areas included: whether the *Book of Praise* is to be the only approved book for worship in the CanRC,
11 confessional membership, receiving guests at the Lord’s Supper table, and whether ministers of non-sister
12 churches may be permitted to preach on CanRC pulpits. GS-FRCA 2021 mandated their deputies to continue
13 to monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to these areas of discussion about church polity and
14 liturgy (Art. 95). GS-FRCA 2021 was updated on the status of the relationship between the URCNA, and the
15 CanRC and deputies were mandated to stay informed on these developments (Art. 96).

6 **The Training for the Ministry**

17 GS-FRCA 2021 decided to continue to support the work of the CRTS and provide financial support to
18 needy students from the FRCA to study in Canada (Art. 101). Deputies were mandated to continue
19 discussions with CRTS to explore the feasibility of a CRTS Australian Affiliate, and assuming a positive
20 outcome, to develop a plan and report to the next synod with recommendations towards implementation.
21 The COVID-19 pandemic, the obstacles in international travel, and increasing secularisation and anti-
22 Christian sentiment in Australia were given as grounds by GS-FRCA 2021 for why this need “has become
23 urgent” (Art. 101). This work is to be done in communication with local FRCA churches and other churches
24 in Australia and the Asia Pacific region regarding the potential benefits of a CRTS Australian Affiliate. The
25 deputies were also tasked with developing guidelines for a vicariate (ministry internship) model of training.
26 The vicariate would see recent FRCA seminary graduates be given the opportunity to spend a full year
27 working in a FRCA congregation under the guidance of a pastor in Australia. This was seen to have the
28 advantage of giving students opportunities for training and growth and bringing FRCA seminary graduates
29 back to the FRCA, with the hope that they would serve there. Through their planning, robust discussions
30 and significant financial commitment, GS-FRCA 2021 demonstrated the importance they place on training
31 for the ministry.

32 **Australian Book of Praise**

33 The FRCA could receive with thankfulness a new Australian *Book of Praise* (Art. 113). Published by
34 Premier Printing Canada, it is similar to the Canadian *Book of Praise*, but includes the FRCA version of the
35 Church Order, and incorporates various small changes to the creeds, confessions, and liturgical forms.
36 Although this book has been completed, GS-FRCA 2021 continued to mandate their committee to maintain
37 good contact with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* of the CanRC.

38 **Interchurch relations**

39 GS-FRCA 2021 (Art. 48) mandated their deputyship for interchurch relations to develop and propose
40 guidelines to the next synod on with whom, how and when to establish sister church relationships. These
41 guidelines were to give attention to the question whether it can ever be legitimate or beneficial to have
42 two sister churches in one country including cases when those two churches are unable to find unity and to
43 consider the merits of an alternate form of ecclesiastical contact with churches of Reformed confession
44 with whom a sister church relationship is not immediately feasible. This would represent a shift in approach
45 for the FRCA who historically have avoided having more than one sister church in a country.

1 **The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (DGK) & Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKN)**

2 GS-FRCA 2021 (Art. 68) decided to continue contact with the DGK and GKN. Synod heard encouraging
3 reports about efforts to move toward unity and decided to encourage them to continue to work together
4 to a united federation. Synod confirmed that these federations both have the marks of the true church.
5 Both these federations have requested sister church relations with the FRCA. Deputies were mandated to
6 work towards entering into a sister church relationship and to encourage the DGK to sever its sister church
7 relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford, Canada.

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

9 GS-FRCA 2021 (Art. 61) decided to continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ. GS-FRCA 2018
10 had mandated their deputies to monitor the RCNZ's relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship with the Christian
11 Reformed Church of Australia, and to the encourage the RCNZ to be vigilant in their approach to theological
12 education. But GS-FRCA 2021 decided against such a specific mandate, since "the RCNZ have demonstrated
13 evidence of faithfulness in these areas over the past nine years...the rules for sister church relations provide
14 an adequate mechanism for assisting, encouraging and exhorting all sister churches in any areas of
15 concern." GS-FRCA 2021 also committed to continuing efforts to overcome the difference in the financial
16 arrangements for retiring ministers. In the RCNZ the emeritus fund is connected to the minister, not the
17 churches (as it is in FRCA and CanRC). In some cases, this presents an obstacle to calling one another's
18 ministers.

19 **Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI, GGRCI, GGRI-Timor)**

20 The FRCA has sister church relationship with the GGRI and noted that the GGRI churches give evidence
21 of continual striving for faithfulness to the Word of God maintaining Reformed Confessions and Church
22 order. Some troubling aspects of church polity and liturgy in the GGRI have been identified and discussed
23 with the leaders of the GGRI. Synod mandated their deputies to continue to offer assistance in improving
24 the Reformed character of the GGRI through theological training support and seminars. The FRCA through
25 its deputies continue to coordinate financial support for the theological seminary of the GGRI in Sumba.

26 The FRCA decided to continue contact with the GGRI-Timor and the GGRCI and to encourage the GGRI
27 in their efforts to work toward federative unity with them.

28 **Other relationships**

29 GS-FRCA 2021 decided to continue the sister church relationship with the First Evangelical Reformed
30 Church of Singapore (FERC), Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) and the Free Reformed Churches in
31 South Africa (FRCSA).

32 Synod mandated its deputies to continue discussions with two federations in Australia, the Evangelical
33 Presbyterian Church (EPC) and Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC) regarding the feasibility of further
34 ecumenical contact. These two federations have had interactions with the FRCA in Tasmania for some years.
35 GS-FRCA 2021 mandated the deputies to discuss with the EPC the well-meant offer of the gospel and
36 conditionality in covenant theology and to determine whether and to what degree diversity on these points
37 could be accommodated in an ecumenical relationship between the EPC and the FRCA. Deputies were also
38 mandated to discuss with both the EPC and SPC the topic of confessional membership and determine what
39 sort of disagreements with the confessional standards are tolerated for communicant members in these
40 churches.

41 GS-FRCA 2021 (Art. 113) received a proposal from a FRCA Classis to send observers to the next meeting
42 of the ICRC. Synod decided not to accede to this proposal on the grounds that prior to re-engaging with the
43 ICRC there is merit in reflecting on what has been said by past FRCA Synods about membership in the ICRC,
44 and where appropriate to address matters that were left unresolved.

45 GS-FRCA 2021 decided (Art. 96) to continue to liaise with the URCNA with a view to determining whether

1 to establish a sister church relationship, to stay informed and monitor the discussion between the CanRC
2 and URCNA and if invited to send a delegate to the next URCNA Synod 2022. Similarly, GS-FRCA 2021
3 decided (Art. 67), to express thanks to God for the Reformed witness evident in the Orthodox Presbyterian
4 Church throughout its history, its constant repudiation of theological liberalism, its commitment to being
5 confessionally Reformed, and its commitment to the authority and truth of the holy Scriptures. GS-FRCA
6 2021 decided to further investigate differences in church polity and practice of the OPC, and to send a
7 delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC.

8 **Church Order article 31**

9 GS-FRCA 2021 (Art. 85) dealt with three appeals against a decision of GS-FRCA 2018 concerning the right
10 of an individual church member to appeal directly to Synod about decisions which deal with the churches
11 in common.² GS-FRCA 2021 denied these appeals on the grounds that individuals are not members of the
12 FRCA federation, but rather members of local FRCA congregations. An individual's right to appeal (FRCA CO
13 Article 31) exists first within that local context. The Church Order describes the process individuals are to
14 follow (the ecclesiastical route), interacting first with their consistory, then Classis and finally Synod. GS-
15 FRCA 2021 acknowledged that historically there have been varying interpretations of Church Order article
16 31. The decision of GS-FRCA 2018 sought to bring clarity to the churches about this process. However more
17 clarity may be beneficial and so GS-FRCA 2021 decided to ask the churches that hold that an individual
18 should have the right to appeal to a synod directly, to bring a proposal to change the Church Order to the
19 next synod.

20 **Observations**

21 We advise Synod Guelph 2022 to include among its observations:

22 1. GS 2019 (Art. 117) decided:

23 4.1 *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches*
24 *of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;*

25 4.2 *To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the*
26 *Theological Seminary, including their financial support;*

27 4.3 *To encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of the Canadian Reformed Theological*
28 *Seminary (CRTS) to continue contact with the deputyship for theological education in the FRCA*
29 *in matters pertaining to their desire to have the first year CRTS program available as distance*
30 *education in the short term and their desire to establish a regional seminary in Australia in the*
31 *medium to long term;*

32 4.4 *To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

33 4.4.1 *To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with*
34 *sister churches abroad and to consult the FRCA concerning changes or developments in*
35 *third party relationships;*

36 4.4.2 *To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding*
37 *CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Book of Praise, Committee on*
38 *Bible Translations) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;*

39 4.4.3 *To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2021;*

40 4.4.4 *To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
41 *synod.*

² This is a question CanRC Synods have addressed as well (e.g. GS-CanRC 2013 art. 26).

1 2. Rev. A. Witten was delegated to address GS-FRCA 2021 via recorded video.

2 3. GS-FRCA 2021 decided

3 3.1 To continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules. Deputies
4 were mandated to monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to church polity and
5 liturgy such as whether the *Book of Praise* is to be the only approved book for worship in the
6 CanRC, confessional membership, receiving guests at the Lord's Supper table, and whether or
7 not only ministers of sister churches may be permitted to preach on CanRC pulpits.

8 3.2 To continue to support the work of CRTS and to explore the feasibility of theological training in
9 Australia through a CRTS Australian Affiliate. GS-FRCA 2021 considered this need to have
10 become urgent.

11 3.3 To mandate their Committee for the Australian *Book of Praise* to maintain good contact with
12 the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* of the CanRC. The FRCA could
13 receive with thankfulness a new Australian *Book of Praise*.

14 3.4 To maintain that according to Article 31 of the Church Order individuals do not have the right
15 to appeal directly to synod about decisions which deal with the churches in common but must
16 follow the "ecclesiastical route". Those churches holding differently ought to bring a proposal
17 to change the church order to a future synod.

18 3.5 To mandate deputies to develop and propose guidelines for inter church relations giving
19 attention to whether it can be legitimate or beneficial to have two sister churches in one
20 country including cases when those two churches are unable to find unity and to consider the
21 merits of an alternate form of ecclesiastical contact with churches of Reformed confession with
22 whom a sister church relationship is not immediately feasible.

23 3.6 To continue contact with both the DGK and the GKN, working toward entering into a sister
24 church relationship with these federations. Deputies were mandated to encourage both
25 federations to continue to work toward a united federation and to encourage the DGK to sever
26 its sister church relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford.

27 3.7 To continue sister church relationship with GGRI. To continue contact with the GGRI-Timor and
28 the GGRCI and to encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work toward federative unity with
29 them. To offer assistance in improving the Reformed character of the GGRI through theological
30 training support and seminars

31 3.8 To continue the sister church relationship with the First Evangelical Reformed Church of
32 Singapore (FERC), The Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ), The Kosin Presbyterian
33 Church of Korea (KPCK), the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA),

34 3.9 To continue to liaise with the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) with a view
35 to determining whether to establish a sister church relationship.

36 3.10 To maintain contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), further investigating the
37 differences in church polity and practice of the OPC.

38 3.11 To continue discussions with two churches in Australia, the Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC)
39 and The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) regarding feasibility of further ecumenical
40 contact, investigating some differences in theological emphasis and practice in these
41 federations.

42 3.12 To not send observers to the next International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) on
43 the grounds that prior to re-engaging with the ICRC there is merit in reflecting on what has been
44 said by past FRCA Synods about membership in the ICRC, and where appropriate to address

1 matters that were left unresolved.

2 **Considerations**

3 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 4 1 As far as can be determined from the Acts of GS-FRCA 2021, the FRCA demonstrate that they remain
5 faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to
6 adopted confessions and church order.
- 7 2 The value of this relationship is evident particularly in the ongoing cooperation in theological
8 education, interchurch relations, the *Book of Praise*, and mission projects. The FRCA take the
9 responsibilities of ecclesiastical fellowship with the CanRC seriously as evidenced by their
10 monitoring discussions and developments in our churches.
- 11 3 Through their planning, robust discussions and financial commitment, GS-FRCA 2021 demonstrates
12 the vital importance the FRCA place on training for the ministry.
- 13 4 Through CRTS the CanRC may be able to assist the FRCA in providing training for the ministry in
14 Australia.
- 15 5 The FRCA demonstrates that they are active in maintaining their current sister church relationships
16 and seek to establish relationships with other faithful Churches.
- 17 6 Regrettably, the FRCA are currently not involved in the ICRC. Membership in the ICRC has been
18 beneficial for the CanRC by providing an opportunity to support Christ's church worldwide and
19 promote unity among faithful Churches. The FRCA should be encouraged to address any matters
20 left unresolved in the past that hindered their participation.

21 **Recommendations**

22 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

23 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
24 follows:

- 25 1 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
26 under the adopted rules;
- 27 2 To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA's ongoing support for and interest in the
28 Theological Seminary, including their financial support;
- 29 3 To encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
30 (CRTS) to continue contact with the deputyship for theological education in the FRCA to explore the
31 feasibility and benefits of delivering theological education in Australia;
- 32 4 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 33 4.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-
34 churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party
35 relationships;
 - 36 4.2 To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding
37 CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, Committee on Bible
38 Translations) in areas of mutual interest where the CER's mandate does not reach;
 - 39 4.3 To communicate to the FRCA the value of the ICRC and encourage them to consider
40 membership;
 - 41 4.4 To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2024;

1 4.5 To submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

2 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

3 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
4 follows:

- 5 1 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) under
6 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 to explore the
11 feasibility and benefits of delivering theological education in Australia;
- 12 4 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 13 4.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with sister-
14 churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third party
15 relationships;
 - 16 4.2 To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding
17 CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, Committee on Bible
18 Translations) in areas of mutual interest where the CRCA's mandate does not reach;
 - 19 4.3 To communicate to the FRCA the value of the ICRC and encourage them to consider
20 membership;
 - 21 4.4 To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2024;
 - 22 4.5 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 3: BRAZIL (IRB)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

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>The federation was established through the mission work of the CanRC churches of Surrey and Hamilton in north-east Brazil, and of GKv in Unaí and in the southern part of the country. The federation was formed in 2000.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Number of churches & Church plants | <i>19 congregations (9 are instituted Churches)</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>1038 members of which 690 are communicant</i> | | |
| Office bearer numbers | <i>Elders – 27; Deacons 22</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/ Council</i> | <i>9</i> | <i>Monthly</i> |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Every 6 months</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>John Calvin Institute (IJC) Currently 5 full time students</i> | | |
| Website | www.igrejasreformadasdobrasil.org | | |

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, 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 look 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 it be mandated to visit with the IRB between now and our next synod to continue to encourage this young federation of churches.

B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT

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

History of the Relationship

In 1970 the CanRC of New Westminster (later Surrey) began a missionary work in São José, Pernambuco and in 1992 the CanRC of Hamilton began a mission project in Maceió, Alagoas. In 2000 (June) the IRB held its first *Concílio* (Synod) and became a federation. At this *Concílio* the IRB decided to request a sister church relationship with the CanRC.

1 GS 2001 decided to offer a relationship of EF to the IRB. This relationship was accepted. The CRCA has
2 sent delegates to several IRB *Concípios* since the relationship of EF began in 2001. The CRCA has also made
3 use of brothers sent to Brazil by the sending Church of Surrey as well as the sending Church of Aldergrove,
4 who took over the work from the Church of Surrey in 2012. The most recent visit by the CRCA was made in
5 November of 2017 by br. Harold Ludwig (Aldergrove Mission Board and Council) and br. Henry Schouten
6 (CRCA). Since Synod Edmonton 2019 it has not been possible to visit due to COVID restrictions in both Brazil
7 and Canada.

8 ***Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)***

9 GS 2019 (art. 87) decided:

10 *4.1 To express gratitude for the continued desire of the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) to grow in*
11 *knowledge and faithfulness;*

12 *4.2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB under the adopted rules;*

13 *4.3 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

14 *4.3.1 To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to*
15 *this federation of churches;*

16 *4.3.2 To visit the IRB at least twice prior to the next general synod;*

17 *4.3.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and Hamilton-*
18 *Cornerstone CanRC (and their supporting churches), given their mission work in Brazil;*

19 *4.3.4. To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
20 *synod.*

21 ***Execution of this mandate in the period of summer 2019 to fall 2021***

22 The following lists the contacts with the IRB since Synod 2019 up to the time of the writing of this report
23 in August 2021:

- 24 • Received Acts of the 33rd *Concílio* of the IRB held in Unai, MG from May 6 to 10, 2019.
- 25 • Received Acts of the 36th *Concílio* of the IRB held in Maragogi, AL from March 22 to 26, 2021.
- 26 • Communicated with a representative of the IRB, br. Chris Boersema, especially during this time when
27 no visits were possible. He was able to give much information and clarity in helping us understand
28 the 'google translate' version of the Acts of *Concílio*.
- 29 • Sent a letter with contact information and a description of the CRCA work to the IRB, including GS
30 2019 art. 87.

31 There is a standing invitation to attend the biannual *Concípios* of the IRB. Plans were underway to accept
32 and attend the spring 2020 *Concílio* but these plans were stopped by the onset of COVID restrictions. From
33 the Acts of the 36th *Concílio* the following can be gleaned.

- 34 • Three men were accepted into the IJC program of studies for the ministry
- 35 • One brother desired to enter the ministry of the word using CO-IRB art. 7 (=CO-CanRC art. 8). He was
36 examined but did not sustain the exam. He may try again.
- 37 • The IRB continues to reach out to other churches in the country with the Reformed gospel.
- 38 • The IRB is active in pursuing contacts with other churches within Brazil and in a limited way with
39 federations outside of Brazil.
- 40 • With much sadness the IRB have ended their sister church relationship with the GKv.

- 1 • Financial difficulties continue to challenge the IRB. The membership is small and many congregations
2 are not able to support their own pastor.
- 3 • Much work was done at this *Concilio* to finalize the forms for baptism and profession of faith.
- 4 • Fraternal ties with the CanRC continue to be very important to the IRB.

5 It is good to note that even with the restrictions placed on gathering, the IRB brothers considered the
6 meetings of *Concilio* to be important enough to continue as much as possible. They only had to cancel the
7 one scheduled for the spring of 2020. It would have also been good to receive the acts of all of these
8 *Concillios*, but so far we have not received any acts for those held in the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2020. The
9 difficulty is that the IRB is a young and a small federation and does not always have manpower with the
10 necessary skills to make sure all the administrative matters of the federation are properly looked after. It is
11 of great benefit when we can regularly visit their *concillios* and have personal contact with the brothers in
12 the IRB. Even with few translators and some who speak broken English, face to face communication is very
13 helpful and builds relationships which result in the back-and-forth flow of information.

14 Since 2015 the very young IRB federation of churches has been concerned with developments in the
15 GKv. They have written letters seeking information on the new hermeneutic being taught and the
16 consequences of that hermeneutic in the way of dealing with sexuality and with the place of women in the
17 church. As things progressed in the GKv, they also wrote letters of exhortation. Despite these exhortations
18 from the IRB and many other sister churches of the GKv, GS-GKv 2020 upheld the decisions of GS-GKv 2017
19 regarding the new hermeneutic, homosexuality, and women in office. For that reason, the IRB at their 36th
20 Concilio, held in March 2021, decided to terminate the relationship of EF they have had with the GKv. The
21 IRB did this with heavy hearts. The GKv has supported the mission work in Brazil for more than 50 years and
22 is considered one of the mother churches of the IRB.

23 The IRB takes its responsibility with respect to evangelism seriously. The biggest obstacles to doing
24 everything they would like to do in this area are a lack of finances and people able to do the work. Most of
25 the congregations have a hard time paying their own expenses and some cannot afford to pay for a minister
26 of the Word.

27 It gives reason for thankfulness to read the Acts of the IRB Concilio. The work of looking after the people
28 of God is taken very seriously. Much of *Concilio* was focused on the training of ministers of the Word, on
29 the exercise of discipline in the churches, on the spread of the gospel in Brazil, and generally on the care for
30 the members of the churches. It was also very clear that there is a strong desire to be a faithful Reformed
31 church.

32 **Observations**

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

40 It is also good to remember that the IRB now has EF with only one federation: the CanRC. They are also
41 a member of the ICRC and were able to send a delegate to the conference held in 2017. They may not be
42 able to do this every time because of financial and time constraints.

43 There are three specific concerns the IRB has in which we as CanRC continue to give assistance. These
44 have not changed since the report to GS 2019.

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

11 We advise Synod to include among its **observations**:

12 1 GS 2019 (art. 87) decided:

13 4.1. *To express gratitude for the continued desire of the Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB) to grow*
14 *in knowledge and faithfulness;*

15 4.2. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB under the adopted*
16 *rules;*

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

18 4.2.1. *To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to*
19 *this federation of churches;*

20 4.2.2. *To visit the IRB at least twice prior to the next general synod;*

21 4.2.3. *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and Hamilton-*
22 *Cornerstone CanRC (and their supporting churches), given their mission work in Brazil;*

23 4.2.4. *To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
24 *synod.*

- 25 2 There is good communication between the IRB and the CanRC, not only through the CRCA, but also
26 through the sending churches of Aldergrove and Hamilton-Cornerstone and those that support their
27 work.
- 28 3 The IRB have many needs. They look for encouragement to continue in the training of men for the
29 ministry of the Word and the training of men for the offices of elder and deacon, and for ways to
30 support churches in caring for ministers of the Word, for books for these ministers, and for buildings
31 for the congregations and their efforts in outreach. The CanRC are able to do much work in Brazil
32 through the sending churches.

33 **Considerations**

34 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 35 1 As far as can be determined, the IRB demonstrate that they remain faithful churches. They abide by
36 the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church
37 order.
- 38 2 In view of the needs in the IRB, it is important to make every effort to maintain direct contact with
39 them and to encourage these churches and their leaders.
- 40 3 It is noted with gratitude that there is good communication between the IRB and the CanRC, and
41 that the CanRC are able to do much work in Brazil through the sending churches.
- 42 4 The sending churches of Aldergrove and Hamilton are to be encouraged in their support of the

1 churches in Brazil, especially in the training of ministers of the Word.

2 **Recommendations**

3 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

4 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
5 follows:

- 6 1 to express gratitude for the continued desire of the IRB to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- 7 2 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) under the
8 adopted rules;
- 9 3 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 10 3.1 to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this
11 federations of churches;
 - 12 3.2 to visit the IRB at least twice prior to the next general synod;
 - 13 3.3 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton-
14 Cornerstone CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;
 - 15 3.4 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

16 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

17 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
18 follows:

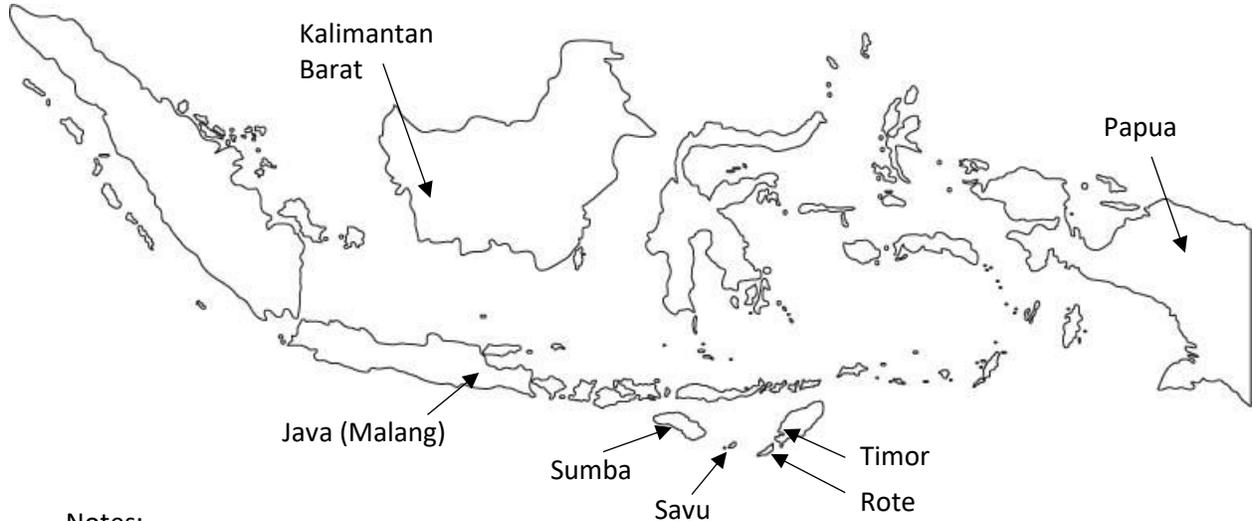
- 19 1 to express gratitude for the continued desire of the IRB to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- 20 2 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) under the
21 adopted rules;
- 22 3 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 23 3.1 to use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this
24 federations of churches;
 - 25 3.2 to visit the IRB at least twice prior to the next general synod;
 - 26 3.3 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton-
27 Cornerstone CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;
 - 28 3.4 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 4: INDONESIA (GGRI, GGRCI, GGRI-TIMOR)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

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.

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.

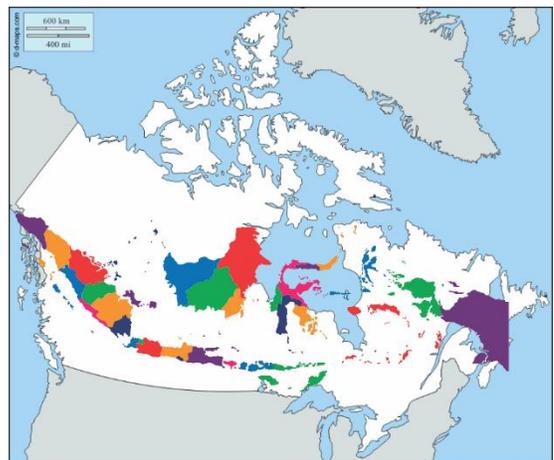
Indonesia is not only a country of great distances, it is also a nation of many peoples. The total population consists of about 277 million inhabitants. Smaller islands have their own ethnicity and culture, larger islands have many ethnicities and cultures, and large cities (like Kupang, population approaching 500.000) tend to be multi-ethnic.

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

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

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

Indonesia and Canada compared for size.



1 **GGRI**

2 **Introduction**

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

5 **Brief description of the GGRI**

6 Source of church data: <https://bbk.gkv.nl/landen/azie/indonesie/> and ICRC 2017 Proceedings and input
7 from a deputy of the GGRI.

8 Date of church data: 2017 and 2021.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 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 in Papua. The three GGRI groups had been conferencing every four years since 1978. They formally became a single federation of churches in 2012.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Polity | <i>Church Order of Dort (adapted to Indonesian context)</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | <i>KB: 35 total NTT: 19 churches + 55 mission posts Papua: 50 churches + 40 mission posts</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>KB: ~3000 to 6000 members NTT: 7556 members Papua: ~10,000 members</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/ Council</i> | | <i>Monthly</i> |
| | <i>Classis</i> | <i>KB: 3 NTT: 4 P: 3</i> | <i>Varies Annually</i> |
| | <i>Regional Synod</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>Every 3 years</i> |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Every 4 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>STT on Sumba Island and STT in the province of Kalimantan Barat</i> | | |
| Website | <i>None</i> | | |

9 **GGRI: History of the relationship**

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

12 (Re)Acquaintance with the GGRI-NTT came about initially through the ICRC; both the CanRC and GGRI-
13 NTT were represented at the Constituent Assembly in 1982. The question of a relationship with the GGRI
14 was raised in a supplementary report to GS 2004, primarily as the GGRI-NTT had EF with the FRCA and GKv,
15 as the GGRI-NTT was in contact with the GGRCI, and as the Smithville CanRC had a mission field in Timor,
16 where the GGRI-NTT also has a congregation. One of the ministers in the GGRI-NTT, Rev. Pila Njuka, is a
17 CRTS graduate CRTS. He currently teaches at the GGRI seminary on Sumba Island. EF between the CanRC
18 and the GGRI-NTT commenced in 2010.

Since entering into EF delegates from the CanRC have visited the GGRI-NTT frequently. Lack of funds has meant the GGRI-NTT have not been to our synods. The GGRI-NTT, the GGRI-KB, and the GGRI-Papua³ had been meeting in conferences for many years until 2012, when the conference was formalized to become 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. The decision to establish EF with the entire GGRI was made at GS 2019.

GGRCI (previously GGRC)

Introduction

The CanRC entered into EF with the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia by a decision of GS 2019 (art. 120).

Brief description of the GGRCI

Source of updated church data: Report from a Deputy for the GGRCI in 2021.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 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. E. Fangidae, a local pastor in Timor, connected with GKv missionary Rev. J. Klamer, and then had future GGRM ministers educated in Sumba. Subsequently, Rev. H. Knigge worked with the GGRM for some 6 years, focussing special attention on graduates of the GMM from the seminary of the GGRI who had returned to Timor.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Polity | <i>Church Order of Dort</i> | | |
| Number of churches | <i>16</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>1617</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/council</i> | <i>9 ministers, 3 interns, 43 elders/ deacons</i> | <i>Weekly meetings</i> |
| | <i>Classis</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>2x per year</i> |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Every 3 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>In the past: STAKRI (Timor), John Calvin (Bali), Malang (Java), and STT-Sumba; Currently: Two students are studying at STT Yestoya (Java) and are under the mentorship of Rev. Yonson Dethan; two other students are studying at STAKRI.</i> | | |
| Website | <i>None</i> | | |

GGRCI: History of the Relationship

CanRC connections with the GGRCI – at that time known as the GGRM or Reformed Pilgrim Churches –

³ Not to be confused with the GGRP.

1 began during the 1990s when br. Yonson Dethan studied at CRTS. Following his graduation in 1997 he
2 returned to Indonesia to serve as a minister in the GGRM. In early 2001 the GGRM requested a “contact
3 relationship” with the CanRC. GS 2001 (art. 54) mandated the CRCA to investigate entering into EF with the
4 GGRC. Four of the nine currently active ministers of the GGRC were students of Dr. Andrew J. Pol when he
5 taught at the theological seminary of the GGRI-NTT in Sumba.

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

10 Developing a relationship with the GGRC has also been impacted by the fact that in 2003 the Smithville
11 CanRC opened a mission field in Timor, sending its missionary, Rev. Edwer Dethan, formerly a member of
12 the GGRC and also a graduate of the seminary of the GGRI-NTT before going on to receive his M.Div. at
13 CRTS. Subsequently, under his leadership, a Theological Seminary and Teachers’ College (STAKRI) was
14 established in Kupang. That city is where the GGRC currently have several churches and STAKRI is within a
15 few miles of where the GGRC operate a K-12 school (Children of Light).

16 The intention of the Smithville CanRC was that any churches formed out of its mission work would join
17 the GGRC. The GGRC were informed of this in letters written in 2003, 2004, and it was confirmed again in
18 2012, so these churches were happy to support the endeavour. However, much to the frustration of the
19 GGRC, in the fall of 2016 the nine churches born out of Smithville’s mission work federated as the GGRI-
20 Timor. In a letter dated April 9, 2018, the Smithville CanRC council informed the CRCA of this. The letter
21 noted: “Despite Smithville’s encouragement and hope that the mission churches would have joined
22 themselves to the GGRC, this did not occur.” On August 4, 2018, the CRCA was informed by the Timor
23 Mission Board that the GGRI-Timor is seeking to join the GGRI-*nasional*.

24 The GGRC, now GGRCI, feel that there was much misunderstanding regarding their internal operations
25 as a federation of churches. This was compounded by unverified rumours that damaged the honour and
26 reputation of the GGRCI and of its office bearers and assemblies. A further complication was that there
27 were negative experiences of the GGRCI as churches and of some members, with STAKRI, the seminary of
28 the GGRI-Timor.

29 Despite their disappointment in regard to the formation of a new federation now known as the GGRI-
30 Timor, the attitude of the GGRCI toward these churches continues to be positive. Subsequent to GS-GGRCI
31 2019, the GGRCI tried to reach out to the GGRI-Timor, but the GGRI-Timor did not engage with this as hoped
32 for.

33 The GGRCI are a member of the ICRC. They have had EF with the GGRI for almost 30 years. They entered
34 into EF with the URCNA in 2016 and have actively encouraged EF between the URCNA and the GGRI. The
35 GGRCI are very thankful that after many years of waiting, there is now also EF between the GGRCI and the
36 CanRC.

37 ***GGRI-Timor (previously GGRI-T)***

38 **Brief description of the GGRI-Timor**

39 This federation of churches arose out of a cooperative effort between the Smithville CanRC through its
40 missionary, Rev. E. Dethan, and the GGRCI. The federation was formally established at a Synod held in Bila,
41 Soe, on the island of Timor in 2016.

42 Source of church data: GS-GGRI-Timor 2016.

43 Date of church data: 2016.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Location (description of political & | Timor, Indonesia |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| geographical context) | | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>Mission work by Rev. E. Dethan, missionary of the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Polity | <i>Church Order of Dort (adapted to Indonesian context)</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | 9 | | |
| Membership numbers | | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory / Council</i> | | |
| | <i>Classis</i> | 2 | <i>Annually</i> |
| | <i>Regional Synod</i> | - | - |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | 1 | <i>Every 3 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>STAKRI (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Reformed Indonesia), in Kupang, Indonesia</i> | | |
| Website | | | |

History of the Relationship

The GGRI-Timor came to the attention of GS Edmonton 2019 through a request from the Smithville CanRC that Synod mandate the CRCA to investigate the GGRI-Timor, a newly formed federation on the island of Timor in Indonesia, “with a view to establishing a sister church relationship with them.”

Summary of the report

Communicating with the churches in Indonesia is not a problem. Both the GGRI and the GGRCI have members who speak English sufficiently; moreover, the CanRC have members who speak Indonesian sufficiently.

Because of the COVID-19 virus, the Synod of the GGRI planned for September 2020, could not be convened and we were not in a position to visit those churches.

Dr. Andrew J. Pol and br. Otto Bouwman were able to attend the GGRCI Synod held from August 13-15, 2019 in Korlok (= GS-GGRCI 2019) on Rote Island, in Indonesia, and also engage in several other activities geared toward getting to know the brothers in those churches better and to offer advice and encouragement where appropriate.

Because of COVID as well as local circumstances in Timor (bushfires, a cyclone), the CRCA could not finish its mandate with respect to the GGRI-Timor. The CRCA received the acts of GS-GGRI-Timor 2016 while this report was being drafted.

The CRCA is **recommending** that the existing relationships of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GGRI and the GGRCI be continued, that the mandate with respect to the GGRI-Timor be continued, and that visits to their broadest ecclesiastical assemblies take place as soon as this is reasonably possible.

B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT

GGRI

GGRI: History of the relationship

Decisions pertaining to the GGRI can be found in the Acts of GS 1954 (art. 54), GS 1962 (art. 128, 146), GS 1998 in the context of the ICRC and FRCA, GS 2004 (art. 100), and GS 2007 (art. 151). A relationship of

1 EF was established by GS 2010 (art. 108) and continued by GS 2013 (art. 123) and GS 2016 (art. 115).

2 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

3 GS 2019 (art. 121) decided as follows:

4 *4.1 To extend ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) to the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) as a whole,*
5 *being the federations of the churches in Kalimantan Barat (GGRI-KalBar), the churches in Nusa*
6 *Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT), and the churches in Papua (GGRI-Papua);*

7 *4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

8 *4.2.1 To try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next*
9 *national synod of the GGRI, planned for 2020;*

10 *4.2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia*
11 *(FRCA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in*
12 *Reformed doctrine and polity;*

13 *4.2.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission*
14 *work in Timor;*

15 *4.2.4 To encourage the GGRI to foster and promote church unity among Reformed churches in*
16 *Indonesia;*

17 *4.2.5 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
18 *synod.*

19 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

20 The CRCA received a letter of Invitation to attend the Regional Synod of the GGRI-NTT from August 5-
21 12, 2019, but did not take them up on this, since according to the decision of GS 2019 our relationship of
22 ecclesiastical fellowship will no longer be restricted to the GGRI-NTT but conducted on a national level with
23 the GGRI.

24 The CRCA informed the GGRI of the decision of GS-CanRC 2019 in regard to the GGRI in a letter dated
25 July 5, 2019. The GGRI reciprocated with gratitude, sending a letter of invitation to Synod 2020 of the GGRI
26 to be convened in KalBar. This Synod was not convened because of the COVID-19 virus, so no delegate could
27 be sent. No formal interaction has taken place since then.

28 Although there are members who have been sick because of the COVID-19 virus, as far as one church
29 leader knew, none died as a result. Livestreaming of church services has taken place in some areas during
30 periods of lockdown, but this was not possible everywhere.

31 The seminary of the GGRI on the island of Sumba continues to function, although no longer in the city of
32 Waingapu, but in a village called Wai Marangu, where it operated years ago. Currently there are 14
33 students, including 5 new ones, one from Papua and four from Sumba. Thirteen other students are away
34 for internships among the churches: four in Papua, eight in Sumba, and one in Java.

35 **Observations**

36 We advise Synod to include among its observations:

37 1 Although the CanRC are geographically far from Indonesia, reasons why we continue to interact with
38 them include the following:

39 1.1 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia.

40 1.2 Across Canada many CanRC members are involved with work among impoverished children and
41 families in Timor and Sumba.

42 1.3 The GKv are devolving from Indonesia as a mission field. The GGRI are becoming increasingly

1 concerned that the GKv are failing to be faithful churches. As the GGRI are heavily dependent
2 upon funding from elsewhere, they look to “daughters” of the GKv, the FRCA and CanRC, for
3 help.

4 2 With thankfulness to the Lord, the CRCA concluded that the GGRI evidence in confession and
5 practice to be churches seeking to serve the Lord according to His Word.

6 3 The church at Smithville is engaged in mission work in Timor, which has led to the formation of the
7 GGRI-Timor federation. This federation has indicated its desire to federate with the GGRI,

8 **Considerations**

9 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

10 1 As far as can be determined, the GGRI demonstrate that they remain faithful churches. They abide
11 by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church
12 order.

13 2 Given that the FRCA is closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is responsible that the CRCA work in
14 close conjunction with the FRCA. It would therefore be helpful if the respective committees continue
15 to share information on their observations and activities in Indonesia.

16 3 Working together, the FRCA and the CanRC will be in a good position to continue to support the
17 GGRI and to encourage church unity among the various groups of Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

18 4 Since the GGRI now also have a relationship with the URCNA, it is advisable to share information
19 with this federation as well.

20 5 Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the GGRCI, it is
21 important for the CRCA to share information concerning its findings with Smithville.

22 **Recommendations**

23 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

24 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
25 follows:

26 1 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);

27 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

28 2.1 to try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national
29 synod of the GGRI;

30 2.2 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
31 and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the
32 churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;

33 2.3 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in
34 Timor;

35 2.4 as opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical
36 harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;

37 2.5 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

38 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

39 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
40 follows:

41 1 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);

2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

2.1 to try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRI;

2.2 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;

2.3 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;

2.4 as opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;

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

GGRCI (previously GGRC)

History of the relationship

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

GS 2001 (art. 54): mandated the CRCA to explore the possibility of EF with the GGRCI.

GS 2004 (art. 100), GS 2007 (art. 150), GS 2010 (art. 108), decided not to enter into EF, but to continue to work towards that goal.

GS 2013 (art. 124): decided as per 2004 through 2010, and mandated the CRCA to encourage the GGRC to make use of STAKRI, the Reformed Theological School in Kupang established by the Smithville CanRC for the training for the ministry in their churches. The decision of GS 2016 (art. 116) is similar to that of GS 2013. (GS 2019 did not repeat this mandate regarding STAKRI.)

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)

GS 2019 (art. 120) decided as follows:

4.1 *To enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Calvinist Churches [in Indonesia] (GGRC);*

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

4.2.1 *To send a delegation to the next synod of the GGRC, planned for 2019, informing them of this decision;*

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

4.2.3 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;*

4.2.4 *To encourage the GGRC to foster and promote church unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia;*

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

Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021

A letter dated July 5, 2019, was sent by the CRCA to the GGRCI informing them of the decision of GS-CanRC 2019 in regard to the GGRI and giving them the list of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

In response to an invitation from the GGRCI, br. Otto Bouwman and Dr. Andrew J. Pol were sent as

1 fraternal delegates to attend GS-GGRCI 2019 in Korlok on Rote Island. Before, during, and after the Synod,
2 the brothers made use of various opportunities for informal conversations with various church leaders in
3 order to gather information concerning the churches and to offer advice and encouragement where
4 appropriate. There were also conversations with Dr. Dick Moes of the URCNA, and delegates from the FRCA,
5 br. Eric Heerema and Rev. Anthon Souman, who attended the synod. Material including our conclusions
6 was shared with the URCNA and FRCA delegates during and after synod.

7 The members of the GGRCI Synod expressed joy at the presence of the delegates from Canada. Dr. Pol
8 was given an opportunity to deliver a sermon during the opening of Synod. Br. Bouwman delivered the
9 address on behalf of the CanRC. All the foreign delegates were invited to share their insights on a variety of
10 topics. On the final day of Synod, there was an intermission during which Dr. Pol gave a seminar to the
11 delegates on the importance of the Reformed confessions, especially in regard to training the youth.

12 One matter about which GS-GGRCI 2019 really wished to have our advice on concerned the Reformed
13 Churches in the Netherlands (GKv). Though it was clear that they had no appreciation for the direction in
14 which these churches are going, they struggled with how to respond most appropriately to this
15 development. After all, the GGRC had not warned the GKv in previous years, and so now they were reluctant
16 to sever the ties. They judged it might be wiser to first give an admonition; if repentance is not evident then
17 they expect to sever the ties at the next synod.

18 The most difficult topic that GS-GGRCI 2019 addressed was the relationship between the GGRCI and the
19 GGRI-Timor (“Smithville”) churches. In the past a substantial number of members of the GGRCI had been
20 transferred to the mission work of Smithville to assist in it becoming a success. The expectation that the
21 churches that were established would be part of the GGRCI, however, was never realized. There was deep
22 regret and puzzlement at the estrangement that has developed between brothers who were originally all
23 members of the same federation. They also regretted that Smithville aligned itself with criticism of GGRCI
24 practices and perspectives despite limited interaction with these churches in regard to the criticism.

25 Doubts were expressed as to the original intention of the churches established through the mission work
26 of Smithville to join the GGRCI federation, since it became apparent that there were baptism certificates
27 issued on behalf of the “GGR-Timor” more than a decade before this federation was instituted. Not having
28 seen any Acts of the GGRI-Timor, they wondered what the grounds for the institution of a separate
29 federation were.

30 GS-GGRCI 2019 decided to ask the Canadian delegates to communicate the deep unhappiness of the
31 GGRCI federation to the Smithville mission. They did not find the argument of the Smithville CanRC that the
32 establishment of the GGRI-Timor as being a local matter convincing, since CO-CanRC art. 18 indicates that
33 missionaries are accountable to the sending church for their actions. They asked Dr. Pol to set up a
34 mediation meeting between the respective interchurch delegations from both church federations;
35 however, efforts in that direction were unsuccessful and time was too limited to pursue this further.

36 There was not always the desired unanimity in the decision-making process at GS-GGRCI 2019. One
37 brother took time to express his dissatisfaction in a letter to the CRCA afterward. The CRCA responded that
38 he should express his dissatisfaction along the agreed upon “ecclesiastical way” as stipulated by the Church
39 Order, rather than appeal to outsiders.

40 The draft version of the Acts of GS-GGRCI 2019 was received within a few weeks of Synod’s completion.
41 The 38-page document is in the Indonesian language. There are not any decisions in these Acts which the
42 CRCA feels need to be brought forward for further examination or consideration. Though the atmosphere
43 around the Synod table remained cordial and brotherly, challenges like trying to live by the Church Order
44 and at the same time trying to satisfy government expectations that there be some “permanent”
45 federational address resulted in spirited discussions. The next Synod of the GGRC has been scheduled to
46 begin on August 1, 2022.

1 Prior to the GGRCI Synod, br. Bouwman gave a seminar in the church of Tarus (of the GGRCI) for the staff
2 and about 200 students of the Reformed High School in Kupang. After returning to Kupang, Dr. Pol gave a
3 seminar to the same audience on the confessions, their historical background, and their usefulness for
4 today. Further, he participated in a two-hour interactive radio dialogue with Rev. E. Dethan on Sahabat
5 Radio. Dr. Pol also preached in the church in Oeba (GGRC) on August 11 and in the church in Kupang (GGRI)
6 on August 18.

7 There have been various discussions at synods of the CanRC and the FRCA as well as of the GGRI and
8 GGRCI concerning theological education in Indonesia. At the request of the CRCA, Dr. Pol therefore made
9 use of an opportunity while he was in Malang, Java with Rev. Yonson Dethan from August 19-21, to visit
10 various seminaries where some students of the GGRI and GGRCI have studied. He visited Aletheia
11 Theological Seminary, Salem Theological Seminary, and Southeast Asia Bible Seminary, in order to get
12 impressions as to the nature of these institutions and their commitment to the Reformed faith, and their
13 accreditation levels, and reported on his findings to the CRCA. The purpose of this is not to dictate to any
14 of the Indonesian churches what they should do in regard to the theological training of their ministers (see
15 GS 2019 art. 120 cons. 3.4), but to better understand the challenges they are facing in their context. While
16 clearly advocating key principles of the Reformed faith, none of these seminaries seem to be resistant to
17 the idea of women in office. Acceptance of this practice seemed in all cases to rest more on practical than
18 on theological considerations.

19 Since the Salem Theological Seminary figures prominently among the GGRI and GGRC as a place where
20 some of their students have obtained degrees, Dr. Pol visited this institution on August 20 in the morning
21 and for their graduation evening on that day. Though it is difficult to accurately gauge the Reformed
22 character of these institutions in a single visit, discussions took place with faculty members of the Aletheia
23 and Salem campuses. They seemed to be receptive to input from Rev. Y. Dethan and Dr. Pol about the
24 effects of the hermeneutics espoused by the GKv, since these institutions have had guest lecturers from
25 those churches.

26 It is noteworthy that the Indonesian government increasingly seems to want to ensure the formal
27 accreditation of the plethora of seminaries/colleges in the country. This means that in the future it will no
28 longer be possible for the seminaries in Malang to receive transfer students of theology from non-
29 accredited institutions such as the seminaries on the islands of Sumba and Timor who come to get their
30 "official" B.Th. or M.Th. degrees, although satisfaction was expressed as to the calibre of such students. All
31 students will need to receive an identification number which will follow them throughout their studies at
32 accredited institutions, a procedure that will prevent a smooth transfer of students from non-accredited
33 institutions to accredited institutions for further theological training. This will have a direct impact on the
34 future of the theological training of students from the GGRI, GGRI-Timor, and the GGRCI. Their instructors
35 of theology will need to attend accredited institutions from the beginning to the end of their training in
36 order to get a degree that has official status.

37 The brs. Bouwman and Pol expressed gratitude for a safe, productive and enjoyable experiences in
38 Indonesia, and also thankfulness for the evidence of the efforts of the GGRCI to live faithfully to Scriptures,
39 our confessions, and the Church Order.

40 The CRCA took note of the report of these brothers and as requested by GS-GGRCI 2019, relayed its
41 observations to the Mission Board of Smithville, given its past interactions with the GGRCI and the GGRI-
42 Timor.

43 **Observations**

44 We advise Synod to include among its observations:

- 45 1 Although the CanRC are geographically far from Indonesia, reasons why we continue to interact
46 with them and why EF is important include the following.

- 1.1 The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia
- 1.2 Across Canada many CanRC members are involved with work among impoverished children and families in Timor and Sumba, with some of this falling under the oversight of Word and Deed.
- 1.3 The GGRCI are self-sufficient as churches. However, they consider themselves weak in areas of Reformed doctrine and practice and seek assistance here. The GGRCI are becoming increasingly concerned that the GKv, with which they have had a relationship for years, are failing to be faithful churches. They have been looking to us for input as to what to decide in regard to their relationship with those churches that have in the past contributed to their development as Reformed churches through the Revs. J. Klamer and H. Knigge as well as through Dr. Andrew J. Pol. For them, the “natural go-tos” are now the FRCA and CanRC.
- 2 With thankfulness to the Lord, the CRCA concluded that the GGRCI evidence in confession and practice to be churches seeking to serve the Lord according to His Word.
- 3 The recent visit of members of the CRCA to GS-GGRCI 2019 demonstrates the importance of continuing EF and to be available for offering input, encouragement, and support where needed.
4. The GGRCI have EF with the GGRI, the CanRC, the FRCA, the URCNA, and the GKv. The relationship with the GKv is under strain.

Considerations

We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 1 As far as can be determined, the GGRCI demonstrate that they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.
- 2 Given that the FRCA is closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is responsible that the CRCA work in close conjunction with the FRCA. It would therefore be helpful if the respective committees continue to share information on their observations and activities in Indonesia.
- 3 Working together, the FRCA and the CanRC will be in a good position to continue to support the GGRCI and to encourage church unity among the various groups of Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

Recommendations

Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as follows:

- 1 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI);
- 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2.1 to try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRCI;
 - 2.2 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
 - 2.3 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;
 - 2.4 as opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;

2.5 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted

Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as follows:

1 to continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI);

2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

2.1 to try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national synod of the GGRCI;

2.2 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;

2.3 to work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work in Timor;

2.4 as opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;

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

GGRI-Timor (previously GGRI-T)

History of the relationship

The GGRI-Timor have thus far been connected to the CanRC via the mission work of the Smithville CanRC and their connections with the GGRI-NTT and GGRCI. Although there originally was cooperation between Smithville and the GGRCI, the churches arising from the mission work of Smithville decided in 2016 to form a separate federation.

GS 2019 received a request from the Smithville CanRC to work towards EF with the GGRI-Timor.

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)

GS 2019 (art. 147) noted that “the request to investigate” the GGRI-Timor with a view to establishing a sister church relation with them did not come to the attention of this GS via the ecclesiastical route” (cons. 3.1). Further, it expressed confidence “that our sister churches, the GGRI, will accept them (be it perhaps via a process) in an application to join their federation” (cons. 3.2). Finally, it also noted, “As the churches known today as the GGRI-Timor were forming and finding their way into a federation, they have been looking to the Smithville CanRC for a measure of guidance. Now that they are newly federated, they continue to look for encouragement and support from Smithville and those with whom Smithville belongs. The CRCA has experience and resources from which the GGRI-Timor could benefit” (cons. 3.3).

GS Edmonton 2019 (art. 147) therefore decided as follows:

4.1 To instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

4.1.1 To provide assistance to the GGRI-T in its effort to join the GGRI;

4.1.2 In conjunction with Smithville to offer any other assistance within the normal ambit of CRCA work that the GGRI-T would need.

Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021

During GS-GGRCI 2019 it became evident that a lack of proper communication between the GGRCI and the GGRI-Timor leading up to and after the GS-GGRI-Timor 2016 in Bila had led to an impasse whereas previously there had been fruitful cooperation between the two groups of churches. Toward the end of GS-

1 GGRCI 2019, at the request of GS- GGRCI 2019, Dr. Andrew J. Pol made an effort to facilitate a meeting of
2 Deputies of the GGRCI and the GGRI-Timor. The purpose was to have an open discussion as to what had led
3 to the formation of the GGRI-Timor and to seek a restoration of brotherly harmony and a way toward
4 cooperation as church federations. It turned out that a meeting on short notice could not be organized.

5 Along with a letter from the CRCA to the Smithville Mission Board dated October 19, 2019, the CRCA
6 shared the report of the visit of its delegates to the GGRCI upon the occasion of GS-GGRCI 2019. In this
7 letter it requested the Mission Board to take special note of a section “regarding how the GGRC has
8 perceived Smithville’s missionary and Smithville’s work of mission there,” conveying their unhappiness
9 about the establishment of the GGRI-Timor as a separate federation. This unhappiness arose against the
10 background of the stated “desire and intention that the mission churches would federate with the GGRC.”
11 The CRCA therefore requested a copy of the acts of the constituting synod of the GGRI-Timor, in order to
12 “achieve a better understanding of the stated rationale for this development.” Smithville urged the CRCA
13 to ask the GGRI-Timor directly for these acts.

14 The CRCA sent a letter to the GGRI-Timor on November 2, 2020, referencing the decision of GS-CanRC
15 2019 mandating the CRCA “to provide assistance to the GGRI-Timor in its effort to join the GGRI (*nasional*)
16 and to offer any other assistance within the normal ambit of CRCA work that the GGRI-Timor would need.”
17 The letter continued, “With a view to our mandate we as committee would appreciate receiving copies of
18 the acts or lists of decisions of your broadest assemblies. This will enable us to understand better who you
19 are and what we should recommend to our next general synod, planned for 2022, as to how best to proceed
20 in our contact and relationship with you.”

21 A brief response from the GGRI-Timor was received on November 5, 2020, acknowledging receipt of this
22 letter, promising that a detailed reply would be forthcoming. On October 5, 2021, an English translation of
23 the Acts of 2016 was received from the GGRI-Timor, along with an explanation that the delay had been
24 caused by various factors: “bushfire, COVID and crisis because of it and later cyclone Seroja which destroyed
25 STAKRI’s building and many other buildings in our community. These have taken so much of our time.”

26 Reading the English version of the Acts of GS-GGRI-Timor 2016 provided by their Deputies gives some
27 insight into their rationale for coming to their decision not to federate with the GGRCI. The advisory
28 committee of this synod observed that the GGRCI was not a sister church of the Canadian Reformed
29 Churches. It also expressed concerns about past struggles within the GGRC that have led to a negative
30 assessment of the GGRC on the part of governing authorities. The brothers voiced the wish to avoid being
31 linked to such an assessment by associating with the GGRCI. They also mentioned that although there had
32 been a meeting between the GGRI-NTT, GGRCI, and the churches arising from the mission work of Rev. E.
33 Dethan, the missionary sent by Smithville with a view to pursuing unity between these federations, it did
34 not seem that the GGRCI wanted to join with the GGRI-NTT. The implication of this consideration is that the
35 GGRI-Timor, as evidenced by its name, is interested in joining the GGRI.

36 Nevertheless, further interaction with the GGRCI was not excluded, where the advisory committee to
37 GS-GGRI-Timor 2016 noted in reference to the schism that had taken place within the GGRC “that we as a
38 federation should learn more about it and make a decision as to how to go about it”, and also that “by
39 having the federation, we as federation can decide together as to how to have relationship with the
40 reformed churches in Indonesia and abroad” (see page 5 of their English translation of the Acts). Their
41 “external deputies” were also given the following mandate:

- 42 a. *Wherever possible to have contact with the reformed churches in Indonesia.*
- 43 b. *Contacts with the church - the church which based on reformed confession and church order. The*
44 *purpose of the contact is to work together as much as we can without damaging the unity of GGRIT.*
- 45 c. *The deputies can visit other reformed churches in Indonesia if GGRIT are invited to go.*
- 46 d. *In the effort to work together – the external Deputat should investigate whether the contact Church*

1 *may be seen as a sister church. They may come with the proposal by looking at the church order -*
2 *their confession and whether their life was according to what was said.*

3 *e. Report the results of these relationships at the next synod.*

4 The Acts of GS-GGRI-Timor 2016 give reason to conclude that seeking a restoration of brotherly harmony
5 and cooperation between the GGRI-Timor and the GGRCI will be impossible unless a meeting with open
6 discussion toward that goal can be organized between Deputies of both church federations. The CRCA is
7 willing to be available to offer whatever help is possible toward achieving that goal, if outside help is needed,
8 but both parties must be willing to cooperate in such an endeavour.

9 As to the failed efforts on the part of the CRCA and also of the GGRCI to have a meeting take place
10 between Deputies of the GGRCI and the GGRI-Timor in 2019 and afterward, it is important to keep in mind
11 the following. A sense of honour or shame can impede communication among various parties in any
12 country, and this can also play a role in communications with churches abroad. This is true in Indonesia as
13 well. Understandably, this can result in an avoidance of communication or a selective presentation of
14 matters. Where communication has come to a standstill, progress can be made if a meeting can take place
15 where all parties feel safe to participate by being given assurances that the goal is not to shame anyone but
16 to come to a mutually agreed upon resolution that is satisfactory to all.

17 **Observations**

18 We advise Synod to include among its observations:

- 19 1 The CRCA has communicated with the Mission Board of the Smithville church as well as to the GGRI-
20 Timor.
- 21 2 Complications are evident in the relationship between the churches arising from the Smithville
22 mission work in Timor and the GGRCI. It is impossible to assess the full extent of the difficulties and
23 their ramifications. Due to circumstances the CRCA was not able to complete its mandate.

24 **Considerations**

25 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 26 1 It is important to continue to show willingness to assist the GGRI-Timor, and opportunities for
27 further interaction may arise in the future.
- 28 2 Given the sensitivities apparent at the assembly of GS-GGRCI 2019 in regard to their history with
29 the mission work of Smithville, the CRCA would do well to continue to encourage all parties to
30 engage in peaceful, open communication with a view to moving toward the goal of brotherly unity
31 and cooperation according to the Word of God. Furthering the cause of unity between the GGRI,
32 GGRI-Timor, and the GGRCI will only be fruitful if all parties agree to pursue that goal.

33 **Recommendation**

34 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

35 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
36 follows:

- 37 1 to instruct the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 38 1.1 in conjunction with the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church to provide assistance within the
39 normal ambit of CER work that would be of benefit to the Reformed Churches in Indonesia-
40 Timor (GGRI-Timor);
 - 41 1.2 as opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical
42 harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
 - 43 1.3 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

1 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

2 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
3 follows:

4 1 to instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

5 1.1 in conjunction with the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church to provide assistance within the
6 normal ambit of CRCA work that would be of benefit to the Reformed Churches in Indonesia-
7 Timor (GGRI-Timor);

8 1.2 as opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical
9 harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;

10 1.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 5: KOREA (KPCK, RCK, IRCK)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

KPCK: Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea

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 (2017)</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 | http://www.kosin.org/kosin/htmls/pck.htm | | |

History of the relationship

For many years (from 1968 onwards), the CanRC were 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 for about 10 years. Cooperation with the GKv in this matter is no longer possible, as they are no longer in EF with the CanRC. In the last two years with the pandemic, there has been little contact with the KPCK.

Summary of the report

The KPCK are one of the largest biblically faithful Presbyterian federations in South Korea. Historically they have also had close ties with the GKv but that is now changing due to the unbiblical direction the GKv have chosen in approving women in office. It has been possible in recent years for the CanRC and KPCK to be of mutual support to each other in admonishing the GKv.

The CRCA is **recommending** that, under the current structure, EF with the KPCK be continued. However, if the new structure is adopted, we recommend that the CanRC would enter into Corresponding Relationship (category 2) with the KPCK due to the significant differences in language and culture, with the resulting minimal contact in practice.

1 **IRCK: Independent Reformed Church in Korea**

2 **Introduction**

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

4 **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 | 4 | | |
| Membership numbers | 700 (2017) | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistories</i> | 4 | <i>Not known</i> |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | 1 | <i>Every 3rd year</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>Theological Academy</i> | | |
| Website | www.irc.or.kr | | |

5 **History of the relationship**

6 In 2007, the CanRC decided not to enter into EF with the IRCK due to a lack of information about the
7 IRCK. In the following years, the CanRC discussed with the KPCK its relationship with the IRCK in order to
8 gain more information about the IRCK. GS 2013 mandated the committee to encourage the IRCK to seek
9 contact with the KPCK and the RCK. This mandate was changed in 2016 to continue having contact with the
10 IRCK where possible. In 2017 the IRCK indicated that they are not seeking EF with the CanRC due to a
11 shortage of manpower from their side.

12 **Summary of the report**

13 It was not possible to have contact with the IRCK due to travel restrictions. The lack of interaction and
14 correspondence indicates that it is prudent to reduce if not end official contact with the IRCK.

15 The CRCA is **recommending** that, if the new structure is adopted, the CanRC enter into General Contact
16 (Category 3) with the IRCK. If the current structure is retained, the CRCA is recommending that official
17 contact with the IRCK be ended.

18 **RCK: Reformed Churches in Korea**

19 **Introduction**

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

21 **Brief description of RCK**

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Location | <i>South Korea</i> | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>Established in 2008, mainly from the KPCK Since 2008, 6 churches left the federation for various reasons.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | 2 | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>Under 200</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistories</i> | 2 | <i>Not known</i> |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| | <i>General Synod</i> | | |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>N/a</i> | | |
| Website | <i>N/a</i> | | |

1 **History of the relationship**

2 The CanRC were approached by the RCK to have EF with the RCK in 2009. The RCK originates mainly from
3 difficulties with the KPCK. Since the CanRC have EF with the KPCK, the CanRC have always encouraged both
4 the RCK and KPCK to work out their differences and be reconciled. There has been no reconciliation between
5 the KPCK and the RCK.

6 **Summary of the report**

7 It was not possible to have contact with the RCK due to travel restrictions. The lack of interaction and
8 correspondence indicates that it is prudent to end official contact with the RCK.

9 The CRCA is **recommending** that, regardless of whether the new structure is adopted or not, official
10 contact with the RCK be ended.

11 ***B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT***

12 ***KPCK: Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea***

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

14 **History of the Relationship**

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 GS 1989 (art. 103): No change.

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

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

31 GS 2001 (art. 36) and GS 2004 (art. 59): It is decided to continue EF with the KPCK but also to discuss
32 questions of divergences.

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

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

1 GS 2013 (art. 155) and GS 2016 (art. 81): Same decision as in 2010.

2 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

3 GS 2019 (art. 103) decided:

4 *4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCCK)*
5 *under the adopted rules;*

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

7 *4.2.1 To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with*
8 *the KPCCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCCK's annual General*
9 *Assembly;*

10 *4.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;*

11 *4.2.3 To maintain regular communication with the KPCCK as well as meet with their delegates at*
12 *the ICRC.*

13 *4.2.4 To monitor the KPCCK response to the GKv decision to allow women in all offices;*

14 *4.2.5 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
15 *synod.*

16 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

17 At the GKv Synod 2020 (Goes), a delegation of the CanRC was able to cooperate closely with the KPCCK
18 delegation in conveying their concerns about the GKv direction of approving of women in office.

19 Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to visit the KPCCK GA in September 2020. The CRCA sent video
20 greetings on behalf of the CanRC to the KPCCK GA in 2020 and 2021.

21 In spite of requests from our side, little was received about the proceedings of their GA. The language
22 and cultural barrier is significant and prevents a close relationship.

23 It was recommended to the GA-KPCCK 2021 to change their relationship with the GKv from sister-church
24 relation to contact relation. GA-KPCCK 2021 has decided to accept this recommendation and include it in its
25 revision of the KPCCK Constitution. In the KPCCK, sister-church relations are embedded in the Constitution of
26 the KPCCK. This alerted the KPCCK to a need to adapt their constitution to make this happen. Thus their
27 fraternal relations committee recommended that the matter of sister-church relations be moved from the
28 Constitution to a separate regulation. This recommendation was also accepted by the KPCCK GA. The vote
29 on these recommended changes will take place at GA-KPCCK 2022; it is worth noting that the KPCCK
30 Constitution does not permit the ordination of women into ecclesiastical office.

31 **Observations**

32 We advise Synod to include among its observations:

33 1. GS 2019 (art. 103) decided:

34 *4.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCCK)*
35 *under the adopted rules;*

36 *4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

37 *4.2.1. To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with*
38 *the KPCCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCCK's annual General*
39 *Assembly;*

40 *4.2.2. To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;*

41 *4.2.3. To maintain regular communication with the KPCCK as well as meet with their delegates*

1 at the ICRC.

2 4.2.4. To monitor the KPCK response to the GKv decision to allow women in all offices;

3 4.2.5. To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
4 synod.

5 2 EF with the KPCK is maintained since they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

6 a) The language barrier is significant and prevents us from easily accessing their material.

7 b) It has been good to cooperate together and support each other in our interaction with the GKv.

8 3 It was recommended to the GA KPCK 2021 by their committee for interchurch relations to change
9 their relationship with the GKv from sister-church relation to contact relation. The CRCA reported
10 that some procedural matters will mean this decision will be taken in 2022. As the KPCK constitution
11 forbids women from serving in office, the CRCA is confident that the KPCK will indeed end its sister-
12 church relationship with the GKv.

13 **Considerations**

14 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

15 1 As far as can be determined, the KPCK demonstrate that they remain faithful churches. They abide
16 by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church
17 order.

18 2 It is good to maintain ecumenical relations with the KPCK since we share the unity of the faith in
19 Jesus Christ.

20 3 Practically speaking, mainly due to language and cultural differences, our bond with them is
21 minimal.

22 **Recommendations**

23 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

24 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
25 follows:

26 1 to enter into Corresponding Relationship (category 2) with the KPCK in accordance with the rules
27 adopted by this synod;

28 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

29 2.1 to inform the KPCK of this decision and the implications of this decision for our relationship;

30 2.2 to be available for dialogue with the KPCK at international conferences;

31 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

32 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

33 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
34 follows:

35 1 to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) under
36 the adopted rules;

37 2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

38 2.1 to continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with the
39 KPCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCK's General Assembly;

40 2.2 to meet with their delegates at the next International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC);

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

IRCK: Independent Reformed Church in Korea

IRCK: History of the Relationship

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

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 107): It is decided to continue contact with the IRCK where possible.

GS 2019 (art. 102): It is decided to continue contact with the IRCK where possible. Further it is noted that the IRCK is not seeking EF with the CanRC due to practical reasons.

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)

GS 2019 (art. 102) decided:

4.1 To continue contact with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) where possible.

Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021

Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to travel to Korea and have contact with the IRCK. The only communication we received from the IRCK (in July 2019) was a request for Dr. R.C. Janssen to lecture at the IRCK Theological Academy.

Observations

We advise Synod to include among its observations:

- 1 The CRCA had recommended to GS 2019 "to end official contact" with the IRCK. GS 2019 did not follow this recommendation due to consideration 3.2 "It is clear that the IRCK values contact with the CanRC, evident from the invitations over the years to CanRC ministers and professors to give lectures at the IRCK Theological Academy, books by CanRC authors have been translated into Korean and published by their publishing house (Sungyak (Holy Covenant) Press), and the presence of Korean students at the CRTS" (GS 2019 art. 102 cons. 3.2). And so GS 2019 (art. 102) decided: *4.1 To continue contact with the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) where possible.*
- 2 It was not possible to have contact with the IRCK due to travel restrictions.
- 3 There has been no communication from the IRCK other than one email in 2019 inviting Dr. R.C. Janssen to lecture at the IRCK Theological Academy.

Considerations

Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 1 It is not the purpose of the CRCA to facilitate lecturers for the IRCK Theological Academy. This can be done through the CRTS or on an individual basis.
- 2 The lack of interaction and correspondence indicates that it is prudent to reduce official contact with the IRCK.
- 3 Our current level of contact with the IRCK, which is minimal, fits well into Category 3 of the new proposed structure of ecumenical relations.

Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted

We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 1 It is not the purpose of the CRCA to facilitate lecturers for the IRCK Theological Academy. This can be done through the CRTS or on an individual basis.
- 2 The lack of interaction and correspondence indicates that it is prudent to end official contact with the IRCK.

Recommendations

Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as follows:

- 1 to enter into General Contact relationship (category 3) with the IRCK in accordance with the rules adopted by this synod;
- 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2.1 to be available for dialogue with the IRCK at international conferences.

Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted

Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as follows:

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

RCK: Reformed Churches in Korea

RCK: History of the Relationship

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

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

GS 2016 (art. 106): It is decided to continue contact with the RCK where possible.

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)

GS 2019 (art. 101) decided:

- 4.1 *To continue contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) where possible.*

Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021

Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to travel to Korea and have contact with the RCK.

The only communication we received from the RCK (in August 2019) was an email indicating that they look forward to meeting CanRC representatives when they visit Korea.

Observations

We advise Synod to include among its observations:

- 1 GS 2019 (art. 101) decided:
 - 4.1 *To continue contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) where possible.*
- 2 It was not possible to have contact with the RCK due to travel restrictions.
- 3 There has been no communication from the RCK other than one email in August 2019.
- 4 It is not realistic for us to have much interaction with the RCK given the language and cultural differences as well as the physical distance between Canada and Korea.

1 5 The RCK is not a member of the ICRC.

2 **Considerations**

3 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

4 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 5 1 The lack of interaction and correspondence indicates that it is prudent to end official contact with
6 the RCK.
- 7 2 It is not possible to place the RCK under General Contact (Category 3) under the new structure since
8 the RCK is not a member of the ICRC and, if the KPCK is placed in Corresponding Relationship
9 (category 2), the CRCA would no longer be travelling to Korea.

10 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

11 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

- 12 1 The lack of interaction and correspondence indicates that it is prudent to end official contact with
13 the RCK.

14 **Recommendation**

15 With a view to our recommendation, it is immaterial whether the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations are
16 adopted or not, given the advised consideration 2 above.

17 We recommend that Synod decide:

- 18 1. To end official contact with the Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK).

REPORT 6: THE NETHERLANDS (GKv, DGK, GKN)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

GKv: Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated)

Introduction

The CanRC entered into EF with the GKv by a decision of GS 1954 (art. 44). This relationship was ended by a decision of GS 2019 (art. 41).

Brief description

Source of information: www.gkv.nl/deputaatschappen/financien-en-beheer

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Location (description of political & geographical context) | <i>The Netherlands</i> | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>The Secession of 1834, the Doleantie of 1886, the Union of 1892, the Liberation of 1944.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Polity | <i>Adapted Church Order of Dort</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | <i>261 established churches,</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>116,850</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/ Council</i> | <i>261</i> | <i>Monthly</i> |
| | <i>Classis</i> | <i>28</i> | <i>Every 3 months</i> |
| | <i>Regional Synod</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>As needed</i> |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Once every 3 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>Theologische Universiteit (broederweg)</i> https://www.tukampen.nl/ | | |
| Website | https://www.gkv.nl/ | | |

History of the relationship

The GKv is, popularly speaking, the “mother church” of the CanRC. It was the first sister church of the CanRC. The relationship was close and hearty until the early 1990s. Concerns about the direction of the GKv were expressed to GS 1995 and every synod thereafter. Much time and energy were spent on investigating, analyzing, and considering issues in the GKv. From 2007 to 2019 a separate synod committee was formed for this work. Concerns focused on a wide range of issues, among which women in office, hermeneutics, and interchurch relations. GS 2016 decided to suspend Rules 4 and 5 of EF (table and pulpit fellowship). As the GKv did not change its course, GS 2019 decided to end the sister church relationship.

Summary of the report

The letter to the GKv adopted by GS 2019 was sent by the second clerk of GS 2019 to the GKv-BBK and to all individual GKv, and delivered by a CRCA member in person to GS-GKv 2020. In concert with many other foreign delegates to this synod, the CanRC delegates urged the GKv to repent. The decisions of GS-GKv 2020 indicate that the GKv is not heeding the warnings of its (now mostly former) sister churches. The decision to allow women to serve in office was maintained, reunification with the NGK is to take place soon, and participation in broad ecumenical activities (National Synod and Council of Churches) was approved.

The CRCA **recommends** that GS 2022 decide that the mandate with respect to the GKv has been completed and that there is no reason to consider re-establishing EF with the GKv.

1 **DGK: The Reformed Churches [in The Netherlands]**

2 **Introduction**

3 The CanRC have been in contact with the DGK since a decision of GS 2004 (art. 44).

4 **Brief description**

5 Source: www.dgkh.nl and deputies BBK of the DGK

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Location (description of political & geographical context) | <i>The Netherlands</i> | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>The Secession of 1834, the Doleantie of 1886, the Union of 1892, the Liberation of 1944, the second Liberation in 2003 and following.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Polity | <i>Church Order of Dort</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | <i>10 churches</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>1450</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/ Council</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>Monthly</i> |
| | <i>Classis</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>Every 3 months</i> |
| | <i>Regional Synod</i> | <i>0</i> | |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Once every 3 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>In house (see https://www.dgkh.nl/opleiding/)</i> | | |
| Website | <i>https://www.dgkh.nl/</i> | | |

6 **History of the relationship**

7 GS 2004 mandated the CRCA to seek clarity about the legitimacy of a recent schism in the GKv; this was
 8 the schism that led to the formation of the DGK. GS 2007 established a separate committee for relations in
 9 The Netherlands, mandating it to study and monitor the DGK with a view to a possible sister church
 10 relationship. A sister church relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of
 11 Abbotsford (LRCA) has been deemed an impediment to a closer relationship between the CanRC and DGK
 12 as the LRCA considers the CanRC a false church.

13 **Summary of the report**

14 There has been good contact with the DGK-BBK and two meetings were held, one in person in January
 15 2020, the other via Zoom in February 2021. As the DGK have recognized the Reformed character of the
 16 Westminster Standards and thus the legitimacy of recognizing Presbyterian churches as churches of the
 17 Lord Jesus Christ, the relationship between the DGK and LRCA is under strain. Though deputies BBK have
 18 recommended to GS-DGK 2021 not to end EF with the LRCA, they are recommending that the LRCA be called
 19 to repentance from its views on the catholicity of the church and to return to the CanRC.⁴ The DGK has
 20 recognized the GKN as a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ and is working on merging the DGK and
 21 GKN. The DGK is not seeking EF with the CanRC at this time, figuring this would be wiser to do once the DGK
 22 and GKN have merged.

23 The CRCA **recommends** that, if the CRCA-CCCNA report is adopted, the CanRC enter into Corresponding
 24 Relationship (Category 2) with the DGK. Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted, the

⁴ GS-DGK 2021 began considering this matter on October 30, 2021 and is to continue doing so on November 22, 2021. The CRCA will submit a supplementary report once the decision been taken by the DGK is known.

1 recommendation is to continue contact with the DGK.

2 **GKN: Reformed Churches The Netherlands**

3 **Introduction**

4 The CanRC have been in contact with the GKN since a decision of GS 2013 (art. 190).

5 **Brief description**

6 Source: www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl and deputies BBK of the GKN.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Location (description of political & geographical context) | <i>The Netherlands</i> | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>The Secession of 1834, the Doleantie of 1886, the Union of 1892, the Liberation of 1944, departure from the GKv in 2009 and following.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Polity | <i>Church Order of Dort</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | <i>10 established churches, 6 church plants</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>~1500</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/ Council</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>Monthly</i> |
| | <i>Classis</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>Every 4 months</i> |
| | <i>Regional Synod</i> | <i>0</i> | |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Every 3 years</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>In house + seminaries</i> | | |
| Website | https://www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/ | | |

7 **History of the relationship**

8 The CRCA-SRN became aware of the formation of the GKN out of the GKv between GS 2010 and GS 2013.
 9 GS 2013 approved the contact the CRCA-SRN had made with the GKN. GS 2019 received a request from the
 10 GKN for a sister church relationship.

11 **Summary of the report**

12 There has been good contact with the GKN, including one meeting in person in January, 2020. The GKN
 13 are very similar to the CanRC, with some diversity between local churches where liturgy and other minor
 14 points of church practice are concerned. The GKN has established a sister church relationship with a two-
 15 church federation in Germany, has established contact, among others, with the OPC and EPCEW,
 16 participates in the European Conference of Reformed Churches (the European equivalent of NAPARC) and
 17 is seeking membership in the ICRC. The GKN has recognized the DGK as a true and faithful church of Jesus
 18 Christ and is working on merging the GKN and DGK. The GKN are seeking EF with the CanRC.

19 The CRCA **recommends** that, if the CRCA-CCCNA report is adopted, the CanRC enter into Corresponding
 20 Relationship (Category 2) with the GKN. Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted, the
 21 recommendation is to continue contact with the GKN.

1 **B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT**

2 **GKv: Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated)**

3 **Brief history:**

4 In 1568 the Reformed Churches formed a tentative bond of churches that became the *Nederlandsche*
5 *Hervormde Kerk* (NHK). Schisms in 1834 (Secession) and 1886 (Doleantie) led to the formation of two bonds
6 of churches that merged in 1892 to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN). In 1944 doctrinal
7 and church political issues led to a church schism which saw the formation of what would become known
8 as the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)* (GKv). A schism took place in the GKv in the late
9 1960s and early 1970s (formation of the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken - NGK*), again in 2003 and
10 following (formation of *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* - DGK) and again in 2009 and following
11 (formation of the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland - GKN*). In 2020 the GKv and NGK committed firmly to
12 reunification.

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

14 **History of the relationship**

15 GS 1954 (art. 44): the CanRC and GKv establish ecclesiastical fellowship (then known as
16 “correspondence”).

17 GS 1954 – GS 1992: the relationship was hearty and close. A constant point of discussion was rules for
18 ecclesiastical fellowship. During the church schism of the late 1960s, early 1970s (the “buitenverband zaak”) the
19 CanRC maintained EF with the GKv. The CanRC and GKv were both founding members of the ICRC in the
20 early 1980s.

21 GS 1995 (art. 19): concern was expressed about the GKv decision to allow elders to bestow the blessing
22 and about the way the GKv was establishing interchurch relationships. Women voting is mentioned but,
23 noting divergence of opinion within the CanRC, was considered to be a matter that need not be followed
24 up on.

25 GS 1998 (art. 40): some CanRC express concern to synod about some matters within the GKv, such as
26 the blessing elder and women voting.

27 GS 2001 (art. 80): determined that the issue of the blessing elder had been dealt with sufficiently. The
28 CRCA was mandated to study various matters within the GKv, including: the Marriage Form adopted by GS-
29 GKv 1999, changes to the Church Order, celebration of the Lord’s Supper led by an army chaplain.

30 GS 2004 (art. 44): many churches express concern about the direction of the GKv. Matters drawing
31 attention include: the proportion of Psalms to Hymns in worship services, the Fourth Commandment and
32 Sunday, the marriage form, the recent church schism (leading to the formation of the DGK),

33 GS 2007 (art. 133): while synod was satisfied several matters had been studied sufficiently and were not
34 to be considered cause for concern, new issues had arisen. Among them was the hermeneutic of “style of
35 the kingdom” in relation to divorce and remarriage. The CRCA was instructed “to hold joint meetings at
36 least every two years with Deputies of the BBK to discuss pro-actively matters of mutual concern and
37 interact with requests for advice or feedback about issues coming before synods as much as possible in
38 keeping with Rule 1 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.”

39 GS 2010 (art. 86): concerns continued to exist, now including the relationship between the GKv and the
40 NGK (the group of churches that split from the GKv in the late 1960s; in 2004 the NGK adopted women in
41 office). A special subcommittee (CRCA-SRN) of four was created for relations with churches in The
42 Netherlands.

43 GS 2013 (art. 148): the number of concerns grew again, to include publications by academics within the

1 GKv or connected to the seminary in Kampen. A letter expressing concern was drafted and adopted by
2 synod to be sent to the GKv (for its text, see GS 2013 art. 165).

3 GS 2016 (art. 104): in light of concerns, the execution of EF rules 4 and 5 (table fellowship and pulpit
4 fellowship) were suspended. The CRCA-SRN received the following mandate:

5 *4.4.1 To maintain contact with the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK) of the*
6 *GKv and represent the CanRC at the next GKv Synod;*

7 *4.4.2 To inform the next synod of the GKv in writing of GS 2016's decision;*

8 *4.4.3 To send a copy of this act of GS 2016 to each of the GKv churches, accompanied by a cover*
9 *letter;*

10 *4.4.4 To monitor the work of the committee "Males / Females and Office", as well as the*
11 *decisions of the next GKv Synod regarding this matter;*

12 *4.4.5 To monitor the ongoing discussions between the GKv and the Netherlands Reformed*
13 *Churches (NGK);*

14 *4.4.6 To continue to observe developments at the Theological University of the GKv in Kampen*
15 *(TUK), which includes paying attention to the article by Dr. Burger;*

16 *4.4.7 To monitor the results of the GKv's involvement with the National Synod;⁵*

17 *4.4.8 To work in consultation with the deputies of our other sister-churches;*

18 *4.4.9 To report to the churches six months prior to GS 2019 giving special attention to the*
19 *question whether or not to continue EF.*

20 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

21 GS 2019 (art. 41) decided:

22 *4.1 To thank the subcommittee mandated by GS 2016 for the diligent work they have done.*

23 *4.2 With sadness to discontinue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed*
24 *Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) and to implore the CanRCs to continue in prayer for the GKv.*

25 *4.3 To convey this decision, together with a letter of explanation and encouragement, to each of*
26 *the GKv congregations.*

27 *4.4 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

28 *4.4.1 To deliver this decision and letter (see 4.3) in person to the next Synod of the GKv;*

29 *4.4.2 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
30 *synod.*

31 The text for the letter referenced in GS 2019 art. 41 rec. 4.3 can be found in GS 2019 art. 104.

32 **Execution of the mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

33 On July 11, 2019, Rev. Holtvlüwer as second clerk of GS-CanRC 2019 sent the letter to the GKv BBK and
34 to all the individual GKv. The CRCA received responses from three GKv, one (Kantens) expressing
35 appreciation for the letter, one (Berkel & Rodenrijs) expressing disagreement with the substance of the
36 letter, and one (Zwolle-Zuid) expressing disagreement with the process of a synod of a foreign sister church
37 directly addressing individual churches. The CRCA also received a request for advice from a minister serving
38 in the GKv and gave advice.

39 The CRCA delegated Rev. Dr. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen to attend the Foreign Delegates' Week of GS-GKv 2020

⁵ This "National Synod" is a forum for all churches in The Netherlands

1 (Goes), held January 7-11, 2020. As none of the current CRCA members have been directly involved with
2 churches in the Netherlands in the past twelve years, the CRCA approached the members of the former
3 CRCA-SRN (aka subcommittee The Netherlands) for a second delegate. Br. G. Nordeman was appointed as
4 a second delegate. They were given the following mandate by the CRCA:

- 5 *1. As per the decisions of GS-CanRC 2019 to convey, in person, the decisions and letter adopted by GS*
6 *2019, thus admonishing the GKv for a last time*
- 7 *2. To communicate with any fraternal delegates and observers to GS-GKv 2020 why the CanRC have*
8 *discontinued EF with the GKv*
- 9 *3. To work together with any sister churches of the CanRC present at GS-GKv 2020*
- 10 *4. As opportunity arises, to meet with and encourage all who wish to continue to serve God in alignment*
11 *with Scriptures and the confessions as they have been historically understood.*
- 12 *5. To submit a report of their visit to the CRCA.*

13 Prior to the Foreign Delegates' Week, the GKv BBK requested the submission of an address which would
14 be distributed via a printed booklet to all synod members and all foreign delegates. With the involvement
15 of all CRCA members, an address was prepared which included the GS 2019 letter. During the course of the
16 Foreign Delegates' Week, it was determined that all foreign delegates be given up to 10 minutes to address
17 synod. For this purpose, a second address was prepared, with the involvement of all CRCA members via
18 email.

19 During the course of the week the CanRC delegates communicated with other delegates to GS-GKv 2020.
20 There was close cooperation with CanRC sister-churches that were present (FRCA, FRCSA, OPC, KPCK – to
21 our regret there were no URCNA delegates at GS-GKv 2020). Almost all foreign delegates attending GS-GKv
22 2020 warned the GKv about the erring path it was on. This warning became more intense when foreign
23 delegates realized in the course of the week that the GKv were entertaining closer ties with the World
24 Council of Churches through planned participation in the Dutch National Council of Churches (not to be
25 confused with the so-called "National Synod"). Strong admonitions were sounded by the CanRC, our sister
26 churches the FRCA, FRCSA, OPC, KPCK, as well as the GKSA (Reformed Churches in South Africa – aka
27 "Doppers"; sister churches of the URCNA and RCNZ), and IPB (Presbyterian Church in Brazil). We express
28 great appreciation for the manner in which foreign delegates, especially those of the CanRC, FRCA, FRCSA,
29 OPC, KPCK, and GKSA, could work harmoniously and in close consultation in presenting concerns to the GKv.

30 As opportunity arose the CanRC delegates met with GKv individuals to encourage them to serve God in
31 alignment with Scriptures and the confessions as they have been historically understood. An attempt to
32 connect with a larger group of concerned GKv members failed. Meetings held with concerned individuals
33 included meeting with a member of the GKv BBK and a member of the M/V in the Church committee.

34 A 29-page report of the visit was duly submitted to the CRCA. As the Foreign Delegates' Week took place
35 at the very start of GS-GKv 2020, following the visit little could yet be said about the course the GKv would
36 take. Foreign delegates came away from the week feeling they had been heard but not confident their
37 words would be heeded.

38 Soon after the visit, the spread of COVID-19 impacted the operations of GS-GKv 2020; sessions were
39 frequently postponed. Even as this report is being written, GS-GKv 2020 has not yet finished its business;
40 the matter of a new church order for the reunified GKv/NGK still needs to be completed. The CRCA
41 continued to monitor developments. It would seem the encouragements and admonitions of foreign
42 delegates had no significant impact. GS-GKv 2020 decided, for the most part unanimously, to continue its
43 course, among others upholding the right of local churches to ordain women to all offices and moving ahead
44 with reuniting with the NGK.

1 **Observations**

2 Much could be reported on what the GKv have done since GS-CanRC 2019 and where they are at today.
3 However, the purpose of this report is not be exhaustive as the CanRC and GKv are no longer in EF. Reporting
4 is limited to noting a few decisions of GS-GKv 2020 to indicate that the GKv continue on the worrisome
5 course they were already on in 2019. This course warrants the conclusion that there is no reason to
6 reconsider the decision to discontinue EF with the GKv. We note the following:

7 *GS-GKv 2020 (art. 19): decision to allow women to serve in office (in spite of appeals). Two of the GKv*
8 *delegates to GS-GKv 2020 were female elders.*

9 *GS-GKv 2020 (art. 82.B): decision to reunify with the NGK*

10 *GS-GKv 2020 (art. 82.H): approved the signing of the subscription document by Rev. M.H. Oosterhuis*
11 *on behalf of the GKv to the Declaration of Communion⁶ of the National Synod.*

12 *GS-GKv 2020 (art. 82.J): decision to join the Council of Churches as associate member. Among the*
13 *grounds are listed: "Associate membership implies that we can take part in the work of the Council*
14 *of Churches without being bound to decisions or positions of the Council" and "Participation in the*
15 *consultation groups of the Council of Churches serves the open meeting and deepening of the*
16 *communal confession of our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour in agreement with the Scriptures."*⁷

17 One consequence of the decisions of the GKv is that most of its sister churches have terminated
18 ecclesiastical fellowship (among whom FRCA, IRB, RCNZ, RCUS) or halted the process of entering into
19 ecclesiastical fellowship (OPC, URCNA). In 2021 the FRCSA decided to maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with
20 a view to concerned members within the GKv. Some churches are in the process of cutting their ties (among
21 whom KPCK, GGRI, GGRCI: the reason for delay is mostly due to the pandemic postponing broadest
22 assemblies).

23 The process of individuals and (parts of) churches pulling out of the GKv is ongoing. At the time of writing
24 (August 2021) there are three churches (Bunschoten, Rijnsburg, and Regio Zuidoost Groningen) that are
25 now independent; these three are in talks with both the DGK and the GKN.

26 **Summary of recommended observations**

27 We advise synod to include among its observations:

28 1 GS 2019 (art. 41) decided:

29 4.1 *To thank the subcommittee mandated by GS 2016 for the diligent work they have done.*

30 4.2 *With sadness to discontinue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed*
31 *Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) and to implore the CanRCs to continue in prayer for the GKv.*

32 4.3 *To convey this decision, together with a letter of explanation and encouragement, to each of*
33 *the GKv congregations.*

34 4.4 *To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

⁶ <https://www.nationalesynode.nl/verklaring/>. The word "communion" translates "verbondenheid", the declaration is called a "verbond", which translates as "covenant".

⁷ In Dutch: "Een geassocieerd lidmaatschap houdt in dat we kunnen deelnemen aan het werk van de Raad van Kerken zonder te zijn gebonden aan besluiten of standpunten van de Raad" and "Participatie in de beraadgroepen van de Raad van Kerken dient de open ontmoeting en de verdieping van het gemeenschappelijk belijden van onze Heer Jezus Christus als God en Heiland overeenkomstig de Schriften."

1 4.4.1 To deliver this decision and letter (see 4.3) in person to the next Synod of the GKv;

2 4.4.2 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
3 synod.

4 2. GS 2019 (art. 104) drafted a letter which was sent to the GKv BBK and to all the individual GKv by the
5 second clerk of GS 2019 and presented personally to GS-GKv 2020 by the CRCA.

6 3. GS-GKv 2020 maintained the decision to allow women to serve in office (art. 19), to reunify with the
7 NGK (art. 82.B), and to participate in the National Synod (art. 82.H); it further decided to become an
8 associate member of the Council of Churches (art. 82.J).

9 Considerations

10 Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

11 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 12 1 The GKv have shown no sign of returning to serving God in alignment with Scriptures and the
13 confessions as they have been historically understood. Thus the following consideration of GS 2019
14 remains relevant: "Ecclesiastical Fellowship is extended to churches where we find the marks of the
15 true church (BC Art. 29). The presence of the marks of the church are premised on a given church
16 accepting the authority of the Word of God. Now that the GKv approve of developments contrary
17 to the Lord's instruction in his Word, the marks of the true church cannot with confidence be said
18 to be consistently present in these churches." (GS 2019 art. 41 cons. 3.3.). This precludes the
19 reestablishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 20 2 There continue to be concerned members, office bearers, and churches within the federation of
21 GKv. We should continue to be willing to assist them in whatever way we can. The CER can be a
22 useful means to provide such assistance. A specific mandate is not required, however, as monitoring
23 the situation in the Netherlands would fall within the general mandate of the CER.
- 24 3 As the GKv is no longer in compliance with the Constitution of the ICRC and will be expelled from
25 the ICRC in the near future, and as we no longer judge the GKv to be a true and faithful church of
26 the Lord Jesus Christ, the GKv do not meet the conditions for any of the categories of ecumenical
27 relations adopted by this synod.

28 Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted

29 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 30 1 The GKv have shown no sign of returning to serving God in alignment with Scriptures and the
31 confessions as they have been historically understood. Thus the following consideration of GS 2019
32 remains relevant: "Ecclesiastical Fellowship is extended to churches where we find the marks of the
33 true church (BC Art. 29). The presence of the marks of the church are premised on a given church
34 accepting the authority of the Word of God. Now that the GKv approve of developments contrary
35 to the Lord's instruction in his Word, the marks of the true church cannot with confidence be said
36 to be consistently present in these churches." (GS 2019 art. 41 cons. 3.3.). This precludes the
37 reestablishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 38 2 There continue to be concerned members, office bearers, and churches within the federation of
39 GKv. We should continue to be willing to assist them in whatever way we can. The CRCA can be a
40 useful means to provide such assistance. A specific mandate is not required, however, as monitoring
41 the situation in the Netherlands would fall within the general mandate of the CRCA.

1 **Recommendations**

2 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

3 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
4 follows:

- 5 1 That the mandate with respect to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) has been
6 completed.
- 7 2 To observe with deep sadness that, in spite of urgent appeals, the GKv continue on a path of
8 disobedience to the Lord.
- 9 3 To give the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) no further mandate specific to the GKv at this
10 time.

11 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

12 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
13 follows:

- 14 1 That the mandate with respect to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) has been
15 completed.
- 16 2 To observe with deep sadness that, in spite of urgent appeals, the GKv continue on a path of
17 disobedience to the Lord.
- 18 3 To give the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) no further mandate specific to
19 the GKv at this time.

20 ***DGK: the Reformed Churches [in The Netherlands]***

21 **Brief History**

22 In the early 2000s GKv office bearers and members concerned about the course of the GKv, as evident
23 in doctrinal, liturgical, and governance decisions, separated out of the GKv. In 2003 / 2004 these churches
24 federated in *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* (DGK).

25 For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report. For the history of the GKv,
26 see under the GKv.

27 **History of the relationship**

28 GS 2004 (art. 44): mandated the CRCA to seek clarity about the legitimacy of the recent schism in the GKv.

29 GS 2007 (art. 143, 167): judged the separation for the DGK from the GKv to be unlawful. GS 2010 (art. 106,
30 107) deemed the judgment of GS 2007 to have been too hasty.

31 GS 2010 (art. 155): created a special subcommittee (CRCA-SRN) of four members for relations with churches
32 in The Netherlands and mandated the CRCA-SRN to study and monitor the DGK with a view to possible
33 EF.

34 GS 2013 (art. 190): considered EF between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford to
35 make EF between the CanRC and DGK impossible, but contact was maintained. GS 2016 (art. 117):
36 decided as GS 2013 had.

37 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel)**

38 GS 2019 (art. 124) decided:

39 4.1 *To thank deputies for their work and discharge them;*

40 4.2 *To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and mandate the Committee on*

1 *Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue to monitor developments within this*
2 *federation, paying special attention to the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated*
3 *Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA).*

4 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

5 Communication with the BBK of the DGK has been upbuilding. Some of it happened informally in Dutch
6 (several CRCA members are fluent in Dutch), more formal correspondence took place in English.

7 On January 9, 2020 a meeting took place of a DGK-BBK delegation with delegates from the CanRC, FRCA,
8 and FRCSA to GS-GKv 2020. On behalf of the CanRC, Rev. K. Janssen and br. G. Nordeman attended. At this
9 meeting we were informed that the DGK have acknowledged the Westminster Confession of Faith as a
10 Reformed confession and acknowledge the GKN as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The
11 DGK informed us that they and the LRCA were in discussions regarding what the DGK decision on the
12 Westminster Standards would mean for EF between the DGK and the LRCA. At the close of this meeting br.
13 Nordeman expressed great thankfulness for where things were at.

14 In September of 2020, the CRCA received a press release from the BBK of the DGK issued on September
15 14, 2020, regarding the relationship with the LRCA.⁸

16 On February 18, 2021 a meeting took place between CRCA and the DGK-BBK via Zoom. Almost all
17 members of both committees were present. This meeting was requested by the DGK-BBK especially with a
18 view to understanding the CanRC view of events that eventually led to the establishment of the LRCA. (One
19 could consider this the meeting referenced in GS-CanRC 2016 art. 119.) The CRCA made use of this meeting
20 to be officially updated on the relationship between the DGK and the GKN.

21 In May 2021 a press release was received from deputies of the DGK and GKN for unification, issued on
22 April 21, 2021.⁹

23 In late May 2021 the BBK of the DGK shared with its close contact churches (CanRC, FRCA, FRCSA) its
24 report to GS-DGK 2021 (only available in Dutch).

25 **Observations**

26 The DGK have continued to be receptive to the Westminster Standards. This has impacted the
27 relationship of EF between the DGK and LRCA. At the time of drafting this report, prior to GS-DGK 2021¹⁰,
28 the report of the DGK-BBK had been shared. Seventeen pages of that report and 112 pages of appendices
29 are devoted to the relationship of the DGK with the LRCA. They lead the DGK-BBK to recommend to GS-DGK
30 2021 to decide¹¹:

31 *Synod observes:*

- 32 *1. that contact with the LRCA has made clear that the LRCA departs in its views from the Reformed*
33 *doctrine on the catholicity of the church, where churches are concerned who have the Westminster*

⁸ An English version can be found here: <https://officebearers.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/200914-Update-from-BBK.pdf>.

⁹ An English version can be found here: <https://officebearers.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Joint-deputies-report-GKN-and-DGK.pdf>.

¹⁰ A synod which has been postponed several times because of COVID-19.

¹¹ Note: the translation printed here has been made by a CRCA member. Source: https://www.dgkh.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/6.01-2021-05-BBK-rapport_.pdf. The discussion of this recommendation began on October 30, 2021 and is to be continued on November 20. The CRCA will submit a supplementary report once the decision taken by the DGK is known. The CRCA figures it is fine to share what we find in this report, as the DGK-BBK report is publicly accessible via the Internet.

1 *Standards as confession*

2 2. *that there were and are no grounds for separation from the CanRC*

3 *Synod decides:*

4 1. *at this point in time to continue to maintain the sister church relationship with the LRCA, but to*
5 *suspend rules 4 and 5 for maintaining a sister church relationship.*

6 2. *to call the LRCA to return to maintaining the Reformed confession concerning the catholicity of the*
7 *church*

8 3. *to call the LRCA to accept the Reformed church order, as applied in the CanRC*

9 4. *to call the LRCA to return to the CanRC without conditions.*

10 *Grounds:*

11 1. *The LRCA departs from Reformed doctrine where the confession of the catholicity of the church is*
12 *concerned. In the context of a sister church relationship the DGK then has the calling to address the*
13 *LRCA on this point and to call it to repentance.*

14 2. *It has not been proven that Reformed doctrine no longer was or is preserved, confessed, or defended*
15 *in the CanRC*

16 3. *There was and is no proof for general and broad apostasy in the CanRC*

17 4. *The members of the congregation had no grounds to separate from the CanRC*

18 5. *The LRCA, while still member of the CanRC, has not sufficiently raised the issue of perceived apostasy*
19 *in the ecclesiastical route*

20 6. *In agreement with BC articles 27, 28 and 29, believers are to join the church in every place where*
21 *God has established her.*

22 Over the past few years the DGK and the GKN have grown closer. The relationship is challenged by the
23 reality that there has been transfer of office bearers and members between the DGK and the GKN because
24 of local issues. The DGK and the GKN are doing their utmost to be sensitive to these issues, without losing
25 sight of the need for these two bonds of churches, which recognize each other as true and faithful churches
26 of the Lord Jesus Christ, to merge into one bond of churches. Deputies ACOBB¹² of the DGK requested the
27 convening of an extraordinary synod in 2019, which took place, and decided (GS-DGK 2019 art. 6.3)¹³:

28 1. *The Reformed Churches (restored)¹⁴ recognize the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) as*
29 *churches of Christ, standing on the foundation of apostles and prophets.*

30 *Grounds with decision 1:*

31 *The discussions that have taken place between deputies of the DGK and deputies of the GKN have made*
32 *clear that:*

33 1. *there is unity in dealing with the authority of Scripture*

34 2. *there is unity in binding to the Reformed confession*

35 3. *there is unity in the view of and operations of the bond of churches*

¹² "Adresvoering/Contacten Overheid/Binnenlandse Betrekking" = "Address / Contact Civil Authorities / Domestic Relations".

¹³ The translation has been made by a CRCA member. The acts can be found here: <https://www.dgkh.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2019-10-08- Pro Acta en Acta buitengew GS Lutten-2019.pdf>.

¹⁴ "De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)", usually abbreviated "DGK", sometimes "DGK(h)".

1 2. *With deep gratitude to inform the synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) of this*
2 *decision with the urgent request also from her side to continue to follow the way to the realization*
3 *of ecclesiastical unity.*

4 3. *[new mandates for the ACOBB regarding further steps to be taken]*

5 The DGK has not given any indication to the CRCA that it is requesting EF with the CanRC. The CRCA
6 considers it wisest to wait until there is a final decision on the relationship between the DGK and the LRCA
7 and until the DGK and GKN have merged before considering EF between the CanRC and the DGK

8 GS 2019 received a letter from a DGK Mariënberg, a church which had been placed outside the
9 federation of the DGK in 2017. In this letter the DGK is accused of hierarchical tendencies; these accusations
10 can also be found on the website of this church.¹⁵ This DGK Mariënberg also has a home church in Zwolle,
11 which has its worship services in Hasselt. This DGK Mariënberg has not approached the CRCA, nor did GS
12 2019, though noting this letter in its observations and considerations, specifically mandate the CRCA to look
13 into this matter. Besides this DGK Mariënberg, there is also still a DGK Mariënberg within the federation.¹⁶
14 The CRCA has not seen any evidence of hierarchical tendencies within the DGK.

15 Ecumenically the DGK has the following relationships and contacts:

- 16 • Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN): “recognition”, working towards “acknowledgement”
17 which is ultimately to lead to unification
- 18 • Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA): sister church relationship, under strain
- 19 • Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC): contact, intensifying
- 20 • Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA): contact, intensifying
- 21 • Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA): contact, intensifying
- 22 • Evangelical Presbyterian Church Northern Ireland: contact, incipient
- 23 • Reformed Churches in Korea: contact, wound down
- 24 • Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW): contact, intensifying
- 25 • Free Church of Scotland (continuing): contact, intensifying
- 26 • Evangelical Reformed Church in West Ukraine (ERE): contact, intensifying
- 27 • Reformed Churches (liberated) (GKv): contact with local church(es) when approached

28 **Summary of recommended observations**

29 We advise synod to include among its observations:

30 1. GS 2019 (art. 12) decided:

31 4.1 *To thank deputies for their work and discharge them;*

32 4.2 *To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK) and mandate the Committee on*
33 *Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to continue to monitor developments within this*
34 *federation, paying special attention to the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated*
35 *Reformed Church at Abbotsford (LRCA).*

36 2. The DGK-BBK are recommending that the DGK recognize the illegitimacy of the LRCA. At the same
37 time, they recommend that the DGK take their duty to call the LRCA to repentance seriously. It
38 would be a proper course of action for the DGK to maintain EF with the LRCA for the purpose of
39 admonition and at the same time to suspend the exercise of Rules 4 and 5 for EF; the CanRC took
40 the same approach with respect to the GKv in 2016 (GS 2016 art. 104 rec. 4.3).¹⁷

15 <https://dgkmarienberg.nl/>

16 <https://www.dgk-marienberg.nl/>

17 If a decision of GS-DGK 2021 is known prior to the convening of GS-CanRC 2022, the CRCA will submit a

- 1 3. The DGK have recognized the GKN as true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and continue to work
2 towards federative unity in a single bond of churches.
- 3 4. The DGK display the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in its preaching, worship, and
4 governance.
- 5 5. The DGK are not requesting EF with the CanRC at this time.

6 **Considerations**

7 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

8 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 9 1. The relationship of EF between the DGK and LRCA has been considered an impediment to a closer
10 relationship between the CanRC and DGK (GS 2013 art. 190). The fact that the DGK has
11 acknowledged the illegitimacy of the LRCA and the validity of the CanRC is to be noted with
12 gratitude.
- 13 2. Since EF between the DGK and LRCA continues, albeit with the suspension of Rules 4 and 5, now is
14 not the time to enter into EF with the DGK.
- 15 3. The fact that the DGK is seriously working on unification with the GKN is to be noted with gratitude.
16 Given where the situation is currently at, it would be wisest to wait with entering into EF with the
17 DGK.
- 18 4. When working towards EF with two federations of churches in the same geographical location who
19 are working on merging, it is wisest to wait until the new federation has formed. If EF is deemed
20 necessary prior to the merger, EF should be entered into with both federations at the same time.
21 The situation between the DGK and GKN is structurally similar to one GS 2019 dealt with (cf. GS
22 2019 art. 120 cons. 3.10).
- 23 5. In view of the adoption of a new structure for ecumenical relations, while Category 1 (Ecclesiastical
24 Fellowship) with the DGK is not advisable at this time, it is appropriate to enter into Category 2
25 (Corresponding Relationship) with the DGK.

26 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

27 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 28 1. The relationship of EF between the DGK and LRCA has been considered an impediment to a closer
29 relationship between the CanRC and DGK (GS 2013 art. 190). The fact that the DGK has
30 acknowledged the illegitimacy of the LRCA and the validity of the CanRC is to be noted with
31 gratitude.
- 32 2. Since EF between the DGK and LRCA continues, albeit with the suspension of Rules 4 and 5, now is
33 not the time to enter into EF with the DGK.
- 34 3. The fact that the DGK is seriously working on unification with the GKN is to be noted with gratitude.
35 Given where the situation is currently at, it would be wisest to wait with entering into EF with the
36 DGK.
- 37 4. When working towards EF with two federations of churches in the same geographical location who
38 are working on merging, it is wisest to wait until the new federation has formed. If EF is deemed
39 necessary prior to the merger, EF should be entered into with both federations at the same time.
40 The situation between the DGK and GKN is structurally similar to one GS 2019 dealt with (cf. GS

1 2019 art. 120 cons. 3.10).

2 **Recommendations**

3 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

4 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
5 follows:

- 6 1 to enter into Corresponding Relationship (category 2) with The Reformed Churches (DGK) in
7 accordance with the rules adopted by this synod;
- 8 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 9 2.1 to inform the DGK of this decision and the implications of this decision for our relationship;
 - 10 2.2 to continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:
 - 11 2.2.1 the relationship between the DGK and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN);
 - 12 2.2.2 the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
13 (LRCA);
 - 14 2.3 to be available for dialogue with the DGK;
 - 15 2.4 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

16 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

17 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
18 follows:

- 19 1 to maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK);
- 20 2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 21 2.1 to continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:
 - 22 2.1.1 the relationship between the DGK and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN);
 - 23 2.1.2 the relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
24 (LRCA);
 - 25 2.2 to be available for dialogue with the DGK;
 - 26 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

27 ***GKN: Reformed Churches The Netherlands***

28 **Brief History**

29 In the late 2000s GKv office bearers and members concerned about the course of the GKv, as evident in
30 doctrinal, liturgical, and governance decisions, separated out of the GKv. In 2009 these churches federated
31 in the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN). These churches did not join the DGK as their reasons for
32 leaving the GKv were not identical.

33 For statistics and further general information see the summary of the report. For the history of the GKv,
34 see under the GKv.

35 **History of the relationship**

36 GS 2013 (art. 190) decided that the CRCA-SRN should monitor developments in the GKN. GS 2016 (art.
37 118) decided the same.

38 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel)**

39 GS 2019 (art. 125) decided:

1 4.1 To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN)

2 4.2 To instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

3 4.2.1 To monitor developments within the GKN;

4 4.2.2 To consider the request from the GKN to establish sister relations;

5 4.2.3 To be available for dialogue with the GKN when needed.

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

8 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

9 Communication with the GKN-BBK has been upbuilding.

10 On January 7, 2020 a meeting took place of a GKN-BBK delegation with delegates from the CanRC and
11 FRCA (the FRCSA were invited but, to their regret, did not make the meeting). On behalf of the CanRC, Rev.
12 K. Janssen and br. G. Nordeman attended. The purpose of the meeting was to become personally
13 acquainted and to provide updates on the relationship GKN-DGK, on how the relationship DGK-LRCA is an
14 impediment for both the CanRC and FRCA, the general character of the GKN, and the reason for the GKN to
15 seek EF with the CanRC and FRCA.

16 In May 2021 a press release was received from deputies of the DGK and GKN for unification, issued on
17 April 21, 2021.¹⁸

18 **Observations**

19 The GKN are somewhat diverse, especially in liturgical practice (e.g. which selection of hymns can be
20 used during worship) and other minor points of church practice (e.g. women voting). The dynamics of
21 entering into EF with the GKN without entering into EF with the DGK is reason to hesitate at this time.

22 The GKN have continued to grow. Given their initial low number of churches, the GKN had the practice
23 of meeting in general synod every 6 months (much like our sister church the IRB). At GS-GKN Oct-2020 the
24 tenth church was instituted, leading to the formation of two classes. The next GS-GKN is to take place in
25 2023.

26 Ecumenically the GKN has the following relationships and contacts:

- 27 • The Reformed Churches (DGK): “recognition”, working towards “acknowledgement” which is
- 28 ultimately to lead to unification
- 29 • Independent Evangelical Reformed Church (Germany): sister church relationship
- 30 • Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC): sister church relationship requested
- 31 • Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA): sister church relationship requested
- 32 • Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA): sister church relationship requested
- 33 • Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW): contact, intensifying
- 34 • Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC): contact, intensifying
- 35 • Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CGKN): contact
- 36 • Restored Reformed (=Hervormd) Church (HHK): contact
- 37 • Reformed Churches (liberated) (GKv): contact with local church(es) when approached

38 The GKN participates in the European Conference of Reformed Churches and is seeking membership in the
39 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

¹⁸ An English version can be found here: An English version can be found here: <https://officebearers.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Joint-deputies-report-GKN-and-DGK.pdf>.

1 With respect to merging with the DGK, the following two most recent decisions are relevant:

2 GS-GKN Nov. 2019 (Hardenberg) (art. 17) decided¹⁹:

3 *Synod decided to mandate deputies Unity Reformed Confessors (EGB) to continue the discussion with*
4 *deputies ACOBB of the DGK. Synod gives deputies the following instruction:*

- 5 *a. In consultation with deputies ACOBB to discuss how ecclesiastical unity can take shape in a cautious*
6 *manner.*
- 7 *b. To address in the discussion all the matters which need to be discussed to form one bond of churches.*
- 8 *c. To take into account the difficulties and sore points which exist with local churches and with brothers*
9 *and sisters.*
- 10 *d. To report their findings to GS October 2020 and to serve Synod with advice as to how to proceed.*

11 *Grounds*

- 12 *a. All believers are called to maintain the unity of the church (among others BC art. 28)*
- 13 *b. Now that mutual recognition has been declared there are no longer any fundamental reasons which*
14 *can prevent merging into one bond of churches and hinder the continuation of discussions between*
15 *the two bonds of churches.*
- 16 *c. In the congregation of Christ all things ought to be done in good order (among others CO article 1)*
- 17 *d. Besides much that corresponds there are substantial and organisational matters in the practice of*
18 *both bonds of churches, which do not correspond with each other. Decisions need to be made about*
19 *these matters in order to live together in one bond of churches.*
- 20 *e. In a number of churches in both bonds of churches there are difficulties and sore points because of*
21 *injustice experienced. One may not bypass the hurt that exists and is carried by brothers and sisters.*

22 GS-GKN Oct. 2020 (Harderwijk) (art. 15) decided²⁰:

- 23 *a. To continue the discussions of deputies EGB [of the GKN] with deputies ACOBB [of the DGK] in keeping*
24 *with the instruction of GS Hardenberg*
- 25 *b. To approach the local churches and to involve them in the difficulties and sore points listed in decision*
26 *c. of GS Hardenberg*
- 27 *c. To inform the churches in our bond of churches regularly of the progress of discussions with the DGK*
- 28 *d. To report to the next (extraordinary) synod and come as quickly as possible with a proposal regarding*
29 *the acknowledgement of the DGK as churches of Christ and come to ecclesiastical unification.*

30 *Grounds (in addition to the mandate of GS Hardenberg)*

- 31
 - *Where ecclesiastical unification with the DGK is concerned, it is important to take note of*
32 *possible obstacles and hindrances which may exist with local churches. This will prevent*
33 *churches feeling they have been bypassed or not heard.*
 - *It is important to inform the churches and its members methodically about the progress of*
34 *discussions with the DGK. This will involve the churches in the process and allow prayer and*
35 *engagement to be more in line with what is happening.*
- 36

¹⁹ The translation has been made by a CRCA member. The acts can be found here:
<https://www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/?ddownload=155079>.

²⁰ The translation has been made by a CRCA member. Note that one has to puzzle together the decision by first
looking at page 19 and then at page 11 of the acts published online
(<https://www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/?ddownload=155134>).

1 **Summary of recommended observations**

2 We advise synod to include among its observations:

3 1 GS 2019 (art. 125) decided:

4 4.1 *To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN)*

5 4.2 *To instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

6 4.2.1 *To monitor developments within the GKN;*

7 4.2.2 *To consider the request from the GKN to establish sister relations;*

8 4.2.3 *To be available for dialogue with the GKN when needed.*

9 4.2.4 *To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
10 *synod.*

11 2 The GKN have recognized the DGK as true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and continue to work
12 towards federative unity in a single bond of churches.

13 3. The GKN display the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in its preaching, worship, and
14 governance.

15 4. The GKN have requested EF with the CanRC.

16 **Considerations**

17 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

18 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

19 1 The fact that the GKN is seriously working on unification with the DGK is to be noted with gratitude.
20 Given where the situation is currently at, it would be wisest to wait with entering into EF with the
21 DGK.

22 2 When working towards EF with two federations of churches in the same geographical location who
23 are working on merging, it is wisest to wait until the new federation has formed. If EF is deemed
24 necessary prior to the merger, EF should be entered into with both federations at the same time.
25 The situation between the GKN and DGK is structurally similar to one GS 2019 dealt with (cf. GS
26 2019 art. 120 cons. 3.10).

27 3 In view of the adoption of a new structure for ecumenical relations, while Category 1 (Ecclesiastical
28 Fellowship) with the GKN is not advisable at this time, it is appropriate to enter into Category 2
29 (Corresponding Relationship) with the GKN.

30 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

31 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

32 1 The fact that the GKN is seriously working on unification with the DGK is to be noted with gratitude.
33 Given where the situation is currently at, it would be wisest to wait with entering into EF with the
34 DGK.

35 2 When working towards EF with two federations of churches in the same geographical location who
36 are working on merging, it is wisest to wait until the new federation has formed. If EF is deemed
37 necessary prior to the merger, EF should be entered into with both federations at the same time.
38 The situation between the GKN and DGK is structurally similar to one GS 2019 dealt with (cf. GS
39 2019 art. 120 cons. 3.10).

1 **Recommendations**

2 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

3 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
4 follows:

- 5 1 to enter into Corresponding Relationship (category 2) with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands
6 (GKN) in accordance with the rules adopted by this synod;
- 7 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
- 8 2.1 to inform the GKN of this decision and the implications of this decision for our relationship;
- 9 2.2 to continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:
- 10 2.2.1 the relationship between the GKN and The Reformed Churches (DGK);
- 11 2.3 to be available for dialogue with the GKN;
- 12 2.4 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

13 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

14 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
15 follows:

- 16 1 to maintain contact with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN)
- 17 2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
- 18 2.1 to continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:
- 19 2.1.1 the relationship between the GKN and The Reformed Churches (DGK);
- 20 2.2 to be available for dialogue with the GKN;
- 21 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 7: NEW ZEALAND (RCNZ)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

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: federation's website

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 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>3,354 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 makes use of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Melbourne Australia, and Mid America Reformed Theological Seminary, and Greenville Theological Seminary.</i> | | |
| Website | www.rcnz.org.nz | | |

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 CanRC has encouraged the ecclesiastical relationship between the RCNZ and our other sister church in the region, the FRCA, and monitored the changes in the relationship between the RCNZ and 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 it be mandated to visit with the RCNZ in the inter-synodical period.

B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT

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

1 2004 (art. 100) decided to seek more information about the RCNZ. GS 2007 (art. 66) decided to accept the
2 invitation for EF. GS 2010 (art. 154), GS 2013 (art. 192), GS 2016 (art. 17), and GS 2019 (art. 136) all decided
3 to continue EF. One point of attention has been the relationships the RCNZ has in Australia with the Christian
4 Reformed Church of Australia (CRCAus) and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA).

5 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

6 GS 2019 (art. 136) decided:

7 *4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New
8 Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;*

9 *4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

10 *4.2.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua
11 New Guinea;*

12 *4.2.2 To send a delegation to the RCNZ Synod at least once every three years;*

13 *4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
14 synod.*

15 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

16 The RCNZ invited a delegation from the CanRC to attend GS-RCNZ 2020 in Hakanui. Due to the impact of
17 COVID-19 and travel restrictions GS-RCNZ 2020 was postponed to 2021. A New Zealand government lock
18 down in September 2021 led to this meeting being held over video conference for two days (September 13-
19 14), and then adjourned with the intention of reconvening in February 2022 D.V.

20 Rev. Arend Witten, addressed the GS-RCNZ 2021 on behalf of the CanRC on September 13, and observed
21 some of the sessions of Synod via video conference.

22 The CRCA forwarded a letter to GS-RCNZ 2021 from the Toronto-Bethel CanRC mission board highlighting
23 the ongoing needs on the mission field in PNG and encouraging GS-RCNZ 2021 to consider sending an
24 additional missionary to the field.

25 The RCNZ has been informed of the decisions of GS-CanRC 2019 and invited to send a delegation or
26 greetings to GS-CanRC 2022 (Guelph).

27 **Observations**

28 GS-RCNZ 2021 met for two days over video conference.

29 GS-RCNZ 2021 decided to continue their sister church relationship with the CanRC. The RCNZ Interchurch
30 Committee reported on visits to the assemblies of the URCNA, OPC, and CanRC, in the previous inter-
31 synodical period. GS-RCNZ 2021 decided not to send delegates to the next assemblies of the URCNA, OPC
32 and CanRC over the next inter-synodical period for reasons of stewardship of resources and stability of the
33 relationships.

34 Concerning matters that still need to be dealt with (as of fall 2021) by GS-RCNZ 2021 we note the
35 following matters.

36 The **mission activities** of the of the RCNZ are coordinated by an Overseas Mission Board which reports
37 to Synod. It could be noted that there is good unity with the FRCA of Southern River and the CanRC Toronto
38 Bethel in the mission work in Papua New Guinea. The board has recommended to GS-RCNZ 2021 to approve
39 sending another missionary. The RCNZ also support mission work in Vanuatu (an island nation in the Pacific
40 Ocean) and a Radio Ministry in South East Asia.

41 The RCNZ has **Church Extension Committee** which reported GS-RCNZ 2021. The Church Extension
42 committee administers a fund for home missionaries, vicariates/student internships, needy churches, and

1 loans for buildings. By these means the churches support one another financially in mission work and
2 instituting new churches domestically.

3 The RCNZ do not have a federational **seminary**. However, the Reformed Theological Seminary in
4 Melbourne Australia, has been maintained in close cooperation with the CRCAus. Some students from the
5 RCNZ also attend Mid-America Reformed Seminary. The Deputies for Students for the Ministry visit these
6 seminaries to meet with Faculty and RCNZ students. The RCNZ also has a year long internship/vicarate that
7 a student must complete with an experienced RCNZ minister prior to examination and ordination into the
8 ministry in the RCNZ.

9 The RCNZ has **sister church relationships** with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA), Free
10 Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA), Orthodox
11 Presbyterian Church, USA (OPC), Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC), United Reformed
12 Church in North America (URCNA), Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA=GKSA) and Reformed
13 Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKv).

14 The RCNZ have a relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship (a second-tier relationship) with the CRCAus. The
15 Interchurch relations committee visited the CRCAus Synod and continues to discuss with the CRCAus their
16 practice of ordaining women as deacons.

17 Together with the CanRC and other sister churches the RCNZ appealed to the GKv to return from the
18 unbiblical path followed in ordaining women to the office in the churches. The Interchurch relations
19 committee recommends to GS-RCNZ 2021 that “since there has been no repentance or change of heart
20 from the decisions” from the GKv decisions of Synod Meppel 2017 that the RCNZ “terminate” its sister
21 church relationship.

22 The RNCZ has expressed concern to the RCSA (=GKSA) regarding their practice of ordination of women
23 to the office of deacon. If there is no change their relationship Interchurch Relations committee
24 recommends that this relationship be downgraded.

25 The Interchurch Relations Committee recommends GS-RCNZ 2021 decide to continue discussions with
26 the Grace Presbyterian Church of NZ. This federation was established in 2002 in reaction to growing
27 liberalism in the mainline Presbyterian Church of NZ and claims to be firmly committed to the Reformed
28 faith, holding strongly to the Bible as its rule of faith and life. There are 20 churches around New Zealand
29 and a number of church-plants. However at this point there has been relatively little informal contact
30 between churches as at a local level.

31 The RCNZ **cooperate at a federative level** for many aspects of their church life. There is a National
32 Diaconate Committee which coordinates support for disaster relief and international development. The
33 RCNZ have a National Publishing committee which publishes a magazine (*Faith in Focus*) and other material
34 for the federation. GS-RCNZ 2021 received a report about an ongoing program for the children of the church
35 (Gems and Calvinist Cadets Corps) as well as a conference for ministers and their wives.

36 The RCNZ synod appoints a Remuneration Committee which oversees the **Emeritus Savings Fund** for the
37 retirement of RCNZ ministers. This fund is connected to the minister and not the church, as with the
38 Retirement Assistance Fund of the Canadian Reformed Churches. As with the FRCSA at times this could
39 present a complication for calling ministers between the CanRC and RCNZ.

40 **Overview of observations**

41 We advise Synod to include among its observations:

42 1 GS 2019 (art. 136) decided:

43 4.1 *To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New*
44 *Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;*

1 4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

2 4.2.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua
3 New Guinea;

4 4.2.2 To send a delegation to the RCNZ Synod at least once every three years;

5 4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
6 synod.

7 2. GS-RCNZ 2021 met for two days over video conference in Sept 2021 adjourning till Feb 2022 D.V.

8 3. Rev. A. Witten addressed GS-RCNZ 2021 via video conference.

9 4. Gratitude was expressed to the RCNZ for the good cooperation in mission work in PNG.

10 5. The RCNZ is diligent and consistent in their ecclesiastical relationships. Relationships with true and
11 faithful churches are sought and maintained. Concerns are raised with sister churches when
12 necessary and the status of relationships changed when appropriate.

13 6. The RCNZ demonstrate faithfulness in carrying out the work of mission. The churches cooperate in
14 supporting mission projects internationally and also in planting new churches domestically.

15 7. The RCNZ shows the importance they place on the training young men for gospel ministry by
16 financially supporting theological education, maintaining close contact with Seminaries and
17 students, and requiring a yearlong internship/vicarate prior to ordination to the ministry in the
18 RCNZ.

19 8. The RCNZ maintains a different structure than the CanRC for the material support of emeritus
20 ministers.

21 **Considerations**

22 We advise Synod to include among its considerations:

23 1 As far as can be determined from the Committee Reports and the Acts of GS-RCNZ 2021 the RCNZ
24 remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere
25 to adopted confessions and church order.

26 2 The relationship between the RCNZ and CanRC has been of mutual benefit in the area of missions,
27 interchurch relations.

28 3 The different structures in the RCNZ and CanRC for the material support for emeritus ministers
29 complicates the transfer of ministers between the CanRC and RCNZ, as it also does between the
30 CanRC and FRCSA. As the material support for emeritus ministers is beyond the jurisdiction of a
31 general synod, and thus beyond the ambit of the CER²¹, Synod can do no more than note this
32 concern.

33 **Recommendations**

34 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

35 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
36 follows:

37 1 to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) under
38 the adopted rules;

39 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

²¹ Or "CRCA" should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted.

- 1 2.1 to express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New
2 Guinea;
- 3 2.2 to send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod;
- 4 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

5 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

6 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
7 follows:

- 8 1 to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) under
9 the adopted rules;
- 10 2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 11 2.1 to express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua New
12 Guinea;
 - 13 2.2 to send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod;
 - 14 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 8: SCOTLAND (FCS, FCC)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

FCS: Free Church of Scotland

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 (2017)</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>8,615 members (2017)</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 | https://freechurch.org | | |

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 CRCA 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 intense, since we do not have a lot of natural interaction, it is good to maintain a relationship with them. Although we were unable to fulfil our mandate to attend any of the General Assemblies since GS-CanRC 2019, we continue to feel the bond of the brotherhood in Jesus Christ, with a perusal of their General Assembly documents (Acts and Reports) of the 2019 and 2020 General Assemblies found on the Church web site. While we continue to get the impression of a church which is vibrant and committed to their witness of Christ in a secularized world, we also acknowledge that distances as well as differences in history and church polity make a closer more intense relationship challenging.

The CRCA is **recommending** that a relationship with FCS be maintained and further that it be mandated to continue the relationship according to the adopted rules with the FCS between now and our next synod. Should Synod adopt the CRCA-CCNA recommendations, the committee is recommending that our relationship with the FCS be changed to a Corresponding Relationship (Level 2).

1 **FCC: Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)**

2 **Introduction**

3 The CanRC entered into EF with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) by a decision of GS 1992 (art. 128). In
 4 2000, the FCC broke away from the FCS. GS 2007 discontinued EF with the FCC, GS 2013 reinstated it.

5 **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>35 churches (29 -Scotland, 1-Canada, 5-USA)</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>1250 members (1000-Scotland, 250 Canada/USA)</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Sessions</i> | | <i>Quarterly</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 | www.freechurchcontinuing.org | | |

6 **History of the relationship**

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

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 CRCA to encourage reconciliation with the FCS, as no request was received
 18 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 intense, since we do not have a lot
 21 of natural interaction and we do not share some of their liturgical convictions, it is good to maintain a
 22 relationship with them. Although we were unable to fulfil our mandate to attend any of the General
 23 Assemblies of the FCC since GS-CanRC 2019, we continue to feel the bond of the brotherhood in Jesus Christ,
 24 with a perusal of their General Assembly documents of the 2019 and 2020 General Assemblies. We continue
 25 to get the impression of a church which is vibrant and committed to their witness of Christ in a secularized
 26 world, at the same time we acknowledge that distances as well as the differences in history and church
 27 polity make a closer more intense relationship challenging

28 The CRCA is **recommending** that a relationship with the FCC be maintained and further that it be
 29 mandated to continue the relationship in accordance with the adopted rules with FCC between now and
 30 the next Synod. Should Synod adopt the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, the committee is recommending

1 that our relationship with the FCC be changed to a Corresponding Relationship (Level 2).

2 **B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT**

3 **FCS: Free Church of Scotland**

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

5 **FCS: History of the Relationship**

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

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

9 GS 1992 (art. 128): It is decided to recognize the FCS as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter
10 into EF with them. GS 1995 (art. 101) & GS 1998 (art. 120): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS

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

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

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

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

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

22 GS 2016 (art. 46): It is decided to continue EF with the FCS and, as no request to assist in reconciliation with
23 the FCC was received, this part of the mandate was discontinued. GS 2019 (art. 21) continued EF with a
24 similar mandate.

25 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

26 GS 2019 (art. 21) decided:

27 *4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Church of*
28 *Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules.*

29 *4.2 To Mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA).*

30 *4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of*
31 *the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at*
32 *assemblies of sister-churches)*

33 *4.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.*

34 *4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of next general synod.*

35 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

36 In the spring of 2020 plans were being developed, in conjunction with an invitation from the FCC, to
37 attend their General Assembly scheduled to take place in May 2020. However due to COVID restrictions
38 travel became impossible and plans were cancelled. Due to further travel and gathering restrictions at the
39 time set aside for the General Assembly the FCS held a virtual meeting in May to address only urgent
40 administrative matters with the decision to schedule a continuation of the assembly meeting in October

1 2020. The meeting in October was also conducted virtually, due to continued restrictions. The general
2 assembly of 2021 was held according to the normal schedule in May, but we were still unable to attend due
3 to the continued travel restrictions and COVID concerns. At the time of this report the Acts of GA-FCS 2021
4 were not yet available.

5 In reviewing the material (Acts and Reports) of the GA-FCS 2019-2020, it is clear that the FCS desires to
6 continue to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

7 Beyond a letter informing the FCS of the Synod 2019 decision to continue EF with the FCS no formal
8 communication has taken place nor have invitations to attend (or participate) in the General Assembly been
9 received.

10 There has been no personal contact with the FCS at ICRC or any major assemblies of sister churches due
11 to COVID and related travel restrictions.

12 From our review of the Acts of GA-FCS 2019 we report the following:

13 a. Much attention was given to the report of the Missions Director regarding the proposed Categories
14 of Relationships. As a result, new categories of interchurch relationships were adopted. The FCS
15 newly adopted five levels of Inter Church Relationships are summarized as follow

16 1. **Mutual eligibility** – involves the mutual exchange of ministers in the due process of calling
17 ministers for the respective denomination, over and above the relationships established under
18 EF.

19 2. **Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Fraternal Relations)** – a relationship with churches which are Reformed
20 in their Confessional standards, church order, worship and discipline but where there are such
21 differences so as not to allow union or enable mutual eligibility at this time.

22 3. **Recognition** – a relationship with churches and denominations with an unqualified subscription
23 to the Reformed Faith. The relationship is based on confessional subscription but recognises
24 that there needs to be a time of mutual contact and encouragement with a view to entering
25 into ecclesiastical fellowship in the future. The relationship includes inter-communion, but not
26 excluding suitable enquiries upon requested transfer of membership, as regulated by the Kirk
27 Session.

28 4. **Gospel Partnership** – Relationships with Churches, and Christian organisations who are Reformed
29 and evangelical but with whom disagreement may exist on secondary matters. There would be
30 a particular focus on co-operation in the local context, at home and abroad

31 5. **Ecumenical Contact** – For relationships with Churches, and Christian organisations with which
32 there is common ground regarding the Gospel and with whom regular conference or local
33 contact is generally not possible due to distance and geographical location.

34 b. The FCS Committee for inter church relations is to give regular updates on developments, from all
35 the denominations and organisations with which it is engaged. In the review of the Existing
36 Ecumenical Relations, we note that no mention is made of the Canadian Reformed Churches; the
37 following note was included as part of the Article in the Acts: *“We outline some of our relationships
38 below. We apologise at the outset that not all churches are included. Note that we have automatic
39 sister church relations with all churches in the International Conference of Reformed Churches
40 network.”* We do not know what level of interchurch relationship “sister church relations” would
41 equate to.

42 From our review of the Acts of GA-FCS 2020 we report the following:

43 a. This GA, held during COVID related restrictions, was focussed primarily on administrative matters

44 b. A significant amount of time was dedicated to the approval of a new appointment at the Edinburgh

1 Theological Seminary (ETS) for an MTH Programme Leader/Lecturer in the department of Church
2 History. Much discussion was given to the request of ETS Senate for permission to open the position
3 to either male or female applicants. In the end approval was given to this request.

4 At the time of writing this report to GS 2022, the Acts of GA-FCS 2021 were not available.

5 **Observations**

6 We advise synod to include in its observations:

7 1 GS 2019 (art. 21) decided:

8 *4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Church of*
9 *Scotland (FCS) under the adopted rules.*

10 *4.2 To Mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA).*

11 *4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of*
12 *the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), mutual presence at assemblies*
13 *of sister-churches)*

14 *4.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.*

15 *4.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of next general synod.*

16 2 While there are FCS congregations in Canada, none are in the vicinity of CanRC congregations.

17 3 EF with the FCS is maintained since they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ. With increased
18 globalization it is good to have interactions with them and to learn from their struggles in a similar
19 secularized context.

20 4 The CRCA has reviewed the acts of GA-FCS 2019 and GS-FCS 2020; the acts of GA-FCS 2021 were not
21 available to them prior to their report to GS-CanRC 2022. In 2019 the FCS decided to adopt a new
22 structure for interchurch relations. In 2020 the FCS made allowance for the appointment of either
23 a male or female to the position of MTH Programme Leader/Lecturer in the department of church
24 history.

25 5 Communication with the FCS in the past three years has been minimal.

26 **Considerations**

27 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

28 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we advise Synod to include the following
29 among its considerations:

30 1 As far as can be determined from the acts of GA-FCS 2019 and GS-FCS 2020, the FCS demonstrate
31 that they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life
32 and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.

33 2 It is good and beneficial to maintain a relationship with the FCS for the reason outlined in
34 observation 3 above.

35 3 It is regrettable that communication with the FCS has been minimal in the past three years.

36 4 The distances are great and there has been very limited contact and interaction over the past 30
37 years since 1992 when a relationship was established. It is therefore advisable to transition the
38 relationship with the FCS from EF (level 1) to Corresponding Relation (level 2).

39 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

40 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we advise Synod to include the following
41 among its considerations:

- 1 As far as can be determined from the acts of GA-FCS 2019 and GS-FCS 2020, the FCS demonstrate that they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.
- 2 It is good and beneficial to maintain a relationship with the FCS for the reason outlined in observation 3 above.
- 3 It is regrettable that communication with the FCS has been minimal in the past three years.

Recommendations

Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as follows:

- 1 to enter into Corresponding Relationship (category 2) with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) in accordance with the rules adopted by this synod;
- 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2.1 to inform the FCS of this decision and the implications of this decision for our relationship;
 - 2.2 to be available for dialogue with the FCS delegates at international conferences and assemblies of other sister churches;
 - 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted

Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as follows:

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

FCC: Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

History of the Relationship

See FCS for data prior to 2001.

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 both the FCS and FCC. 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 discontinue EF with the FCC as GS 2004 erred in continuing EF with the FCC; and further, to exhort the FCS and the FCC to continue their efforts toward reconciliation.

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

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

3 GS 2016 (art. 45): It is decided to continue EF with the FCC and, as no request to assist in reconciliation with
4 the FCS was received, this part of the mandate was discontinued. GS 2019 (art. 18) continued EF with a
5 similar mandate.

6 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

7 GS 2019 (art. 18) decided:

8 *4.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland*
9 *(Continuing) (FCC) under the adopted rules;*

10 *4.2 To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

11 *4.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of*
12 *the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at*
13 *assemblies of sister churches;*

14 *4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC*
15 *congregations in North America;*

16 *4.2.3 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;*

17 *4.2.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
18 *synod.*

19 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021**

20 In the spring of 2020 plans were being developed, in response to an invitation from the FCC, to attend
21 the General Assembly scheduled to take place in May 2020. However due to COVID restrictions travel
22 became impossible. FCC held a virtual meeting in May to address only urgent administrative matters and
23 adjourned till October to deal with the balance of the agenda, which was also held virtually via Zoom. The
24 general assembly of 2021 was held according to the normal schedule in May, but we were not able to attend
25 due to the continued travel restrictions and COVID concerns, and the Acts of GA-FCC 2021 were not
26 available at the time of this report.

27 In reviewing the material for the GA-FCC 2019-2020 it is clear that the FCC desires to continue to be a
28 faithful church of Jesus Christ.

29 Beyond a letter informing the FCC of GS-CanRC 2019 decision to continue EF with the FCC, no formal
30 communication has taken place other than the CRCA receiving an initial invitation to attend the GA-FCC
31 2020, which was later withdrawn.

32 There has been no personal contact with FCC at ICRC or any major assemblies of sister churches due to
33 COVID and related travel restrictions.

34 From our review of the Acts of GA-FCC 2019 we report the following:

35 a. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) requested input on how to re-establish
36 relationships with the FCC, since churches in both federations adhere to an exclusive psalmody in
37 worship. The response from FCC was one based on the view that “the FCC is the constitutional
38 continuation of the Free Church of Scotland of the twentieth century and all its legislations” and as
39 such the only breach in the relationship was from the PCEA perspective and as such it was in their
40 power to re-establish the relationship with FCC (Continuing).

41 b. A request was received from OPC seeking advice regarding a proposal to revise their Confessional
42 standards with a view to modernizing the language. FCC responded by “counselling against such a
43 step as a potentially dangerous move, setting a precedent which could easily be used to loosen their

1 church's doctrinal commitments."

- 2 c. The committee for relationships in North America reported the following. "The Committee
3 continues to remember with prayerful interest the discussions taking place between our United
4 States Presbytery and the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC) towards closer relations. The PRC is
5 a small, conservative denomination, which originated from Canadian congregations associated with
6 the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Committee received a letter from Rev. Michael Ives
7 on behalf of the PRC in September 2018, requesting assistance in identifying 'the potential benefits
8 and difficulties of pursuing formal fraternal relations with the FCC'. The Committee authorised the
9 Clerk to correspond with Mr Ives, and answer his questions on its behalf."
- 10 d. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored) (DGK) initiated contact seeking to develop
11 relations. The committee will continue further inquiries into this church's history and outlook. The
12 FCC continues to maintain relations in the Netherlands with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken
13 in Nederland (CGKN)

14 From our review of the Acts of GA-FCC 2020 we report the following:

- 15 a. Only urgent matters were dealt with in the assembly meeting held in May, with the assembly to be
16 continued in October to deal with the remaining items on the agenda, and it was hoped that in the
17 unusual situation, all the somewhat more contentious matters could be delayed, if possible, until
18 the following Assembly.
- 19 b. All Committee appointments were held till the next assembly.
- 20 c. From the Ecumenical Relations Committee Reports
- 21 i. Regarding relations in North America: close informal ties have developed in recent years
22 between the FCC and the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC). In its worship (Authorised
23 version, metrical psalms, women with heads covered) the PRC precisely resembles the Free
24 Church (Continuing), and its constitutional basis would appear to be identical. The FCC planned
25 to send a delegation to PRC general Assembly to discuss closer ties but the trip was cancelled
26 due to COVID. No mention is made in their report of the CanRC.
- 27 ii. Relation in Scotland: Contact continues between the committee and representatives of the
28 Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland (RPCS). A lengthy paper urging progress towards
29 union between the FCC and the RPCS has been distributed and while this proposal is not
30 considered to be immediately workable, it may be of help in structuring future discussions. The
31 General Assembly noted with pleasure the cordial discussions between representatives of the
32 FCC and the RPCS. The committee was instructed to proceed in the discussions with RPCS with
33 caution.

34 At the time of writing this report to GS 2022, the Acts of GA-FCC 2021 were not available.

35 Observations

36 We advise Synod to include in its observations:

37 1 GS 2019 (Article 18) decided:

38 4.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC)*
39 *under 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), and mutual presence at*
43 *assemblies of sister-churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once*
44 *every three years;*

1 4.2.2 To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC
2 congregations in North America.

3 4.2.3 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;

4 4.2.4 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
5 synod.

6 2 EF with the FCC is maintained since they are a faithful church of Jesus Christ. With increased
7 globalization it is good to have interaction with them and to learn from their struggles in a similar
8 secularized context.

9 3 The CRCA has reviewed the acts of GA-FCC 2019 and GS-FCC 2020; the acts of GA-FCC 2021 were
10 not available to them prior to their report to GS-CanRC 2022. In 2019 the FCC reported on contact
11 with various churches; of particular interest is their contact with the Presbyterian Reformed Church
12 (PRC) in Canada and the United Kingdom and the DGK in The Netherlands. In 2020 the FCC again
13 discussed contact with the PRC, as well as contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of
14 Scotland (RPCS).

15 4 Communication with the FCC in the past three years has been minimal.

16 Considerations

17 Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

18 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we advise Synod to include the following
19 among its considerations:

20 1 As far as can be determined from the acts of GA-FCC 2019 and GS-FCC 2020, the FCC demonstrate
21 that they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life
22 and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.

23 2 It is good and beneficial to maintain a relationship with the FCC for the reason outlined in
24 observation 3 above.

25 3 It is regrettable that communication with the FCC has been minimal in the past three years.

26 4 The distances are great and contact and interaction with the FCC has been limited. It is therefore
27 advisable to transition the relationship with the FCC from EF (level 1) to Corresponding Relation
28 (level 2).

29 Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted

30 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we advise Synod to include the following
31 among its considerations:

32 1 As far as can be determined from the acts of GA-FCC 2019 and GS-FCC 2020, the FCC demonstrate
33 that they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life
34 and adhere to adopted confessions and church order.

35 2 It is good and beneficial to maintain EF with the FCC for the reasons outlined in point 3 above.

36 3 It is regrettable that communication with the FCC has been minimal in the past three years.

37 Recommendations

38 Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report

39 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
40 follows:

41 1 to enter into Corresponding Relationship (category 2) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
42 (FCC) in accordance with the rules adopted by this synod;

1 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

2 2.1 to inform the FCC of this decision and the implications of this decision for our relationship;

3 2.2 to be available for dialogue with the FCC delegates at international conferences and assemblies
4 of other sister churches;

5 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of next general synod.

6 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

7 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
8 follows:

9 1 to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) under
10 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
14 sister-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 next general synod.

REPORT 9: SOUTH AFRICA (FRCSA)

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

Introduction

The CanRC began regular correspondence with the Free Reformed Churches in²² 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</i> | | |
| Origin(s) | <i>The FRCSA has a similar migration story as both the CanRC and FRCA. The FRCSA churches are very engaged in mission and relief work, particularly amongst neighboring black / disadvantaged communities.</i> | | |
| Confessional Documents | <i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i> | | |
| Number of churches & church plants | <i>8 instituted churches and a number of preaching points / church plants and an eMission documentation centre. The church federation is quite diverse in culture, with 4 immigrant churches and presently 4 indigenous mission churches.</i> | | |
| Membership numbers | <i>~ 1500</i> | | |
| Assemblies, number, frequency | <i>Consistory/ Council</i> | <i>8</i> | <i>Monthly</i> |
| | <i>Classis</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>Biannually</i> |
| | <i>General Synod</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>Triennially, with an "indaba" (informative meeting of churches and deputies) halfway between synods</i> |
| Training of Theological Students | <i>CRTS, inhouse. See detail in subsection on CRTS.</i> | | |
| Website | http://www.vgk.org.za/ | | |

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 an ongoing warm relationship.

Broadly speaking, as the English language has become more familiar in South Africa 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.

²² Many CanRC Synod Acts have “of South Africa”, but it should be “in South Africa”.

1 **Summary of the report**

2 The relationship with the FRCSA has been a meaningful one. Language barriers are minimal. There is
3 deep appreciation for our interest in and support of their churches. Various topics under discussion on their
4 table are also topics of interest to us. The CRCA is **recommending** that EF with the FRCSA continue along
5 the same trajectory as we have experienced for the past several synods.

6 Readers should be aware that South Africa has experienced significant political and social unrest, as well
7 as internal economic problems, during the past few decades. Current political developments in the country
8 are troubling as corrupt politicians try to maintain control.

9 **B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

11 **Recent history of the Relationship**

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

13 GS 2004 (art. 33):

14 *5.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of*
15 *South Africa under the adopted rules.*

16 *5.2 To mandate the CRCA:*

17 *5.2.1 To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of financial assistance to aid them*
18 *with their extensive mission work and in their labours among the concerned members in*
19 *other church federations;*

20 *5.2.2 To invite the Board of Governors of our Theological College to seek ways and means to*
21 *offer assistance to the FRCSA for theological training, such as extending academic support*
22 *through guest lectures and the like by the faculty of our College in Hamilton, Ontario.*

23 *5.2.3 To request the reasons why the FRCSA have revoked sister church relations with our sister*
24 *churches in Korea and report to the next Synod.*

25 GS 2007 (art. 124):

26 *4.1 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCSA under the adopted rules.*

27 *4.2 To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued and increased prayerful and*
28 *financial assistance, to help them with their extensive mission work as well as the*
29 *compassionate pursuits among the disadvantaged.*

30 *4.3 To mandate the Board of Governors of our Theological College to encourage and aid the FRCSA*
31 *in the quest to redesign their Theological Training by serving them with advice, and by extending*
32 *academic backing through guest lectures, as well as assisting students who may enroll here with*
33 *the necessary language and social support.*

34 GS 2010 (art. 82) and GS 2013 (art. 132): similar to GS 2007

35 GS 2016 (art. 47): continue EF, have a delegation go to the next synod, and encourage the CRTS to support
36 FRCSA in the training of their theological students

37 **Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton)**

38 GS 2019 (art. 108) decided:

39 *4.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches*
40 *of South Africa (FRCSA) under the adopted rules;*

1 4.2 *To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

2 4.2.1 *To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;*

3 4.2.2 *To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued and increased prayerful*
4 *and financial assistance, to help them with their extensive mission work as well as the*
5 *compassionate pursuits among the disadvantaged;*

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

8 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021***

9 Due to COVID restrictions, travel to South Africa has not been possible during this reporting period.
10 Nonetheless, electronic communication was an effective manner by which to maintain contact. During the
11 GS-FRCSA 2021, which took place in Belhar in April, three delegates of the CRCA interacted via Zoom with
12 the brothers in synod: committee members Brs. Otto Bouwman and Henry Schouten, and also CRTS
13 principal Dr. Jason VanVliet.

14 ***Observations***

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

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

- 17 1. We have had a continued relationship with the FRCSA ever since our first synod.
- 18 2. There are numerous informal personal connections and relationships which ensure continued
19 dialogue.
- 20 3. As the FRCSA distances itself from the Dutch, they are turning increasingly to their Australian and
21 Canadian brothers and sisters. Since Canadian experiences related to many of the topics under
22 discussion on their table (including not only the CRTS but also their relationship with other
23 federations in their own country) are considered helpful and relevant to them, they genuinely
24 appreciate our interest and involvement in their discussions.
- 25 4. Communication involving the CRTS continues as there is ongoing exploration of how the CRTS can
26 help the FRCSA adequately prepare some of their young men for the ministry.
- 27 5. As Rev. Ryan Kampen is serving with a “special ministerial task” under the oversight of the
28 Dunnville CanRC, there is a significant connection involving the Reformational Study Centre near
29 Pretoria.

30 We recommend that synod observe:

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

33 **The CRTS**

34 The discussions between CRTS and the FRCSA have been meaningful and helpful in our relationship. We
35 are thankful for the evident good rapport in this regard, and are grateful that the CRTS principal, Dr. J.
36 VanVliet, was willing to be a CanRC delegate to GS-FRCSA 2021.

37 The FRCSA has worked out a Memorandum of Cooperation with CRTS; CRTS provides their students
38 access to its programme through videorecording of the lectures, provision of guest lecturers at limited costs,
39 and funding the living costs of South African students while they study at CRTS. While the FRCSA is deeply
40 appreciative of their connections with the CRTS, GS-FRCSA 2021 also articulated a desire that (some) FRCSA
41 students be able to receive theological training in a South African context. Discussions related to the
42 preferred structure of theological training for young men in the FRCSA will continue.

43 Thankfully, for the last number of years CRTS has been able to provide meaningful support to the FRCSA;

1 South African students have been able to have online access to much of the instruction in Hamilton. More
2 recently, CRTS has been able to admit a South African student to the MDiv program, even though both
3 COVID and student visa complications have prevented him from coming to Hamilton. This student is taught
4 online in a fully synchronous manner.

5 We recommend that synod observe:

- 6 3. Over the past three years the CRTS has meaningfully supported the FRCSA in the training of their
7 theological students.

8 **Contact with Other Churches**

9 The FRCSA has been following church developments in The Netherlands with considerable interest and
10 concern. Though GS-FRCSA 2021 concluded that, by the decisions of Synod Goes (GKv) related to women in
11 office and unification with the Netherlands Reformed Church, the GKv had deviated from God's Word, yet,
12 for the sake of grieved local churches and individuals within the GKv, they would continue a restricted sister-
13 church relationship with the GKv for now. GS-FRCSA 2021 instructed their deputies to actively engage with
14 concerned churches and individuals in the GKv and provide them continued support and encouragement as
15 they walk a difficult path.

16 Within South Africa, there has been substantial contact between the Reformed Churches of South Africa
17 (RCSA) and the FRCSA, and generally these federations find a lot of common ground on most theological,
18 confessional, and church order principles. However, there appears to be considerable differences from
19 church to church within the RCSA, which hampers efforts to increase federative-wide collaboration and
20 mutual understandings. Consequently, GS-FRCSA 2021 encouraged local FRCSA churches to work with
21 individual RCSA congregations where that might be possible and warranted.²³

22 We recommend that synod observe:

- 23 4. The FRCSA show continued evidence of faithfulness in executing interchurch relationships.

24 **Financial Assistance**

25 From the North American side, Canada Revenue Agency regulations continue to limit the ability of
26 churches to provide financial assistance to the FRCSA. Consequently no Canadian church is able to act as a
27 conduit for funds to a foreign federation's mission work.

28 Nonetheless, financial needs in South Africa will continue to be real. For example, financial costs
29 associated with the provision of good theological training are substantial; the FRCSA has sought assistance
30 from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in that regard. Secondly, as the mission work in South Africa
31 continues and new churches are established, more financial support will be needed. A complicating
32 challenge in this regard is that funding from the GKv in support of FRCSA mission activity is being deliberately
33 decreased. Finally, there is also a needy churches fund which expects to experience increasing financial
34 pressures.

35 Considering the substantial financial needs in the FRCSA, the CRA restrictions for Canadian churches, the
36 willingness of the FRCA to contribute, and the decreasing financial assistance from the GKv, the suggestion
37 was shared at GS-FRCSA 2021 that perhaps the FRCSA might request some three-way conversations
38 involving Australian and Canadian churches. In line with that suggestion, the CRTS recently coordinated
39 discussions involving some of our committee members as well as deputies from South Africa and Australia.
40 Considering the substantial anticipated financial needs in South Africa in future years, we are grateful for
41 such collaboration and transparency. At that meeting, the FRCSA was encouraged to continue discussions
42 to articulate more clearly a comprehensive picture of the federation's anticipated financial challenges.

²³ The RCSA, informally often referred to as "Doppers," also have EF with the URCNA and the RCNZ.

1 We recommend that synod observe:

2 5. The financial needs of the FRCSA are and can be expected to continue being substantial.

3 **Overview of recommended observations**

4 We advise that Synod include among its observations:

5 1 GS 2019 (art. 108) decided:

6 4.1 *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches*
7 *of South Africa (FRCSA) under the adopted rules;*

8 4.2 *To mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):*

9 4.2.1 *To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;*

10 4.2.2 *To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued and increased prayerful*
11 *and financial assistance, to help them with their extensive mission work as well as the*
12 *compassionate pursuits among the disadvantaged;*

13 4.2.3 *To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
14 *synod.*

15 2 Our EF with the FRCSA dates back to the first CanRC synods. There continue to be many close ties –
16 ecclesiastical, operational, and personal – between the FRCSA and CanRC.

17 3 Over the past three years the CRTS has meaningfully supported the FRCSA in the training of their
18 theological students.

19 4 The FRCSA show continued evidence of faithfulness in executing interchurch relationships.

20 5 The financial needs of the FRCSA are and can be expected to continue being substantial and merit
21 attention.

22 ***Considerations***

23 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

24 1 As far as can be determined, the FRCSA demonstrate that they remain faithful churches. They abide
25 by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to adopted confessions and church
26 order.

27 2 There is sufficient reason to continue EF with the FRCSA.

28 3 The CRCA has never had a mandate to financially support other church federations. However, in this
29 situation it may be appropriate to mandate the CER²⁴ to assist the FRCSA, should further financial
30 assistance be necessary. In collaboration with others involved, the CER²⁴ could seek out appropriate
31 churches or organizations to responsibly interact with requests for financial assistance.

32 ***Recommendations***

33 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

34 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
35 follows:

36 1 to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA)
37 under the adopted rules;

38 2 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

²⁴ Or “CRCA” should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted.

1 2.1 to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;

2 2.2 to continue involvement in discussions involving financial requests from the FRCSA and provide
3 coordination assistance where possible;

4 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 5 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

5 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

6 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
7 follows:

8 1 to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA)
9 under the adopted rules;

10 2 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):

11 2.1 to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;

12 2.2 to continue involvement in discussions involving financial requests from the FRCSA and provide
13 coordination assistance where possible;

14 2.3 to submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

REPORT 10: INTERNATIONAL (ICRC)

PRELIMINARY NOTE TO THE ICRC REPORT

GS 2019 neglected to take a decision on the ICRC. Hence the CRCA decided to resubmit to GS 2022 the report it submitted to GS 2019, augmented with a supplementary report for the period 2019-2021.

A. SUMMARY / READER FRIENDLY VERSION

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+3²⁵</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 | www.icrconline.com | | |

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 ICCS (International Council of Christian Churches).²⁶ A conference was held

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ WARC and REC are merged to form 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 in 1982 in The Netherlands at which the ICRC was formed. The first formal conference was held in Scotland
2 in 1985.

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

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

8 **Summary of the report**

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

15 **Supplementary Report**

16 **The following was recommended to GS 2019:**

17 The CRCA is **recommending** that CanRC membership in the ICRC be continued and further that it be
18 mandated to make arrangements for a CanRC delegation of four members to attend the next quadrennial
19 conference, to be held, DV, in 2021 (in India or, alternatively, in Australia). This delegation should be
20 representative of the various CanRC interchurch relations committees.

21 **The following is now being recommended to GS 2022:**

22 The CRCA is **recommending** that CanRC membership in the ICRC be continued and further that it be
23 mandated to make arrangements for a CanRC delegation of four members to attend the next quadrennial
24 conference, to be held, DV, in October 2022 in Namibia. The CRCA is also recommending that GS 2022
25 submit a proposal to the ICRC to terminate the membership of the GKv in the ICRC.

26 **B. FULL LENGTH OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

28 **History of our membership**

29 GS 1980 (art. 153):

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

31 *a. That the Committee for Correspondence with Churches Abroad be authorized to send two*
32 *delegates to this Conference;*

33 *b. That a report on this Conference analyzing its basis, aim, powers, structure, members and agenda,*
34 *along with a recommendation on how to proceed further in this matter, be sent to the next*
35 *Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches by the Committee for Correspondence with Churches*
36 *Abroad;*

37 *c. That Synod Smithville 1980 refrain from any official endorsement of this Conference due to its*
38 *preliminary character.*

39 GS 1983 (art. 121):

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

1 Constitution: ...

2 ...

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

5 The following synod decisions all concern (explicitly or by implication) continued membership in the ICRC:
6 GS 1986, art. 175; GS 1989, art. 128; GS 1992, art. 94; GS 1995, art. 101.IV; GS 1998, art. 52; GS 2001,
7 art. 53; GS 2004, art. 52; GS 2007, art. 132; GS 2010, art. 156; GS 2013, art. 167; GS 2013, art. 167.

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

10 The following decisions all concern the CanRC recommending and voting for new members to the ICRC: GS
11 1998, art. 52; GS 2004, art. 52; GS 2007, art. 27.

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

13 GS 2016 (art. 121) decided:

14 4.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches
15 (ICRC);

16 4.2 To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;

17 4.3 To mandate the CRCA to ensure an appropriate CanRC presence at ICRC events;

18 4.4 To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC,
19 scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017, keeping in mind Cons. 3.3.²⁷

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

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

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

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

36 The CanRC delegates participated fully in ICRC activities.

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

38 - Dr. Temple was a member of the advisory committee on the next ICRC. An attempt will be made to

²⁷ 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 have the next ICRC take place in India; as there are a lot of government hoops to go through, an
2 alternative location may be sought.

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

6 Some of the highlights of this ICRC were:

- 7 - sitting together with the FRCNA delegates to reflect on where the CanRC and FRCNA are at
8 - a meeting of the GGRC, GGRI, CanRC, URCNA, GKv, URCNA, and the Timor Mission Board of the
9 Smithville CanRC

10 **Observations**

11 **Recent activity**

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

- 13 2. The ICRC met in Jordan, Ontario from July 12-19, 2017.
14 3. This conference was an excellent opportunity to interact with and have meetings with delegates of
15 a number of churches with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) and also with delegates of
16 churches with which we do not.
17 4. The ICRC adopted revisions to the Constitution.

18 **Benefits of the CanRC being a member of the ICRC**

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

23 We recommend that synod observe:

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

25 **Calling for the CanRC to participate in the ICRC**

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

30 Currently there are 6 positions filled by CanRC (ARC) members:

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

33 Treasurer: Mr. K. Lodder

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

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

37 Publications Committee member: Mr. F. Ezinga

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

39 We recommend that synod observe:

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

1 the ICRC.

2 **CanRC delegations to the ICRC**

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

9 We recommend that synod observe:

- 10 7. The experience of having a delegation to a multi-church conference consisting of members from the
11 various interchurch relations committees has been good.

12 **Overview of Observations as proposed to GS 2019 (see supplementary report for revised)**

13 We advise synod to include among its observations:

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

- 15 4.1 *To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches*
16 *(ICRC);*
17 4.2 *To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;*
18 4.3 *To mandate the CRCA to ensure an appropriate CanRC presence at ICRC events;*
19 4.4 *To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC,*
20 *scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017, keeping in mind Cons. 3.3.*

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

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

- 25 4. The ICRC adopted revisions to the Constitution.

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

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

- 29 7. The experience of having a delegation to a multi-church conference consisting of members from the
30 various interchurch relations committees has been good.

31 **Considerations as proposed to GS 2019 (see supplementary report for revised)**

32 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 33 1. With thankfulness to the Lord, the ICRC continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony and
34 unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches world wide.
35 2. It has proven prudent to have the interchurch relations committees of the CanRC labour
36 cooperatively, especially with respect to multi-church forums.

37 **Recommendations as proposed to GS 2019 (see supplementary report for revised)**

38 We recommend that synod decide:

- 39 1. To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches
40 (ICRC);

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

1. to ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;
2. in consultation with other CanRC interchurch relations committees, to form a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC.

Supplementary Report – ICRC

History of our membership

Nothing to add,

Decisions of GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel)

GS 2019 overlooked taking a decision regarding the ICRC. The CRCA thus considered the mandate it received from GS 2016 to be its mandate and to act according to it or in analogy with it.

Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2019 to fall 2021

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

In 2020 the CRCA was informed that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICRC 2021 would be postponed to 2022. This ICRC is to take place in October 2022 in Windhoek, Namibia, being hosted by the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA aka GKSA).

Observations

Calling for the CanRC to participate in the ICRC

Currently there continue to be 6 positions filled by CanRC (ARC) members as listed in the report to GS 2019, with one difference: Rev. Dr. G.H. Visscher now serves as secretary to the Theological Education Committee.

GKv membership in the ICRC

The Constitution of the ICRC states regarding membership:

IV. MEMBERSHIP

4. Suspension or termination of membership in the Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, whenever the Conference concludes that the Member Church, in its doctrine and/or practice (which includes the ordination of persons to the offices of minister or ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture, cf., Belgic Confession, Article 30), is no longer in agreement with the Basis; removal of suspension shall also be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote. A proposal to suspend, terminate, or remove the suspension of the membership of a Member Church may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church. A suspended Member Church may send Delegates to meetings of the Conference but shall not vote.

Just prior to the 2017 ICRC the CRCA was informed by the OPC of their intention to propose that the GKv be suspended from ICRC membership. The grounds for this proposal were that GS-GKv 2017 had decided to allow women to be ordained to the office of ministers and elders, which put it at odds with the ICRC Constitution IV.4. The CRCA, reflecting on the motion and on decisions of previous CanRC synods, decided it would be proper for the CanRC to support this motion, even to second it. The CanRC delegation at ICRC 2017 did second the motion (*ICRC 2017 Proceedings*, art. 27.4)

The proposal (motion) to suspend the GKv was initiated by the OPC upon a decision of its General Assembly. The proposal was seconded by the CanRC upon a decision of the CRCA. It would have been more

1 proper, though, if the decision to support the OPC motion had been made by a general synod. In July 2017
2 that was not possible: the time frame between the decision of the GKv to allow women to be ordained to
3 all offices and the opening of the ICRC was only 12 days. **It would still be proper for General Synod to**
4 **approve this action of the CRCA explicitly (something the CRCA neglected to ask GS 2019 to do).**

5 The matter of GKv membership in the ICRC will be on the agenda of the tenth ICRC, to convene, the Lord
6 willing, in October 2022. The most recent OPC General Assembly has decided to propose that the
7 membership of the GKv in the ICRC be terminated.²⁸ The ground for this proposal is the fact that GS-GKv
8 2020 has maintained the decision to allow women to serve in the offices of minister and elder, which is at
9 odds with the ICRC Constitution IV.4.

10 The CRCA requests GS 2022 to express the agreement of the CanRC for the OPC motion by means of a
11 synod decision stating something similar, and to inform the ICRC of this decision by means of a letter from
12 Synod. We request this for the reasons mentioned in the overview of observations below (see #7). The
13 mailing address for the ICRC is: ICRC Corresponding Secretary Rev. Dr. J. Visscher, 5734 – 191A Street,
14 Surrey, BC, V3S 7M8, Canada.

15 **Overview of Observations (includes those presented to GS 2019, revised as needed)**

16 We advise synod to include among its observations:

- 17 1 GS 2019 overlooked taking a decision regarding the ICRC. GS 2016 (art. 121) decided:
 - 18 4.1 *To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches*
19 *(ICRC);*
 - 20 4.2 *To approve the revised Constitution of the ICRC, as recommended;*
 - 21 4.3 *To mandate the CRCA to ensure an appropriate CanRC presence at ICRC events;*
 - 22 4.4 *To send a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members to the next ICRC,*
23 *scheduled to meet in southern Ontario in 2017, keeping in mind Cons. 3.3.*
- 24 2 The ICRC met in Jordan, Ontario from July 12-19, 2017. This conference was an excellent opportunity
25 to interact with and have meetings with delegates of several churches with which we have
26 Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) and also with delegates of churches with which we do not. The ICRC
27 adopted revisions to the Constitution already approved by GS 2016 art. 121 rec. 4.2.
- 28 3 The ICRC is a useful vehicle to promote unity and harmony in the church world-wide.
- 29 4 The CanRC is called upon to serve the global community of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches via
30 the ICRC. Six positions within the ICRC currently being filled by CanRC and ARC members.
- 31 5 The experience of having a delegation to a multi-church conference consisting of members from the
32 various interchurch relations committees has been good.
- 33 6 The ICRC has suspended the membership of the GKv upon a motion by the OPC delegation,
34 seconded by the CanRC delegation.
- 35 7 The CRCA is recommending that GS 2022 decide to propose to the ICRC that GKv membership in the
36 ICRC be terminated for the reasons listed below. Such a decision would express agreement with the
37 action decided to by GA-OPC 2021. If GS 2022 so decides, the ICRC should be informed of this via a
38 letter sent by GS 2022 itself.
 - 39 7.1 The CanRC have had very close ties with the GKv and have spent much time and effort in
40 communicating with the GKv about matters of concern and reprimanding them in public and

²⁸ For the text of this decision see GA-OPC 2021 art. 73 (pp. 22-24) : <https://opcminutes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GA-Minutes-2021-without-CFM-Report-or-Ministers-List-10.30.21.pdf>

1 with great intensity for the course they are on. It is appropriate for the CanRC to initiate action
2 that removes the GKv from the ICRC (analogous to Deut. 13:6-11).

3 7.2 Just as the termination of EF with the GKv in 2019 clearly expressed where the CanRC stand
4 with respect to the issues at stake, so will a proposal to terminate the membership of the GKv
5 in the ICRC. This will unequivocally communicate to the ICRC member churches that we are
6 sorely grieved by decisions of the GKv and were in earnest about our past letters and words of
7 admonition (cf. GS 2019 art. 41 cons. 3.4).

8 7.3 GS-GKv 2020 (art. 19 decision 3) maintained the decision of GS-GKv 2017 (art. 18 decisions 5&6)
9 to allow women to serve in the offices of minister and elder. This puts the GKv at odds with the
10 ICRC Constitution IV.4.

11 7.4 The ICRC Constitution (art. IV.4) requires that a proposal to terminate membership in the ICRC
12 be made by a decision of the major assembly of a member church.

13 7.5 Given the seriousness of this matter, it would be proper and appropriate for GS 2022 itself to
14 send a letter to the ICRC. GS 2019 (art. 41 rec. 4.3, art. 104) took it upon itself to send a letter
15 to the GKv, rather than instructing the CRCA to do so.

16 7.6 The 87th (2021) GA of the OPC adopted an action regarding the membership of the GKv in the
17 ICRC to terminate the membership of the GKv in the ICRC. Past synods instructed the CRCA-SRN
18 to work together with sister churches. It is appropriate for the CanRC to express agreement
19 with the proposal of the OPC.

20 **Considerations (includes those presented to GS 2019, revised as needed)**

21 We advise synod to include among its considerations:

- 22 1 The CRCA has acted correctly in considering the mandate of GS 2016 as its mandate after GS 2019.
- 23 2 With thankfulness to the Lord, the ICRC continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony and
24 unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches worldwide.
- 25 3 It has proven prudent to have the interchurch relations committees of the CanRC labour
26 cooperatively, especially with respect to multi-church forums.
- 27 4 The CRCA acted properly and appropriately in seconding the proposal of the OPC to suspend the
28 membership of the GKv in the ICRC. The correctness of this action was confirmed by the decision of
29 GS 2019 (art. 41) to terminate EF with the GKv.
- 30 5 Regarding the membership of the GKv in the ICRC:
 - 31 5.1 The CanRC have had very close ties with the GKv and have spent much time and effort in
32 communicating with the GKv about matters of concern and reprimanding them in public and
33 with great intensity for the course they are on. It is appropriate for the CanRC to initiate action
34 that removes the GKv from the ICRC (analogous to Deut. 13:6-11).
 - 35 5.2 Just as the termination of EF with the GKv in 2019 clearly expressed where the CanRC stand
36 with respect to the issues at stake, so will a proposal to terminate the membership of the GKv
37 in the ICRC. This will unequivocally communicate to the ICRC member churches that we are
38 sorely grieved by decisions of the GKv and were in earnest about our past letters and words of
39 admonition (cf. GS 2019 art. 41 cons. 3.4).
 - 40 5.3 GS-GKv 2020 (art. 19 decision 3) maintained the decision of GS-GKv 2017 (art. 18 decisions 5&6)
41 to allow women to serve in the offices of minister and elder. This puts the GKv at odds with the
42 ICRC Constitution IV.4.
 - 43 5.4 The ICRC Constitution (art. IV.4) requires that a proposal to terminate membership in the ICRC

1 be made by a decision of the major assembly of a member church.

2 5.5 Given the seriousness of this matter, it would be proper and appropriate for GS 2022 itself to
3 send a letter to the ICRC. GS 2019 (art. 41 rec. 4.3, art. 104) took it upon itself to send a letter
4 to the GKv, rather than instructing the CRCA to do so.

5 5.6 The 87th (2021) GA of the OPC adopted an action regarding the membership of the GKv in the
6 ICRC to terminate the membership of the GKv in the ICRC. Past synods instructed the CRCA-SRN
7 to work together with sister churches. It is appropriate for the CanRC to express agreement
8 with the proposal of the OPC.

9 **Recommendations**

10 **Assuming adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA report**

11 Assuming the adoption of the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
12 follows:

- 13 1 to continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches
14 (ICRC);
- 15 2 regarding membership of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) in the ICRC:
 - 16 2.1 to propose to the tenth ICRC, to be held, the Lord willing, in Windhoek, Namibia during October
17 2022, that the membership of the GKv be terminated as its decision on women in office no
18 longer qualifies it for membership in the ICRC;
 - 19 2.2 to express agreement with a similar proposal decided to by the 87th (2021) GA of the OPC;
 - 20 2.3 to convey this proposal by means of a letter from General Synod via the second clerk to the
21 ICRC as soon as possible.
- 22 3 to mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 23 3.1 to ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;
 - 24 3.2 to attend the next ICRC with a delegation of two voting members and two advisory members.

25 **Should the CRCA-CCCNA report not be adopted**

26 Should the CRCA-CCCNA recommendations not be adopted, we recommend that GS 2022 decide as
27 follows:

- 28 1 to continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches
29 (ICRC);
- 30 2 regarding membership of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) in the ICRC:
 - 31 2.1 to propose to the tenth ICRC, to be held, the Lord willing, in Windhoek, Namibia during October
32 2022, that the membership of the GKv be terminated as its decision on women in office no
33 longer qualifies it for membership in the ICRC;
 - 34 2.2 to express agreement with a similar proposal decided to by the 87th (2021) GA of the OPC;
 - 35 2.3 to convey this proposal by means of a letter from General Synod via the second clerk to the
36 ICRC as soon as possible.
- 37 3 to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA):
 - 38 3.1 to ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;
 - 39 3.2 in consultation with other CanRC interchurch relations committees, to form a delegation of two
40 voting members and two advisory members and have this delegation attend the next ICRC.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The use of abbreviations and acronyms follows the principles set out in the introduction to the Acts of GS 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel), being:

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

We note with respect to point 4 that, for churches with a Presbyterian polity, GA refers to General Assembly.

| Language of origin | English equivalent | Spelled out |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ARC | <i>ARC</i> | American Reformed Church (part of the federation of CanRC) |
| ARPC | <i>ARPC</i> | Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church |
| BBK | <i>RCA</i> | <i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation) |
| CanRC | <i>CanRC</i> | Canadian Reformed Church(es) |
| CanRCs | <i>CanRCs</i> | Multiple Canadian Reformed Churches |
| CCCNA | <i>CCCNA</i> | CCCNA Committee for Contact with Churches in North America |
| CCU | <i>CCU</i> | Committee for Church Unity |
| CEIR | <i>CEIR</i> | Committee on Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations (of the OPC) |
| CERCU | <i>CERCU</i> | Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA) |
| CGKN | <i>CRCN</i> | <i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands) |
| CICR | <i>CICR</i> | Committee on Inter-Church Relations (of the ERQ) |
| CNSF | <i>CNSF</i> | Committee for Needy Students’ Fund |
| CO | <i>CO</i> | Church Order |
| CRCA | <i>CRCA</i> | Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC) |
| CRCA-SRN | <i>CRCA-SRN</i> | Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands |
| CRCAus | <i>CRCAus</i> | Christian Reformed Churches of Australia |
| CRCNA | <i>CRCNA</i> | Christian Reformed Church in North America |

| Language of origin | English equivalent | Spelled out |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CRTS | <i>CRTS</i> | Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary |
| DGK | <i>TRC</i> | <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches) |
| EF | <i>EF</i> | Ecclesiastical Fellowship |
| EPC | <i>EPC</i> | Evangelical Presbyterian Church (in Australia) |
| EPCEW | <i>EPCEW</i> | Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales |
| ERQ | <i>RCQ</i> | <i>Église Réformée du Québec</i> (Reformed Church of Quebec) |
| FCC | <i>FCC</i> | Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) |
| FCS | <i>FCS</i> | Free Church of Scotland |
| FERC | <i>FERC</i> | First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore) |
| FRCA | <i>FRCA</i> | Free Reformed Churches of Australia |
| FRCNA | <i>FRCNA</i> | Free Reformed Churches of North America |
| FRCSA | <i>FRCSA</i> | Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA) |
| GA | <i>GA</i> | General Assembly – broadest assembly in Presbyterian polity |
| GGRC | <i>CRCI</i> | See GGRCI |
| GGRCI | <i>CRCI</i> | <i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia) |
| GGRI | <i>RCI</i> | <i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia) |
| GGRI-KalBar | <i>RCI-KalBar</i> | <i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat) |
| GGRI-NTT | <i>RCI-NTT</i> | <i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur) |
| GGRI-Papua | <i>RCI-Papua</i> | <i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Papua) |
| GGRI-T | <i>RCI-T</i> | See GGRI-Timor |
| GGRI-Timor | <i>RCI-Timor</i> | <i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Timor</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Timor) |
| GKH | <i>RCR</i> | <i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – renamed <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches) See DGK |
| GKN | <i>RCN</i> | <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> – Reformed Churches The Netherlands |
| GKNvv | <i>RCNtf</i> | <i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation). Now known as GKN |
| GKSA | <i>RCSA</i> | <i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika</i> (Reformed Churches in South Africa aka “Dopper Kerken”) |
| GKv | <i>RCN</i> | <i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated) |

| Language of origin | English equivalent | Spelled out |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GS | <i>GS</i> | General Synod – broadest assembly in Reformed (Dort) polity |
| HRC | <i>HRC</i> | Heritage Reformed Congregations |
| ICRC | <i>ICRC</i> | International Conference of Reformed Churches |
| IPB | <i>PCB</i> | <i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil) |
| IRB | <i>RCB</i> | <i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil) |
| IRC | <i>IRC</i> | Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA) |
| IRCK | <i>IRCK</i> | Independent Reformed Church in Korea |
| 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 |
| PJCO | <i>PJCO</i> | Proposed Joint Church Order (for a merged CanRC & URCNA) |
| PNG | <i>PNG</i> | Papua New Guinea |
| PRCA | <i>PRCA</i> | Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia |
| RCK | <i>RCK</i> | Reformed Churches in Korea |
| RCNZ | <i>RCNZ</i> | Reformed Churches of New Zealand |
| RCSA | <i>RCSA</i> | Reformed Churches in South Africa (also: GKSA) |
| RCUS | <i>RCUS</i> | Reformed Church in the United States |
| RPCNA | <i>RPCNA</i> | Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America |
| SCBP | <i>SCBP</i> | Standing Committee for the Publication of the <i>Book of Praise</i> |
| TUK | <i>TUK</i> | <i>Theologische Universiteit Kampen</i> (Theological University in Kampen (of the GKv)) |
| URCNA | <i>URCNA</i> | United Reformed Churches in North America |