

**Reports to
General Synod Smithers
2007**

**Committee for the Promotion of
Ecclesiastical Unity**

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R E P O R T
of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
to
GENERAL SYNOD SMITHERS, BC 2007

1. Mandate

The Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity appointed by General Synod Chatham 2004 received the following mandate.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

RE: URCNA

- 5.2. To maintain the rules of Phase Two (Ecclesiastical Fellowship), so far as it concerns the churches in common (see *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Article 73, Considerations 4.5 and 4.6).
- 5.3. To pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the URCNA with a view towards entering the final phase of federative unity.
- 5.4. To work closely with the sub-committees of the CPEU re: church order, theological education and a common songbook, consulting with them concerning the progress made.
- 5.5. To present a single comprehensive report, that has been prepared jointly with the CERCU of the URCNA to the next Synod, including a recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity.
- 5.6. To provide information to the churches at regular intervals.
- 5.7. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the URCNA.
- 5.8. To work closely with the CERCU of the URCNA.
- 5.9. To commence discussion concerning the "Framework Hypothesis" and the support this theory has within the URCNA, and serve the next Synod with information concerning this matter.
- 5.10. To give the CPEU sub-committees the following specific mandates:

Re: Church Order

- 5.11. To express its appreciation for the valued contributions of Dr. J. De Jong to the work of the committee for a common church order.
- 5.12. To thank the Church Order Committee for its work.
- 5.13. To give the Church Order Committee the following mandate:
 - 5.13.1. To continue to work closely with the committee re: Church Order appointed by the URCNA synods;
 - 5.13.2. To continue in the evaluation of the differences between the current church orders of the federations, in the light of the scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of

- church government of the Church Order of Dort;
 - 5.13.3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort;
 - 5.13.4. To formulate a draft proposal of regulations for general synod;
 - 5.13.5. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
 - 5.13.6. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.
- 5.14. To instruct the churches to forward their suggestions and concerns directly to the committee for its consideration.

Re: Theological Education Committee

- 5.15. To thank the Theological Education Committee for its work.
- 5.16. To give the Theological Education Committee the following mandate:
- 5.16.1. To continue working closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synods;
 - 5.16.2. To continue the evaluation of the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and the URCNA;
 - 5.16.3. To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:
 - 5.16.3.1. The new federation should retain at least one federational theological school at which the board of governors, the professors and teaching staff are appointed by synod;
 - 5.16.3.2. Attention should be given as to what to do in the case of an aspiring candidate to the ministry who does not have adequate instruction in significant courses in Reformed Doctrine, in Reformed Church Polity, or in Reformed Church History, as well as Reformed Homiletics.
 - 5.16.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
 - 5.16.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

Re: Common Songbook

- 5.17. To thank the committee for the common songbook for its work.
- 5.18. To give the committee the following mandate:
- 5.18.1. To continue working closely with the committee re: songbook appointed by the URCNA synods;

- 5.18.2. To continue to produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions of the Psalms, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions;
- 5.18.3. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
- 5.18.4. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

RE: OCRC

5.19. To give the committee the following mandate:

- 5.19.1. To represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring the possibility of federative unity;
- 5.19.2. To develop a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the OCRC;
- 5.19.3. To specifically address with the OCRC whether it shares the mutual desire for federative unity with the CanRC;
- 5.19.4. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments.

RE: FRCNA

5.20. To give the committee the following mandate:

- 5.20.1. To continue meeting with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path;
- 5.20.2. To specifically address with the FRCNA whether it shares the mutual goal of federative unity with the CanRC;
- 5.20.3. To encourage that the FRNCA be invited to meetings of Canadian Reformed classes and regional synods and to send copies of the *Acts of Synod* to each other with the purpose of pursuing meaningful interactions and discussions with the churches at the local level.

2. Contacts with the United Reformed Churches in North America

2.1 CPEU General

With the members of the committee living all over the country efforts were made to stay in touch via e-mail. This turned out not to be the most effective way to get things done. On March 6, 2006 a meeting was held in Ancaster, ON which was the first and only face to face meeting of our committee, and not everyone could be

present. The minutes of this meeting are attached as **appendix 1** to this report.

2.1.1 *Re: mandate 5.2*

In general the commitment to implement Phase 2 of the relationship with the URCNA, and the desire to work towards full federative unity remain strong in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Among the URCs – in particular the ones located in Canada – there is definitely also much willingness to cooperate with local CanRCs and to implement Phase 2 of the relationship. There are many local contacts throughout the country.

We may mention with thankfulness to the Lord that regular pulpit exchanges take place and that vacant churches invite ministers from both federations as guest preachers. Also the opportunity to call each other's ministers has been pursued. The churches have also come to accept each other's attestations, and welcome each other's members at the Lord's Supper table. In many places combined council and consistory meetings were held, local committees continue to meet, and office bearers meet each other at conferences.

We have the impression that in the meantime there has been a move from combined meetings to discuss our differences, to practical cooperation in certain areas. It is encouraging to see this growing cooperation in Evangelism, Urban Mission (Streetlight Ministries in Hamilton), Young People Conferences, and Campfire! Summer Bible Camp.

However, despite the fact that through these activities members and office bearers get to know each other and grow in mutual understanding and respect, some members and churches are still hesitant when it comes to a possible merger of the two federations in the near future. This difficulty is especially noticeable among URCNA in the United States. This is understandable since there is obviously very little 'natural' contact when the nearest CanRC is more than a thousand miles away.

The question is what can and should be done to improve these contacts. The significance of this question was also stressed by the experiences of the Joint Church Order Committee when this committee met in California, and was able to present the CanRC to URC members in this area. What are the options? Is "twinning" between two

congregations that are far apart a solution? The CanRC in Langley (BC) has initiated such a relationship with the URC in Escondido (Cal). Should the CPEU be instructed to play a more proactive role in stimulating and intensifying these local contacts?

Despite possible roadblocks on the way and despite the fact that we may need many more years than we initially anticipated, your committee remains positive about the developments. We are confident that under God's blessing the intensifying cooperation in the areas of outreach, young people and young adults conferences and retreats, etc. will eventually bear the fruit that in the future mutual misconceptions and distrust of each other will disappear.

2.1.2 *Re: mandate 5.3*

Since Synod Chatham 2004 there has been one combined meeting of the CPEU and the CERCU (the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity) of the URCNA. The meeting was held in Hamilton, ON on March 7, 2006. The minutes of this meeting are attached as **appendix 2** to this report. During our discussion we experienced an excellent spirit of unity and brotherly appreciation. We committed to meet together at least every two years.

It became clear in our discussion that, although the commitment to work towards the final phase of federative unity is present, the brothers of the URCNA see this as a long process in which they want to move forward cautiously. They sense that among office bearers and church members in the URCNA there are many questions about the CanRC and that some feel somewhat nervous about possible consequences of a merger. They expect a critical evaluation on the local level of the proposal for a common church order.

That this is a realistic assessment came out also in the lists of questions that were put before us, coming from a Classis and from a local church in the URCNA. The difficulty is that these are theological questions about the position of the CanRC, or the stand of CanR ministers on matters like federal vision, justification, common grace, covenant of works, internal and external covenant, etc. The CPEU does not want to take these concerns lightly, but at the same time we cannot make theological statements or declarations on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches or ministers.

At our March meeting we discussed whether we ought to respond to these questions. Certainly the URC brothers encouraged us to do so and even promised a draft of a letter that Rev. Bouwers had started. In 2.1.8 we mention that we are anticipating a response from them on the “framework Hypothesis” matter, but we did not follow up on that.

In general we need to emphasize that we are bound only by the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity as basis for our ecclesiastical unity as Reformed churches. Discussing theological topics can be interesting and helpful, but it must be clear that we are not bound by specific theological views, whether defended and promoted by a small minority or a large majority. This leads to the important question where the boundaries are of the freedom to accept and discuss theological differences within the parameters of the Reformed confessions.

2.1.3 *Re: mandate 5.4*

Synod Chatham 2004 continued the mandates for the three sub-committees for, respectively, a Common Church Order, a Common Songbook, and Theological Education. Most of the work for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity was done by these committees. Each committee was busy with work in progress and had a clear mandate. Therefore not much consultation was needed with the CPEU. Just before our combined meeting with the CERCUC in March 2006 we were informed about the progress made via short interim reports.

The final reports of all three subcommittees are presented here as the major part of this CPEU report.

The sub-committee on the Church Order has made tremendous progress, and presents in this report a complete draft of a Church Order for a new federation of the URCNA and the CanRC. With much gratitude we may mention that the joint committees have worked effectively and in good harmony. Two brothers have presented a minority report on one issue (art.35).

Good progress can also be noted in the report from the sub-committee that is to develop a common Songbook. In this case it is clear that much work still needs to be done, so that the mandate should be continued. Although – it may be important to note that a decision on the minority report re: art. 35 of the proposed Church Order, could have an impact on the mandate for this sub-committee.

The report from the sub-committee on Theological Education shows that in this area the URCNA and the CanRC committees have come to a stalemate. The urgent issue for both general synods will be to judge the arguments on both sides of the divide. We call this 'urgent', for – as the sub-committee report indicates – this issue could have serious implications for future developments on the way towards federative unity.

2.1.4 *Re: mandate 5.5*

In our combined CERCU – CPEU meeting in March 2006 we discussed with the United Reformed brothers this mandate from Synod Chatham, *to present a report prepared jointly with the CERCU of the URCNA.....including a recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity*. This proved to be difficult, since the CERCU does not have a similar instruction from the URC Synod.

It was also clear to both committees that it would be impossible to come up with a reasonable recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity. We know that this was the desire expressed by Synod Chatham, but as CPEU and CERCU we are both convinced that at this point in time it would not be helpful to put this kind of pressure on the unity process. One of the clear reasons is that right now a solution for the Theological Education issue seems farther away than ever. And such a definite timeframe would make those churches and members that are cautious already, even more reluctant.

In light of the above the CERCU did not see the need to participate in preparing and presenting a joint report. On top of that, through the CERCU the URCNA are engaged in similar discussions with other churches at the same time.

As a result of these considerations Synod will not find a recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity in our report. This part of the mandate has not been completed. Although some may feel that we lose some of the momentum that we felt in the first years after Synod Neerlandia 2001, it has become clear that the churches need more time than we perhaps initially anticipated. Much will also depend on how the proposed common Church Order will be received, dealt with, and perhaps amended via proposals from both federations.

2.1.5 Re: mandate 5.6

Providing information to the churches was done mainly through Press Releases of the various meetings, published in *Clarion* and *Christian Renewal*. A Press Release was published of the combined CERCU & CPEU meeting, held in Hamilton on March 7, 2006.

The combined committees on the Church Order presented extensive Press Releases to inform the membership of the churches on the progress of their work, and so did the combined committee on the Songbook. Two brothers of this last committee, one from the CanRC and one from the URCNA have also published a series of articles for the edification of the members in both federations. They have written about congregational singing and in particular about the workings of the committee and the criteria for selecting music and songs.

2.1.6 Re: mandate 5.7

Some correspondence took place with churches that had asked for advice in particular matters of local contacts between the URCNA and the CanRC. At our committee meeting in March 2006 we discussed the question whether it would be possible or beneficial to assume a more proactive role as CPEU in stimulating and promoting cooperation between URCs and CanRCs on the local level, without waiting for requests for advice. And if so – what would be the best way to go about it. The matter was not pursued. Although it would reflect the name of the committee, it would go beyond the committee's mandate.

2.1.7 Re: mandate 5.8

Beyond the aspects mentioned in other parts of this report (see in particular under 2.1.2. and 2.1.4.) it is not quite clear what more can be done at this point in time in working closely with the CERCU of the URCNA. We have agreed to meet as a minimum every two years (see the minutes of the combined meeting on March 7, 2006). For us that is indeed a bare minimum, but it is important to remind ourselves that the brothers of the CERCU have more on their mind than the relationship with the CanRC. As CanRC we have several committees for contacts with other churches (the CCCA and the CRCA), whereas the CERCU is responsible for maintaining all the ecumenical contacts of the URCNA.

2.1.8 Re: mandate 5.9

The matter of the “Framework Hypothesis” and the level of support for this view on Genesis 1 within the URCNA, and in

particular among pastors, was brought up in our combined meeting on March 7, 2006. The brothers of the CERCU reminded us of a decision of Synod Escondido 2001 regarding creation and evolution, and expressed as their conviction that almost all URC churches hold to a literal 6 days of creation. They agreed that as committee they would write a response to this query, seeking the input in particular of the representative from Classis SWUS. So far no official and written response has been received. We recommend that this part of the mandate should be renewed.

2.2 Sub-committee Report on a common Church Order

Report of the Church Order Committee to the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity August 2006

A. Mandate

The committee appointed by Synod Chatham 2004 received the following mandate (Acts of General Synod Chatham, 2004, Article 76, p.67):

- 5.3.1. *To continue to work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;*
- 5.3.2. *To continue in the evaluation of the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort;*
- 5.3.3. *To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort;*
- 5.3.4. *To formulate a draft proposal of regulations for General Synod;*
- 5.3.5. *To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;*
- 5.3.6. *To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.*

B. The Committee and its activities

The committee is composed of Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, br. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg (convener), and Dr. Art Witten. Since Synod Chatham 2004 the committee met nine times by itself and seven times with the committee re: church order of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA).

The URCNA committee is composed of Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, and br. Harry VanGurp.

The committee enjoyed an excellent working relationship both internally as well as with the brothers of the URCNA.

Mandate 5.3.1

The committee continued to work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the Synod Escondido 2001 (and continued by Synod Calgary 2005) of the URCNA. Since Synod Chatham, the combined committees met four times in Dutton (Grand Rapids), Michigan, twice in Burlington, Ontario, and once in Chino, California. Each time these were three day meetings. Most often there was full attendance: only at three meetings was one of the committee members absent due to sickness or pastoral responsibilities. At these meetings Dr. Kloosterman functioned as chairman and br. Nordeman prepared the Press Releases. Initially Rev. Sikkema composed the minutes and Rev. VanWoudenberg kept the

proposed church order up to date. Later, due to the heavy work load of the secretary, Rev. VanWoudenberg composed the minutes and Rev. Pols kept the proposed church order up to date. A single set of minutes was kept and common press releases published. Each meeting could be concluded with thanks and praise to our heavenly Father for the brotherly manner in which the combined committee could proceed with its work.

Mandate 5.3.2

Building on the work done prior to Synod Chatham, and together with both the ongoing discussions with the URCNA church order committee and input received from the churches, the committee continued to evaluate the differences between the current church orders in the light of the scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort.

Since Synod Chatham, 2004, the committee received input from four churches and two individuals. This input proved valuable in fulfilling the mandate.

Mandate 5.3.3

Using the Church Order of Dort as a starting point, the combined committee continued to spend much time deliberating and drafting a common church order, striving to maintain the principles, structure, and essential provisions of Dort. At the beginning of each meeting the material provisionally adopted at previous meetings was carefully reviewed and refined where necessary.

With thankfulness to the Lord we may report that we could come to a proposed church order. This proposal is attached to this report.

Mandate 5.3.4

Prior to Synod Chatham, the committees had agreed to seek the mandate from their respective synods to formulate a draft proposal of regulations for General Synod. While Synod Chatham of the Canadian Reformed Churches did so, Synod Calgary of the United Reformed Churches did something slightly different. Since the United Reformed Churches currently do not have any synodical regulations, and since the need was felt to have such regulations even apart from a merger with the Canadian Reformed Churches, Synod Calgary of the United Reformed Churches gave the task of proposing regulations to a separate committee (although the members of this committee are the same as those on the church order committee). The URCNA Church Order committee will now propose to the next URCNA synod to adopt the work of this committee regarding regulations for General Synod, and to refer that work to the Church Order committee for joint collaboration with the CanRC church order committee. Hence the CanRC Church Order committee hopes that it can yet fulfill this part of its mandate if the upcoming URCNA Synod decides to act according to the proposal it will receive.

Mandate 5.3.5

The CPEU and the churches were kept informed and updated on the progress of the Committee via the press releases that were published in Clarion, Reformed Polemics, and Christian Renewal. These press releases are attached to this report.

After our public meeting in Chino, California, the CanRC church order committee also sent a letter to the CPEU (identical to the letter that the URCNA church order committee sent to the CERCU of the URCNA) informing the CPEU of our experiences in Chino which highlighted the value of direct communication with the churches in the whole unity process.

Mandate 5.3.6

Since Synod Chatham of the CanRC and Synod Calgary of the URCNA, the joint committee had as its goal the production of a joint church order before the next general synods. The committee envisioned that in this way a proposal could be put before the churches in 2007, and the churches could be given adequate time to examine this proposal before final adoption of a refined proposal. While time was of the essence, thankfully this goal of having a proposal ready for the general synods has been achieved.

C. Conclusion

It is with much thankfulness to the Lord that the committee fulfilled its mandate to this point. Much appreciation is felt for the spirit and the brotherly harmony wherein our work has progressed and the growing understanding of each other. It is our prayer that our work may contribute to a greater awareness and understanding between the two federations as we move forward to Phase 3.

With a sense of humble gratitude to the Lord for blessing our efforts we present to General Synod Smithers:

1. A Proposed Church Order (PCO) as of Aug 2006.
Besides actual church order articles, this PCO includes an introduction (biblical basis and historical background), foundational principles, and examination appendices.
2. A four column document for comparing the PCO to the Church Order of Dort (English translations 1914/1920), the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches (1986), and the Church Order of the United Reformed Churches (2004).

We are very grateful that though it often took much effort from both sides we were able to come to a consensus with the URCNA committee on the entire Church Order. Complete consensus eluded us only with one issue in article 35 of the PCO: while we could reach consensus on this matter with the majority of the URCNA committee, a minority of the URCNA committee felt

compelled to submit a minority report on this one issue to the URCNA Synod. Hence there is a minority report attached regarding this one item.

In our last joint meeting with the URCNA brothers the matter of protocol was discussed. Attached is a protocol proposal that the URCNA brothers will submit to their 2007 General Synod. This proposal, though drafted particularly with the URCNA context in mind, was drafted with our input. Our recommendations regarding protocol found below have been crafted keeping this proposal in mind.

D. Recommendations

The church order committee recommends that Synod Smithers 2007:

1. Receives the PCO and the 4 column comparison document;
2. Gives the PCO and the 4 column comparison document to the churches for discussion and evaluation, with a view to final adoption by Synod 2010;
3. Re-appoints, for the sake of continuity, the current committee members;
4. Mandates the committee to work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;
5. Mandates the committee to receive, collate, and evaluate all official communications regarding the PCO, and on that basis to recommend a revised PCO to Synod 2010;
6. Requests that all official communications regarding the PCO proceed only from consistories to the committee;
7. Requests that all communications from individual church members regarding the PCO be processed through their consistories;
8. Requests that all communications regarding the PCO be received by the committee by no later than March 1, 2009;
9. Mandates the committee to compile a list of all communications received together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication;
10. Authorizes the committee, in conjunction with the URCNA synod appointed Church Order Committee, to hold no more than eight (8) regional information and review conferences throughout the federations.
11. Mandates the committee to formulate a draft proposal of regulations for General Synod;
12. Mandates the committee to keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
13. Mandates the committee to provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod 2010 in a timely fashion.

The church order committee recommends that the CPEU simply pass on our report as part of the joint report with CERCUC that it is mandated to draft for Synod Smithers (Acts of Synod Chatham, Article 98, 5.5).

Correspondence for the Committee can be sent to: CPEU Church Order Committee, c/o Rev. J. VanWoudenberg 8037 Hwy 7 East R.R.# 2 Guelph, ON, N1H 6H8 email:

In order to perform the task given to us by Synod Chatham 2004 the Committee incurred a total of \$11,779.85 in expenses.

Respectfully submitted,
G. Nederveen
G.J. Nordeman
J. VanWoudenberg (convener)
A. Witten

The Proposed Church Order (August 2006)

Introduction

Biblical and Confessional Basis

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. As a federation of churches we declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are confessional churches, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we fully agree with these Reformed Confessions.

Both the Word of God and these Reformed Confessions demand that in our ecclesiastical structure and rule we openly acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the church. Christ exercises His headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and order in the churches. The churches of our federation, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order. Congregations manifest this unity when their delegates meet together in the broader assemblies.

Historical Background

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, including those in Wezel, the Netherlands (1568), and in Emden, Germany (1571). For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

The Church Order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and The Hague (1586), before being adopted by the well-known Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Our Church Order follows the principles and structure of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

Foundational Principles

The following list of foundational principles, though not exhaustive, provides a clear biblical basis for and source of our Church Order.

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27

2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18
3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are determined not by human preference, but by biblical teaching.
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18; II Timothy 3:16-17
4. The catholic or universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; I Timothy 3:15; II John 9
5. In its subjection to its heavenly Head, the universal church is governed by Christ from heaven by means of His Word and Spirit with the keys of the kingdom, which He has given to the local church for that purpose. Therefore, no church may lord it over another church.
Matthew 16:19; 23:8; John 20:22-23; Acts 14:23; 20:28-32
6. The offices of minister, elder, and deacon are local in authority and function. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national, or regional offices to His church by which the churches are to be governed. Therefore, no office-bearer may lord it over another office-bearer.
Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5
7. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, churches should seek contact with other faithful, confessionally Reformed churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.
I Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Although churches exist in certain circumstances without formal federative relationships, the well-being of the church requires that such relationships be entered wherever possible. Entering into or remaining in such relationships should be voluntary; there is however a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation.
Acts 11:22, 27-30; 15:22-35; Romans 15:25-27; I Corinthians 16:1-3; Colossians 4:16; I Thessalonians 4:9-10; Revelation 1:11, 20
10. Member churches meet together in broader assemblies to manifest ecclesiastical unity, to guard against human imperfections, and to benefit from the wisdom of many counselors. The decisions of such assemblies

are settled and binding among the churches unless they are contrary to Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the adopted Church Order.

Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; I Corinthians 13:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17

11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth and by administering the sacraments in the congregation.
Matthew 26:26-30; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:38-39;
I Corinthians 11:17-34; II Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for and governs His church through the office-bearers, namely, ministers, elders, and deacons, whom He chooses through the congregation.
Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 14:23; I Timothy 3:1, 8; 5:17
13. The Scriptures require that ministers, elders, and deacons be properly qualified for the suitable discharge of their respective offices.
I Timothy 3:2-9; 4:16; II Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5
14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the consistory, is called to worship Him in reverence and awe according to the scriptural principles governing worship.
Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1-2, 6; Psalm 100:4;
John 4:24; Hebrews 12:28-29; I Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through its teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.
Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 4:6;
II Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. The church's evangelistic and missionary calling consists of preaching and teaching the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing new churches or expanding existing churches. This calling is fulfilled by ministers of the Word ordained to be missionaries, and by equipping the congregation to be the light of the world.
Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-13;
Philippians 2:14-16; I Peter 2:9-12; I Peter 3:15-16
17. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for His people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby to bring honor and glory to God's name.
I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
18. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every church member, but when official discipline by the church, to whom the

keys of the kingdom are entrusted, becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the consistory of the church.

Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 5:13;
I Peter 5:1-3

Article 1. The Purpose and Divisions of the Church Order

For maintaining proper ecclesiastical order (I Corinthians 14:40), the Church Order must regulate the offices; the assemblies; the supervision of doctrine, worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and the discipline. Therefore we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:

- I. Offices (Articles 2-19)
- II. Assemblies (Articles 20-32)
- III. Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies (Articles 33-46)
- IV. Discipline (Articles 47-58)

I. OFFICES

Article 2. The Three Offices

Christ has instituted three distinct offices in the church: the minister of the Word, the elder, and the deacon. No one shall exercise an office without having been lawfully called to it with the cooperation of the congregation.

Article 3. The Duties of the Minister

The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, watching over his fellow office-bearer, and finally, together with the elders shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.

Article 4. Preparation for the Ministry

- a. Theological Education: Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church shall see to it that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.
- b. Licensure: A man aspiring to the ministry shall seek licensure to exhort in the churches. Such licensure shall be granted only after the student has completed at least one year of theological education, and has sustained a licensure examination conducted by his classis as required in Appendix 1. Classis shall give license only to one who is preparing for the ministry, and only for the duration of his theological training. All the work of the licentiate shall be conducted under consistorial supervision.
- c. Candidacy: At the conclusion of his training a student shall ask his

consistory to request classis to conduct a candidacy examination, as required in Appendix 2. Upon sustaining this examination, the classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall declare him eligible for call among the churches of the federation.

- d. Exceptional Circumstances: Only under circumstances of general tribulation or severe persecution which make the completion of regular theological education impossible, may a consistory request that an exceptionally gifted brother be presented to classis for a suitable candidacy examination (see Appendix 2). In such a situation, his consistory and the classis should also have assurance of his godliness, humility, modesty, understanding, wisdom, discretion, and public speaking ability.

Article 5. Calling a Candidate

The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of:

First, the election by the council of a man who has been declared a candidate according to the regulations prescribed in Appendix 2, after having prayed and having received the advice of the congregation and of the counselor appointed by classis.

Second, the examination necessary for ordination, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the classis to which the calling church belongs, in accordance with the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix 3.

Third, the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with proper instructions, admonitions, prayers and subscription to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, followed by the laying on of hands by the ministers who are present and by the elders of the congregation, with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

Article 6. Calling an Ordained Minister Within the Federation

A minister already ordained within the federation who is called to another congregation shall be called in the lawful manner by the council. The classis shall ensure the good order of the calling process, including the issuance of written ecclesiastical testimonies of his doctrine and life, of his ministerial service, and of his honorable release from the church and classis he last served.

Upon receipt of these documents, the church shall install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form and he shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.

The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

Article 7. An Ordained Minister without a Congregation Entering the Federation

A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after an

adequate period of consistorial supervision and only after sustaining an examination conducted to the satisfaction of classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix 4, whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.

Article 8. Bound to a Particular Church

No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of the congregation or as one charged with some other ministerial task. All ministers shall remain subject to the Church Order.

Article 9. Bound for Life

A minister of the Word once lawfully called is bound to the service of the churches for life and shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation. He may leave this vocation only for weighty reasons, upon the approval of his council and with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod.

Article 10. Support and Emeritation of Ministers

Each church shall provide honorably for the minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children.

A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or other personal disabilities, shall retain the honor and title of Minister of the Word, and shall retain his official bond with the church he last served, which shall provide honorably for his support.

The emeritation of a minister shall take place with the approval of the council, and with the concurring advice of classis and of the deputies of regional synod.

Article 11. Temporary Release

If because of illness or other substantial reasons, a minister requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he shall receive the same only with the approval of the council. If the duration of the release is greater than four months, the council shall obtain the concurring advice of classis. He shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation.

Article 12. Exceptional Release of a Minister

When for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, a council may release its minister from his call only under all of the following conditions:

- a. This release shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;
- b. This release shall occur only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;

- c. This release shall occur only with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod;
- d. This release shall require the approval by classis of the council's provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years.

The council from whose service he has been released shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office.

Article 13. Nomination and Election of Elders and Deacons

The council shall provide adequate preparation of elders and deacons by means of instruction and training regarding the duties of each office. The procedure for the lawful calling of elders and deacons shall consist of the following:

First, the council shall nominate only male communicant members who meet the biblical requirements for office, and who indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription. Prior to nominating, the council may invite the congregation to direct attention to suitable men. Ordinarily, the number of nominees shall be twice the number of vacancies.

Second, after public prayer, elders and deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the regulations adopted for that purpose.

Third, the council shall appoint the elders and deacons, and shall announce their names to the congregation two weeks prior to entering office, in order that the congregation may have opportunity to bring lawful objections to the attention of the consistory.

Article 14. The Term and Ordination of Elders and Deacons

Before entering upon their work, elders and deacons, having been elected in accordance with local regulations to a term specified by the consistory, and having been appointed by the council, shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, and shall be ordained with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

Article 15. Subscription to the Confessions

Each office-bearer shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. Anyone refusing to subscribe shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone in office refusing to subscribe shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and if he persists in his refusal, shall be deposed from office.

Article 16. Parity Among Office-bearers

Among the office-bearers, parity shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their respective offices and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.

Article 17. The Duties of Elders

The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of shepherding and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in

order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall ensure that their fellow-elders, the minister(s), and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, persist in praying for the congregation, assist in catechizing the youth in the congregation, and promote confessionally Reformed schooling at all levels. Moreover, they shall visit the members of the congregation according to need, engage in family visiting, preserve and promote concord and unity among the members and between the congregation and its office-bearers, exercise discipline in the congregation, promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order.

Article 18. Protecting Doctrinal Purity

To protect the congregation from false teachings and errors which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and admonition, in the ministry of the Word, in Christian teaching, and in family visiting.

Article 19. The Duties of Deacons

The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of performing and supervising works of Christian mercy in the congregation. The deacons shall do this by acquainting themselves with congregational needs, exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy, gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, distributing these offerings according to need, continuing in prayer, and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered.

The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a monthly account of their work to the consistory. The deacons may invite the minister to visit their meetings in order to acquaint him with their work and request his advice.

Article 20. The Civil Authorities

As the task of civil government includes protecting the freedom of the Christian church, so it is the responsibility of the church to respect the government as instituted by God. In order that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, and that the witness of the gospel may be protected and advanced, the office-bearers must lead the congregation by their admonition and example. They shall ensure that prayers for the government are regularly offered and that members render due honor and lawful obedience to the civil authorities, thereby living as good citizens under Christ and promoting the true welfare of the land in which they live.

II. ASSEMBLIES

Article 21. Ecclesiastical Assemblies

- a. Identification: Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings.
- b. Convening: Regulations for broader assemblies shall delineate the function of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the convening churches.
- c. Delegation: Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body as required in Appendix X, thereby receiving authorization to deliberate and decide upon all the matters properly placed before them. These assemblies shall require each delegate to indicate his agreement with the Form of Subscription. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church is particularly involved.
- d. Jurisdiction: In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All such matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod.
- e. Decisions: All decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be received with respect and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.
- f. Proceedings: The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer. In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the business to be transacted, to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed, and to ensure that every member observes proper order and decorum.
- g. Records: In every assembly a clerk shall keep and distribute an accurate record of the proceedings. In all broader assemblies these functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.
- h. Censure: At the close of broader assemblies, admonition shall be given to those who demonstrated unworthy behavior, either during the meeting or regarding a decision of a narrower assembly.
- i. Archives: Each ecclesiastical assembly shall ensure the proper preservation of its archives.

- j. Press Release: Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.

Article 22. The Consistory

In each church there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The consistory is the only assembly which exercises direct authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ. The term council designates not an assembly of the church, but a meeting of the elders and minister(s) with the deacons under the authority of the consistory, at which matters are dealt with as stipulated by the Church Order or as assigned by the consistory.

Article 23. Small Number of Office-Bearers

Where the number of elders is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the deacons. This shall invariably be done where the number of elders is fewer than three. Where the number of deacons is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the elders. This shall invariably be done where the number of deacons is fewer than three.

Article 24. Organizing a New Congregation

A congregation shall be organized under its first consistory only under the supervision of the neighboring consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.

Article 25. The Classis

- a. Composition: A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose consistories shall delegate two members, ordinarily a minister and an elder, with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis. Ordinarily a classis shall consist of between eight and twelve churches.
- b. Frequency: A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.
- c. Convening: The churches shall take turns convening classis and providing a chairman from their delegation. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession. Each classis shall appoint a convening church and determine the time and place of the next classis.
- d. Mutual Oversight: The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistory, council, and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments are faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and confessionally Reformed schooling is wholeheartedly promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church,

and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.

- e. Delegation to Regional and General Synod: The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod. If the regional synod consists of three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. If the regional synod consists of four or more classes, each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders. The second last classis before general synod shall choose delegates to that synod. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders.
- f. Classis Contracta: A minimum of three churches may convene as a *classis contracta* exclusively to approbate a call, or to release a minister who has accepted a call, and to appoint a counselor for the ministerial vacancy.

Article 26. Church Visitors

Every two years classis shall appoint a number of its more experienced and competent ministers or elders to visit all the churches of the classis once during that period. At each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister.

These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers perform their duties in harmony with the Word of God, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the Church Order, and properly promote, by word and deed, the edification of the whole congregation. Moreover, they shall fraternally encourage the office-bearers to fulfill their offices faithfully, that by their advice and assistance the visitors may help direct all things unto the peace, edification, and profit of the churches. Upon the request of a consistory, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

The church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the next classis.

Article 27. Counselors

The consistory of a church with a ministerial vacancy shall request classis to appoint the minister it specifies to serve as counselor. His task is to help the consistory follow the provisions of the Church Order, particularly in the matter of calling a minister. Along with the council members, he also shall sign the letter of call.

Article 28. The Regional Synod

A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall ordinarily meet once per year. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis.

The regional synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes, with lawful appeals of classical decisions, and with the reports of its deputies. It shall also determine the time and place for the next regional synod, and designate a convening church.

The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

Article 29. The Deputies of Regional Synod

Each regional synod shall appoint two deputies and an alternate for each classis, who shall assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order. Upon the request of a classis, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

In cases of disagreement between the deputies, the decision of classis shall stand. In cases where the deputies cannot give concurring advice, the classis may request the deputies to report the matter to regional synod for decision.

The regional deputies shall keep a proper record of their actions. They shall submit a written report of their actions to the regional synod and, if so required, they shall further explain those actions. The deputies shall serve until they are discharged from their duties by their regional synod.

Article 30. The General Synod

A general synod, consisting of delegates chosen by the classes, shall meet at least once every three years. If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.

The general synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes and the regional synods, with lawful appeals, and with reports which were mandated by the previous synod. It shall also determine the time and place for the next general synod, and designate a convening church.

The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk(s) shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

Article 31. Ecumenical Relations

The churches of the federation are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and faithfully demonstrate allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church shall give account to classis of its ecumenical activities with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship. A church must receive the approbation of classis before such ecumenical relations progress to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord's Supper.

The churches as a federation may enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with other federations by a synodical decision of two-thirds majority. Ecclesiastical fellowship with churches abroad that faithfully uphold the Reformed Confessions shall be regulated and maintained by general synod. Churches abroad shall not be rejected on the basis of minor differences of ecclesiastical polity or practice.

Article 32. Admitting a Church

A church shall be admitted into the federation by the nearest classis with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, only upon recommendation from a consistory, and provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree with the Church Order. If one of these office-bearers is a minister, he shall be examined according to Appendix 4.

III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES**Article 33. The Regular Worship Services**

The consistory shall call the congregation together for public worship twice each Lord's Day.

The consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word, namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.

At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence, and may give such attention also to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

Article 34. Special Worship Services

In the manner decided by the consistory, special worship services may be called in observance of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Special worship services may be called also in connection with prayer for crops and labor, Thanksgiving Day, the turning of the new year, and times of great distress or blessing.

Article 35. Psalms and Hymns

The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod.

Article 36. Admission to the Pulpit

Consistories shall permit men to administer the Word and sacraments only according to the following stipulations:

- a. The consistory must give its consent before any minister may preach the Word or administer the sacraments in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to ministers of churches within the federation and to ministers of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- b. The consistory must give its consent before any licentiate or candidate may exhort in the congregation. Such consent shall be

given only to licentiates and candidates within the federation and to licentiates and candidates of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.

- c. Any exception to either of these requirements shall be granted only occasionally, only to ministers, licentiates, and candidates who faithfully subscribe to the Reformed Confessions, and only with prior approbation of classis.

Article 37. The Administration of the Sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered under the authority of the consistory in a public worship service by an ordained minister of the Word with the use of the synodically adopted liturgical forms.

Article 38. The Baptism of Covenant Children

The consistory shall ensure that God's covenant is signified and sealed by holy baptism to the children of communicant members in good standing. Parents shall present their children for baptism as soon as feasible.

Article 39. The Baptism of Adults

Adults who have not been previously baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

Article 40. Administration of the Lord's Supper

At least once every three months the Lord's Supper shall be administered in a service of public worship, under the supervision of the consistory, according to the teaching of God's Word, and in a manner most conducive to the edification of the congregation.

Article 41. Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Visitors may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided that, as much as possible, the consistory has secured confirmation of their biblical church membership, of their proper profession of faith, and of their godly walk of life.

Article 42. The Church's Mission Calling

Each church shall fulfill its mission calling, which is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing churches. This shall be carried out by missionaries who are ministers of the Word set apart for this labor by being called, supported, and supervised by their consistories for this task. Such missionaries shall proclaim the Word of God, and administer the sacraments to those who have come to the faith. They shall also institute church offices according to the provisions of the Church Order. The consistory shall promote the involvement of church members in labor and service that assist fulfilling this mission calling. If necessary, a calling church shall invite churches within its classis or regional synod to cooperate by agreement regarding the field, support, and oversight of the mission work.

Article 43. The Church's Evangelism Calling

Each church shall fulfill its evangelism calling according to the Word of God and relying on the Holy Spirit, which is to make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those within its area of life and influence. It shall seek to persuade those who do not know God or are estranged from God and His service to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily includes affiliating with His church through profession of faith.

Article 44. Marriage

Scripture teaches that marriage is to be a lifelong monogamous union between a man and a woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry only in the Lord. The minister, as authorized by the consistory, shall solemnize only marriages that accord with Scripture, using the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage adopted by general synod.

Article 45. Funerals

A funeral is a family matter and shall not be conducted as a worship service.

Article 46. The Church Records

The consistory shall maintain accurate records which include the names of the members of the congregation and the dates of their births, baptisms, professions of faith, marriages, receptions into and departures from the church, and deaths.

IV. DISCIPLINE

Article 47. The Nature and Purpose of Discipline

Ecclesiastical discipline, one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities. The purpose of ecclesiastical discipline is that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church, and one's neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ.

Article 48. Consistory Involvement

When a member's sin in doctrine or life is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed. A private sin from which the sinner repents after having been admonished by one person alone, or subsequently in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be brought to the consistory.

When a member does not repent after having been admonished in the presence of two or three witnesses concerning a private sin, or when it is alleged that a member has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the consistory. Only then shall the consistory deal with any alleged sin in doctrine or life.

Article 49. The Reconciliation of a Member

The reconciliation of a member, whose sin is public or has become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and in a manner which best promotes the edification of the church. The consistory shall determine whether, for the welfare of the congregation and the sinner, the member shall be required to confess the sin publicly.

Article 50. The Discipline of a Member

A communicant member, or a mature non-communicant member, whose sin is properly made known to the consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory, shall, in agreement with the Word of God, be subject to church discipline according to the following stages:

- a. Silent Discipline: a member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from all the privileges of church membership, including using the sacraments and voting at congregational meetings. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory.
- b. Public Discipline: if the silent discipline and subsequent admonitions do not bring about repentance, and before proceeding to excommunication, the sinner's impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the member's offense and failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.
 1. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared.
 2. In the second step, the consistory shall seek the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation.
 3. In the third step, the congregation shall be informed that unless there is repentance, the member will be excommunicated from the church on a specified date.
- c. Excommunication: if these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, the consistory shall excommunicate the impenitent sinner, using the synodically approved liturgical form.

Article 51. The Readmission of an Excommunicated Person

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be readmitted into communion with Christ and His church, the congregation shall be so informed. If no lawful objections are presented to the consistory within one month after the public announcement, readmission into the church with all its privileges shall take place, using the synodically approved liturgical form. One who has been excommunicated as a non-communicate member, shall be readmitted only upon the public profession of faith.

Article 52. No Lording it Over

No church shall lord it over other churches, and no office-bearer shall lord it over other office-bearers.

Article 53. Mutual Censure

The minister(s), elders, and deacons shall conduct mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort one another in a loving and edifying manner regarding the discharge of their offices.

Article 54. The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-bearer

When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or grievous sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of his consistory, he shall be temporarily suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches.

Included among the sins requiring suspension from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, schism, open blasphemy, simony, desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; in short, all sins which would warrant the discipline of any other member.

Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot effectively continue in office, he shall be deposed from his office by his consistory. In each case the concurring advice of classis is required, and in the case of a minister the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod is also required.

Suspension or deposition in itself does not necessarily require further ecclesiastical discipline.

A man once deposed may be reconsidered for office only after a sufficient period of time, only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and only through the regular procedure for entering office.

Article 55. Appeals and Procedure

When all avenues for settling a dispute at the consistory level have been exhausted, and a member is convinced that an injustice has been done to him by a decision of his consistory, he may appeal the decision to classis for its judgment. The judgment of the broader assembly shall be reached by majority vote, received with respect, and considered settled and binding unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.

Any appeal to a broader assembly must provide written grounds, and the broader assembly shall provide adequate grounds for its decision to sustain or not sustain an appeal. If an assembly does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may appeal the decision of the narrower assembly to the next broader assembly. If a general synod does not sustain that appeal, the appellant may appeal synod's decision only once and that to the next general synod.

A member who desires to object to a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, shall bring the

matter to his consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.

A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a broader assembly conflicts with the Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the broader assembly next in order as soon as feasible.

Article 56. The Reception, Departure, and Withdrawal of Members

- a. The Reception of Members: Members from churches within the federation or churches with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall be received under the spiritual care of the consistory upon receipt of a testimony regarding their doctrine and life. Others shall be admitted only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. In such cases the consistory shall determine whether a public profession of faith shall be required.
- b. The Departure of Members: Members departing to a church within the federation or a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall submit a written request to the consistory, which shall send a letter concerning their doctrine and life to such church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care.
- c. The Withdrawal of Members: The withdrawal of a member shall be appropriately announced.
- d. Letter of testimony: If a letter of testimony concerning doctrine and life is requested by a member, the consistory shall furnish such a letter.

Article 57. Property

All property, whether real or personal, held by a local church for the benefit of that local church, shall remain the property of that local church in accordance with its own by-laws or regulations and the governing laws of the jurisdiction in which the church is located.

All property, whether real or personal, held for the benefit of the federation by a local church, a classis or synod or a committee, trustee or trustees thereof, or otherwise, shall be held in trust as property in common of all of the churches within the federation, in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by classes or synods of the federation. In the event a local church withdraws from the federation, unless the rules and regulations of the federation provide otherwise, the withdrawing church shall cease to have any benefit in such property.

Notwithstanding the laws of the jurisdiction in which a local church is located, the final authority for any acquisition or disposition of property by a local church, whether real or personal, shall be the council of that church in accordance with the church's own by-laws or regulations, regardless of how the property is held.

Any appeals to broader assemblies with respect to property shall be governed by this article.

Article 58. The Observance and Revision of the Church Order

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, having been drafted in accord with the Foundational Principles and adopted by common consent, shall be observed diligently. Only when the good order and welfare of the churches make it necessary, shall this Church Order be revised. Any proposed revision of the Church Order shall be adopted only by a majority vote of a general synod.

APPENDIX 1

The Licensure Examination

(cf. Article 4)

A theological student who is a member of a church within the federation and is preparing for the ministry of the Word and sacraments must undergo the licensure examination in order to be authorized to exhort in the churches.

A. Required Documents:

1. Proof of successful completion of at least one year of training at a seminary approved by the federation.
2. A letter from the student's consistory which
 - a. in consultation with the faculty of his seminary, gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
 - b. recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
3. A brief statement from the student regarding his wholehearted commitment to the Lord, His Word, and the Three Forms of Unity.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The student's consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the student a sermon text.
4. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the student's written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
5. The student shall deliver the sermon at classis.
6. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is sufficiently competent in the following areas:
 - a. knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity (20-30 minutes);
 - b. understanding of public worship (15-25 minutes);
 - c. exegesis and homiletics (15-25 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the examination. After a maximum of ten minutes of questioning by classis in each area, classis will vote to signify that it has received enough information from the student to proceed to the next section of the examination. Classis may decide not to sustain a student so that a subsequent classis can re-examine him in specified areas.

7. If classis judges the student's performance to be acceptable, and he promises to teach in accordance with the Three Forms of Unity, classis shall issue him a license to exhort in the churches as long as he continues preparing for the ministry of the Word and sacraments, subject to annual review by the licensing classis.

APPENDIX 2

The Candidacy Examination

(cf. Articles 4 and 5)

A man aspiring to the office of minister who is a member of a church within the federation and has graduated from an approved seminary must undergo the candidacy examination in order to become eligible for call within the federation.

A. Required Documents:

1. Proof of successful completion of required training at a seminary approved by the federation.
2. Written recommendations from one or more consistories and ministers of the federation under whom the prospective candidate has labored in ministerial training for a minimum equivalent of nine months of full-time work.
3. A letter from the prospective candidate's consistory which:
 - a. In consultation with his seminary, gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life,
 - b. Recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
4. A medical certificate of good health.
5. A brief statement from the prospective candidate regarding his wholehearted commitment to the Lord, His Word, and the Three Forms of Unity.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
 - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
 - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
 - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the candidate shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the prospective candidate's personal and spiritual life;

his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).

- b. Knowledge of Scripture: the prospective candidate's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
- c. Biblical Exegesis: the prospective candidate's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- e. Reformed doctrine: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- f. Church Polity: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- g. Church History: the prospective candidate's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- h. Ethics: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the examination. After a maximum of ten minutes of questioning by classis in each area, classis will vote to signify that it has received enough information from the applicant to proceed to the next section of the examination. Classis may decide not to sustain an applicant so that a subsequent classis can re-examine him in specified areas.

8. Classis shall issue a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. his whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.

9. If after two years the candidate has not received a call he may, with the recommendation of his consistory, request an extension of his candidacy for another year. To grant this request classis may require another examination.

APPENDIX 3

The Ordination Examination

(cf. Article 5)

A candidate who has accepted a call within the federation must undergo the ordination examination to become eligible for ordination to the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the churches.

A. Required Documents:

1. A letter of call.
2. A letter of acceptance of the call.
3. A written declaration of candidacy.
4. A letter from the candidate's consistory which:
 - a. gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
 - b. recommends that classis proceeds with the examination.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the candidate a scripture passage for examination in exegesis, from which he is also to prepare a new sermon.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the candidate shall deliver the sermon. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable, shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the candidate's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Biblical Exegesis: the candidate's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned passage (15-20 minutes).
 - c. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the candidate's

knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).

- d. Reformed doctrine: the candidate's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

8. Classis shall declare that the candidate has sustained his ordination examination, and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments, upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon ordination.
9. A candidate who does not sustain his examination may undergo the ordination examination again by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

APPENDIX 4

The Examination for Ordained Ministers

(cf. Articles 7 and 32)

Requirement for Ecclesiastical Examinations of Ordained Ministers:

Ordained ministers who seek admission to the ministry within the federation who come from churches with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship or who come from churches with whom we do not maintain such fellowship, are required to undergo an ecclesiastical examination to become eligible for a call from the churches of the federation. One of the following three examinations shall be conducted as applicable.

I. A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship:

A. Documents:

1. a letter of call
2. a letter of acceptance

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant a scripture passage for examination in exegesis, from which he is also to prepare a new sermon.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver the sermon. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable, shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original

- languages and to exegete the assigned passage (15-20 minutes).
- c. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
 - d. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.
8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained his ordination examination, and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments, upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon ordination.
 9. An applicant who does not sustain his examination may undergo the above examination again by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

Appendix 4 (part 2)

II. A minister of a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and who is seeking eligibility for call to a church of the federation:

A. Documents:

1. A letter from the minister requesting the examination for ordained ministers and providing information relating to the background of the minister and the circumstances leading to this request,
2. A letter from the sponsoring consistory which:
 - a. gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
 - b. recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
3. Documentation relating to seminary training, and
4. A letter from the church he last served regarding his pastoral record.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The sponsoring consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding

the request by way of the provisional agenda.

3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
 - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
 - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
 - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Knowledge of Scripture: the applicant's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
 - c. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
 - e. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
 - f. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
 - g. Church Polity: the applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
 - h. Church History: the applicant's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
 - i. Ethics: the applicant's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems

(10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

Classis may decide not to sustain the applicant for the sake of a subsequent classis re-examining him in specified areas.

An applicant who does not sustain his examination may be reexamined by a subsequent classis in all or specific areas of the candidacy examination.

8. Classis shall decide whether the applicant:
 - a. has sustained the examination and need not undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry before being declared eligible for call, or
 - b. has sustained the examination and yet needs to undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry before being declared eligible for call, or
 - c. has not sustained the examination.
9. If classis decides that the applicant need not undergo a period of testing before declaring him eligible for call to the churches in the federation, then classis shall issue a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
 - a. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - b. the applicant's whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
10. If Classis judges that the applicant should undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry by the sponsoring consistory before declaring him eligible for call to the churches in the federation, then Classis shall determine how long this period of testing should be, Classis shall issue the applicant a license to preach in the churches in the federation for that time period upon the applicant's whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity. The sponsoring consistory, after the prescribed period of testing and upon approval of his performance, shall recommend to a subsequent classis to declare the applicant eligible for call to the churches in the federation. This subsequent classis shall issue the applicant a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of the classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. the applicant's whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
11. If after two years the applicant has not received a call he may, with the recommendation of his sponsoring consistory, request an extension of his eligibility for a call for another year. To grant this request classis may require another examination.

Appendix 4 (part 3)

III. A minister of a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and who, together with his congregation, is seeking entrance into the federation:

A. Documents:

1. A letter from his congregation requesting the examination for ordained ministers and providing information relating to the background of the minister and the congregation, the pastoral record of the minister, and the circumstances leading to this request,
2. A letter from the sponsoring consistory recommending that classis proceed with the examination,
3. Documentation relating to seminary training, and
4. A letter from the church he served prior to his present congregation regarding his pastoral record.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The ministers's consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
 - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
 - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
 - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Knowledge of Scripture: the applicant's doctrine of Scripture;

his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).

- c. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- e. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- f. Church Polity: the applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- g. Church History: the applicant's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- h. Ethics: the applicant's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

Classis may decide not to sustain the applicant for the sake of a subsequent classis re-examining him in specified areas.

An applicant who does not sustain his examination may be reexamined by a subsequent classis in all or specific areas of the above examination.

8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained the examination for ordained ministers, and is therefore eligible to be admitted to the ministry as minister of his congregation in the federation, upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. the applicant's promise to sign the Form of Subscription.

<p>Article 1. The Purpose and Divisions of the Church Order. For maintaining proper ecclesiastical order (I Corinthians 14:40), the Church Order must regulate the offices, the assembly, the supervision of doctrine, worship, sacraments and ceremonies, and the discipline. Therefore, we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Offices (Articles 2-19) II. Assemblies (Articles 20-32) III. Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies (Articles 33-46) IV. Discipline (Articles 47-58) 	<p>Article 1. For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.</p>	<p>I. INTRODUCTION</p> <p>ARTICLE 1. Purpose and Division For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary that there be offices, and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and discipline.</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>We as a federation of churches declare complete submission and obedience to the Word of God delivered to us in the inspired, infallible and learned book of Holy Scriptures. We believe and are fully persuaded that the Reformed Creeds do fully agree with this Word of God and therefore do subscribe to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. We acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the Church. This headship is exercised in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the God-ordained officers, for the sake of the purity of doctrine and the holiness of life. The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order. This is expressed as they coordinate and exercise mutual concern for one another. Since we believe that God has commanded that in the churches all things are to be done directly and in good order (I Cor. 14:40), we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities in the following articles covered under the following divisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Ecclesiastical Offices (Articles 1-15) II. Ecclesiastical Assemblies (Articles 16-35) III. Ecclesiastical Functions and Tasks (Articles 37-55) IV. Ecclesiastical Discipline (Articles 51-58)
<p>I. OFFICES</p> <p>Article 2. The Three Offices Christ has instituted three distinct offices in the church: the minister of the Word, the elder, and the deacon. No one shall exercise an office without having been lawfully called to it with the cooperation of the congregation.</p>	<p>Article 2. The offices are of four kinds: of the Ministers of the Word, of the Professors of Theology, of the Elders, and of the Deacons.</p> <p>Article 3. No one, though he be a Professor of Theology, Elder or Deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when anyone acts contrary thereto, and adhering frequently administered does not desist, the Classis shall judge whether he is to be declared schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.</p>	<p>II. OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE</p> <p>ARTICLE 2. The Offices The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.</p>	<p>Article 1 Christ has instituted three offices in the church: minister of the Word, elder and deacon.</p>

<p>Article 3. The Duties of the Minister</p> <p>The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, watching over his fellow office-bearer, and finally, together with the elders shepherding the congregation, extending church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>	<p>Article 16.</p> <p>The office of the Minister is to continue in prayer and in the Ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well as the Congregation, and finally, with the Elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 16. The Office of Ministers of the Word</p> <p>The specific duties of the office of minister of the Word are thoughtfulness and sincerity to proclaim to the congregation the Word of the Lord, to administer the sacraments, and to publicly call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; also to instruct the children of the church in the doctrine of salvation, to visit the members of the congregation in their homes, and to comfort the sick with the Word of God; and further, with the elders, to keep the church of God in good order, to exercise discipline, and to govern it in such a manner as the Lord has ordained.</p>	<p>Article 2</p> <p>The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, and assisting the elders in the shepherding and discipline of the congregation.</p>
<p>Article 4. Preparation for the Ministry</p> <p>a. Theological Education: Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man applying to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness and must receive a thorough reformed theological education. The council of his church shall see to it that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.</p> <p>b. Licensure: A man aspiring to the ministry shall seek licensure to exert in the churches. Such licensure shall be granted only after the student has completed at least one year of theological education, and has sustained a licensure examination conducted by his classis as required in Appendix 1. Classis shall give licensure only to one who is preparing for the ministry, and only for the duration of his theological training. All the work of the licensure shall be conducted under consistorial supervision.</p> <p>c. Candidacy: At the conclusion of his training a student shall ask his consistory to request classis to conduct a candidacy examination, as required in Appendix 2. Upon sustaining this examination, the classis, with the concurring advice of the elders of regional synod, shall</p>	<p>Article 19.</p> <p>The churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the Ministry of the Word.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 19. Training for the Ministry</p> <p>The churches shall maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to instruct the students of theology in those disciplines which have been entrusted to them, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfill the duties of their office as these have been described above.</p> <p>ARTICLE 20. Students of Theology</p> <p>The churches shall endeavor that there be students of theology, extending financial aid to those who are in need of it.</p>	<p>Article 3</p> <p>Competent men should be urged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man who is a member of a church of the federation and who aspires to the ministry must evidence genuine godliness to his Consistory, which shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training, including his licensure to exert, and assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church should help him ensure that his financial needs are met. (See Appendix 1.)</p>
<p>Students who have received permission according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have according to Article 8 been judged competent to be prepared for the Ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the Congregations, be allowed to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 21. An Edifying Word</p> <p>Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training and in order that they may become known to the congregations.</p>	<p>Article 4</p> <p>At the conclusion of such training, a student must approach his Consistory to become a candidate for his examination at a meeting of the classis of which his Consistory is a participant. No one shall be declared a candidate for the ministry until he has sustained an examination at a</p>	

<p>4. declare him eligible for ordination in the churches of the federation.</p> <p>Exceptional Circumstances of General</p> <p>Under circumstances of general tribulation or severe persecution which make the completion of regular theological education impossible, may a consistory request that an exceptionally gifted brother be presented to class for a suitable candidate examination (see Appendix 2). In such a situation, his consistory and the classis should also have assurance of his godliness, humility, modesty, understanding, wisdom, discretion, and public speaking ability.</p>	<p>Article 8. Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study in preparation for the Ministry of the Word, and have therefore not been declared eligible according to Article 4, shall not be admitted to the Ministry unless as assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense and discretion, as a result of public address. When such persons present themselves for the Ministry of the Classis (of the particular Synod approval) shall first submit them and further deal with them as it shall deem worthy, according to the general regulations of the churches.</p>	<p>Article 18. Exceptional Gifts.</p> <p>Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech.</p> <p>When such persons present themselves for the ministry, classis, after the approval of a regional synod, shall examine them in a preparatory examination and allow them to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, with observation of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.</p>	<p>meeting of this classis, in the presence of his Consistory of his Christian faith and experience, of his call to the ministry, of his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, both in the original languages and in English translations, of the Three Forms of Unity, of Christian doctrine, Christian ethics and church history, of the Church Order, and of his knowledge and attitude with regard to the particular duties and responsibilities of the minister of the Word, especially the preparation and preaching of sermons. Upon sustaining this exam in the presence of his Consistory and with the concuring advice of the delegates to this meeting of classis, his Consistory shall declare him a candidate for the office of minister of the Word. (See Appendix 2.)</p>
<p>Article 5. Calling a Candidate</p> <p>The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of:</p> <p>First, the election by the council of a man who has been declared a candidate according to the regulations prescribed in Appendix 2, after having prayed and having received the advice of the congregation and of the consore appointed by classis.</p> <p>Second, the examination necessary for ordination, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the classis to which the calling church belongs, in accordance with the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix 3.</p> <p>Third, the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with proper instructions, admonitions, prayers and subscription to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, followed by the laying on of hands by the ministers who are present and by the elders of the churches of the congregation, with the use of the syndically approved liturgical form.</p>	<p>Article 4.</p> <p>The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office, consists:</p> <p>First, in the ELECTION by the Consistory and Deacons, after praying prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinances, that only one can be first called to the Ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches, according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of classis or of the consistory appointed for the purpose by the Classis;</p> <p>Secondly, in the EXAMINATION both of doctrine and life which shall be conducted by the classis, to which the call must be submitted for approval, and which shall take place in the presence of three delegates of Synod from the nearest Classis;</p> <p>Thirdly, in the APPROBATION by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the ministers, having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objections arise, which approbation, however, is not required in the case the election takes place with the co-operation of the congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made.</p> <p>Finally, in the public ORDINATION in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers and the laying on of hands by the officiating minister.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 5. The Calling to Office</p> <p>No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto. Only male members who have made profession of faith and may be considered to fulfill the conditions set forth in Holy Scripture (e.g., in Timothy 3 and Titus 1) shall be eligible for office.</p> <p>The election to any office shall take place with the cooperation of the congregation, after praying prayers, and according to the regulations adopted for that purpose by the consistory with the deacons.</p> <p>The consistory with the deacons shall be the one to give the congregation the opportunity beforehand to draw the attention of the consistory to brooks deemed fit for the respective offices.</p> <p>The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation either as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or at the most twice as many, from which number the congregation shall choose as many as are needed.</p> <p>Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons in accordance with the adopted regulations.</p> <p>Prior to the ordination or installation in the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation approval on at least two consecutive Sundays.</p> <p>The ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the revised formula.</p>	<p>Article 6</p> <p>The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office consists of:</p> <p>First, the election by the council of one who has been declared a candidate according to the regulations prescribed therein, after having prayed and received the advice of the congregation.</p> <p>Second, the examination of both doctrine and life, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the delegates to the classis of which the calling church is a participant, according to the regulations adopted by the federation (see Appendix 3).</p> <p>Finally, the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate instructions, admonitions, prayers and subscription to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, followed by the laying on of hands by the ministers who are present and by the elders of the congregation, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.</p>

<p>Article 6. Calling an Ordained Minister Within the Federation A minister already ordained within the federation who is called to another congregation shall be called in the lawful manner by the council. The classis shall ensure the good order of the calling process, including the issuance of written ecclesiastical testimonies of His doctrine and life, of his ministerial service, and of his honorable release from the church and classis he last served. Upon receipt of these documents, the church shall install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form and he shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.</p>	<p>(and by the other ministers who are present) agreeable to the Form for that purpose. Article 5. Ministers already in the Ministry of the Word, who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in the foremost manner by the Consistory and the Deacons, with observance of the regulations made for the purpose by the Consistory and of the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Christian Reformed Church, and for the repeated calling of the same Minister during the same vacancy; further, with the advice of the Classis or of the counselor, appointed by the Classis, and with approval of the Classis, to whom the ministers called shall show good ecclesiastical testimonies of doctrine and life, with the approval of the members of the calling congregation, as stated in Article 4; whereupon the minister called shall be installed with appropriate stipulations and prayers agreeable to the Form for this purpose. Article 9. Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some seat, shall not be admitted to the Ministry in the Church until they have been declared eligible after careful examination, by the Classis, with a approval of Synod.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 4. Eligibility for the Ministry A. ELIGIBILITY Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who 1. have been declared eligible for call by the churches; 2. are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or 3. have been declared eligible in, or are serving in, one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a later-church relationship. B. DECLARED ELIGIBLE Only those shall be declared eligible for call with the churches who 1. have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; 2. have served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a later-church relationship, and have been examined by the classis in which they live, with due observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for that purpose; or 3. have been examined according to the rule described in Article 8. C. CALLING TWICE The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy. D. COUNSELLOR When a vacant church extends a call, the advice of the counselor shall be sought. ARTICLE 5. Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed: 1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call. Classis shall approve the call a. upon satisfactory testimony</p>	<p>ARTICLE 7 Those who are already ordained ministers within the Federation may be called to another congregation in a manner consistent with the above rules, without the examination or the laying on of hands. Any minister receiving a call shall consult with his current council regarding that call. He may accept the call only with their consent. Upon receipt of proper credentials from the church he last served, he shall be installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form and shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.</p>	<p>Article 7. An Ordained Minister without a Federation A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the Federation shall be admitted to serve a church within the Federation only after an adequate period of consistorial supervision and only after sustaining an examination conducted to the satisfaction of classis, according to the regulations adopted by the Federation as set forth in Appendix 4, whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 8 A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the Federation shall not be admitted to serve in a church within the Federation without an examination conducted to the satisfaction of the classis, according to the regulations adopted by the Federation, whereupon he may be declared by classis eligible for call by his sponsoring Consistory. (See Appendix 4.)</p>
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<p>Article 8. Bound to a Particular Church No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of the congregation or as one charged with some other ministerial task. All ministers shall remain subject to the Church Order.</p>	<p>Article 6. No Minister shall be at liberty to serve in an institution of mercy or otherwise, unless he be previously admitted in accordance with the preceding articles, and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the Church Order.</p> <p>Article 7. No one shall be called to the Ministry of the Word, without his being stationed in a particular place, except he be sent to do church extension work.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 6. Bound to a Church No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church, either to be stationed in a certain place, or to be sent out for the gathering of the church from among the heathen or from among those who have become estranged from the gospel, or to be charged with some other special ministerial task.</p> <p>ARTICLE 9. From One Church to Another A minister, once lawfully called, shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis.</p> <p>On the other hand, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or of the church only, if he remains with in the same classis.</p>	<p>Article 9 A minister of the Word is bound to the service of the churches for life and may change the nature of his labor only for weighty reasons, upon approval by his supervising council with the concurring advice of classis.</p>
<p>Article 9. Bound for Life A minister of the Word once lawfully called is bound to the service of the churches for life and shall at all times remain subject to the call of his congregation. He may leave this vocation only for weighty reasons, upon the approval of his council and with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod.</p>	<p>Article 10. A Minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the Consistory with the Deacons, and knowledge on the part of the Classis; likewise no other church may receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of dismission from the church and the Classis where he served.</p> <p>Article 12. Inasmuch as a Minister of the Word, once lawfully called as described above, is bound to the service of the Church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the Classis.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 12. Bound for Life Inasmuch as a minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons, of which the consistory with the deacons shall judge, and which shall receive the approval of classis with the concurring advice of deputies of regional synod.</p>	<p>Article 10 Each church is to provide adequately for the minister of the Word and his family while he is serving that church, and should contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. Those who have received from the active ministry shall retain the respect and dignity of the office of minister of the Word.</p>
<p>Article 10. Support and Emeritization of Ministers Each church shall provide honorably for the minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children. A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or</p>	<p>Article 11. On the other hand, the Consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its Ministers, and shall not dismit them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the Classis, and of the Delegates of the (particular) Synod.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 10. Proper Support The consistory, with the deacons, as representing the congregation, shall be bound to provide for the proper support of its minister(s).</p> <p>ARTICLE 13. Retirement of Ministers If a minister of the Word retires because of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office on account of illness or physical or mental disability, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of</p>	<p>Article 10 Each church is to provide adequately for the minister of the Word and his family while he is serving that church, and should contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. Those who have received from the active ministry shall retain the respect and dignity of the office of minister of the Word.</p>

<p>other personal disabilities, shall retain the honor and title of Minister of the Word, and shall retain his official bond with the church he last served, which shall provide honorably for his support.</p> <p>The ordination of a minister shall take place with the approval of the council, and with the concurring advice of classis and of the deputies of regional synod.</p> <p>Article 14. Temporary Release</p> <p>If, because of illness or other substantial reasons a minister requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he shall receive the same only with the approval of the council. If the duration of the release is greater than four months, the council shall obtain the concurring advice of classis. He shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation.</p>	<p>Article 14.</p> <p>If any Minister, for the avoidance of any other reason, is compelled to discontinue his service for a time which shall not take place without the approval of the Council, he shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.</p>	<p>the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide, honorably, for his support. The same obligation exists towards a Minister's widow and/or dependants.</p> <p>Release of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and of deputies of regional synod.</p> <p>ARTICLE 14. Temporary Release</p> <p>If a minister, because of illness or for other substantial reasons, requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he can receive the same only with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and shall at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.</p>	<p>Article 11</p> <p>If, for reasons other than such as warrant ecclesiastical discipline, either a minister of the Word or the congregation he is serving desires to dissolve their pastoral relationship, that dissolution shall occur only upon mutually satisfactory consents and only after concurring advice of the classis, if the released minister desires to receive a call to serve in other congregation, the council from which notice is being released shall announce his eligibility for a call, which eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably released from office, if the minister released from his congregation desires to leave his office in order to seek non-ministerial labor, he must receive the approval of the classis before doing so.</p>
<p>Article 12. Exceptional Release of a Minister</p> <p>When, for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irretrievably broken, a council may release its minister from his call only under all of the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> This release shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, discipline, or other warrant church discipline. This release shall occur only when a tempered reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an irreparable situation. This release shall occur only with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod; This release shall require the approval by classis of the council's provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years. <p>The council from whose service he has been released shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office.</p>	<p>Article 13</p> <p>Ministers who, by reason of age, sickness, or otherwise, are hindered in performing the duties of their Office, shall be released from their Office if a Minister, or the Church which they have served shall provide honorably for them in their needs (likewise for the orphans and widows of Ministers) out of a common fund of the Church, according to the general ecclesiastical ordinances in this matter.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 11. Dissmissal</p> <p>If a minister of the Word is judged unfit and incapable of serving the congregation fruitfully and to its edification, without there being any reason for church discipline, the consistory with the deacons shall inform the minister of his service with the congregation without the approval of classis and the concurring advice of classis and the regional synod, and without proper arrangements regarding the support of the minister and his family for a reasonable period of time.</p> <p>If the call is forthcoming in three years, he shall be declared released from his ministerial status by the classis in which he served last.</p>	<p>Article 11</p> <p>If, for reasons other than such as warrant ecclesiastical discipline, either a minister of the Word or the congregation he is serving desires to dissolve their pastoral relationship, that dissolution shall occur only upon mutually satisfactory consents and only after concurring advice of the classis, if the released minister desires to receive a call to serve in other congregation, the council from which notice is being released shall announce his eligibility for a call, which eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably released from office, if the minister released from his congregation desires to leave his office in order to seek non-ministerial labor, he must receive the approval of the classis before doing so.</p>

<p>Article 13. Nomination and Election of Elders and Deacons The council shall provide adequate preparation of elders and deacons by means of instruction and training regarding the duties of each office. The procedure for the lawful calling of elders and deacons shall consist of the following: First, the council shall nominate only male communicant members who meet the biblical requirements for office, and who indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription. Prior to nominating, the council may invite the congregation to direct attention to suitable men. Ordinarily, the number of nominees shall be twice the number of vacancies. Second, after public prayer, elders and deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the regulations adopted for that purpose. Third, the council shall appoint the elders and deacons, and shall announce their names to the congregation two weeks prior to entering office. In order that the congregation may have opportunity to bring lawful objections to the attention of the consistory.</p>	<p>Article 15. No one shall be permitted, neglecting the Ministry of his Church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of Synod or Classis. Likewise, no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the Sacraments in another Church without the consent of the Consistory of that Church.</p> <p>Article 22. The Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the Consistory and the Deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the Consistory. In pursuance of these regulations, every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons, in order that the consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as many elders as are needed, that they may, after they are approved by it, unless any obstacles arise, be installed with public prayers and adjurations; or present a double number to the congregation and thereupon install the one half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeable to the Form for this purpose.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 16. Preaching in Other Places No one shall be permitted to preach the Word or to administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory of that church.</p> <p>See CanRC A.1.3</p>	<p>Article 12 The council shall present to the congregation nominations for the offices of elder and deacon. Only male confessing members who meet the biblical requirements for office and indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription shall be nominated by the council. Prior to making nominations, the council may give the congregation opportunity to direct attention to suitable men.</p>
<p>Article 14. The Term and Ordination of Elders and Deacons Before entering upon their work, elders and deacons, having been elected in accordance with local regulations to a term specified by the consistory, and having been appointed by the council, shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, and shall be ordained with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.</p>	<p>Article 27. The Elders and Deacons shall serve two or more years according to the local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of Art. 22 and 24, render a re-election advisable.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 24. Term of Office The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years, according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The place of the retiring officers shall be taken by others, unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the benefit of the church render it advisable to have them serve another term, or to extend their term, or to declare them immediately eligible for re-election.</p>	<p>Article 13 Elders and deacons shall be elected to a term specified by the Consistory, and upon subscribing to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, shall be ordained or installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form before entering upon their work.</p>

<p>Article 15. Subscription to the Confession Each office-bearer shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. Anyone who subscribes shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone in office refusing to subscribe shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory and if he persists in his refusal, shall be deposed from office.</p>	<p>Art. 53 The Ministers of the Word of God and likewise the Professors of Theology (which also belongs to the other Professors and School Teachers) shall subscribe to the Three Formulas of Unity, namely, the Belgic Confession, of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618-19, and the Ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall de facto be suspended from their office by the Consistory or Classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.</p> <p>Art 54 Likewise the Elders and Deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid Formulas of Unity.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 26. Subscription to the Confession All ministers of the Word, elders, deacons, and professors of theology shall subscribe to the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches by signing the form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory with the deacons, and classis shall not receive him, if he obstinately persists in his refusal, he shall be deposed from office.</p>	<p>See URCNA 7</p>
<p>Article 16. Parity Among Office-bearers Among the office-bearers, parity shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their respective offices and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.</p>	<p>Article 17. Among the Ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and also in other matters as far as possible according to the judgment of the Consistory, and if necessary, of the Classis, which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the Elders and the Deacons.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 17. Equality among the Ministers of the Word Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.</p> <p>ARTICLE 26. Equality to be Maintained Among the elders as well as among the deacons equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also, as far as possible, in other matters, of which the consistory shall judge.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 14 The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of continuing in prayer and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and the Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth, promote God-centered schooling, visit the members of the congregation according to their needs, engage in family visiting, exhort discipline in the congregation, actively promote the work of evangelism and missions, and insure that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>
<p>Article 17. The Duties of Elders The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of depending and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall ensure that their fellow-elders, the minister(s), and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth in the congregation, and promote consistency Reformed schooling at all levels. Moreover, they shall visit the members of the congregation according to their needs, engage in family visiting, preserve and promote concord and unity among the</p>	<p>Article 22. The office of the Elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the Minister of the Word, is to take heed that the Ministers, together with their fellow-Elders and the Deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as the and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the churches to visit the families of the Congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian Religion.</p> <p>Article 21. The Consistory shall see to it that there are good Christian Schools where the parents</p>	<p>ARTICLE 22. The Office of Elder The specific duties of the office of elder are, together with the ministers of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's church, that every member may conduct himself properly in doctrine and life according to the gospel, and faithfully to visit the members of the congregation in their homes, to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God, reproving those who behave improperly. They shall exhort Christian discipline according to the command of Christ against those who show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent and shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned. Being stewards of the house of God, they are further to take care that the congregation all things are done decently and in good order, and to</p>	<p>ARTICLE 22. The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of continuing in prayer and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and the Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth, promote God-centered schooling, visit the members of the congregation according to their needs, engage in family visiting, exhort discipline in the congregation, actively promote the work of evangelism and missions, and insure that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>

<p>members and between the congregation and its office-bearers, exercise discipline in the congregation, promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>	<p>have their children instructed according to the demands of the Covenant.</p>	<p>lead the flock of Christ which is in their charge. Finally, it is the duty of elders to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice and to supervise their doctrine and conduct.</p>	<p>Article 18. Protecting Doctrinal Purity To protect the congregation from false teachings and errors which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and admonition, in the ministry of the Word, in Christian teaching, and in family visiting.</p>
<p>Article 19. The Duties of Deacons The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of performing and supervising works of Christian mercy in the congregation. The deacons shall do this by acquainting themselves with congregational needs, exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy, gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, distributing these offerings according to need, continuing in prayer, and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered.</p> <p>The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a monthly account of their work to the Consistory.</p>	<p>Article 20. The Office of Deacons The specific duties of the office of deacon are to see to the good progress of the service of charity in the congregation; to acquaint themselves with existing needs and afflictions and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy; and further, to gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name according to need. They shall encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love, and promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.</p>	<p>Article 21. False Doctrines To ward off false doctrines and errors which could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.</p>	<p>Article 22. The Office of Deacon The specific duties of the office of deacon are to see to the good progress of the service of charity in the congregation; to acquaint themselves with existing needs and afflictions and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy; and further, to gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name according to need. They shall encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love, and promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.</p>
<p>Article 23. The Duties of Deacons The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of performing and supervising works of Christian mercy in the congregation. The deacons shall do this by acquainting themselves with congregational needs, exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy, gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, distributing these offerings according to need, continuing in prayer, and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered.</p> <p>The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a monthly account of their work to the Consistory.</p>	<p>Article 24. The Deacons shall be chosen, approved and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the Elders.</p> <p>Article 25. The office, peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it, to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in Consistory and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the Congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may seem fit.</p>	<p>Article 26. Schools The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions.</p>	<p>Article 27. False Doctrines To ward off false doctrines and errors which could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.</p>
<p>Article 28. Places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of</p>	<p>Article 29. Places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of</p>	<p>Article 30. Places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of</p>	<p>Article 31. Places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of</p>

<p>Article 20. The Civil Authorities As the task of civil government includes promoting the freedom of the Christian church, so it is the responsibility of the church to respect the government as instituted by God. In order that the church of Christ may lead a Christian life in all godliness, and that the witness of the gospel may be protected and advanced, the office-bearers must lead the congregations by the admonition for example: They shall ensure that prayers to the government are regularly offered and that members render due honor and lawful obedience to the civil authorities, thereby living as good citizens under Christ and promoting the true welfare of the land in which they live.</p>	<p>Institutions of mercy, and to that end they shall request the Board of Directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the Deacons assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions.</p> <p>Article 40 - The Meeting of the Deacons Likewise the Deacons shall meet every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereas the Ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present.</p>	<p>Article 28. Civil Authorities As it is the office of the civil authorities to promote in every way the holy ministry, so all office-bearers are in duty bound to impress diligently and sincerely upon the whole congregation the affection, love, and respect which are due to the civil authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter, and endeavor by due respect and communication to secure and retain the honor of the state towards the church, so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.</p>	<p>Article 16 Among churches belonging to the federation, three assemblies shall be recognized: the Consistory, the classis and the synod. Classis and synod are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the Consistory is a continuing body.</p> <p>Article 17 In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, only in an ecclesiastical manner.</p>
<p>ii. ASSEMBLIES</p> <p>Article 21. Ecclesiastical Assemblies a. Identification: Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classis and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings. b. Consent: Regulations for broader assemblies shall determine the functions of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the</p>	<p>Article 29 Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the Consistory, the Classis, the Particular Synod, and the General or National Synod.</p>	<p>Article 29. The Ecclesiastical Assemblies Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod.</p>	<p>Article 16 Among churches belonging to the federation, three assemblies shall be recognized: the Consistory, the classis and the synod. Classis and synod are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the Consistory is a continuing body.</p>
<p>Article 21. Ecclesiastical Assemblies a. Identification: Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classis and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings. b. Consent: Regulations for broader assemblies shall determine the functions of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the</p>	<p>Article 29 Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the Consistory, the Classis, the Particular Synod, and the General or National Synod.</p>	<p>Article 29. The Ecclesiastical Assemblies Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod.</p>	<p>Article 16 Among churches belonging to the federation, three assemblies shall be recognized: the Consistory, the classis and the synod. Classis and synod are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the Consistory is a continuing body.</p> <p>Article 17 In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, only in an ecclesiastical manner.</p>

<p>c. Delegation: Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body as required in Appendix X, to be used by receiving authorization to deliberate and decide upon all the matters properly placed before them. These assemblies shall require each delegate to indicate his agreement with the Form of Subscription. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church is particularly involved.</p> <p>d. Jurisdiction: In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All such matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod.</p> <p>e. Decisions: All decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be received with respect and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.</p> <p>f. Proceedings: The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer. In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the business to be transacted, to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed, and to ensure that every member observes proper order and decorum.</p> <p>g. Records: In every assembly a clerk shall keep and distribute an accurate</p>	<p>Article 33 - The Credentials Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they only shall have a vote.</p> <p>Article 46 - Instructions for the Major Assemblies Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of the previous Synod have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed unless a relation be deemed necessary.</p> <p>Article 30 - The Authority of the Ecclesiastical Assemblies In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.</p> <p>Article 36 - The Authority of the Major Assemblies Over the Minor Ones The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular.</p> <p>Article 32 - The Opening and Closing of Ecclesiastical Assemblies The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the Name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.</p> <p>Article 35 - The Office of the President The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the capricious and those who are vehement in speaking, and to properly</p>	<p>Article 32. Credentials Delegates to the major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by those sending them, they shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.</p> <p>Article 30. Ecclesiastical Matters These assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.</p> <p>Article 33. Proposals Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.</p> <p>Article 37. Jurisdiction The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the regional synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the regional synod.</p> <p>Article 34. Proceedings The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with calling upon the Name of the Lord. At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof, or who have sinned the admission of the minor assemblies. Furthermore, each classis, regional synod or general synod shall determine the time and place of the next classis, region, or synod, or</p>	<p>Article 25 Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued only with properly signed credentials, and each delegate shall have only one vote. In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered. All such matters shall originate with a Consistory and be considered by classis before being considered by synod. No broader assembly shall have the power to depose an office-bearer or otherwise exercise church discipline, since these powers belong to the Consistory.</p> <p>Article 24 Although congregations are distinct and equal and do not have dominion over each other, they ought to preserve fellowship with each other because they are all united with Christ, the spiritual and governing Head of the church. Congregations manifest this unity when they meet together in the broader assemblies.</p>	<p>Article 18 The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.</p>
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<p>record of the proceedings, in all broader assemblies these functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.</p> <p>h. Censure: At the close of broader assemblies, admonition shall be given to those who demonstrated unworthy behavior, either during the meeting or regarding a declaration of a narrower assembly.</p> <p>i. Archives: Each ecclesiastical assembly shall ensure the proper preservation of its archives.</p> <p>j. Press Releases: Each broader assembly shall provide for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.</p>	<p>to discipline them if they refuse to leave. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly adjourns.</p> <p>Article 34 - The Officers, and Task of the Clerk In all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of that which deserves to be recorded.</p> <p>Article 43 - The Censure in Major Assemblies At the close of the Classical and other major Assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who have done something worthy of censure in the meeting, or who have sinned the admonition of the minor assemblies.</p> <p>Article 45 - Taking Care of Written Records It shall be the duty of the church in which the Classis, and likewise the Particular or General Synod meets, to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.</p>	<p>general synod respectively and appoint the convening church for that meeting.</p> <p>ARTICLE 35. President In all assemblies there shall be a president whose task it is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with, to ensure that every one observe due order in speaking, to deny the floor to those who argue about minor topics or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and to discipline those who refuse to listen. In minor assemblies the office of the president shall cease when the assembly has ended.</p> <p>ARTICLE 36. Clerk A clerk shall be appointed whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of all things worthy to be recorded.</p> <p>ARTICLE 43. Archives The consistory and the major assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.</p>	<p>Article 19 In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with, and to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed and that every delegate observes due order and decorum in speaking. In all delegated assemblies the above named functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.</p> <p>Article 20 In every assembly there shall be a clerk whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of the proceedings in the broader assemblies, the clerk shall ensure that due order is observed by the delegates. Between broader assembly meetings, the clerk shall perform his duties under the supervision of the next convening Consistory.</p>	<p>Article 21 In each congregation there shall be a Consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The Consistory is the only assembly in the churches whose decisions possess direct authority within the congregation, since the Consistory receives its authority directly from Christ, and thereby is directly accountable to Christ.</p> <p>Article 23 When the deacons meet together with the Consistory, the body is referred to as the council. The council shall exercise such duties described in the Church Order or such duties delegated to it by the Consistory. The council shall operate under the authority of the Consistory.</p>	<p>Article 38. Consistory In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the ministers of the Word and the elders who, as a rule, shall meet at least once a month. As a rule the ministers of the Word shall preside. If a church is served by more than one minister, they shall preside in turn.</p>	<p>Article 39. Consistory and the Deacons Where the number of elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement; this shall invariably be done where the number of elders or the number of deacons is less than three.</p>	<p>Article 22. The Consistory In each church there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The consistory is the only assembly which exercises direct authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ. The term council designates not an assembly of the church, but a meeting of the elders and minister(s) with the deacons under the authority of the consistory, at which matters are dealt with as stipulated by the Church Order or as assigned by the consistory.</p> <p>Article 23. Small Number of Office-Bearers Where the number of elders is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the deacons. This shall invariably be done where the number of elders is lower than three. Where the number of deacons is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the elders. This shall invariably be done where the number of deacons is lower than three.</p>
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Article 24. Organizing a New Congregation
 A congregation shall be organized under its first consistory only under the supervision of the neighboring consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.

Article 36. - Of Constituting a New and Of Small Consistories
 In places where the Consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall be done only with the advice of classis.
 And whenever the number of Elders is very small, the Deacons may be added to the Consistory.

ARTICLE 40. Constitution of a Consistory
 In places where a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall be done only with the advice of classis.

Article 22
 When a congregation is organized within the federation, this shall take place under the supervision of a neighboring Consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.

Article 39. - Where There is Not Yet a Consistory
 In places where as yet there is no Consistory, the Classis shall in the meantime take care of the work which would otherwise be performed by the Consistory in accordance with this Church Order.

ARTICLE 41. Places without a Consistory
 Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

Article 26
 A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose Consistories delegate two of their members with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis meeting, within the next twelve months, if three Consistories in the classis deem it necessary that a classis meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur. The churches shall take turns providing a chairman and acting as the convening church.

Article 25. The Classis
 a. Composition: A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose consistories shall delegate two members, ordinarily a minister and an elder, with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis. Ordinarily a classis shall consist of between eight and twelve churches.
 b. Frequency: A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

ARTICLE 44. Classis
 Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

Article 26
 A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose Consistories delegate two of their members with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis meeting, within the next twelve months, if three Consistories in the classis deem it necessary that a classis meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur. The churches shall take turns providing a chairman and acting as the convening church.

c. Convening: The churches shall take turns convening classis and providing a chairman from their delegation. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession. Each classis shall appoint a convening church and determine the time and place of the next classis.

ARTICLE 44. Classis
 Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

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d. Mutual Oversight: The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistory, council, and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and confessionally

ARTICLE 44. Classis
 Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

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Article 42. - Concerning Two or More Ministers Representing One Church in the Classis
 When there are more Ministers than one in a church, all of them may attend the Classis and have a vote, except in matters which particularly concern their persons or churches.

ARTICLE 44. Classis
 Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

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<p>6. Reformed schooling is to be earnestly promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.</p> <p>Delegation to Regional and General Synod. The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod if the regional synod consists of three classes; each class shall delegate three ministers and three elders. If the regional synod consists of four or more classes, each class shall delegate two ministers and two elders. The second last classis before general synod shall choose delegates to that synod. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders.</p> <p>Classis Contacts. A minimum of three churches may choose as a classis contacts exclusively to appoint a call, or to release a minister who has accepted a call, and to appoint a consistor for the ministerial vacancy.</p>	<p>Article 26. Church Visitors</p> <p>Every two years classis shall appoint a number of its more experienced and competent ministers or elders to visit all the churches of the classis once during that period. At each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister.</p> <p>These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers perform their duties in harmony with the Word of God, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the Church Order, and properly promote, by word and deed, the edification of the whole congregation. Moreover, they shall fraternally encourage the office-bearers to fulfill their office faithfully, that by their advice and assistance the visitors may help direct all things unto the peace, edification, and profit of the church, and, upon the request of a consistory, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.</p> <p>The church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the next classis.</p>	<p>Article 44 - The Church Visitors</p> <p>The Classis shall authorize a number of its Ministers, at least two of the oldest, most experienced and competent ones, to visit all the Churches once a year in classis as well as in rural districts, and to take heed whether the Ministers, Consistories, and School-teachers faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, by word and deed, the edification of the Congregation including the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the Churches and Societies. And each Classis may continue the said visitors in service as long it sees fit, except where the visitors themselves request to be released for reasons of which the Classis shall judge.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 45. Church Visitors</p> <p>Each year classis shall authorize at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit all churches in that year, classis as well as in rural districts, and to take heed whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfill the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church.</p> <p>They shall submit a written report of their visits to classis.</p>	<p>Article 27</p> <p>Each Consistory of the classis shall in the two experienced office-bearers appointed by classis, elect two ministers or a minister and an elder to visit the church once every two years, who shall give account of their visit to the classis. These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, by word and deed, the edification of the congregation, including the youth, to the end that these visitors may fraternally admonish those office-bearers who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, edification and greatest profit of the churches.</p>
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<p>Article 27. Counsellors The consistory of a church with a ministerial vacancy shall request classes to appoint the minister. It specifies to serve as counsellor. His task is to help the consistory follow the provisions of the Church Order, particularly in the matter of calling a minister. Along with the council members, he also shall sign the later of call.</p>	<p>Article 47 - The Particular Synod Every year, or if need be often, four or five or more neighboring Classes shall meet as a Particular Synod, to which each Class shall delegate two Ministers and two Elders. At the close of both the Particular and the General Synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with the advice of the Classes the time and place of the next Synod.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 45. Counsellors Each vacant church shall request classes to appoint a counsellor for the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the later of call.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 47. Regional Synod Each year some neighbouring classes shall send delegates to meet in a regional synod. If there are two classes, each class shall delegate four ministers and four elders. If there are three classes, the number shall be three ministers and three elders. If there are four or more classes, the number shall be two ministers and two elders. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of classes. The last regional synod before the general synod shall choose delegates to that general synod.</p>
<p>Article 28. The Regional Synod A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall ordinarily meet once per year. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classes. The regional synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes, with its will; appeals of classical decisions, and with the reports of its deputies. It shall also determine the time and place for the next regional synod, and designate a convening church. The chairman, vice chairman, and clerk shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.</p>	<p>Article 49 - The Deputies of the Particular Synod Each Synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by Synod both as to what pertains to the High Authorities and to the respective Classes resorting under it, and likewise to supervise together or in similar number all examinations of future Ministers. And furthermore, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the Classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. They shall also keep proper record of all their actions, to report thereof to synod, and if it be demanded, give reasons. They shall also receive discharged from their service before and until Synod itself discharges them.)</p>	<p>48. Deputies of Regional Synod Each regional synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order, and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulty. These deputies shall keep proper record of their actions and submit a written report to regional synod, and, if so required, they shall give account of their actions. They shall not be discharged from their task before and until regional synod itself discharges them.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 49. General Synod The general synod shall be held once every three years. Each regional synod shall give account of their actions. They shall not be discharged from their task before and until regional synod itself discharges them.</p>
<p>Article 30. The General Synod A general synod, consisting of delegates chosen by the classes, shall meet</p>	<p>Article 50 - The National Synod The National Synod shall ordinarily be held every three years, unless an urgent need</p>	<p>ARTICLE 50. General Synod The churches shall meet as a synod at least once every three years. Each Consistory shall</p>	<p>Article 28 The churches shall meet as a synod at least once every three years. Each Consistory shall</p>

<p>at least once every three years. If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.</p> <p>The general synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes and the regional synods, with lawful appeals and with topics which were mandated by the previous synod. It shall also determine the time and place for the next general synod, and designate a convening church.</p> <p>The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk(s) shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.</p>	<p>arises to make it a shorter period.</p> <p>Article 48 - The Correspondence Each synod shall be at liberty to solicit and host correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods. In such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.</p> <p>Article 52 Inasmuch as different languages are spoken in the churches, the necessary translations shall be made in the ecclesiastical assemblies and in the publication of recommendations, instructions and decisions.</p>	<p>delegate to this synod four ministers and four elders.</p> <p>If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of regional synod.</p>	<p>delegate two of its members to this meeting. Each synod shall determine a time and place for the subsequent synod and shall authorize a Consistory to convene that synod. If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a synod meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.</p>
<p>Article 31. Ecumenical Relations The churches of the federation are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and testify demonstrably and Scripturally summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church shall give account to classes of its ecumenical relations with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship. A church must receive the approbation of classes before such ecumenical relations programs to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>The churches as a federation may enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with other federations by a synodical decision of two-thirds majority. Ecclesiastical fellowship with churches abroad that faithfully uphold the Reformed Confessions shall be regulated and maintained by general synod. Churches abroad that are not rejected on the basis of minor differences of ecclesiastical polity or practice.</p>	<p>Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 50. Churches Abroad The relation with churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod. With foreign churches of Reformed confession a sister-church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.</p>	<p>Article 34 Churches are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with Reformed congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and testify demonstrably and Scripturally as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church is to give an account of its ecumenical activities to classes. Fraternal divisions between congregations which need not be reported to classes may include occasional paper exchanges, table fellowship, as well as other means of manifesting unity.</p> <p>Article 35 The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery. The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honoring our federative bond.</p> <p>Article 36 The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision must be ratified by a majority of the Consistories.</p> <p>Article 32 Any church may be admitted into the federation provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree with this Church Order, and its minister sustains an examination by the nearest classis, according to the regulations accepted by the federation. Any such church shall be provisionally accepted into</p>

<p>one of these office-bearers is a minister, he shall be examined according to Appendix 4.</p> <p>III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES</p> <p>Article 33. The Regular Worship Services The consistory shall call the congregation together for public worship twice each Lord's Day. The consistory shall regulate the worship services which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word, namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence, and may give such attention also to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.</p>	<p>Of Doctrines, Sacraments and Other Ceremonies</p> <p>Art 68 Catechism Preaching The Ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian Doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so far as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself, for that purpose.</p>	<p>Art 52. Worship Services The consistory shall call the congregation together for worship twice on the Lord's Day. The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed.</p>	<p>membership in the federation by the classes, pending ratification by the following synod.</p> <p>Ecclesiastical Functions and Tasks</p> <p>Article 37. The consistory shall call the congregation together for corporate worship twice on each Lord's Day. Special services may be called in observance of Christmas Day, Good Friday, Ascension Day, a day of prayer, the national Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, as well as in times of great distress or blessing. Attention should also be given to Easter and Pentecost on their respective Lord's Days.</p> <p>Art. 38 The Consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word; namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, that confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.</p> <p>Art 40. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with special attention given to the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence.</p>
<p>Article 34. Special Worship Services In the manner decided by the consistory, special worship services may be called in observance of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Special worship services may be called also in connection with prayer for crops and labor, Thanksgiving Day, the turning of the new year, and times of great distress or blessing.</p> <p>Article 35. Psalms and Hymns The 150 Psalms shall have the</p>	<p>Art 66 Prayer Services In times of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the Churches, it is fitting that the Classes proclaim Days of Prayer. Art 67 Days of Commemoration The Churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day.</p>	<p>Prayer Services Art 54. Days of Prayer. In time of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions, the presence of which is felt throughout the churches, a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the churches appointed for that purpose by general synod. Art 53. Days of Commemoration. Each year the churches shall, in the manner decided upon by the consistory, commemorate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as His outpouring of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Art 55. Psalms and Hymns The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in</p>	<p>Article 37. The consistory shall call the congregation together for corporate worship twice on each Lord's Day. Special services may be called in observance of Christmas Day, Good Friday, Ascension Day, a day of prayer, the national Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, as well as in times of great distress or blessing. Attention should also be given to Easter and Pentecost on their respective Lord's Days.</p> <p>Art. 38 The Consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word; namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, that confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.</p> <p>Art 40. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with special attention given to the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence.</p>
<p>Article 35. Psalms and Hymns The 150 Psalms shall have the</p>	<p>Art 69. Psalms and Hymns in the Churches only the 150 Psalms of</p>	<p>Art 55. Psalms and Hymns The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in</p>	<p>Article 37. The consistory shall call the congregation together for corporate worship twice on each Lord's Day. Special services may be called in observance of Christmas Day, Good Friday, Ascension Day, a day of prayer, the national Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, as well as in times of great distress or blessing. Attention should also be given to Easter and Pentecost on their respective Lord's Days.</p> <p>Art. 38 The Consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word; namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, that confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.</p> <p>Art 40. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with special attention given to the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence.</p>

<p>principal place in the singing of the churches, in the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod.</p> <p>Article 35. Admission to the Pulpit Consistories shall permit men to administer the Word and sacraments only according to the following stipulations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The consistory must give its consent before any minister may preach the Word or administer the sacraments in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to ministers of churches within the federation and to ministers of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. The consistory must give its consent before any licentiate or candidate may cohort in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to licentiates and candidates within the federation and to licentiates and candidates of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Any exception to either of these requirements shall be granted only occasionally, only to ministers, licentiates, and candidates who voluntarily subscribe to the Reformed Confessions, and only with prior approbation of classis. 	<p>David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Praise before the sermon shall be sung.</p>	<p>as well as the Hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services.</p>	<p>the singing of the churches. Hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity may be sung, provided they are approved by the Consistory.</p>
<p>Article 37. The Administration of the Sacraments The sacraments shall be administered under the authority of the consistory in a public worship service by an ordained minister of the Word with the use of the synodically adopted liturgical forms.</p>	<p>Art 56. Administration of Sacraments. The sacraments shall be administered only under the authority of the consistory, in a public worship service, by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms</p>	<p>Art 56. Administration of Sacraments. The sacraments shall be administered only under the authority of the consistory, in a public worship service, by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms</p>	<p>Art 56. Administration of Sacraments. The sacraments shall be administered only under the authority of the consistory, in a public worship service, by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms</p>
<p>Article 38. The Baptism of Covenant Children The consistory shall ensure that God's covenant is signified and sealed by holy baptism to the children of communicant members in good standing. Parents shall present their children for baptism as soon as feasible.</p>	<p>Art 56 Infant Baptism The Covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Covenanters by Baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.</p> <p>Art 57</p>	<p>Art 57. Infant Baptism The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.</p>	<p>Art 41. The covenant of God shall be signified and sealed to the children of covenanting members in good standing through holy baptism administered by the minister of the Word in a service of corporate worship, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. The Consistory shall properly supervise the administration of the</p>

<p>Article 39. The Baptism of Adults Adults who have not been previously baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.</p>	<p>The ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for Baptism</p> <p>Art 58 In the ceremony of Baptism, both of children and of adults, the Ministers shall use the respective forms drawn up for the administration of this Sacrament.</p> <p>Art 59 Adults are through Baptism incorporated into the Christian Church, and are accepted as members of the Church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.</p>	<p>Art 59. Baptism of Adults. Adults who have not been baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.</p>	<p>sacrament, which shall be administered as soon as feasible.</p> <p>Art 42. Adults who have not been baptized shall receive holy baptism upon public profession of faith, with the use of the appropriate liturgical forms, and be thus accepted as members. They shall be obliged to persevere in the fellowship of the church, not only in hearing God's Word, but also in partaking of the Lord's Supper.</p>
<p>Article 40. Administration of the Lord's Supper At least once every three months the Lord's Supper shall be administered in a service of public worship, under the supervision of the consistory, according to the teaching of God's Word, and in a manner most conducive to the edification of the congregation.</p>	<p>Art 62 Administration of LS Every Church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read.</p> <p>Art 63 The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months.</p> <p>Art 64 The administration of the Lord's Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of Elders, according to ecclesiastical order and in a public gathering of the Congregation.</p>	<p>Art 60. Lord's Supper The Lord's supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.</p>	<p>Art 46. Administration of LS The Consistory shall ordinarily administer the Lord's Supper at least every three months in a service of corporate worship, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. This administration shall conform to the teaching of God's Word and the regulations of ecclesiastical order, in such a manner as is most conducive to the edification of the congregation.</p>
<p>Article 41. Admission to the Lord's Supper The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Visitors may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided that, as much as possible, the consistory has secured confirmation of membership church membership, of their proper profession of faith, and of their godly walk.</p>	<p>Art 61 Admission to the LS None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the Church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed Religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which also those who come from other Churches shall not be admitted.</p>	<p>Art 61. Admission to the Lord's Supper. The consistory shall admit to the Lord's supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.</p>	<p>Art 45. The Consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Table. No member shall be admitted to the Lord's Table who has not first made public profession of faith and is not living a godly life. Visitors may be admitted provided that, as much as possible, the Consistory is assured of their biblical church membership, of their proper profession of faith, and of their godly walk.</p> <p>Art 43 Baptized members who have been instructed in</p>

<p>Article 42. The Church's Mission Calling Each church shall fulfill its mission calling, which is to preach the Word of God to the community at home and abroad with the goal of establishing churches. This shall be carried out by missionaries, who are ministers of the Word set apart for this labor by being called, supported, and supervised by their companions for this task. Such missionaries shall proclaim the Word of God, and administer the sacraments to those who have come to the faith. They shall also induct church officers according to the provisions of the Church Order. The consistory shall promote the involvement of church members in labor and service that assist, further, and sustain this mission calling. If necessary, a calling church shall invite churches within its classis or regional synod to cooperate by agreement regarding the field, support, and oversight of the mission work.</p> <p>Article 43. The Church's Evangelism Calling Each church shall fulfill its evangelism calling according to the Word of God and relying on the Holy Spirit, which is to make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those within its area of life and influence. It shall seek to persuade those who do not know God or are estranged from God and His service to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily includes affilating with His church through profession of faith.</p>	<p>Article 51 The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 51. Mission The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. When churches cooperate in this matter, they shall, as much as possible, observe the division into classis and regional synods.</p> <p>ARTICLE 18. Missions When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall be and remain subject to the Church Order. They shall report and give account of their labours to the church while sent, and shall at all times remain subject to its calling.</p> <p>It shall be their task, in the specific region assigned to them or chosen by them in consultation with the church that sets them, to proclaim the Word of God, to administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to conserve all that Christ has commanded His church, and to ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.</p>	<p>the faith and who have come to the years of understanding shall be encouraged to make public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who wish to profess their faith shall be interviewed to the satisfaction of the Consistory concerning doctrine and life, and their public confession of faith shall occur in a public worship service after adequate announcements to the congregation and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Thereby baptized members are accepted into full communion in the congregation and shall be obliged to persevere in the fellowship of the church and only in hearing God's Word, but also partaking in the Lord's Supper.</p>
<p>Article 44. Marriage Scripture teaches that marriage is to</p>	<p>Art 70 Marriage Since it is proper that the matrimonial state</p>	<p>Art 83. Marriage The consistory shall ensure that the members</p>	<p>Article 47 The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the uncaptured. Where this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. The consistories provide assist each other in the support of their missionaries.</p>
			<p>Art. 48. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those</p>

<p>be a fitting monogamous union between a man and a woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry only in the Lord. The minister, as authorized by the consistory, shall solemnize only marriages that accord with Scripture, using the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage adopted by general synod.</p> <p>Article 45. Funerals A funeral is a family matter and shall not be conducted as a worship service.</p> <p>Article 46. The Church Records The consistory shall maintain accurate records which include the names of the members of the congregation and the date of their births, baptisms, professions of faith, marriages, receptions into and departures from the church, and deaths.</p>	<p>be confirmed in the presence of Christ's Church, according to the Form for that purpose, the Consistories shall attend to it.</p> <p>Art. 65. Funerals Funeral services or funeral services shall not be introduced.</p> <p>Art. 60. Church Records The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded</p>	<p>of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorized by the consistory - solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnization of a marriage may take place either in a private ceremony or in a public worship service. The adopted Form for the Solemnization of Marriage shall be used.</p> <p>Art. 65 Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.</p> <p>Art. 64. Church Records The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the date of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.</p>	<p>under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would conflict with the Word of God.</p> <p>Art. 49 A Christian funeral is neither a service of corporate worship nor subject to ecclesiastical government, but is a family matter, and should be conducted accordingly.</p> <p>Art. 50 The Consistory shall maintain accurate membership records which include names and dates of baptisms, professions of faith, marriages and deaths of members of the congregation.</p>
<p>IV. DISCIPLINE</p> <p>Discipline</p> <p>Article 47. The Nature and Purpose of Discipline Ecclesiastical discipline, one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities. The purpose of ecclesiastical discipline is that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church, and one's neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ.</p> <p>Article 48. Consistory Involvement When a member's sin in doctrine or life is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed. A private sin from which the sinner repents after having been admonished by one person alone, or subsequently in the presence of two or three witnesses, that not be brought to the consistory.</p>	<p>Of Censure and Ecclesiastical Admonition.</p> <p>Art. 71 As Christian Discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from Civil trial or punishment by the Authorities, so also besides Civil punishment there is need of Ecclesiastical Censures, to reconcile the sinner with the Church and his neighbor and to remove the offense out of the Church of Christ.</p> <p>Art. 72 In case any one sins in doctrine or offends in conduct as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Math. 18 shall be followed.</p> <p>Art. 73 Secret sins of which the sinner repents, after</p>	<p>Christian Discipline</p> <p>Art. 66 Nature and Purpose Since church discipline is of a spiritual nature and, as one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, has been given to the church to shut and to open that kingdom, the consistory shall ensure that it is used to punish also against both the purity of doctrine and the purity of conduct, in order to reconcile the sinner with the church and with his neighbor, and to remove all offense out of the church of Christ by our Lord in Matthew 18: 15-17 is followed in obedience.</p> <p>Art. 67 Consistory Involvement The Consistory shall not deal with any matter pertaining to purity of doctrine or purity of life that is reported to it unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admissions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.</p>	<p>Ecclesiastical Discipline</p> <p>Art. 51 Since Christian discipline is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities, so also besides civil punishment there is need of ecclesiastical censure, that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church and his neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ.</p> <p>Art. 52 In case anyone sins in doctrine or offends in conduct as long as the sin is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed.</p> <p>Art. 53 Secret sins from which the sinner repents after</p>

<p>When a member dies not present after having been admonished in the presence of two or three witnesses concerning a private sin, or when it is alleged that a member has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the consistory. Only then shall the consistory deal with any alleged sin in doctrine or life.</p> <p>Article 49. The Reconciliation of a Member The reconciliation of a member whose sin is public or has become public, because the admission of the church was despised, shall take place upon evidence of genuine repentance, and in a manner which best promotes the edification of the church. The consistory shall determine whether, for the welfare of the congregation and the sinner, the member shall be required to confess the sin publicly.</p> <p>Article 50. The Discipline of a Member A communicant member, or a private non-communicant member, whose sin is properly made known to the consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory, shall, in agreement with the Word of God, be subject to church discipline according to the following stages: a. Silent Discipline: A member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from all the privileges of church membership, including using the sacraments and voting at congregational meetings. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory. b. Public Discipline: If the sinner disciplines and subsequent admonitions do not bring about repentance, and before proceeding to excommunication, the sinner's impotence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the member's offense and failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be</p>	<p>being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be made public before the Consistory.</p> <p>Art.74 In any one, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin, by two or three persons, does not give heart, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the Consistory.</p> <p>Art.75 The reconciliation of all such sins are of the nature of a public character, or those become public because the admission of the church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church. Whether in any particular case that takes place in public shall, when there is the difference of opinion about it in the Consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring Churches or of the Classes.</p> <p>Art. 76 Such a sinner who obstinately rejects the admonitions of the Consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with consent of the Classes.</p> <p>Art.77 After the suspension from the Lord's Table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the obduracy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him, in reproach, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. These shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name</p>	<p>being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be made known to the Consistory.</p> <p>Art. 54 If anyone has been admonished in love by two or three persons concerning a secret sin and does not repent, or if he has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the Consistory.</p> <p>Art. 57 The restoration of a sinner whose sin is public, or has become public, because the admission of the church was despised, shall take place upon sufficient evidence of repentance, in such a manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of the church. Whether in particular cases this should take place in public shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it with the Consistory, be decided with the advice of two neighboring churches of the Classes.</p> <p>Art. 55 Anyone whose sin is properly made known to the Consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the Scriptural admonitions of the Consistory, shall be suspended from all privileges of church membership, including the use of the sacraments. After such suspension and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the impotence of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him and repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to him and pray for him. This shall be done in three steps. In the first, the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned, that he be somewhat spared. In the second, the Consistory shall speak the advice of Classes, before proceeding. In the third, the congregation shall be informed. If the sinner he repents, he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, if he remains impenitent, may take place with the full knowledge of the church. The interval between the steps shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.</p>	<p>being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be made known to the Consistory.</p> <p>Art. 54 If anyone has been admonished in love by two or three persons concerning a secret sin and does not repent, or if he has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the Consistory.</p> <p>Art. 57 The restoration of a sinner whose sin is public, or has become public, because the admission of the church was despised, shall take place upon sufficient evidence of repentance, in such a manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of the church. Whether in particular cases this should take place in public shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it with the Consistory, be decided with the advice of two neighboring churches of the Classes.</p> <p>Art. 55 Anyone whose sin is properly made known to the Consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the Scriptural admonitions of the Consistory, shall be suspended from all privileges of church membership, including the use of the sacraments. After such suspension and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the impotence of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him and repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to him and pray for him. This shall be done in three steps. In the first, the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned, that he be somewhat spared. In the second, the Consistory shall speak the advice of Classes, before proceeding. In the third, the congregation shall be informed. If the sinner he repents, he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, if he remains impenitent, may take place with the full knowledge of the church. The interval between the steps shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.</p>
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<p>done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared. 2. In the second step, the consistory shall seek the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation. 3. In the third step, the congregation shall be informed that, unless there is repentance, the member will be excommunicated from the church on a specified date. <p>6. Excommunication: if these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, the consistory shall excommunicate the impenitent sinner, using the synodically approved liturgical form.</p>	<p>of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the consent of the Classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the congregation shall be informed that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the Church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the Church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.</p>	<p>has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned and a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place. The time between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.</p>	<p>Art. 56 If these steps of discipline, having been carried out in a loving manner, do not bring about repentance, but rather harden the sinner in his ways, the Consistory shall proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication. In agreement with the Word of God and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.</p> <p>Art. 59 Mature members by baptism who are delinquent in doctrine or life shall be admonished and, if they persist, shall be excluded from the church of Christ. The advice of classis must be sought before proceeding to such exclusion.</p>
<p>Article 51. The Readmission of an Excommunicated Person When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be readmitted into communion with Christ and His church, the congregation shall be so informed. If no lawful objections are presented to the consistory within one month after the public announcement, readmission into the church with all its privileges shall take place, using the synodically approved liturgical form. One who has been excommunicated as a non-communicate member, shall be readmitted only upon the public profession of faith.</p> <p>Article 52. No Lording It Over No church shall lord it over other churches, and no office-bearer shall lord it over other office-bearers.</p> <p>Article 53. Mutual Censure The ministers, elders, and deacons shall conduct mutual censure regularly, whereby they exert one another in an edifying manner regarding the and edifying manner regarding the</p>	<p>Art. 78 Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the Church in the way of penitence, it shall be announced to the Congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary, he may with profession of his conversion be publicly reinstated, according to the Form for that purpose.</p> <p>Art. 84 No church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons.</p> <p>Art. 81 The Ministers of the Word, Elders and Deacons, shall before the celebration of the Lord's Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves and in a friendly spirit</p>	<p>Art. 70. Readmission When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of his desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised, the readmission shall take place with the use of the Form for that purpose.</p> <p>Art. 74. No Lording It Over Others No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.</p> <p>Art. 73. Christian Censure The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.</p>	<p>Art. 58 Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church by way of penitence, it shall be announced to the congregation in order that, insofar as no one can allege anything against him to the contrary, he may, with profession of his repentance, be publicly reinstated with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.</p> <p>Art. 60 Members by baptism who have been excluded from the church and who later repent of their sin shall be received again into the church only upon public profession of faith.</p> <p>Art. 65 No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, and no office-bearers shall lord it over other office-bearers.</p> <p>Art. 63 The ministers, elders and deacons shall exercise mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort one another in an edifying manner regarding the discharge of their offices.</p>

<p>discharge of their offices.</p> <p>Article 54. The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-bearer</p> <p>When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or gross sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of his consistory, he shall be temporarily suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches. The sin, resulting in suspension from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, schism, open blasphemy, simony, detraction of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unchastity, or anything else which would warrant the discipline of any other member. Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot effectively continue in office, he shall be deposed from his office by his consistory. In each case the concurring advice of classis is required, and in the case of a minister the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod is also required. Suspension or deposition in both cases does not necessarily require further ecclesiastical discipline.</p> <p>A man once deposed may be reconsecrated to office only after a sufficient period of time, only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and only through the regular procedure for entering office.</p> <p>Article 55. Appeals and Procedure</p> <p>When a consistory, for settling a dispute at the consistory level, have been exhausted, and a member is convicted that an injustice has been done to him by a decision of his consistory, he may appeal the decision to classis for its judgment. The judgment of the broader assembly shall be reached by majority vote, received with respect, and considered settled and binding unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.</p>	<p>admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.</p> <p>Art.79</p> <p>When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders or Deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the Church, or worthy of punishment by the Authorities, the Elders and Deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof expel from their office, but the Ministers shall only be suspended. When a Minister shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis, with the advice of the Delegates of the (Particular) Synod mentioned in Article 11.</p> <p>Art.80</p> <p>Furthermore among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, there are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, false testimony, or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, detraction, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, and in the case of a minister, detraction, simony, and in the case of a deacon, detraction, simony, and in the case of a minister of the Church would be considered worthy of excommunication.</p>	<p>Art.71. Suspension and Deposition of Office-bearers</p> <p>When ministers, elders, or deacons have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuse to heed the admonitions by the consistory with the deacons, they shall be suspended from office by the judgment of their own consistory with the deacons, and of the neighboring church. When they harden themselves in their sin or when the sin committed is of such a nature that they cannot continue in office, elders or deacons shall be deposed by the judgment of the above mentioned consistories with the deacons, Classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, and the judge whether the ministers are to be deposed.</p> <p>Art.72. Serious and Gross Sins on the Part of Office-bearers</p> <p>All serious and gross sins which deposition of office-bearers are grounds for the suspension of following are to be mentioned particularly: false doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, detraction of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, detraction, brawling, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unchastity, and in the case of a minister, all sins and serious misdemeanors that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.</p>	<p>Art.61</p> <p>When a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions of the Consistory, he shall be suspended from his office by his own Consistory with the concurring advice of the Consistories of two neighboring churches. Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot continue in office, he shall be deposed by his Consistory with the concurring advice of Classis.</p> <p>Art.62</p> <p>Included among the gross sins, but not to the exclusion of all others, which are worthy of suspension or deposition from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, false testimony, or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, detraction, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre, in short, all sins and gross offenses which render the perpetrators infamous before the world and which in any other member of the church would occasion excommunication.</p>	<p>Article 31 - The Right of Appeal</p> <p>If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles formulated in the General Synod, as long as they are not changed by another General Synod.</p>	<p>Article 31. Appeals</p> <p>If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.</p>	<p>Article 29</p> <p>If any assembly complains of having been wronged by the decision of another assembly, it shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. An individual's appeal must proceed first to the Consistory, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly. All decisions of a broader assembly are to be received with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order. Consistories who are convicted that they cannot comply with a decision of a broader</p>
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<p>Any appeal to a broader assembly must provide written grounds, and the broader assembly shall provide adequate grounds for its decision to sustain or not sustain an appeal. If an assembly does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may appeal the decision of the narrower assembly to the next broader assembly. If a general synod does not sustain that appeal, the appellant may appeal synod's decision only once and that to the next general synod.</p> <p>A member who desires to object to a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, shall bring the matter to his consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.</p> <p>A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a broader assembly conflicts with the Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the broader assembly next in order as feasible.</p> <p>Article 56. The Reception, Departure, and Withdrawal of Members</p> <p>a. The Reception of Members. Members from churches within the federation or churches with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall be received under the spiritual care of the consistory upon receipt of a testimony regarding their doctrine and life. Others shall be admitted only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. In such cases the consistory shall determine whether a public profession of faith shall be required.</p> <p>b. The Departure of Members. Members departing to a church within the federation or a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall submit a written request to the consistory, which shall send a letter concerning their doctrine and life to such church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care.</p> <p>c. The Withdrawal of Members. The withdrawal of a member shall be appropriately announced.</p> <p>d. Letter of testimony. If a letter of testimony concerning doctrine and life</p>	<p>Art. 82. To those who remove from the Congregation a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the Consistory, signed by two or in the case of letters, which are given under the seal of the Church, signed by one.</p> <p>Art. 83. Furthermore, to the poor, removing for sufficient reasons, so much money for traveling shall be given by the Deacons, as they deem adequate. The Consistory and the Deacons shall, however, see to it that they be</p>	<p>Art. 62. Atestations Communicant members who move to a sister-church shall be given, after previous announcements to the congregation, an atestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by two of its members. In the case of a non-communicant member such an atestation shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned.</p>	<p>assembly because it does not agree with the Word of God cannot be compelled to do so, provided that they state to the classis the points at which the decision of the assembly disagrees with the Word of God. If a Consistory refuses to comply with the final decision of the synod and a subsequent synod rules by majority vote that submission in the matter is essential for the unity of the churches, the congregation is no longer eligible for membership in the federation.</p> <p>Article 30 Having availed herself of the avenues for appeal, a church through its Consistory may withdraw from the federation at any time by submitting a written statement to the classis to which the church belongs.</p> <p>Article 31 If any church member complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a narrower assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. Until a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed.</p> <p>Art. 44 Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. The Consistory shall determine in each case whether public profession of faith shall be required. Their names shall be announced to the congregation two weeks prior to reception, in order that the congregation may have opportunity, if necessary, to bring lawful objections to the attention of the Consistory.</p> <p>Art. 64 Those who seek membership in another congregation shall request in writing that their current Consistory send to the receiving Consistory an official letter including pertinent membership information and testimony concerning doctrine and life.</p>
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<p>is requested by a member, the consistory shall furnish such a letter.</p> <p>Article 57. Property</p> <p>All property, whether real or personal, held by a local church for the benefit of that local church, shall remain the property of that local church in accordance with its own by-laws or regulations and the governing laws of the jurisdiction in which the church is located.</p> <p>All property, whether real or personal, held for the benefit of the federation by a local church, a classis or synod or a committee, trustee or trustees thereof, or otherwise, shall be held in trust as property in common of all of the churches within the federation, in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by classis or synods of the federation. In the event a local church withdraws from the federation, unless the rules and regulations of the federation provide otherwise, the withdrawing church shall cease to have any benefit in such property.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the laws of the jurisdiction in which a local church is located, the final authority for any acquisition or disposition of property by a local church, whether real or personal, shall be the council of that church in accordance with the church's own by-laws or regulations, regardless of how the property is held.</p> <p>Any appeals to broader assemblies with respect to property shall be governed by this article.</p>	<p>not too much inclined to relieve their Churches of the poor, with whom they would without necessity burden other Churches.</p>	<p>Art.75. Property of the Churches</p> <p>All property, both real and personal, which belongs to the churches comprised respectively in classes, regional synods, and general synods in common, shall be held in trust for such churches in equal shares by deacons or trustees appointed for that purpose from time to time by the appropriate classis, regional synod, or general synod, and such deacons or trustees shall be bound by the terms of their appointment and instruction and are subject to being discharged by a subsequent classis, regional synod, or general synod.</p>	<p>Article 33</p> <p>Whereas it is the sole right of a congregation to hold title to its property, the ownership of all property, real and personal, held by a congregation of this federation is vested exclusively in that congregation, and shall be taken in its name alone. Each congregation shall have exclusive control over all of its temporalities, nor shall the exercise of its property rights, through the decisions of its Consistory, be subject to the supervision of the broader assemblies, nor shall the broader assemblies have the right to revise those decisions. The broader assemblies of the federation shall not attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation, whether or not such congregation remains within, chooses to withdraw from, or is removed from the federation.</p>
<p>Article 58. The Observance and Revision of the Church Order</p> <p>These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, having been drafted in accordance with the Foundational Principles and adopted by common consent, shall be observed diligently. Only when the good order and welfare of the churches make it necessary, shall this Church Order be revised. Any proposed revision of the Church Order shall be adopted only by a majority vote of a general synod.</p>	<p>86</p> <p>These Articles, relating to the lawful order of the Church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the Church demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented or diminished. However, no particular liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the General Synod.</p>	<p>Art.76. Observance and Revision of the Church Order</p> <p>These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord, if the interest of the churches demand such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented, or diminished. However, no consistory, classis, or regional synod shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavor diligently to observe the articles of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by a general synod.</p>	<p>Art.66</p> <p>These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they ought to be observed diligently. If it be found that God may be more honored and the churches better served by changing any article, this shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the Consistoria prior to the next synodical meeting, after which meeting they shall take effect.</p>

URCNA Protocol Procedure Proposal

1. Synod 2007
 - 1.1 Report of JCO Committee, with submission of a Proposed Church Order (PCO), and the recommendation that Synod 2007 present the PCO to the churches for discussion and evaluation, with a view to final adoption by Synod 2010.
 - 1.2 Recommend that the JCO Committee be appointed as the PCO Committee, mandated to receive, collate, and evaluate all official communications regarding the PCO, and on that basis to recommend a revised Proposed Church Order to Synod 2010.
 - 1.3 Recommend that official communications regarding the PCO proceed only from consistories to the PCO Committee.
 - 1.4 Recommend that the PCO Committee compile a list of all communications which are to be received by no later than March 1, 2009 from consistories, and individual communications processed through their consistories, together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication.
 - 1.5 Recommend that the PCO Committee be authorized to hold no more than eight (8) regional conferences (perhaps in connection scheduled meetings of the classes) throughout the federation (Ontario, Alberta, California, eastern US, Michigan, central US).
2. Between Synod 2007 and Synod 2010
 - 2.1 Mandate several committee members to prepare, circulate, and finalize for publication a number of expositions of various provisions of the PCO, including their biblical principle(s), historical background, and practical considerations.
 - 2.2 Mandate teams of committee members to prepare and provide regional seminar conferences (perhaps in connection with scheduled meetings of the classes) to present and discuss various provisions of the PCO.
 - 2.3 Mandate the PCO Committee to prepare a report for Synod 2010, and to recommend a revised PCO for adoption by Synod 2010.
3. Synod 2010
 - 3.1 Report of PCO Committee regarding all communications received from consistories, together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication.
 - 3.2 Recommend a revised Proposed Church Order for adoption by Synod 2010.

A Minority Report of the Joint Church Order Committee, re. PCO 35

Background

It has been a privilege for us to serve our federation by functioning on the Joint Church Order Committee with brothers from both the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our presentation of this minority report in no way indicates any personal differences with these brothers. It does indicate a difference of perspective on a very specific matter. We support the vast majority of the Proposed Church Order which is a thoughtful, careful, and hopefully helpful work which will assist in bringing our two federations together.

Objection

Our objection is centered on Article 35: **Psalms and Hymns**. It says, "The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod." We agree with this article with the exception of the last phrase, "by the general synod." Our present church order (Article 39, *Church Order of the URCNA*) indicates that the congregation may sing "hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity..., provided they are approved *by the consistory*." We believe that the "150 Psalms should have the principal place in the singing of the churches." There is adequate Biblical principle and precedent to use the Psalms prominently in the churches. We fully agree that any hymns sung in the worship of the churches must "faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity." This is in keeping with the Biblical principle that our singing in worship must truly conform to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. We do, however, disagree that the *general synod* needs to approve all music sung in the churches. Rather, we are convinced that our singing ought to contribute to the unity of the newly formed federation by the use of a synodically approved set of standards for music which shall be applied on the local level by the wise decision of the consistory of each church.

Reasons for the Objection

There are several reasons for our objection.

1. We have not been persuaded that there is sufficient Scriptural precept, principle, or precedent which requires that the general synod, rather than the local consistory, must approve all music used in the local churches.
2. Mandating the general synod to approve all music used in the local churches places an impractical restriction on the local church which

wishes to reach other cultures with the gospel. A number of our churches are located in areas where people do not all speak English, or who communicate better in another language. To mandate that the local church cannot use any other songs than those approved in the English language hymnal, effectively and sadly conveys an attitude that we are not interested in having any other than English speaking Reformed Christians as part of our federation. To suggest that the federation will produce a hymnal in various languages is impractical and costly. It is much more practical to permit each local consistory, which is sensitive to the local needs of other cultures, to approve of songs appropriate for these congregations.

3. To mandate the general synod, rather than the local consistory, to approve of all music used in the worship of the churches is rather inconsistent with what we expect of our consistories. In Article 33: **The Regular Worship Services**, the Proposed Church Order states that the “consistory shall regulate the worship services,” one item of which is the singing of the congregation. Our synod does not require the churches to use a specific Bible translation. We expect our local consistory to choose a reliable and faithful translation of the Bible, something very crucial for the life and instruction of the churches. We have entrusted to the local consistory this important responsibility. Yet, by suggesting that the local consistory cannot and should not make evaluated and wise decisions about appropriate music in the churches is inconsistent with what we expect of them. At each service we expect the elders to determine whether the sermon preached was in accord with Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. If not, the consistory is expected to deal appropriately with the concern. Yet, removing the task of approving music from the consistory’s responsibility, as is indicated in the Proposed Church Order, conveys the idea that the local consistory cannot and should not be entrusted with this responsibility.
4. To remove from the local consistory the responsibility of approving the churches’ music, and to place this in the hands of the general synod, effectively denies the churches any opportunity to use any other music than that which is contained in the current song book of the federation. This means that no church in the future may use any old music now contained in the 1976 Blue *Psalter Hymnal* which did not make it into the new federation hymnal. This means that no church may use any music which meets the criterion for entry into a new federation hymnal, but for reasons of space did not make it into the new hymnal. This means that any Psalm tune now contained in the *Book of Praise* but which will not make it into the new federation hymnal may not be sung in the future. The long standing practice of a church singing the “Hallelujah Chorus” on Resurrection morning would have to cease, because this chorus likely would not be included in the federation hymnal. If a church uses any other music than that contained in the new song book, that church will be out of compliance with the Church Order.

Furthermore, to mandate that only the general synod may approve of music used in the worship of the churches effectively puts an end to the use of any *new* Biblically, Reformed, well-written, beautiful music. The last time any changes were made to the music in the *Songs of Praise* hymnal was in 1983. The URCNA currently uses the 1976 edition of the *Psalter Hymnal*. Such books cannot be frequently updated. It is too costly and time consuming. Nor would we expect the federation to do so. Under our present Church Order, the churches could purchase the *Trinity Hymnal*, for example. If this article of the Proposed Church Order is adopted, however, this fine hymnal may not be used.

5. Both the principle and the practice of singing in public worship only those songs approved by synod have a deep and broad history among Reformed churches. Usually this principle and practice are defended with an appeal to preserving unity among the churches.

Nevertheless, given the current circumstances that exist among the churches we seek to serve with this Proposed Church Order, one very foreseeable and probable consequence of codifying this requirement in the current Church Order will be the fracturing of the unity already being enjoyed among the congregations. This fracturing of unity would arise from restricting what many have come to believe is the liberty, given by God through Scripture to the consistory, to determine, in accordance with Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, which songs may be used in the congregation's public worship.

This liberty is in principle related to the liberty which a consistory exercises regarding the choices (1) of Bible version for public worship, (2) of catechism and Sunday School materials for youth nurture, (3) of vacation Bible school materials, and (4) of Bible study materials for use by groups sponsored by the consistory. The proposed Church Order fully recognizes the consistory's prerogative in all of these latter areas. To refuse the exercise of this same prerogative with regard to songs sung in public worship seems inconsistent and harmful.

Recommendation

In view of these objections, we wish to recommend to the synod the following wording of the Proposed Church Order Article 35:

"The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by the consistory in accord with a synodically adopted standard."

Respectfully submitted,
 Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman
 Rev. Ronald L. Scheuers

2.3. Sub-committee Report on a common Songbook

Report to the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) and the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) by the Joint Committee for a Common Song Book (Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise [SCBP] of the Canadian Reformed Churches [CanRC] and the Psalter-Hymnal Committee of the United Reformed Churches of North America [URCNA])

1. **CanRC Mandate** (Reference: Acts General Synod Chatham: Article 77 para. 5.2)
 - 1.1 To continue working closely with the committee re: song book appointed by the URCNA synod (ref 5.2.1);
 - 1.2 To continue to produce a song book that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions of the Psalms, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and Reformed confessions (ref 5.2.2);
 - 1.3 To keep the CPEU updated on the progress (ref 5.2.3);
 - 1.4 To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for it to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion (ref 5.2.4).

2. **URCNA Mandate** (Reference: Minutes Synod Escondido).
 - 2.1 "That the present 'Psalter Hymnal Committee' work together with the Canadian Reformed 'Book of Praise Committee' to consider for inclusion in this song book the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality." (Minutes, Article XLV, B, 2, c).
 - 2.2 "To report annually to the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, which, in turn will make full annual reports to the churches concerning this work." (Minutes, Article XLV, B, 4).

3. **Joint Committee**
 - 3.1 Meetings

The Joint Committee meets two times per year. Since the last Synod the Joint Committee met four times with one more meeting scheduled for late October 2006. Detailed minutes are taken for internal use. For each of the meetings extensive Press Releases were issued. The individual committees meet regularly, CanRC usually face to face and URCNA usually on-line.

The Joint Committee met:
 March 2004 in Jenison MI
 April 2005 in Ancaster ON
 November 2005 in Jenison MI
 April 2006 in Ancaster ON

The topics discussed and accomplishments made to date are recorded in the paragraphs following.

3.2 Benefit of Joint Meetings

The original meeting schedule was to meet once per year. This has now been doubled to twice per year. With each successive meeting mutual trust and understanding is strengthened. This was particularly obvious when selecting hymns according to the adopted Principles and Guidelines. As a result, the Joint Committee could work in harmony and with frankness toward each other. Although complete agreement was not always achieved, the discussions were always brotherly.

Efforts are being made to publicize awareness of the work done, particularly on the Principles and Guidelines, with a series of articles in *Christian Renewal* and *Clarion*.

4. Principles and Guidelines

The Principles and Guidelines presented to Synod Chatham (CanRC) and Synod Calgary (URCNA) were (unintentionally) slightly different. An addition to Guideline 7 was picked up in the report to Synod Calgary, but not in the report to Synod Chatham. Synod Calgary felt it necessary to additionally amend Guideline 9. The Joint Committee adopted these changes which are as follows:

- 4.1 Guideline 7 now reads (italics constitutes the change) "In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, *and individualism.*"
- 4.2 Guideline 9 originally read as follows: "The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Where possible, use is to be made of music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage (e.g., the Genevan psalm tunes and the Scottish Psalter)." Synod Calgary changed the wording to: "*The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.*"

5. Joint Committee Future Plans

The Joint Committee intends, D.V., to:

- 5.1 Continue to meet at least two times per year.
- 5.2 Continue to foster public awareness of the activities relating to the Common Song Book by way of articles and press releases of joint meetings.
- 5.3 Continue to search for suitable Psalms (See also Section 7).
- 5.4 Continue to evaluate hymns (See also Section 7).
- 5.5 Resolve copyright issues relating to using material not in the public domain.
- 5.6 Deal with issues involving rhyming and change of text of songs made necessary due to questionable doctrine, antiquated language, questionable expressions and the like.

6. Creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers

6.1 Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)

Synod Calgary created a new committee with the mandate of dealing with the non-musical portion of the Song Book. The original committee's remaining mandate is to deal only with the musical section.

When the change was made by Synod Calgary, there appeared to be no clear mandate instructing the new committee to work together with the SCBP; hence the Joint Committee expressed concern that combined work on the creeds, confessions, etc. could not begin. Contact was taken up with the new committee with the aid of CPEU and CERCU.

The result was a communication from Dr. K. Riddlebarger, chairman of the new committee who, in March 2006, wrote in part: “ ... *that our current operating assumptions —1). That our committee is distinct from the committee working on the musical portion of the Psalter, 2). That we are working on prayers, liturgical forms, and confessional documents for a new URCNA hymnal, and 3). That we are to report our work to the churches through the CERCU committee—do need to include consultation with the CanRC. ... Before we begin our work on the forms (we should start in May) we'll figure out what is meant by “in conjunction with” and then go from there.*”

6.2 Joint Committee's intent to make a recommendation

In a united federation a common set of creeds, confessions, liturgical forms and prayers will be required at some time. Since under the current condition no meaningful work could be started on this non-musical part of the Common Song Book, the Joint Committee will make the appropriate recommendations to correct this situation at the conclusion of this report.

7. Song Book Activity

7.1 Hymns

7.1.1 *Gross List of Potential Hymns*

The joint committee has reviewed the hymns as found in the Centennial Edition of the Psalter-Hymnal, some of the hymns of the Book of Praise, the proposed hymns for the Book of Praise Augmentation and hymns of the New Trinity Hymnal (the review of latter is still in progress). The adopted Principles and Guidelines were applied to each hymn reviewed. On the basis of the review the hymn was placed on the gross list or rejected. This gross list will be used to make final selections for the Common Song Book proposal to arrive at a well-balanced hymnary.

7.1.2 *Structure of the hymnary*

Initial work has been done on the structure. There is complete agreement that the basic structure will follow the division of

the Apostolic Creed. The tentative structure is as follows:

1. The Apostles Creed
2. The Holy Trinity
3. God the Father and our Creation
Including: Thanksgiving for Harvest and Labour
4. God the Son and our Redemption
5. God the Holy Spirit and our Sanctification
6. The Church
Including: Holy Baptism
The Lord's Supper
Ordination
7. The Forgiveness of Sins
8. The Resurrection of the Body and the Return of Christ
9. Eternal Life on the New Earth

7.2 Psalms

7.2.1 *Agreement*

- 7.2.1.1. The Joint Committee has found agreement in many areas.
- 7.2.1.2. The Joint Committee has agreed that at least one of each Psalm rendition must be a complete Psalm. Additional selections of the same Psalm may be partial.
- 7.2.1.3. Whether complete or partial, the renditions ought to be accurate translations or paraphrases of the Hebrew text of the Psalms;
- 7.2.1.4. The Joint Committee has agreed that all 150 Psalms are to be represented in the Psalter section.
- 7.2.1.5. The tunes should support the words;
- 7.2.1.6. The Psalter should be expressive of the Reformed tradition.
- 7.2.1.7. The Psalms will have the principal place in the singing of the congregation, and therefore, in the churches' Song Book.
- 7.2.1.8. In principle there is agreement to publish in 4-part harmony.

7.2.1 *Understanding each other's positions where there is no complete agreement*

In order to better understand our mutual positions, with respect to whether or not to include the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter in the Common Song Book, the individual committees prepared position papers. These also generated an open and frank discussion to try to come to a mutual understanding.

- 7.2.2.1 The CanRC paper outlined the history and background of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. As a collection, it is a significant and unique contribution to North American Psalmody, containing all 150 Psalms and that the choice was made to compile a

non-eclectic Psalter. Of great importance is that the words are true to the actual biblical text and that each and every Psalm is 100% complete. The CanRC continue to be deeply grateful for the existence of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter.

- 7.2.2.2 The URCNA paper explains that there are arguments against incorporating an all Genevan Psalter. Generally there is a negative reaction against the Genevan Psalter among the URCNA churches. This is for a large part due to the fact that although in URCNA congregations there are some second-generation Dutch immigrants who might be somewhat familiar with the Genevan tunes, there is increasingly greater cultural diversity. There is the danger of presenting a narrow cultural profile that is completely foreign to URCNA communities.

The paper contains many questions touching on the reality as it is in the URCNA, some of which include the following:

Can we argue for Genevan tunes on the basis of Scripture or confessions?

Are there no other tunes that could support the text equally well?

These questions are intended to convey the reluctance of many URCNA church members to accept a common Song Book that contains all the Genevan Psalms. The result could well be that, instead of fostering increased Psalm singing, it may actually lead to less Psalm singing or even non-use of the Song Book. This would certainly be counter productive to the cause of unity even if federative unity will be achieved.

7.2.3. *Discussion of papers*

In the discussion based on these papers it became clear that it was not that far-fetched that this issue could become an obstacle to real unity. We make the following observations:

The CanRC will need to revisit the General Synod decision that all 150 Genevan Psalms are to be included. It should be considered whether we may allow the inclusion of all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms to become the main divisive issue preventing full unity. Although we recognize the tremendous commitment and effort that led to the development and production of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter, can it be defended that all 150 Genevan tunes are to be included?

In addition, in order to serve the unity sought, the URCNA will need to study seriously the Genevan Psalms in order to become thoroughly informed about them. Such efforts will help to discover the beauty of the melodies that have withstood the test of time, and will develop a greater understanding of why the CanRC churches sing and love the Genevan Psalms. Disassembling the Anglo-Genevan Psalter will be difficult for the CanRC to accept without the assurance that this is done for a good reason: For the sake of unity, and the expectation that the new book will be the official Song Book, to the exclusion of other books and collections.

If everyone keeps the unity of the federation-to-be fully in view, considerations for a compromise that is God pleasing must be made possible.

7.2.4 *How do we go from here to a Common Song Book*
The joint committee recommend that the Common Song Book ought not to be a condition for federative unity for the following reasons:

7.2.4.1 Currently the Song Book appears to be a condition for federative unity (see art. 73. 4.7 Neerlandia). However, the committee understands that there is a huge emotional element present. This was also obvious in our working together as committees. (A flavour of this “tension” can be seen in paragraph 7.2.2.2 above).

7.2.4.2 To truly serve unity, it may be better to first learn to fully trust and appreciate each other as fellow members of Christ before adopting the Common Song Book.

7.2.4.3 To produce the complete Song Book is a tremendously labour intensive task that will take many years.

It would therefore be best that the Common Song Book be not a part of the merger vote. After merger the committee can continue its work. Then a synod of the new federation can adopt the Common Song Book when it is completed.

8. **Contact with CPEU/CERCU**

8.1 The contact with these committees was accomplished by interim reports, and Press Releases of the Joint Meetings. Advice was also sought with respect to the “Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)”

8.2 This report will be the final report under the current synodical mandates.

9. Recommendations

	Recommendations to Synod Smithers	Recommendations to Synod Scherererville
9.1	<u>Synod decide</u> to continue the SCBP mandate as given by Synod Chatham Article 77 para. 5 except modified as listed under 9.4	<u>Synod decide</u> to continue the committee's mandate given by previous Synods.
9.2	<u>Synod appoint</u> a (new) sub committee to the SCBP to work together with URCNA "Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)" to come to a unified text for creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers	<u>Synod clarify</u> the mandate for the "Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)" in order for it to work together with the sub committee to the SCBP for Creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers to come to a unified text for creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers
9.3	<u>Synod maintain</u> the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book but establish that the Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity (see concerns para. 7.2.4)	<u>Synod maintain</u> the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book but establish that the Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity (see concerns para. 7.2.4)
9.4	<u>Synod reconsider</u> the decision recorded in Art. 77 para. 5.2.2 of Synod Chatham: "To continue to produce a song book that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter" and <u>allow</u> the SCBP to delete some Genevan Psalms provided suitable complete replacements can be found. (Refer to para. 1.2 above)	<u>Synod provide</u> direction to the committee if the inclusion of all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms would be detrimental for the churches to accept the Common Song Book.
9.5	<u>Synod approve</u> the changes to Guidelines 7 and 9 (Refer to para. 4.1 and 4. above)	<u>No action required</u> as Synod Calgary already approved the Principles and Guidelines in their present form.
9.6	<u>Synod state</u> its commitment that the Common Song Book shall be the exclusively used Song Book in the worship services of the united federation.	<u>Synod state</u> its commitment that the Common Song Book shall be the exclusively used Song Book in the worship services of the united federation.

Respectfully submitted,
(in alphabetical order)

D.G.J. Agema (CanRC)
N.H. Gootjes (CanRC)
D. Jasperse (URCNA)
E. Knott (URCNA)

R. Lankheet (URCNA)
C.J. Nobels (CanRC)
D. Royall (URCNA)
D. Vander Meulen (URCNA)

A. VanderPol (URCNA)
C. VanHalen-Faber (CanRC)
G.Ph. van Popta (CanRC)
D. Wynia (URCNA)

2.4 Sub-committee Report on Theological Education

**THE REPORT OF
THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

To The Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
Reporting to the 2007 General Synod of the
Canadian Reformed Churches
meeting in Smithers, British Columbia

Esteemed Brothers,
Herewith we submit to you a report outlining our mandate and its execution.

I. MANDATE

The General Synod of Neerlandia 2004 made the following decision:
5.2 “to give the Committee re: *Theological Education* the following mandate:

- 5.2.1. To work closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synods;
- 5.2.2 To continue the evaluation the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and URCNA;
- 5.2.3 To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:
 - 5.2.3.1 The new federation should retain at least one federational theological school at which the board of governors, the professors and teaching staff are appointed by synod;
 - 5.2.3.2 Attention should be given as to what to do in the case of an aspiring candidate to the ministry who does not have adequate instruction in significant courses in Reformed Doctrine, in Reformed Church Polity, or in Reformed Church History, as well as Reformed Homiletics;
- 5.2.4 To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
- 5.2.5 To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.”

(ACTS GS 2004, Art. 75)

2. URC COMMITTEE MANDATE

Our Committee also decided to inform you of the mandate of the Committee for Theological Education for Ministers of the United Reformed Churches. It reads as follows:

“that this committee work together with the Canadian Reformed Committee to draft proposals for theological education to our

respective synods in preparation for an eventual plan of union.”
(Minutes of the Fourth Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America 2001, Article XLV)

3. APPOINTMENTS

The General Synod of Neerlandia 2001 also made the following appointments:

“4.4. Theological Education Committee: N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam, C. VanDam (convener), K.J. Veldkamp, J. Visscher.”
(ACTS, GS 2004, Art. 116)

4. MEETINGS

Your Committee met on Sept. 10, 2005, Sept. 9, 2005 and Sept. 8, 2006 at the Theological College building in Hamilton, Ontario. These meetings were chaired by Prof. Dr. C. van Dam as convener. Dr. .J. Visscher was appointed secretary.

5. FURTHER APPOINTMENTS

The Rev. Cl. Stam informed the Committee that due to his health, he would not be able to accept his re-appointment. The Committee then approached the Rev. R. Schouten, who is also the secretary of the Board of Governors, and asked him to become a member of the Committee. He agreed to do so.

Authorization for this action is based on the ruling of Synod 1983 that “the Committees shall have the right, in case a vacancy occurs, in order to fulfill their mandate to bring their membership up to its original strength” (Acts, Art. 175).

6. ASSIGNED TASKS

After a careful review of the mandate given it by Synod 2004, your Committee decided to investigate the matter of church mergers and the impact they have on church seminaries. It also decided to react to parts of the Minutes of the URCNA Committee of April 21, 2004. Finally, it instructed one of the Committee members to look into the matter of financial assessment and explain how this works in a decentralized federation such as ours.

An attempt was also made to obtain access to the pertinent documents connected with the reception of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod along with its seminary – Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, into the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Contact with the historian of the PCA proved to be unsuccessful.

7. JOINT MEETINGS – JUNE 15, 2004; NOVEMBER 7, 8, 2005

In our previous report we informed Synod Chatham 2004 that it had not been possible to organize a joint meeting where most of the Committee members from both churches could be present. Thankfully, we may inform you that a majority of the committee members could be present

at a meeting held in Calgary, Alberta, on June 15, 2004 in connection with the URCNA Synod 2004.

Another, and even better attended, meeting took place on Nov. 7 and 8, 2005, on the premises of Mid-America Theological Seminary in Dyer, Indiana.

We may report that we were most graciously received and that throughout our meetings the atmosphere was one of civility and brotherhood.

Still, as you can read from the Notes (attached) the end result was less than what we had hoped for.

In a Press Release issued in early 2006, we informed the churches we had reached an impasse.

The members of the URCNA Committee “unanimously agreed that ‘we as a committee are not prepared to entertain any proposal for theological education that mandates at least one federational seminary’.” They were of the opinion that their mandate did not permit them to accept such a proposal and that they would need a specific instruction from their next synod before they could do so.

For our part, we were not at liberty to ignore this condition seeing our mandate specifically states “the new federation should retain at least one federational theological school...” In our discussions we defended the principle of having at least one federational school and that theological education should be of the churches, by the churches and for the churches. (For our position on this see: “Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?”, *Acts 2004*, pp. 224 – 234) Whether such a church-run theological school would be situated in Hamilton, elsewhere in Canada or in the United States, even the possibility of two such schools (one in each country) were all matters that were discussed but left unresolved.

8. THE ROAD AHEAD

Because of the impasse that has been reached, your Committee did not see any benefit in having further joint committee meetings. It is now up to the URCNA Committee to address the 2007 General Synod of the URCNA. If that Synod gives its Committee the mandate to discuss the presence of at least one federational seminary in a new federation, then we can proceed to deal with the other issues relating to theological education.

On the other hand, should the next General Synod of the URCNA refuse to give its Committee such a mandate, it will call into question not just the continued existence of our Committee but also the future of the entire merger project. Our Committee is convinced that our churches are not prepared to surrender the principle that is at stake here, namely that theological training is both the task and the responsibility of the churches.

9. FUTURE MANDATE

It would be presumptuous for this Committee to suggest to your assembly what to do about our continued existence; however, we do trust that you will give serious consideration to continuing our mandate in the hope that the URCNA General Synod will give its committee that mandate which we so fervently pray for and that we will then be able to serve the next General Synod, and the churches, with a finalized report.

10. CLOSING

We wish you the blessings of the Lord in all of your deliberations and decisions.

The Committee,
N.H. Gootjes
R. Schouten
C. van Dam
K.J. Veldkamp
J. Visscher

September 8, 2006

APPENDICES

Appendix # 1 –

PRESS RELEASE OF JOINT MEETINGS OF THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEES of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) and the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) held in at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, in Dyer, Indiana, United States of America, from Monday to Tuesday, November 7 – 8, 2005

Background

Since this is the first press release of the Theological Education Committees, some background information is in order. At present the URCNA primarily support the theological training at Mid-America Reformed Seminary and Westminster Seminary California, without direct official federative control. The CanRC provide theological training by way of the Theological College in Hamilton which is maintained, supported and controlled by the federation of these churches through Synod.

Earlier joint meetings of the two Theological Education Committees had been held on January 13, 2004 and June 15, 2004. The first meeting included a discussion of two position papers: “Why do the Canadian Reformed Churches have their own Seminary” and “Theological Education in the United Reformed Churches.” This meeting ended with the adoption of the following statements of agreement.

1. It is the task of the churches to train ministers;
2. Ministers of the churches must receive sound Reformed theological training;
3. As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers;
4. Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education;
5. It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training; and
6. The churches, i.e the URCNA and CanRC, should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.

The joint meeting of June 15, 2004 was held in conjunction with the URCNA Synod meeting in Calgary, Alberta. This meeting continued the discussion but did not result in any further agreement on the outstanding issues.

Current Press Release

The November 2005 meetings of which this is a press release were held Monday evening, Tuesday morning and afternoon of November 7 and 8). It was agreed that Rev. J. Barach would chair these meetings and that Mr. K. Veldkamp would record the proceedings.

Present from the URCNA were: Rev. John Barach, Mr. Jonathan Gross, Rev. Brad Nymeyer, Rev. Cal Tuininga, and Rev. Mark Vander Hart and present from the CanRC were: Dr. James Visscher, Dr. Cornelis Van Dam, Dr. Nicolaas H. Gootjes, Rev. Robert A. Schouten and Karl J. Veldkamp. Absent was Dr. W. Robert Godfrey of the URCNA.

For this meeting, the following items were part of the discussion:

- a. The position paper of URCNA committee dated May, 2005
- b. The response of the Can RC committee to the May, 2005 URNCA position paper dated September 12, 2005
- c. A presentation by representatives of the CanRC committee as to how theological education is provided in the Can Reformed Churches and the manner in which it is delivered.

An extensive free flowing brotherly discussion took place in which many aspects of trying to come to grips with a common approach to theological education received due attention. By the end of the time which was available for our meetings, a motion was made that we adopt the model of one federational seminary, with two officially approved independent seminaries (this was without presumption as to which of the present seminaries would be which). The intention was to jointly agree on a model which could be worked with, expanded upon, and developed for presentation to the respective Synods of the URCNA and CanRC which are both scheduled for 2007.

A break is taken to allow the URCNA committee to consider the matter. Following their discussion, the URNCA committee advised they had unanimously agreed that

“We as a committee are not prepared to entertain any proposal for theological education that mandates at least one federational seminary:

Grounds:

1. We are not convinced that this is Biblically mandated; and
2. We do not believe that this will serve the churches well.”

From this resolution it was determined that we were at an impasse since the mandate of the CanRC committee requires at least one federational seminary. There was no common ground to move forward and we would need to report to our respective synods.

The Theological Education Committees of the CanRC and URCNA

3. **Contacts with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches**

In the period since Synod Chatham 2004 no correspondence took place and the committee did not receive any invitation to attend a Synod of the OCRC. There have been no contacts, other than some incidental personal conversations. It appears that from the side of the OCRC there is no interest or desire to pursue further contacts with the CanRC. In our meeting of March 2006 we decided that a letter would be drafted to the OCRC, seeking clarification as to their interest in further contacts with the CanRC. This never materialized, and unless Synod sees the need to follow up on this, the CPEU recommends that the mandate to pursue contacts with the goal to explore the possibilities for federative unity with the OCRC not be renewed.

4. **Contacts with the Free Reformed Churches in North America**

We regret that we must report that at this point in time our contacts with the FRCNA do not look very promising. The brothers Rev. DeGelder and Rev. Louwse attended the FRC Synod held in Dundas, ON in June 2004, and the brothers Rev. Slomp and Rev. DeGelder were present at the FRC Synod held in Brantford, ON in June 2005. Reports of these visits are attached as **appendices 3 and 4** to this CPEU report. In 2006 no invitation was received, since the FRC have decided to invite the churches they maintain contact with no longer every year, but every other year.

The respective committees (FRC and CanRC) met in Langley on January 10, 2005. The minutes of this meeting are included in this report as **appendix 5**. At this meeting the decision was made to continue meeting and discussing matters of mutual interest. The date for this next meeting was set for January 16, 2006.

However, in the Fall of 2005 the committee received a letter on behalf of the subcommittee of the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA, dated November 10, 2005. This letter is attached as **appendix 6**, and the content speaks for itself. Recently we have responded that we have received this letter with sadness and surprise, expressing the hope that we may be able to meet again in the future. To explain our position we have attached to this letter an editorial written by Rev. Slomp, member of our committee. The title is *Reflections on our Contact with the Free Reformed Churches*, and it was published in *Clarion*, vol.55, #17.

5. Recommendations

The mandate for the new committee, to be appointed by Synod Smithers, should be similar to the mandate formulated by Synod Chatham 2004. Throughout this report some minor adjustments are suggested.

Br. F. Westrik's and Rev. R. Aasman's terms on the committee come to an end in 2007. They need to be replaced.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Aasman J. De Gelder
J. Louwse
W. Slomp
J. Vanderstoep
F. Westrik

APPENDIX 1

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, held in the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church, 7:30 PM, March 6, 2006.

Article 1. Opening.

Rev. J.DeGelder, convener for CPEU called the meeting to order, welcomed all present, read from Ephesians 1:15-23, spoke briefly about this passage as it pertained to the work of the CPEU, and then led in opening prayer. Afterwards he noted the following: after many email communications this was a first face to face meeting of this committee in a long time and committee members, Rev. R.Aasman (Edmonton) and W.B.Slomp (Edmonton) were absent with notice. The rest of the committee members were present: Rev. J.DeGelder (Flamborough), Rev. J.D. Louwse (Neerlandia), J.VanderStoep (Surrey) and F.Westrik (Guelph). He also stated the purpose of this meeting which was to discuss the entire work of the committee but also prepare for a meeting the next day with the committee from URCNA.

Article 2. Agenda.

The Agenda for the evening meeting was perused and adopted. Rev. J.Louwse was requested to write the minutes of this meeting.

Art.3. Review of the Mandate of Synod Chatham 2004.

The committee reviewed the mandate of the CPEU as given by Synod Chatham 2004.

See article 60, pages 55-56 – the mandate of CPEU with respect to the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC).

See article 85, pages 74-75 - the mandate of CPEU with respect to the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

See article 98, pages 91-95 - the mandate of CPEU with respect to the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

There is overlap here.

There has been no exchange of Acts of Synod with any of the three Church Federations. Especially with the URCNA it should be done according to the rules for our Phase 2 relationship (Ecclesiastical Fellowship)

This item will be brought up in the next day's meeting with the URCNA brothers.

Article 4, Progress Reports from the 3 subcommittees are presented.

Br. J.VanWoudenberg on behalf of the Common Church Order Committee presented a written progress report. There has been considerable progress, but more needs to be done. This joint committee has issued press releases informing the Churches of their work.

Br. C.Nobel on behalf of the Common Song book Committee presented a written interim progress report. There has been progress. Much more needs to be done. This joint committee has issued press releases informing the Churches of their work.

Rev. J.DeGelder received a verbal report from Prof. C.VanDam on behalf of the Theological Education Committee. There has been no progress to date.

Article 5. Local Developments.

Wherever there are Canadian and American Reformed Churches which are close proximity to United Reformed Churches there has been varying degrees of progress in working towards greater local unity. In fact in most places there have been pulpit exchanges.

Concern, however, was expressed about reaching the United Reformed Churches in the United States of America. Suggestion was made to twin churches. The CanRC of Langley has already such a relationship with the URCNA of Escondido California. We discussed to what degree we as committee must and would be able to promote contacts especially with the American URCs.

Article 6. How do we respond to the letters with questions from the URC Classis South West and the Cornerstone URC in Sanborn Iowa ?

The question is asked which CanRC churches received questions from the Cornerstone URC in Sanborn Iowa ? Confirmed: the Spring Creek CanRC of Tintern ON.

It will be asked tomorrow in the meeting with the URCNA brothers whether they want a response from our committee to the two sets of questions.

With respect to both letters it is concluded that we cannot make official statements about the various topics brought forward with these questions. Various CanRC ministers and professors may speak and/or write on these topics. A bibliography of various writings on these topics could be provided, but with the proviso, that these are not the official positions of the Canadian Reformed Churches on these topics. What we have as official positions is what we have in our Three Forms of Unity.

Article 7. The Developments in our contacts with the FRCNA.

The last letter received from the FRCNA committee was one written by Rev. W. Wullschleger dated Nov 10, 2005. Prior to receiving this letter, brothers Aasman, Slomp and Vanderstoep had a meeting with them on January 10, 2005. In the discussion at that meeting the Free Reformed delegates made clear that they were not interested in organic unity. The Can. Ref. delegates replied that if that is the case, they did not see much use to

continue our contacts. From the Free Reformed side the comment was then made that, when there is a union of hearts, they would still be interested in contact in the form of conferences dealing with matters of common concern, such as Bible translations. But they were not ready to go beyond this.

We then received the letter of Nov 10, 2005 from the FRCNA Committee for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity in which the FRC brothers acknowledged that there is not much motivation for the scheduled meeting. Two reasons were given for suggesting not to meet for some time. "One is the ongoing discussions and movement of the Canadian Reformed Churches towards union with the United Reformed Churches in North America. The other is that our meeting are too much from the top down communication with virtually no concrete communications between our churches on a local level." Another reason not mentioned in this letter, but communicated early is the perception of the ordinary FRC members that there is a lack of experiential preaching in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

How do we respond to their letter ? We will acknowledge that we have received this letter. We will recommend what they have suggested, to our next Synod, D.V. Smithers 2007. They simply do not share the same goal as us: one of federative unity. This was the mandate given by our Synods: to seek federative unity. The secretary will draft a letter of response.

Article 8. The developments in our contacts with the OCRC.

No invitations were received by the committee from the OCRC. An invitation was extended to them for Synod Chatham 2004. They did not respond. As mandated by Synod Chatham we must seek them out: a letter will be drafted by the secretary to see if there is any interest for discussions concerning federative unity.

Article 9. Matters for and suggestions concerning our report to Synod Smithers 2007.

Email correspondence from Rev.C.VandeVelde and Br. W. Gortemaker indicate that the committee reports for Synod Smithers, 2007 need to be in the possession of br. Gortemaker no later than Oct 1, 2006. This raises several questions for us as committee, working together with 3 subcommittees. Can we prepare our report by emailing or by a face to face meeting ? Do we need as committee to have a joint report with the URCNA general committee. And what about the reports of the subcommittees ? Are they to be included ?

It will be asked at tomorrow meeting with the URCNA brothers whether we need to have another meeting and so issue a joint report to our next Synods?

Rev. J.DeGelder will contact the subcommittees, informing them of the above mentioned deadline and our interest in putting all three subcommittee

reports and our own report in one booklet. This requires that the subcommittees to have their reports prepared by the beginning of August and ours by sometime in September.

Article 11. General Question Period.

General question period was not made use of.

Article 12. Closing.

Br.J.Vanderstoep leads in thanksgiving prayer. Rev. J.DeGelder declares the meeting closed.

Appendix 2

Minutes of the Meeting
 The Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
 of the Canadian Reformed Churches
 The Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity –
 United Reformed Churches in North America
 March 7, 2006

1. Opening and welcome by Rev. Jan DeGelder He opened with devotions from Ephesians 4:1-16 and prayer.
2. Members present: CERCU: Rev. John Bouwers, Mr. Chuck Dykstra, Rev. Casey Freswick, Rev. Todd Joling, Rev. William Van der Woerd, Rev. Harry Zekveld, CanRC: Rev. John Louwerse, Rev. Jan DeGelder, Mr. John Vander Stoep, Mr. Fred Westrik
3. Adoption of suggested agenda.
4. Rev. Casey Freswick was requested to take minutes for the meeting and formulate a report.
5. Progress Reports of the subcommittees/Unity Committees from the URC and CanRC, on
 - a. Common Church Order
 - i. The committees are not finished nor do they think they will be completed before the next Synod of the CanRC and there are questions about the URC Synod of 2007.
 - ii. It was noted that the other committees are not technically subcommittees but committees that have direct access to our Synods.
 - iii. Noted that this is a process and that the end of the Committees recommendation does not mean the end of the process.
 - iv. It seems clear that the church order must take precedence in the development of union over the Song Book.
 - b. Common song Book
 - i. This matter has been divided into two sections in the URC. There is agreement among the CERCU members that the prose section of the URCNA committee ought to be engaged with their counterparts in the CanRC. It seems to us that these two committees should be working together. It was noted that the URC has not officially adopted creeds and confessions. That the direction of the current URC committee is not to make a new translation. The prose section, especially dealing with the confessions and the form of subscription is a priority in our talks with unity.
 - ii. The song component of the committees continue their work with what looks like growing harmony. It is noted that these committees have different mandates. From the URC the mandate is to produce a song book while considering the inclusion of Anglo Genevan Psalms. The CanRC have a

mandate to include all 150 Anglo Genevan Psalms. Additionally there is presently a church orderly difference between federations. The CanRC order CO speaks of synodically approved songs and a Song Book that “must be used, whereas the URC CO speaks of consistorially approved songs and envisions a song book that “may” be used.

- iii. The CanRC brothers mention that some of their congregations also use supplements for Hymn Sings but not during the worship service.
 - iv. The Canadian Reformed brothers mentioned they are considering a recommendation to their synod to divide the work of their committee into song and prose sections to complement the way it is now being done in the URC.
- c. Theological Education
- i. We informed each other of the perspectives of our reports. The URC CERCU committee was able to inform the CanRC brothers of a March 4 report from the URC Theological Education Unity Committee.
 - ii. The following was shared from the recent URC Theological Education Unity Committee report:

The URCNA committee met together and passed the following motion by unanimous vote:

“We as a committee are not prepared to entertain any proposal for theological education that mandates at least one federational seminary. Grounds:

- 1. We are not convinced that this is Biblically mandated; and
- 2. We do not believe that this will serve the churches well.”

“At this point, therefore, our discussions are at an impasse stage. However, we both hope that this is not a complete impasse and that further discussions may resume once new and/or different ideas and proposals are placed before our committees. At this time no further meetings are scheduled.”

- iii. The URC Committee has also sought to present a church orderly rationale for this perspective in a supporting document from a URC CO perspective. It furthermore also presents its answer to the previous presentation of the Canadian Reformed committee that had laid out the Canadian Reformed arguments for a federational seminary.
 - iv. This seemed to be a helpful and necessary step in ongoing discussion.
6. What do we know about local developments/contacts between URC and CanRC? What are the challenges and difficulties local churches are facing, perhaps in particular in the US? Should the synodical committees in this area have a more active role?

- a. How can we interact between each other?
 - b. We agree that it is important, but that it is difficult to meet with the U.S. churches in particular. In this context the committees can encourage the possibility of Classis' fraternal delegates to attend classes where possible. This has happened on a regular basis in Ontario, once in Classis Central U. S.. It was noted since we are in Ecclesiastical unity we should be sending fraternal delegates to the classes where possible.
 - c. Should we form a sister or twinning relationship between one congregation and another?
 - d. One meeting and a number of pulpit exchanges took place California. In Canada there are a number of activities ongoing: pulpit exchanges, meetings, in some places children are attending the same school, a combined Bible study, there are a few local CanRC considering ministers from the URC because the URC have more ministers available, ...etc.
7. What would be the best way to deal with the questions from the URC Classis South West and from the Cornerstone URC in Sanborn, Iowa?
- a. Unofficially observe the nature of the discussions in the context of the Canadian Reformed churches. There is the concern that we not make every discussion confessional. It was also suggested that some of these questions be summarized into several major points.
 - b. But the brothers were encouraged that the matters are properly before them and it is very important that they be responded to.
8. What is the level of support for the "Framework Hypothesis" within the URC?
- a. In page 92 of the Acts of General Synod 2004. Article 98.38 there is an observation that URC ministers promote the "Framework Hypothesis".
 - b. The Acts can be found on line at <http://www.canrc.org/resources/govdocs/gs2004/index.html>
 - c. The decision can be found under the Acts for February 20, 2004 at <http://www.canrc.org/resources/govdocs/gs2004/0220.pdf>
 - d. It reads as follows - 5.9. To commence discussion concerning the "Framework Hypothesis" and the support this theory has within the URCNA and serve the next synod with information concerning this matter.
 - e. The brothers of CERCU reminded the CanRC brothers of the decision of Synod 2001(?) regarding creation and evolution. And discussed the matter as one in which almost all churches hold to a literal 6 days of creation.
 - f. The brothers of CERCU agreed that as committee they would write something of a response to this query, particularly seeking the input of our classical representative from Classis SWUS. If the questions from Classis SWUS and Cornerstone Sanborn are properly to be dealt with by the CanRC brothers, reciprocally this question is properly before the brothers of CERCU

9. Time table for organic unity - p. 93 art 98.55 — What are our expectation as to the progress of the unity process?
 - a. At Synod Chatham 2004 the CPEU was instructed - 5.5. To present a single comprehensive report, that has been prepared jointly with the CERCU of the URCNA, to the next Synod including a recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity. (Acts of February 20)
 - b. Although there were original recommendations about a specific date, these were rejected by both Synods. Both committees agree that it would be unwise to make a specific timetable. There is progress being made in the committees. We recognize there may come a time when we must do this but now it seems premature. For instance, even after the Church Order Unity committee finishes their work the approval of the joint church order most likely will be a process that could take some time: Committee recommendations, Synodical changes, consistory ratification (URCNA) and then reworking differences may well be part of this process.
10. According to the mandate from Synod Chatham 2004, The CPEU is to present a single report to its Synod with CERCU. The CERCU is not mandated to do this. The two committees will communicate regarding our reports to make a joint effort in communicating our common understanding of the situation.
11. General Questions
 - a. We considered further meeting. We committed to meet together at least every two years.
 - b. If there are special circumstances that show a need we should meet quicker.
 - c. We also recognized that in two years we will have just met at our respective Synods. May 2007 in Smithers BC for the CanRC and July 2007 in Chicago, IL for the URCNA.

Rev. Bouwers closed the meeting in prayer.

APPENDIX 3

Report of the visit to the 2004 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in North America held in Dundas, ON

By Rev. J. DeGelder and Rev. J.D. Louwerse

1. Introduction

The annual Synod of the FRCNA was held from June 7 – 11, 2004. We had the opportunity to be there for the day on Thursday, June 10th. The meetings were held in the beautiful and spacious facilities of Ebenezer FRC in Dundas, Ontario, with the Rev. G.R. Procee from Hamilton as chairman. We were seated as ‘fraternal delegates’ and warmly welcomed, not only officially by the chairman, but also in personal contacts between sessions. A one-day visit gives limited possibilities to witness the proceedings, but it was good to interact and taste the atmosphere.

Although the federation is smaller than the CanRC, the Synod is more than twice the size of our Synods. Since the Synod is the only major assembly, all 17 churches are represented, each by two delegates.

2. Agenda Matters

When we arrived we received a copy of the proposed agenda, with all the reports from the various committees, and overtures from several churches. When reading through this material it struck us that many more matters than we are used to, are dealt with on the level of Synod, as matters of the churches in common. There is, for instance, a Standing Committee on Foreign Mission, one on Home Missions, one on Youth and Education, one on Publications, and one on Finances. The last one deals with the Emeritus Fund, Ministers’ Salary Guidelines, Remuneration for Pulpit Supply and Catechism, and Needy Churches.

Since we were able to spend just one day at Synod, we have only heard discussions on a few topics. One issue of particular interest was the extensive report by the Ad Hoc Committee on Bible Translation. Over time the topic of Bible Translation has generated some intense debate within the FRC. This committee had analyzed both the NKJV and the KJV, and had come to the conclusion that “though the NKJV exceeds the KJV in clarity, it is doctrinally inferior and less aligned with our Reformed confessions than the KJV”. The committee recommended “that the KJV be retained as the version of choice in the FRC federation, and that synod allow local consistories who on good grounds find the ministry of the Word substantially hampered by using the KJV, to use the NKJV.”

When we were present a first round of discussion on this report and its recommendations had already taken place, but the matter was not finalized yet.

2.1 Theological Education

Much time was spent on the topic of training for the ministry. The present situation is that the FRCNA are directly and increasingly involved in the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, president Dr. J.L. Beeke. At this time two Free Reformed students are studying theology at PRTS and Dr. G.M. Bilkes is teaching at the Seminary as full-time Free Reformed theological instructor. Some FRC ministers have also taught specific courses.

The Consistory of the FRC of St. Thomas had presented an overture re. 'theological education', in which they expressed the concern that the present requirements to be accepted as a student preparing for the ministry, as well as the rule that FRC students can only attend PRTS, are too restrictive. They stressed the pressing need for more pastors, as well as the fact that it would be theologically healthy for the churches to have more seminaries involved in the theological education of future ministers. They overtured Synod "to begin discussions with *Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary* (GPTS) in South Carolina with the view that it may also be approved as a school for FRC seminary students."

Dr. J. Pipa, president of GPTS was present and addressed Synod to explain the position of his Seminary. He stressed that there are many connections and much affinity between PRTS and GPTS. They would not only welcome FRC students at the Seminary, but would also appreciate FRC input in the development of courses.

In the lengthy discussion that took place, much sympathy was expressed for the intention of the overture, although many were reluctant to go this route. Questions were asked about a possible closer cooperation between PRTS and GPTS. Others emphasized that the churches themselves should take responsibility for strengthening the theological education in the FRC, according to the old reformed principle 'by the church – for the church'.

2.2 External Relations

The External Relations Committee report was quite short. Since the previous Synod there had been remarkably few contacts with other Reformed churches, other than some visits to Synods and General Assemblies.

The committee expressed its disappointment that there seems to be a standstill, or even a weakening in what initially appeared to be a promising relationship with the *Heritage Reformed Congregations*, especially in light of the growing cooperation at PRTS.

The FRC have entered into a 'Limited Contact Relationship with the *Free Church of Scotland – continuing* (FCSC). Rev. C. Pronk gave a verbal report of his visit to the General Assembly of the FCSC in Edinburgh in May this year.

With regard to the relationship with the CanRC the report says the following:

We attended the CanRC's Synod in Chatham in February 2004. We were cordially received and given ample to address them. We incurred some criticism for our reluctance to move beyond a Limited Contact form of fellowship. It seems to us that while the CanRC are almost ready for the marriage (federative unity), we are still busy proposing a topic for discussion at our next date. We believe that deliberations on federative unity belong to the Limited and Complete Correspondence levels of ecclesiastical fellowship. We intend to continue meeting on an annual basis.

The discussion on the report was also very short. The comment was made that the committee should not just visit Synods all over the world, but pay more attention to direct contact with delegates of other churches in close proximity.

Various fraternal delegates were given the opportunity to address Synod. Rev. C.F. Heiberg spoke on behalf of the URCNA. A response was given by Rev. C. Pronk, who was also scheduled to attend the upcoming Synod of the URC in Calagary. Rev. Kelderman spoke for the Heritage Reformed Congregations, with a response by Rev. J. Schoeman. Rev. R. McCurley, pastor in Smiths Falls, On, addressed Synod on behalf of the FCSC, and Rev. P. VanderMeyden responded. Rev. DeGelder addressed Synod on behalf of the CanRC. His speech is added as an appendix to this report. Rev. L.W. Bilkes gave the reponse.

2.3 Overture re. Classis System

The FRC used to have Classes, but in 1977 this structure was abolished, and since then the churches meet only together as Synod, once a year. Over time several proposals had been submitted to Synods to return to the Classis system (in 1989, 1992 and 1995). This time Synod dealt with an overture from the FRC of Abbotsford , BC, to establish three Classes.

The discussion concentrated mainly on the question of delegation. Fear was expressed that by adding an extra layer, so to speak, the local churches would be further removed from the things going on in the federation. The pros and cons were discussed of returning to the Classis system, while leaving intact the present consistorial delegation to Synod. It was suggested that another possibility would to have classical delegation to Synod (as in Abbotsford's overture), but then with consistorial representation.

After a first round of discussion the matter was referred back to the advisory committee for further consideration.

2.4 Foreign Mission

In the evening the Deputies for Foreign Mission presented their report about the missionary activities in Guatemala. This included an interesting presentation by Rev. Ken Herfst. Rev. Herfst used to be a missionary in Guatemala, but after he had returned to Canada, about two years ago, he had worked as Home Missionary / Church Planter on Vancouver Island. Recently an invitation was extended to him for a teaching position at the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala, prompted by the need for sound Reformed teaching in that country.

Rev. Herfst informed Synod that he was willing to accept this call, and that he was looking forward to this new task, as it will open up many opportunities to spread the Reformed faith in Guatemala. For this position he will be employed by the Foreign Mission Committee.

3. Conclusion

A one day visit is not enough to build far reaching conclusions on. Just a few observations.

We must say that we felt quite at home among the brothers. Their deep love for the Lord, and for His Word and work is obvious, and there is a strong and genuine commitment to the Reformed faith, as expressed in the confessions of the Reformation. Here we have so much in common with our Free Reformed brothers.

At the same time they like to emphasize the need to preserve their own 'identity'. A few times it was even stated with so many words (especially in the discussion on theological education), that "we need to preserve our special Free Reformed characteristics". That mind set won't make it easier to talk about unity.

Having come from The Netherlands the FRC trace back the roots of some of their "own distinctives" to the movement of what is called "The Second Reformation" (Dutch: de Nadere Reformatie) in the late 17th and 18th century in the history of the Reformed Church in The Netherlands. That movement was strongly influenced by Scottish and English Puritans. But these same Puritans also had their influence in North American theology in the 18th and 19th century. This means that in the FRC there is much more affinity with 'the Puritan heritage' in early North American theology, than in the CanRC.

We were somewhat disappointed by Rev. Bilkes' response to the Canadian Reformed presence and speech at Synod. No reference was made whatsoever to what our committee had reported to G.S. Chatham with regard to what was said by the FRC Deputies about the preaching in the CanRC. On the contrary, the old refrain came back that Canadian Reformed Churches still do not understand what experiential preaching is all about.

Much work and time will be needed to get just the desire for federative unity really on the agenda in our relationship with the Free Reformed Churches.

APPENDIX 4

**REPORT OF THE VISIT TO THE SYNOD OF THE
FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA
On June 9, 2005**

by Rev. J. DeGelder and Rev. W.B. Slomp

Introduction

The Synod 2005 of the Free Reformed Churches was held in Brantford, Ontario from June 6 – 10. Rev. W. B. Slomp and Rev. J. DeGelder, both members of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches, attended this Synod as delegates on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

We were well received, and were given a copy of the agenda with all the supporting documents. The federation of the Free Reformed Churches in North America consists of 18 churches, which are all represented with two delegates at the only major assembly, the Synod. This Synod meets annually. Extensive discussion took place as to the advantages and disadvantages of splitting into three classes. The Church Order Sub-Committee of the Publications Committee had presented a detailed evaluation of the Classis system, as proposed by the Church of Abbotsford to the Synod 2004, including the financial implications.

Reports

Much attention was also given to the report of the Theological Education Committee. Although the FRCNA do not have their own theological training, some delegates expressed strong support for the principle that this training should be done by the churches. Despite the desire of some to explore and consider other options, the FRC remain strongly supportive of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, under the leadership of Dr. Beeke, as the recommended seminary for FRC students. Some FRC ministers teach courses at the PRTS. The FRC are also represented by Dr. G. M. Bilkes who is a permanent full-time theological instructor at the PRTS.

The agenda of a FRC Synod shows that many more matters are dealt with at a Synod, and in a more centralized manner than we are used to in the CanRC. There are, for instance, reports from Standing Committees on Evangelism & Radio Mission, on Foreign Mission, on Home Missions, on Publications, responsible for the magazine *The Messenger*, the Yearbook, Reading Sermons, etc. There is also a Standing Committee on Finances, including the salaries of the ministers, and the emeritus fund.

External Relations

We were particularly interested in the report of External Relations Committee. The Committee informed Synod about the developments in the

various churches they are in contact with. The *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in The Netherlands are historically speaking the “mother churches” of the FRC, and with these Dutch sister churches there are still many close contacts. But the Committee informed Synod about considerable troubling concerns with regard to modern developments in the CGK.

The relation of the FRC with *Heritage Reformed Congregations* is getting stronger, also as the result of the close cooperation in the PRTS. However, the status of that relation does not seem to be clear. There appears to be an increasing interest in contacts with the *Free Church of Scotland Continuing*, the *Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches*, and with the *Presbyterian Reformed Church*. The contacts with the *United Reformed Churches* have been minimal. Some of these churches were also represented by delegates.

There is a growing contact with a few conservative congregations in the *Reformed Church of America*. These churches have asked for help from FRC ministers for preaching and teaching. A discussion took place about the question if it is desirable to develop a special relationship with these churches while they remain in a large liberal denomination.

Contact with the CanRC

Concerning the contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches the External Relations Committee wrote the following.

A meeting with CanRC delegates was held in January 2005. It was agreed to share research in the area of Bible Translations to avoid duplication of efforts. The meeting discussed the articles written in the semi-official periodical of the CanRC, “The Clarion”, by Rev. C. Stam in which he critically dissects Dr. L. W. Bilkes’ speech at the CanRC Synod in Chatham as well the statement in our report to Synod 2003 that “we continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be. This is particularly evidenced in the preaching.” The contents of these articles merely confirm our earlier assertion. At the floor of Synod we plan to correct an alleged failure to communicate a promise made by our CanRC subcommittee with regard to our 2003 statement. At this meeting the FRC brothers made it clear that within our denomination there is not a desire for federative unity but for spiritual unity. The CanRC responded that if federative unity is not a goal between us then that would bring our discussions and meetings to an end. Nevertheless the delegates agreed to listen to each others’ sermons, and to meet again in January 2006 to discuss liturgy, with the concurrence of our ERC.

As mentioned in previous reports from our delegates to the FRC Synods in 2003 and 2004, the Free Reformed External Relations Committee had failed both times to correct a statement made in the report to the FRC Synod 2003 with regard to the preaching in the CanRC. In the report to Synod the

committee had written, “we continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be, which is particularly evidenced in the preaching”. However, both committees had expressed great appreciation for each other’s preaching, after they had listened to many sermons from both sides.

At that time the CanRC committee was disappointed because of the obvious discrepancy between the positive conclusion of the committee discussions, and the negative statement in the report to Synod. The FRC brothers had promised to correct this and convey to their Synod their positive experiences with the Can. Ref. preaching, but they never did.

Now br. C. Keuning, the secretary of the ERC, gave at the floor of Synod the explanation that the subcommittee that had the meetings with the CanRC brothers, and had listened to the Can. Ref. Sermons was positive about the preaching, but that this was not necessarily shared by the whole ERC. In our view this can hardly be called a frank correction. But your delegates do not see much merit in pursuing this matter any further.

There appears to be a difference between the eastern and western part of this country in how local CanRCs and local FRCs perceive each other. It would be interesting to find and answer to the question what the cause is of this difference. Are the CanRCs in the west different from the ones in the east, or is that the case with the FRCs? In the discussion on this section of the report some delegates expressed disappointment that there have not been any meetings between local FRCs and CanRCs in Ontario. Rev. C. A. Schouls disputed this and referred to some meetings in London, which were discontinued by the London CanRC and in Chatham, which were discontinued by the FRC.

Rev. Slomp had the opportunity to address the Synod. That speech is attached as a separate document. A response was given by Rev. H. Overduin.

Evaluation

Your delegates left the 2005 Synod of the FRCNA with mixed feelings. On the one hand we are very thankful for the strong commitment to the Reformed faith that is clearly noticeable in all the discussions at Synod. We do sense a strong desire in the FRC to remain faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions. There are many things that make us feel deeply connected with the FRC brothers. On the other hand, although it remains extremely difficult to make clear what it exactly is that keeps us separate, we do not seem to speak the same language. And it is hard to get away from the impression that the FRC continue to be very hesitant to move any closer to the CanRC than they are.

When we try to understand this, the crucial matter appears to be what the FRC brothers call “spiritual unity”. Towards the CanRC they say, *within our denomination there is not a desire for federative unity but for spiritual unity.*

And in its report the External Relations Committee says that in the contacts with other churches they attempt to *gauge the degree of spiritual unity, which is the essential basis for all formal unity*. No one can have a problem with this priority, and so as CanRC we fully agree with this approach.

However, do we mean the same with “spiritual unity”? It is striking that throughout the report the expression is used many times, but it is never defined. It is clearly distinct from formal unity, or even confessional unity. This can be illustrated with the following examples.

(a) Regarding the Synod of the Dutch sister churches, the CGK, the committee writes, *Spiritual unity was experienced with many delegates*. There is formal and confessional unity with the denomination as a whole, but spiritual unity was experienced with many (implying: not with all) delegates. Here is a subtle, but telling distinction.

(b) With the RCA the FRC have no formal unity whatsoever, and perhaps not even confessional unity. Nevertheless, the committee writes about the meetings they had with the consistories of two RCA congregations, *We sensed a genuine spiritual oneness with these brothers, and look forward to increased cooperation*.

The problem with this is that in the FRC thinking adhering to God’s Word and to the Reformed Confessions is very important, but does not constitute “spiritual unity”. It remains, therefore, an open question what defines “spiritual unity” – at least for those who are not Free Reformed. This undefined distinction makes it utterly problematic whether we can ever reach this “spiritual unity”, since we don’t know for sure what to strive for.

The sad conclusion is that in this light striving for federative unity between the CanRC and the FRC becomes a futile exercise, until we learn to speak each other’s language.

J. DeGelder
W. Slomp

APPENDIX 5

Meeting of the Canadian Reformed Church and Free Reformed Church delegates on January 10, 2005, in Langley, B.C.

Attendance:

CanRC: Rev. Richard Aasman, Rev. Willem Slomp, Dr. John Vanderstoep

FRC: Rev. Hans Overduin, Rev. Jack Schoeman, Rev. Wim Wullschlegler
(Rev. Kuldip Gangar sends his regrets).

Opening

The chairman of the meeting, Rev. Hans Overduin welcomes the brothers, requests the singing of Psalter 238, leads in prayer and reads Colossians 3:1-17. Rev. Overduin reflects on this passage for a few minutes, asking how this applies to our unity talks. In connection with this, he reads the FRC regulations regarding local contact with other Reformed Churches. Specifically he reads the following guiding principle:

When Christ prayed that His church might be one (John 17:21) He did not only pray for the future ingathering of those whom the Father gave Him and for whom He laid down His life (John 17:20). These words also imply that it is pleasing to the Lord that the essential spiritual union which already exists among those who truly believe in the Gospel of Christ should also be preserved and manifested as much as possible in the local gatherings and federations of His Church (see Rom 12:16-18; Phil 3:16; Eph 2:14-22; 4:1-6; Heid. Cat 54, 55; Belgic Conf. Art. 27-30). This means that church federations which are founded upon the basis of God's Word and subscribing to the Reformed Confession, (particularly the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort) and which have become disunited from each other due to historic circumstances and doctrinal divergences, are called upon to strive to remove the differences which separate them and thus work toward closer fellowship and, if possible, federative union with each other.

Rev. Overduin explains the application of this in Colossians 3. In our discussions together we are to seek the things which are above, we are to be honest to one another – being both compassionate and frank – and to seek the glory of Jesus Christ.

At this point, the chairman welcomes the two new brothers present for the first time at these unity talks: Rev. Jack Schoeman and Dr. John Vanderstoep. These brothers are invited to give their initial impressions about being part of these talks. Both express real interest and appreciation for being a part of these discussions. It is pointed out that this is our first meeting since May 2003.

Bible Translations

The morning discussion is devoted to the CanRC Bible Translation Report of 1995 and the FRC Bible Translation Report of 2004. It is pointed out by the CanRC brothers that there are certain weaknesses in the FRC report. The FRC brothers agree, but also indicate that Bible translation has been on the FRC agenda for about ten years and people are getting tired of discussing this further. An emergency Synod of the FRC was convened in October 2003 to deal with their June 2003 Synod decision which allowed churches to use the NKJV. The FRC has used the KJV for many years but now there is openness to the NKJV. The FRC brothers express much appreciation for the thoroughness of the CanRC Bible Translation Report. However, they candidly add that the CanRC's use of the NIV could be an impediment for the FRC to enter into federative unity with the CanRC. The CanRC brothers point out that they have no objection to the use of the KJV and the NKJV, but add that a translation used by any church must be both a faithful translation and readable to the modern reader. The regret is expressed that much parallel work is being done by the CanRC and the FRC which duplicates work and therefore wastes manpower. It is agreed that in the future, whatever Bible translation reports are generated by the two church federations will be shared with one another.

Clarence Stam's articles in *Clarion*

Two editorials published in *Clarion* which were written by Rev. Cl. Stam near the end of 2004 (issues 18 and 23) expressed serious concerns and made accusations against the FRC regarding a false statement made by the FRC External Relations committee to their Synod of 2003. Concerns were also raised regarding Dr. L. Bilkes' speech at the CanRC Synod of 2004 in Chatham, Ontario. The point regards the FRC concern that CanRC preaching does not show appreciation for experiential preaching. What the FRC report failed to communicate to its Synod 2003 is that sermons had been exchanged by the ministers at these meetings between representatives of the CanRC and the FRC, and appreciation has been expressed for both FRC and CanRC preaching. A promise was made to correct the report on the floor of the FRC Synod but this was not done. Rev. Richard Aasman and Rev. Willem Slomp were present at that Synod and took note of it, also reporting this to the CanRC Synod of 2004. This report had also been made available to the FRC brothers prior to publication for their input. Rev. Stam based his articles exclusively on these reports.

At this point, the FRC brothers ask the CanRC brothers to comment on how they see our future relations. The latter point out that the CanRC are more inclined to move forward to ecclesiastical unity, but they perceive the FRC as putting up stumbling blocks to this. They ask the FRC to be clear and forthright in what they really want from the CanRC and what significance they attach to our discussions as two church federations.

In the ensuing discussion it was clear that as committees we are moving along well. But there is a frustration among both CanRC members and FRC members that there is the perception that these talks will go nowhere. The FRC brothers make clear that within their federation there is really not a will for federative unity but more for a spiritual unity. The question is asked of the CanRC brothers how their churches would feel if the discussion focussed more on spiritual unity. The CanRC brothers frankly say that if federative unity is not a goal between us then that would bring our discussions and meetings to an end. It is pointed out that the FRC's own guideline quoted earlier in these minutes do recognize that full unity is to be considered during unity talks.

Regarding the point raised in the editorials of Rev. Clarence Stam, the FRC brothers point out that what was reported to their Synod and which was not corrected at Synod was inadvertently done. The FRC brothers make clear that they need to clarify this, apologize for what was done and to set the record straight, also to their Synod. It is stated that Rev. Clarence Stam has a legitimate concern, but the tone of his articles is not appreciated.

Where to go from here?

In order to bring our respective churches closer to each other and more acquainted with one another, all brothers present agree that one way to attain this is to keep each other in our congregational prayers. Our reports to Synod will also ask our churches to keep our unity talks in congregational prayer. We also resolved to continue meeting together and to do so once per year. The FRC brothers will also try to get someone from the east in their committee so that the eastern churches may become more familiar with these contacts and discussions.

Our next meeting, D.V., will be January 16, 2006 in the Chilliwack FRC building. The discussions that day, to be introduced by Rev. Jack Schoeman will be on liturgy. The CanRC and FRC brothers will also submit three sermons from each federation to the brothers of the other federation in the next few months. These sermons are to be discussed at our next meeting. These do not have to be sermons by members of the committees. We will have a look at each other's Psalters.

That evening there will be a general meeting open to all members of the CanRC and the FRC. Dr. James Visscher or possibly Dr. Adrian de Visser will be invited to give an address on Biblical Liturgy in the 21st Century. It is also agreed that Dr. John Vanderstoep and Rev. Wim Wullschleger will be the contact persons in our respective committees.

Closing

Rev. Richard Aasman closes in prayer. It is also decided that he will chair the next meeting.

APPENDIX 6

To the members of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
From Western Canada

Rev. R. Aneman
Rev. W.B. Stamp
Mr. J. Vanderstap

Langley, November 10, 2005

Dear trustees,

At our last External Relations Committee meeting held in Dundas on October 26, we discussed again our subcommittee meetings with the CanRel subcommittee. It was mentioned that a meeting was planned for January. To be honest, however, at this point there is not much motivation for the scheduled meeting. Two reasons were given in our meeting to suggest not meeting for some time. One is the ongoing discussions and movement of the Canadian Reformed Churches towards union with the United Reformed Churches in North America. The other is that our meetings are too much from the top down communication with virtually no concrete communications between our churches on a local level.

We do wish to maintain our first level of official contact with you as Canadian Reformed Churches. We repeat that our main aim in our communications is not union of federations primarily but union of hearts in and under the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the meantime, we wish to keep communications open. Our External Relations Committee did not wish to disband the subcommittee, but to cancel meetings for the time being. At some point in the future it is our hope that our contacts may receive new and fresh impulses.

We have appreciated our times together in the past. We trust this note also will meet with your approval.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the subcommittee from the External Relations Committee of the PRC/NA
Pastor Wim Wullschlaeger

