

APPENDIX VI

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD ABBOTSFORD 1995

Esteemed Brethren,

We hereby submit to you our report on the activities of the Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA), appointed by General Synod 1992.

I. MANDATE

General Synod Lincoln 1992 gave our Committee the following mandate:

A. General

1. To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland [Vrijgemaakt]), and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in accordance with the adopted rules. (Acts 1992, Art. 49, V, B)
2. To charge the CRCA to send an invitation to our sister churches abroad to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible. (Acts 1992, Art. 49, V, D)

B. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

- 3.1. to request the CRCA to convey our appreciation for support given by the FRCA to our Theological College in Hamilton.
- 3.2. to mandate the CRCA delegates to attend, if possible, the meeting organized by the FRCA to discuss their concerns regarding the ICRC and report about this to the General Synod.
- 3.3. to mandate the CRCA to convey our reservations about the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship adopted by the FRCA. (Acts 1992, Art. 49, V, C, E, F)

C. The Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK)

- 4.1. to inform the PCK of our acceptance of their request for Ecclesiastical Fellowship using the adopted rules.
- 4.2. to formalize this relationship in a manner satisfactory to both church federations.
- 4.3. to inform the churches and to report to the next General Synod on the relationship with the PCK. (Acts 1992, Art. 111, IV, B, 1, 2, 3)

D. The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

- 5.1. to recognize with gratitude the Free Church of Scotland as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5.2. to offer the Free Church of Scotland, including the Free Church of Scotland congregation in Canada, a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules.
- 5.3. to thank the CRCA for completing its mandate thus far with respect to the FCS and to charge the CRCA to convey to the FCS the decision of Synod

1992, and to advise the churches and Synod 1995 of the response of the Free Church of Scotland. (Acts 1992, Art. 128, IV, A, B, C)

E. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

- 6.1. to thank the church at Carman, MB and the CRCA for their work done with regard to the RCUS and express our appreciation for the desire of the RCUS to establish fraternal relations with our churches.
- 6.2. to mandate the CRCA to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, making use of the findings of the church at Carman, MB. (Acts 1992, Art. 79, IV, A, B)

F. The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

- 7.1. that the CanRC continue to participate in the ICRC.
- 7.2. that the CanRC be represented at the next meeting of the ICRC, Zwolle 1993.
- 7.3. that two members of the CRCA be sent to the ICRC, Zwolle 1993, as voting delegates and Dr. N.H. Gootjes as advisor (with Dr. J. Faber as alternate).
- 7.4. that the CRCA report to the next General Synod, as well as to the churches, giving a report and evaluation of the ICRC, Zwolle, the Netherlands, (D.V.) 1993. (Acts 1992, Art. 94, IV, A, B, C, D)

G. Committee Mandate

- 8.1. to give the CRCA the following mandate:
 1. to investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship;
 2. to respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meeting of other churches;
 3. to report on its findings with suitable recommendations, to the next General Synod.
- 8.2. this mandate allows the CRCA to further investigate the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) and the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ).
- 8.3. that the CRCA submits to Synod 1995 a financial statement and budget. (Acts 1992, Art. 112, IV, A, 1, 2, 3, B, C)

II. RULES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP

General Synod 1992 revised the existing Rules of Correspondence and decided to call them officially "Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship." The revised rules read as follows:

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

5. The churches shall open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

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

6. When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation can take place as possible before a final decision is taken.
7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit." (Acts 1992, Art. 50, IV B, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

III. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. Declarations

- a. The following ministers and professors of the Canadian Reformed Churches, planning to travel abroad, requested and received a declaration that they are ministers in good standing in the Churches:

The Revs. D.G.J. Agema, J. Huijgen, K. Jonker, E. Kampen, Cl. Stam, J. Kroeze, G.A. Snip, M. van Beveren.

- b. The following ministers of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands visited Canada:

The Revs. Tj. Boersma, C. Bouwman, A.J. Pol.

2. Acts

When the Acts of General Synod Lincoln 1992 were received, a sufficient number of copies was sent to those churches with which we maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

3. Notifications and Invitations

Letters of notification and invitation were sent to the sister Churches regarding the convening of General Synod Abbotsford 1995. Copies of the Provisional Agenda were sent.

4. Interim Information to the Churches

A number of articles have appeared in *Clarion* during the last couple of years informing the Churches of some of the activities of the CRCA. They are as follows:

- July 16, 1993, Rev. E. Kampen reported on his visit to the 247th Synod of the RCUS;
- Oct. 22, 1993, Rev. Cl. Stam reported on the Third Meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle, the Netherlands;
- Year End Issue 1993 and March 11, 1994, Rev. J. Visscher reported on his visit to the General Synod Ommen of the RCN and to the General Assembly of the FCS;
- Sept. 9 and 23, 1994, Rev. E. Kampen reported on his visit, along with the Rev. M. van Beveren to the FRCA;
- Year End Issue 1994, br. A. Nap reported on his visit to the 248th Synod of the RCUS.

In addition, in the January 28, 1994 issue the CRCA informed the Churches that Ecclesiastical Fellowship had been entered into with the FCS and the PCK. In the April 22, 1994 issue the Churches were informed that the CRCA had delegated the Revs. E. Kampen and M. van Beveren to visit the FRCA.

IV. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA (FRCA)

1. Correspondence

- a. After the Synod of 1992 met, the FRCA were informed about the decisions taken that pertained to them. A copy of the new Rules for relations with Sister Churches was sent to them. Copies of the Acts of 1992 were sent as soon as they were received from the printer. Appreciation for their support of the Theological College was expressed.
- b. In a letter from FRCA deputies dated Feb. 15, 1993, it was expressed that the FRCA wish to maintain Hymn 1A unaltered.
- c. Concerning the ICRC, a letter was sent indicating that we were not opposed to an informal meeting with sister churches. The delegates at the ICRC met informally and discussed the difficulty among the Australian churches with the expression "unity of faith" at the ICRC. The Australian opinion that closer unity in credal statements and church polity must be reached before we can speak of such unity was discussed at length. The difficulty of the Australian sister churches was not shared by the others at the meeting.
- d. In a letter dated 31 January 1994, we were informed of the Synod scheduled to be held in Byford, starting June 14, 1994. The letter stated "...we would plead with you to send a delegation to our next synod." Input was sought especially in two matters on the agenda, namely Bible translation and the ICRC. Rev. C. Stam and Rev. J. Visscher were delegated, with Rev. E. Kampen as alternate. (See Appendices)

2. Acts of Synod Bedfordale, 1992

Synod Bedfordale met from May 18-June 8, 1992. Since the Acts were not available in time to report to Synod Lincoln, 1992, we as yet note some items from the Acts that will serve to give a picture of the life of the FRCA.

- a. The following officers were elected: Chairman – Rev. A. Veldman; Vice chairman – Rev. A. van Delden; First clerk – elder J. Eikelboom; Second clerk – Rev. C. Bouwman.
- b. A tremendous amount of time was spent on matters of interchurch relationships, not only on a national level (Australia) but also internationally. The following is gleaned from the Acts:
 - i. Synod decided to continue contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. In the *considerations* disappointment was expressed that there is not more information about our churches. The specific example mentioned was contact with the OPC. The deputies were urged to give more content to the contact with our churches.
 - ii. Sister church relations were continued with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, as well as with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN). Disappointment was expressed that the "RCN in the matter of recognizing sister churches did not honour their commitment under the adopted Rules for relations with churches abroad (Rule e)." This pertains especially to the RCN entering into sister church relations with the RCUS, the Eglise Reformee Confesante au Zaire and the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines without informing or consulting the sister churches in Australia.
 - iii. Sister church relations were continued with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (RCSTS). The Musyafir Churches in Timor were to be further investigated to see if they can be recognized as true and faithful churches. Johnson Dethan from the Musyafir Churches and

Rev. Doko from the RCSTS were to be invited to Australia for orientation and training.

- iv. With respect to the PCEA, the committee was mandated to “work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the light of this goal: To continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987, viz, the supervision of the Lord’s table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant.”
Due attention is also to be given to “inter-denominationalism.”
 - v. With respect to the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA), deputies were mandated to observe what the next RCA Synod would do with the report which their deputies for dialogue with the FRCA will submit, and report to the next FRCA synod.
 - vi. With respect to the Reformed Church of New Zealand, the same level of contact was to be maintained. Discussions were to continue especially about contact with third parties (Reformed Church in Australia and NGK).
 - vii. Continued efforts were to be made for closer contact with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (ERCS).
 - viii. Synod decided to leave contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia to the churches at the local level.
 - ix. Efforts to become more acquainted with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland were to be continued.
 - x. It was decided not to accede to the request of the Free Reformed Churches in the Philippines and the Reformed Church of Zaire (RCZ) to establish relations with them, as the resources of the churches are stretched to the limit when it comes to international contacts. Further information is to be gathered.
 - xi. Continued efforts are to be made with respect to the Free Church of Scotland to come to full sister church relations.
 - xii. Contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland will be kept at a low level.
- c. It was decided to continue the support for the Theological College at \$37.50 cm. At the same time, the FRCA will stay alert to the possibility of establishing an Australian based theological training.
 - d. Deputies were instructed “once more to communicate to our sister churches our rules about declarations for ministers who visit abroad or who visit us.” This was due to the fact that visiting ministers, some of whom led worship services, did not come accompanied with proper declarations.
 - e. The following rules for exercising sister relations were adopted:
 1. Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.
 2. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.
 3. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or their Minutes and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible in translation).
 4. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.

5. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.
6. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations. Also the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls.
7. In cases of substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms this intention shall be brought to the special attention of the sister churches, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.
8. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.

The Dutch churches specifically, as well as the other sister churches, were to be asked to adopt these rules. It was also decided to discontinue offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact" and to work toward sister relations with those churches with whom the FRCA has this relationship.

- f. Much time was spent on the issue of the ICRC. Synod had to deal with a great number of submissions by church members. A key concern was the issue of "unity of faith." Synod decided to continue membership in the ICRC. Due to the concerns signaled, a meeting of sister churches was to be convened prior to or coinciding with the next ICRC.
- g. The matter of Bible translation continued to be of concern. It appears that the RSV has never gained much acceptance. It was decided to "recommend to the churches that the NKJV be used for study, instruction and family purposes," and to appoint new deputies who are "to continue the study of the NKJV, in comparison with the NIV, to determine whether the NKJV can be endorsed as a final recommendation to the churches." This decision was to be communicated to Synod Lincoln 1992, in order that our churches might reach a similar decision.

3. Acts of Synod Byford, June 14-27, 1994

From the Acts we note the following details:

- a. The following officers were elected: Chairman – Rev. W. Huizinga; Vice chairman – Rev. C. Bouwman; Clerk-Elder A. Slobe; Second Clerk – Rev. C. Kleyn.
- b. Upon a proposal from the Church at Kelmscott, it was agreed to use advisory committees only for those items that synod as a whole decides would benefit from such referral and revert to the 1985 decision to use the headings MATERIAL, DECISION, and GROUNDS.
- c. Synod adopted a final version of the Church Order in the tradition of Dort adapted to the Australian situation.
- d. With respect to Bible translation, it was decided: "To endorse the NKJV as a faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches, as well as for study, instruction and family purposes."

"To allow the NIV to be used in the church service, and for study, instruction and family purposes."

"To allow a period of transition for the churches to move away from the RSV in two years." (Art. 55)

- e. It was decided to continue support for the Theological College at \$38.00 cm.
- f. It was decided to continue membership in the ICRC. The Synod also proposes to the next ICRC to adopt the following amendment of the first Purpose of the ICRC as stated in its Constitution so that it will read: *"1. to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the member churches confess."* One of the grounds for this amendment is that the present reading, "the unity of faith that the member churches HAVE in Christ" implies to many that unity already exists, while full ecclesiastical fellowship has not yet been realized.
- g. With respect to interchurch relationships, the following is gleaned from the Acts:
 - i. Synod decided to continue contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches.
 - ii. Sister church relations were continued with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, as well as with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN).
 - iii. Sister church relations were continued with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (RCSTS). Contact with other churches in Indonesia will be continued. Support will continue to be given for the studies of Yonson Dethan from the Musyafir Churches
 - iv. With respect to the PCEA, FCS, EPCI and RPCI it was decided to continue contacts/relations at a low level (passing on Acts and greetings, etc.) leaving the discussions in abeyance while the churches study /discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian churches in general (Art. 111)
 - v. With respect to the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA), it was decided not to send an observer to the next RCA Synod
 - vi. With respect to the Reformed Church of New Zealand, the same level of contact was to be maintained.
 - vii. Continued efforts were to be made for closer contact with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (ERCS).
 - viii. The Free Reformed Church of the Philippines will continue to be investigated to see if official contacts should be opened with them.
- h. With respect to the Ecumenical Creeds, the present text of the Apostles' Creed was maintained, the revised text of the Athanasian Creed was adopted, and the text of the Nicene Creed was retained for the present.

In response to the letter dated January 31, 1994, a delegation was sent to the Synod of the FRC scheduled to start on June 14, 1994 in Byford, WA. A report of the visit by the delegates can be found in Appendices.

4. Consideration

From the correspondence received, from the Acts of Synod 1992 and Synod 1994, and from the Report on the visit made to the Synod of 1994 we may conclude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia continue to be faithful to the Word of the Lord, to the Confessions which sum up that Word and the adopted Church Order.

5. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1995 that we continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in accordance with our adopted rules.

V. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (PCK)

1. Correspondence

- a. In December of 1992 a card, with an enclosed letter, was received from the Korea Theological Seminary, wishing our churches the blessings of the Lord for 1993 and informing us of changes in the Seminary faculty as well as the fact that 436 students were enrolled at the Seminary. Among these students there exists considerable financial need.
- b. On January 25, 1993, the PCK was informed that Synod 1992 of the Can-RC had accepted the invitation of the PCK to enter into a sister church relationship. We informed them of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, as revised by Synod 1992, and of our desire to maintain our relationship on the basis of these Rules. Due to the costs involved, Synod did not deem it appropriate for a delegation to travel to Korea, but it was suggested that perhaps this relationship could be formalized at the upcoming meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle, the Netherlands. This suggestion was later agreed to by the PCK.
- c. In a letter dated Feb. 22, 1993, the PCK informed us about the highlights of the 42nd General Assembly which met on Sept. 21-25, 1992. Some of the highlights include:
 - the addition of three new presbyteries;
 - that divorce be permitted “when other party who is unbeliever makes his (or her) christian life impossible and forces him (or her) to divorce when other party who is fallen in sectarian belief hinders proper christian family life and requests divorce;”
 - the immediate past chairman is ineligible for re-election to the chair;
 - to attend the third meeting of the ICRC (Sept., 1993) and to send two delegates;
 - the Assembly set aside 1992-3 as the year for the study of Reformed evangelism; 1993-4 as the year for the study of mission; 1994-5 as the year for the study of deaconal works;
 - every congregation was urged to choose at least one region in North Korea and pray for evangelization, while looking forward to the day of liberation and union;
 - to appoint one person to study and gather information on mission work in communist China;
 - the wording of the Constitution of the PCK was modernized;
 - it was reported to the Assembly that the General Assembly building (to be called the Rev. Bruce Hunt Memorial building in honour of this OPC missionary) was progressing and would be completed in August of 1993;
 - 41 ministers of the PCK are serving as army chaplains;
 - 19 new churches were instituted in 1992 and 6 joined the PCK; 1 church was closed;
 - \$5,000.00 US was donated to Christians who had suffered from the riots in Los Angeles and Atlanta, USA.
- d. On September 2, 1993, a joint meeting was held in Zwolle, the Netherlands to formalize the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Presbyterian Church in Korea. (For particulars on this meeting see the Appendices);

- e. On Dec. 22, 1993, the PCK sent us a letter expressing their happiness at the newly established relationship between our respective churches. They also suggested that one way to make this relationship more effective would be through an exchange of professors. Currently such an arrangement exists between Kampen and Pusan. They suggest that travel costs be borne by the sending churches and lodging costs by the accepting churches. They would like us to consider this matter seriously.

The PCK also informed us that the 43rd General Assembly had decided to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA. They would also appreciate any information that we can supply them on the FCS, the RCUS, and the ERCZ.

For the academic year 1994, there were 221 applications for admission to the Theological Seminary in Pusan of which 159 were accepted;

- f. On Dec. 17, 1994, the Fraternal Relations Committee of the PCK sent us a letter with the highlights of the 44th General Assembly which met from Sept. 26-30, 1994. These include:
- a decision to demand that the Bible Society produce a total revision of the “Standard New Translation” because of its theological unsoundness;
 - to organize a mission committee for special fields: handicapped, prisons, hospitals, gay quarters, etc.;
 - to appeal to the Government to stop holding official functions on Sundays;
 - to divide a presbytery into two, bringing the total number of presbyteries to 34;
 - to contribute \$1.25 US per member for the support of needy fishing and farming village churches;
 - to take up contact with the Presbyterian Church in Japan and to ask the advice of the sister church, the Reformed Church in Japan, on this matter.

2. Considerations

- a. On the basis of the above information, we may conclude that the PCK continues to be faithful to God's Word, to its confessional standards, and to its church government.
- b. Since the PCK has formally suggested that an arrangement be made for exchanging professors between Hamilton and Pusan, the Synod should give proper consideration to this matter and, if it so decides, instruct both the CRCA and the Board of Governors of the Theological College to expedite this matter further.

3. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1995 that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued with the Presbyterian Church in Korea in accordance with the adopted Rules.

VI. THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS (RCN)

1. Correspondence

- a. On January 25, 1993, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands were informed about the decisions of Synod 1992 that had a bearing on them. A copy of the new Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship were sent to them. The Acts of Synod 1992 were sent as soon as they arrived from the printer.

- b. On March 29, 1993, we notified the Dutch deputies that although we had taken a decision not to send a delegate to Synod Ommen 1993, that decision had since been reviewed and altered due to the urging of the Free Church of Scotland. The Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the FCS had unanimously decided to recommend to the Assembly to accept the offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship from the CanRC and asked if a member of the CRCA could be in attendance. As a result, the CRCA delegated Dr. J. Visscher to attend and seeing that he could travel just as economically via Amsterdam as London decided also to delegate him to attend Synod Ommen.
- c. The CRCA received a letter from the Dutch deputies, dated Nov. 25, 1993, in which they informed us of pertinent decisions taken by Synod Ommen. They relayed that Synod Ommen had decided to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC. They also notified us that this Synod had adopted new Rules for this relationship and that those Rules were very similar to the Rules adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992. (A comparison reveals that Synod Ommen adopted verbatim the Rules that the CRCA had proposed to Synod Lincoln. Synod Lincoln decided to make some alterations in the CRCA's proposal, Synod Ommen did not.)
- d. On Jan. 17, 1994, we received another letter from the CRCA of the RCN telling us that they had been instructed by Synod Ommen to send a delegation to Brazil to take up contact with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB) and the Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil (IERB). They asked if the CanRC had made any decisions with respect to these two churches. In addition, they promised to send a copy of the report of this visit. On March 28, 1994, we informed them that no decisions had been made by the CanRC with regard to these two Brazilian churches.
- e. On March 25, 1994, the Dutch deputies wrote us again and told us once more about their new Rules. They stated that the Rules adopted by the Free Church of Scotland correspond to the new Dutch Rules. They also expressed happiness that a sister church relationship had been established between the CanRC and the FCS. Appreciation was conveyed over the fact that Dr. J. Visscher had been delegated to attend Synod Ommen.

On a different note, the Dutch deputies also asked us for information on the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church – General Assembly (RPCGA). They asked as well whether we could keep them up to date on developments in the Christian Reformed Church. On Oct. 24, 1994, we responded in detail to their request regarding the CRC, but were not able to share with them much knowledge about ARPC. As for the RPCGA, a packet of information had been received by the CRCA and was under study.

- f. On Dec. 9, 1994, the RCN Deputies sent us a copy of a report made by Mr. J. van Dijk and Rev. J. T. Oldenhuis regarding the IPB and IER of Brazil. It is currently being studied by the CRCA.

2. Acts of Synod Ommen 1993

From the Acts we pass on the following highlights:

- a. Synod Ommen granted retirement to Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann and appointed as his successor, Drs. G. Kwakkel.
- b. Dr. J. Visscher visited this Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Other fraternal delegates were: Rev. N. Hoefflinger (Reformed Church in the US), Rev. G. Ball (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland), Rev. I.N. a Kuibondo and Rev. N.K. Kasastika (Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire), and Rev. C. Bouwman (Free Reformed Churches of Australia).

- c. Synod approved a proposal to give voting rights to women in the churches. The following grounds were offered by Synod (summarized):
 - i. The Scriptures do not explicitly forbid granting voting rights to women in the congregation.
 - ii. The submissiveness of women is to be seen not as a general aspect but more specifically pertaining to the marriage relationship. Women also share in the office of all believers, and thus may participate in the act of voting. It is also their calling to cooperate in the upbuilding of the congregation.
 - iii. Voting is not to be seen as “governing” and is not to be isolated as part of a process to which women also have access.
 - iv. The decision to grant voting rights to women is not to be seen as a capitulation to the “spirit of the times” and will not lead to granting women the right to hold office in the churches, since the Scriptures are quite clear on this matter.
- d. Synod decided that in worship services where no minister is available, the votum and benediction may be said unchanged and laid upon the congregation by the elder who conducts the service. To make this clear, the elder may raise his hands in the benediction.
- e. Synod decided that special services for handicapped members are permitted and useful. Deputies were appointed to prepare an inventory on what is available in this field and to make recommendations regarding general rules in this respect. The church at Zwolle-Zuid was appointed to call a minister who will give pastoral care to the deaf.
- f. Synod appointed Deputies to study developments in the churches with respect to liturgy, with special attention for variation in and expansion of the liturgies and the number of Liturgical Forms. These Deputies will also investigate the desirability and possibility of expanding the present Hymn section of the Dutch *Book of Praise*.
- g. Synod decided to continue the discussions with De Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken “to seek ways and means to come to ecclesiastical unity.” The CGK will be asked to be precise about their objections concerning the “appropriation of salvation” and the view on the “church.” Synod expressed the desire that the CGK and the Gereformeerde Kerken, “who recognize in one another the will to live by God’s trustworthy Word and in a sincere bond to the Reformed confession, also may indeed find one another in the experience of Word and sacrament.”
- h. Synod decided to continue the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity and gave an outline for the procedure of local contacts. Synod spoke of three phases in these contacts: one of exploration to see where agreement and disagreement lies, one of recognition as true churches and a pledge to work towards ecclesiastical unity (involving also the major assemblies), and a final phase of acquaintance and fellowship.
- i. The Deputies were also given the mandate to investigate whether there are possibilities to have contact with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, and if so, in what way.
- j. Synod adopted new Rules for relations with sister churches.
- k. Fraternal relations were initiated/continued with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Reformed Church in the U.S., the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire,

the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke of South Africa, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi de Indonesia, La Iglesia Cristiana Fe Reformada in Venezuela, Igreja Reformada Colonia Brasolandia (Unai), the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines, and the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

- l. The offer of sister church relations to the Free Church of Scotland was again extended under the new Rules.
- m. It was decided to strive towards a sister church relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia, because this is to be recognized as a true church of the Lord.
- n. Contacts will be initiated/continued and intensified with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Presbyterian Association in England, the Ely Reformed Church in Cardiff, the Union des Eglises Reformees Evangeliques Independantes de France, the Greek Evangelical Church, the Iglesias Reformadas de Espana, the Iglesia Christiani Reformada in Madrid and Portugal, the Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa, the African Evangelical Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Reformed Church of East Africa, the Nongo u Kristu u Ken Sudannen Tiv (Nigeria), the Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir, Igreja Presbyteriana do Brasil, Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil, the Reformed Church in Japan, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong), the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India.
- o. The membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was continued.

3. Considerations

- a. From the correspondence and the Acts of General Synod Ommen, the Committee may gratefully conclude that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have shown themselves to be faithful to God's Word and have abided by the Reformed Creeds and Church Order.
- b. The new Rules for sister church relationships adopted by Synod Ommen are almost literally a translation of the Rules adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches. These Rules therefore pose no problems for the Canadian Reformed Churches, but instead show a remarkable and desired harmony for which we have pleaded in the past.
- c. The decision to grant women in the churches the right to vote does not affect the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, who have in the past also struggled with this matter and have not made any definite pronouncements on it, except to say that "there is an obvious lack of consensus on this matter" (Acts 1983, Art. 160, C. 1).
- d. With respect to granting elders the right to extend the benediction, the question should be asked how this decision impacts on the relation between the offices, as confessed in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, and explained in the Form for Ordination of Office Bearers. Do the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands still hold to a three-office view, and if so, what is the relation and distinction between the office of minister and the office of elder?
- e. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands show increased activity with respect to relations with churches abroad. While this is in itself quite laudable, care must be taken to consult with sister churches, especially in areas where the sister churches are actively involved (e.g. in the case of Brazil, the Igreja Presbyteriana do Brasil and Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil, where also the Canadian Reformed Churches conduct mission work).

4. Recommendations

- a. Gratefully to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules.
- b. To request the CRCA to pass on to the Dutch Deputies the question concerning offices, as posed above, and to solicit a response from the Dutch churches on this matter.

VII. THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (FCS)

1. Correspondence

- a. On Jan. 25, 1993, we wrote to the FCS and informed them via the Committee on Ecumenical Relations about the decision of Synod Lincoln 1992 to invite the FCS to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC. A copy of the new Rules for this relationship was enclosed. Copies of the Acts 1992 were sent as soon as they were received.
- b. A letter was received from the FCS, dated Feb. 4, 1993, in which we were informed that the General Assembly of the FCS would meet in Edinburgh from May 17 - 21, 1993. Since this year marked the 150th anniversary of the Disruption, special attention would be paid to this historic event. In addition, it was stated that the Committee on Ecumenical Relations had decided unanimously to recommend that the Assembly accept the invitation of the CanRC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. In light of this development, the CRCA was urged to send a delegate to the General Assembly.

The CRCA weighed this request carefully because of the expense factor and because of the synodical charge to send two delegates and an advisor to the third meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle in 1993. After further discussion by telephone with the chairman of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations, Prof. C. Graham, it was decided to delegate Dr. J. Visscher to represent the CanRC. The fact that he could also fit in a visit to Synod Ommen of the RCN influenced the CRCA's decision.

- c. On Feb. 8, 1994, the FCS extended an invitation to the CanRC to be represented at their 1994 General Assembly. Seeing that our churches had been represented in 1993, it was decided not to delegate anyone but to send a letter of best wishes. On June 2, 1994, the FCS wrote expressing appreciation for the fraternal greetings received.

2. Acts of the General Assembly 1993

The General Assembly met from May 17 - 21, 1993, in Edinburgh. Some of the highlights include:

- a. Principal-Emeritus Clement Graham was elected as the Moderator. Years before he had also served in this office and the fact that he was elected for a second time (a most unusual thing!) reflects the honour and esteem that is accorded him for his many years of faithful labour in the Free Church.
- b. The FCS decided to recommend the Reformed Church in the United States, the Free Reformed Church in North America and the Free Church of Central India for membership in the ICRC.
- c. The Assembly accepted with gladness a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the agreed upon Rules.
- d. Time was also set aside for the Assembly to give proper attention to the 150th Anniversary of the Disruption.

- e. The Assembly decided to exhort Her Majesty's Government to have regard for the sanctity of the Lord's Day, as well as other moral issues.
- f. A considerable amount of time was also spent on the matter of Church Extension work.
- g. Since the closure, amalgamation and start-up of new churches falls under the work of the Assembly, several matters had to be dealt with. In addition, the sale and purchase of church property and manses also involves the Assembly, along with the local congregations affected.
- h. The Thursday evening of the week that the Assembly meets is customarily devoted to matters of foreign mission. The report of the Board was received and representatives from the mission fields in India, Peru and South Africa spoke.

3. Acts of the General Assembly 1994

The General Assembly met from May 23 - 27, 1994, in Edinburgh. Some of the highlights were:

- a. The Assembly entered into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands in accordance with the agreed Rules.
- b. The Assembly accepted a report from the Finance, Law and Advisory Committee which contained new regulations for sick leave and leaves of absences by ministers, missionaries and professors. It also passed a supplement as to how disciplinary matters should be handled before the courts of the Church.
- c. A report was received from the Committee on Public Questions, Religion and Morals. This Committee makes representation to the government in moral matters. A report was also received from the Committee on Church Extension. It drew the attention of the Assembly to places where there are encouraging signs of church growth, to home missionaries, and to efforts that needed assistance.
- d. A special committee appointed to visit and examine the workings of the Free Church College in Edinburgh tendered a report that included a number of proposals for change in the exams, semesters, and placement of students.

It was decided that students who have completed the first year of the three year course and students who have completed the second year of the four year course, shall be placed with an experienced minister for a period of six weeks. The programme for the student's placement is to be set out by the minister in consultation with the Kirk Session. Both the minister and the Kirk Session will submit reports on the student's ability, attitude, progress, etc. to the Professor of Practical Theology. These reports will become part of a student's overall assessment.

- e. In its report to the Assembly the Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations commented on the ICRC meeting in Zwolle as follows: "Probably the most encouraging feature of the whole Conference was the obvious development of respect and trust between the participating Churches. There was a total lack of the confrontation which had featured occasionally in previous Conferences. Differences of viewpoint emerged from time to time but were always expressed in a pacific manner appreciative of the position of others. For example, though the Free Church representatives were not won over to the idea of replacing preaching from the Scriptures with preaching from the Catechism, we were persuaded that our Church should make much more use of the Westminster Catechism as a teaching tool."
- f. In its report the Visitation Committee to the Free Church College stated, "It is our conviction that we should as a Church be profoundly thankful for the

fact that we have our own theological training establishment. One of the plainest lessons of past years in some other denominations is that when churches give up control over the appointment of their professors they virtually hand over the training of their future ministers to outsiders." It added, "We should as a Church be grateful for the fact that our College has been held in esteem world-wide as a school in which Calvinism has been taught with love and conviction. Such establishments are comparatively rare in our modern world. For this reason it is all the more important that we should appreciate the work of Professors and make their service to Jesus Christ a matter of constant prayer. Professors need to show the highest examples of theological and personal integrity and inspire in their students a life-long love of the gospel in all its richness and fullness."

4. Consideration

On the basis of the above, we may conclude that the FCS continues to be faithful to the Word of God, to its confessional standards and to its church government.

5. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1995 that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued with the Free Church of Scotland in accordance with the adopted Rules.

VIII. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (FRCSA)

1. Correspondence

- a. On Jan. 25, 1993, the FRCSA were informed about the decisions of Synod Lincoln 1992 that had a direct bearing on our mutual relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. A copy of the new Rules for this relationship was enclosed. When the Acts 1992 appeared, copies were sent to the South African churches.

Seeing that Synod had mandated the CRCA to investigate the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA), we asked the South African deputies for information on these churches, as well as for their evaluation.

- b. On March 3, 1993, a letter was sent to us by the South African deputies thanking us for our previous letter and stating that they saw no problems with our new Rules. Furthermore, they said that they might propose similar Rules to Synod Johannesburg 1994.

They also urged the CRCA to organize another workshop on rules for inter-church relations at the forthcoming meeting of the ICRC in the hope that all reformed and presbyterian churches would as yet adopt exactly the same rules. The CRCA decided that sufficient progress had been made on this matter and that there was little to be gained by organizing yet another workshop.

As far as information and evaluation about the RCSA was concerned, the South African deputies referred us to the forthcoming Acts of Synod Pretoria 1992.

- c. The deputies of the FRCSA sent us another communication on Jan. 18, 1994, in which they notified us of the convocation of Synod Johannesburg on May 4, 1994. The CRCA did not feel free to send a delegate to South Africa in view of the planned Australian visit and hence greetings were conveyed via the post office. Special mention was made of the political difficulties being experienced in the nation of South Africa, and in the Free Reformed Churches due to the high number of ministerial vacancies.

- d. On May 11, 1994, we received two copies of the report of the South African deputies to the Synod Johannesburg 1994. In this report the Deputies ask Synod for a mandate to study and recommend the new Rules adopted by the Canadian and Dutch churches.

2. Acts of Synod Pretoria 1992

From the "Handelinge" we pass on:

- a. A sister church relationship will be continued with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.
- b. Synod decided to continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Churches in Sumba/Savu, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and the Free Church of Southern Africa.
- c. Synod appointed delegates to examine the possibilities of a theological training for members of the FRCSA at Potchefstroom University.
- d. Synod appointed deputies to select 50 hymns from the "Afrikaanse Koraalboek" to serve as an addition to the Psalms sung in the worship services.
- e. Synod expressed a preference for the 1933/53 Bible translation, but also allowed the usage of the New African Bible for study purposes.
- f. Synod re-evaluated the contacts with the Reformed Churches in South Africa. After concluding that the FRCSA and the Reformed Churches in South Africa recognize Scripture as the infallible Word of God, accept the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed and the Three Forms of Unity, have a similar Church Order and Subscription Form, Synod decided that it was time for new initiatives, possibly leading to recognition.

3. Consideration

On the basis of the above, we may conclude that the FRCSA continues to be faithful to God's Word, to the confessions and to the adopted Church Order.

4. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends to General Synod 1995 that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in accordance with the adopted Rules.

IX. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)

1. Context

The Canadian Reformed Churches are one of the founding members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Delegates were sent to the 1982 Constituent Assembly which met in Groningen, the Netherlands, to the first official meeting which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1985, to the second meeting which was held in Langley, B.C., in 1989, and to the third meeting which was held in Zwolle, the Netherlands, in 1993. This third meeting was to have taken place in Seoul, Korea, however, since their facilities were not ready, it was shifted to Zwolle, and held there from Sept. 1 - 9, 1993.

2. Correspondence

- a. On Dec. 14, 1992, a letter was sent to us by the ICRC Secretary, the Rev. M. van Beveren, stating that churches applying for admission needed to have two sponsors and that due to their limited contacts, the Free Reformed Church of North America (FRCNA) and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) had difficulty obtaining two sponsors. He asked whether the CRCA was prepared to sponsor these two churches.

On Dec. 14, 1992, the Rev. C. Pronk wrote us on behalf of the FRCNA and asked if the CanRC would be willing to recommend the FRCNA for membership in the ICRC.

Earlier on March 16, 1992, the RCUS had made a similar request to the CRCA.

- b. On Jan. 26, 1993, we informed both the FRCNA and the RCUS that the CRCA disagreed with the ICRC Secretary's interpretation of the Constitution and that the two letters of recommendation mentioned refer to churches desiring to send observers to the meetings of the ICRC. In order to avoid having these two churches caught in the middle of a matter of constitutional interpretation, however, the CRCA decided to give both churches a qualified recommendation. In our letters of recommendation to the Secretary of the ICRC we made clear that no official relationship existed between the CanRC and either the FRCNA or the RCUS. We based our qualified recommendation on local contacts between our churches and the two applying churches. We mentioned the fact that the FRCNA sends its students for the ministry to our Theological College and that Synod Lincoln 1992 decided that we had sufficient confidence in the RCUS to approach them with a view to establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- c. On April 27 and May 22, 1993, the Secretary informed us that contrary to some reports the PCK is not a member of a new organization called the International Reformed Fellowship. He also sent a provisional agenda for the 1993 ICRC meeting in Zwolle.
- d. On Feb. 8, 1994, the Secretary wrote seeking input from the CanRC in the matter of regional conferences. The CRCA is of the opinion that unless a specific need can be cited, there is little justification for such regional conferences.
- e. On Nov. 7, 1994, the Secretary sent us a ICRC Newsletter informing us of the new Mission Newsletter, the fact that the ICRC member churches in Ireland, Scotland and the Netherlands were planning a regional conference for 1995, and plans for the next meeting of the ICRC in Seoul, Korea.
- f. On Jan. 4, 1995, the Secretary told us that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) had submitted a proposal to amend Art. III, sub 1, of the ICRC Constitution. The FRCA proposes to change the statement "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ" to "to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the member churches confess."

The decisions of Synod 1992 on the ICRC indicate that the Canadian Reformed Churches are satisfied with the present formulation and therefore the CRCA recommends that no further changes be entertained and supported.

The Secretary also informed us that the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) is applying for membership in the Conference, and that a paper presented at the Zwolle meeting has been translated into French and will be available soon.

3. The Third Meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle, the Netherlands, Sept. 1 -9, 1993

- a. For specific details of this meeting we refer you to the *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches*. (September 1 - 9, 1993, in Zwolle, the Netherlands)
- b. Our delegates to this meeting were Rev. Cl. Stam and Dr. J. Visscher, with Dr. N.H. Gootjes as advisor. Dr. J. Faber was also present as Convener of the Committee on Theological Affirmation. Rev. M. van Beveren and

br. H.A. Berends also attended as Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

Prof. Gootjes contributed a paper on the subject of "Catechism Preaching."

In view of some editorial comments made in the *1994 Yearbook* of the CanRC, it should be noted that the Canadian Reformed Churches paid directly for the travelling expenses of their two delegates and their one advisor. The other three participants either paid their own way or had their way paid for by the Conference.

- c. The following churches were received as new members:
 - the Free Church of Central India;
 - the Free Reformed Church of North America;
 - the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA);
 - the Reformed Church in the United States.

This brings the membership in the ICRC to 15.

- d. The Conference accepted a proposal from the Finance Committee "to assess each member Church, with the understanding that no member Church would bear more than 49% of the assessment." (*Proceedings*, 28:1)
- e. The next meeting of the Conference has been scheduled for Seoul, Korea. The commencement date will be D.V. August 20, 1997.

4. Considerations

Generally speaking, CanRC participation benefited our delegates, advisor, and members and was well received by the other participants. The papers delivered stimulated much constructive discussion. During the plenary sessions and especially during the intermissions, there were many opportunities to learn more about the struggles and difficulties that exist in the member Churches. It was good to hear not only about hardships, but also to hear and observe that the Lord in His grace gathers His Church in many different places in the world. The ICRC provides an excellent forum for sharing experiences and knowledge, and so acts as another means to promote the Church gathering work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

5. Recommendations

- a. Your Committee recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to participate in the ICRC and that the CRCA submit a report to General Synod 1998 containing its findings and evaluation.
- b. Your Committee recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches be represented at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in Korea during the month of August in the year of our Lord 1997.
- c. Your Committee also recommends that Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. C. VanSpronsen be sent as voting delegates and that in view of his familiarity with the language and customs of Korea, Dr. N.H. Gootjes be appointed as advisor.

X. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES (RCUS)

1. Correspondence

- a. On Jan. 25, 1993, the CRCA informed the RCUS that Synod 1992 had charged us to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. We requested that appropriate documents be sent in order that we might be able to commence work on this mandate. Some weeks later the RCUS sent us a large box filled with the material requested.
- b. On Jan. 25, 1993, we also supplied the RCUS with a letter of qualified recommendation to accompany their application for membership in the ICRC.

In an accompanying letter we informed the RCUS that such a letter was not really required according to our interpretation of the Constitution of the ICRC. In addition, we informed them that our recommendation would need to be somewhat qualified seeing that as yet no official relationship existed between the CanRC and the RCUS.

- c. On Feb. 1, 1993, the Canadian Reformed Church at Carman wrote and asked advice on how it might continue its contact with the RCUS seeing that the CRCA had now been mandated by Synod to involve itself. The CRCA has no intention of discouraging the local contacts of the Church at Carman, but as to what form such contacts should take must be left in the freedom of the Church at Carman to decide.
- d. On Feb. 3, 1993, the RCUS invited the CRCA to send an observer to its 247th Synod to be held in Sutton, Nebraska, from May 24 - 27, 1993. The CRCA delegated the Rev. E. Kampen to act as the CanRC observer.
- e. On March 16, 1994, the RCUS invited the CRCA to send an observer to its 248th Synod to be held in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, from May 16 - 19, 1994. The CRCA delegated Mr. A. Nap to act as the CanRC observer.
- f. On July 11, 1994, we received two copies of the 1994 Abstract of the 248th Synod.

2. Other Activities

In order to carry out its mandate, the CRCA decided

- a. to appoint a sub-committee consisting of the brs. E. Kampen, A. Nap and C. VanSpronsen. This Committee indicated which areas needed discussion with the RCUS. It also studied in detail the Constitution of the RCUS. Some of their findings are included under the next section (see Consideration c);
- b. to delegate both the Rev. E. Kampen and Mr. A. Nap as observers to successive Synods of the RCUS. In this way different impressions could be formed and added information and insight received. The reports of both brothers are appended and contain valuable data about the RCUS;
- c. to organize a meeting with members from the InterChurch Relations Committee and the "Study and Defend RCUS Ecclesiology Committee" of the RCUS. The intent of this meeting between representatives of the CanRC and the RCUS would be to gain further understanding of the history, confession and life of our respective churches. At the time that this Report is being finalized, a date and place for such a meeting has yet to be established.

3. Considerations

- a. Rev. F.H. Walker visited Synod Lincoln 1992. In a part of his report to the RCUS Synod 1993 (Sutton) he complained about "overly critical and often inaccurate reports." He preferred to wait for further developments in contacts between the CanRC and the OPC before establishing official contact with the CanRC.
- b. Rev. E. Kampen visited the 1993 RCUS Synod on behalf of the CRCA. In his contacts and speeches he followed up the discussion items identified by the sub-committee. These are:
 - the doctrinal standards in the RCUS;
 - the Constitution of the RCUS;
 - ecclesiology;
 - inter-church relations.

- c. From a report of our Sub-committee to study the Constitution of the RCUS we quote:

“Preliminary Remark:

The Committee discussed for some time to what extent we are expected to discuss the basic structures of the Constitution in as far as they resemble those of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and have already been evaluated and not found to be an obstacle to recognition as a true Church. Do we start from the assumption that the Presbyterian church polity as such is not an impediment to establish ecclesiastical fellowship? If so, several points ...ought to be presented to their committee for further discussion and clarification.”

General Comments:

1. It appears that this Constitution is a remarkable blend of Reformed and Presbyterian church polity. In its general make-up it does, however, give the impression of being more presbyterian than reformed. Presbyterian concepts are given reformed names: consistory, classis, synod, instead of session, presbytery and general assembly but function in a similar manner as under the presbyterian system....
 6. The place of the Heidelberg Catechism is prominent. The Constitution stresses knowledge of and adherence to this confession for all members.
 7. Their ecclesiology shows in the manner of receiving ministers into their communion from other “Orthodox Protestant Churches” (art. 5, 74) as well as at the table of the Lord. What are “other branches of the Christian Church” (art. 4)? What are other denominations “holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel” whose members should be invited to participate in the Holy Supper (art. 189)? Is the pluriformity one of being more or less pure or a matter of different historical/ethnic origins?”
- d. Br. A. Nap visited the 1994 RCUS Synod (Manitowoc). He reported that the RCUS adopted the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort as additional confessional standards.

The CRCA expresses deep thankfulness for this decision.

- e. The 1994 RCUS Synod appointed a committee “to study and defend the Reformed Church in the United States’ view of Church Government and Form of Government.” This committee expects to present a final report in May, 1995. Included in this report will be:

- “1. An overview of the Canadian Reformed Churches’ Church Order;
2. An exegetical study on women voting in the congregational meeting;
3. An exegetical study of the ‘one true church’ concept;
4. An exegetical study of the idea that the local congregation is not a judicatory;
5. A search of our denominational Constitution as to the idea of judicatory.”

4. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 1995 renew the mandate of the CRCA to continue its investigation of the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship according to the adopted Rules.

XI. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN QUEBEC (ERQ)

1. Correspondence

- a. On June 23, 1994, the Church at Ottawa adopted in principle an extensive report on the Eglise Reformee du Quebec (for our purposes and in keeping with the rest of our report we translate this name as follows: the Reformed Church of Quebec and we abbreviate this name as: ERQ) and decided to send it as an overture to Classis Ontario North of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- b. On July 11, 1994, the ERQ wrote the CRCA informing us that in March of 1994 the ERQ decided to begin talks with the CanRC in order to seek an official relationship. To that end two deputies from the ERQ visited with the Consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Ottawa. After a positive discussion, it was decided to prepare an overture asking for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC. The text of the overture was completed and accepted by the Consistory of the CanRC at Ottawa.

On June 16, 1994 the Synod of the ERQ expressed the need for more time before coming to the CanRC with an official request for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. As a result, the Synod of the ERQ decided to invite two representatives from the CanRC to be present at the next Synod of the ERQ to be held in Montreal on Sept. 16 and 17, 1994. As representatives they invited the Rev. J.L. VanPopta of the Church at Ottawa to be present and they also requested the CRCA to send one of its members.

- c. On Sept. 5, 1994, the CRCA informed the ERQ that it could not send a member of the CRCA because none were available. It had, however, found the Rev. C. Bosch of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington-South, Ontario, willing and able to accompany the Rev. J.L. VanPopta to the September Synod of the ERQ.

It should also be mentioned that from the very beginning the CRCA questioned and debated whether or not this was really a matter for our Committee seeing that, as our name indicates, we are to deal with "churches abroad" i.e. foreign churches.

- d. Subsequent to his visit, the Rev. C. Bosch sent us a report of his visit which we have appended for your consideration. In his recommendation he requests the CRCA to send a delegation to visit the ERQ as soon as possible and to submit a report of this visit to the churches.
- e. On Nov. 21, 1994, the Rev. P. Bedard, the deputy of the ERQ appointed to develop relations with the CanRC, wrote us and asked for additional information on the CanRC. The requested information was sent.
- f. On Dec. 14, 1994, the Church at Ottawa informed us that Classis Ontario North had gone on record as stating that "the information provided by the church at Ottawa demonstrates that l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec can be recognized as a true Church of Christ. Therefore Classis requests Synod 1995 to respond to the request of l'ERQ by mandating the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad to intensify and confirm the contact initiated by the church at Ottawa with a view to entering a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship."

2. Considerations

- a. Your Committee is impressed with the extensive submission prepared by the Church at Ottawa and appreciated the invitation received from the ERQ to send an observer to its September Synod. It also appreciated the willing-

ness of the Rev. C. Bosch to represent the CRCA and is grateful for his report. Furthermore, it is thankful that Classis Ontario North could come to its above-mentioned statement.

- b. At the same time the CRCA is of the opinion that while it had a right to respond positively to the request of the ERQ to send an observer to its September Synod (cf. Acts 1992, Art. 112), it could not do more than that without receiving instructions from General Synod. As a result, we did not feel free to arrange an official visit to the ERQ and to commence a formal investigation.
- c. The CRCA has been urged to initiate such an investigation also because of the immediate needs of the ERQ; however, we are of the opinion that many of the needs of the ERQ can be responded to positively by the CanRC even if there is as yet no formal relationship between our respective church federations.

3. Recommendation

Your Committee makes no recommendation in this matter but awaits further instruction, if any, from General Synod 1995.

XII. OTHER REQUESTS

A. The Reformed Church in Zaire (RCZ)

1. Correspondence

- a. On Jan. 15, 1993, the Reformed Church in Zaire wrote to the CRCA requesting close relations with the CanRC and asking us to pay a visit to Zaire. This Church also requested that missionaries from Canada be sent to work in Zaire.
- b. On Jan. 25, 1993, we wrote to the Reformed Church in Zaire as per instruction of General Synod 1992 asking it to supply us with information regarding its confessional position, church government, number of congregations and ministers, ecumenical relations, etc. We also asked in what way it differed from the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire (ERCZ).
- c. On April 30, 1994, we received another letter from the Moderator of the RCZ, the Rev. P.H. Kazadi Lukonda Ngube-Ngube, in which he stated that the RCZ was different from the ERCZ, although they will probably have fellowship in the future. He said that the ERCZ has the Belgic Confession but not the Canons of Dort, whereas, the RCZ is based on the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity.

Rev. Ngube-Ngube stated that he founded the RCZ four years after his return from Zambia where he received his theological training in the Reformed Church in Zambia. The government of his church, he said, is based on the synodical system of synods, presbyteries and consistories. In addition, there are presently 70 congregations, 17 pastors and candidates who will be ordained at a meeting held from June 22 to July 3, 1994. He again expressed a desire to have a relationship with the CanRC and invited us to visit. He also reiterated an earlier request for missionaries. He would like us to send publications and videos tapes of CanRC life.

- d. On May 23, 1994, Rev. Ngube-Ngube wrote us again informing us that an economic crisis existed in his country and asking us to send money for food.
- e. On Aug. 17, 1994, Rev. Ngube-Ngube sent us another letter asking us to participate in the first General Assembly of the RCZ to be held on June 25, 1995 and to assist in the food costs for the 200 expected participants.

We decided not to send an immediate reply but to wait for information about the RCZ from Rev. Kishimba of the ERCZ. (See Appendix: "From Mantowoc and Lubumbashi" by Mr. A. Nap)

2. Considerations

- a. It is obvious that the RCZ, through its representative the Rev. Ngube-Ngube, continues to persist in their request for a relationship with the CanRC, as well as for missionaries and financial assistance.
- b. As CRCA we find it very difficult to respond to these requests in a positive way seeing that none of our normal contacts are familiar with the RCZ. Furthermore, we have been informed that our sister churches in the Netherlands, the RCN, has Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the ERCZ, as does the RCUS.
- c. At the moment we are awaiting information from other sources about the RCZ, and about the relationship between the RCZ and the ERCZ.
- d. Our cautious approach in this matter is caused by our well-established procedure of careful investigation before entering into an official relationship with another church.

3. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends that the CRCA be mandated to continue its investigation and report to the next General Synod on its findings with respect to the Reformed Church in Zaire.

B. The Reformed Presbyterian Church – General Assembly (RPCGA)

1. Correspondence

- a. On May 11, 1993, we received a letter from the Rev. G.W. Donnan, Chairman of the Committee on Ecumenicity of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly requesting that ecclesiastical contact be established between the RPCGA and the CanRC.
- b. On Feb. 28, 1994, we received another letter from the RPCGA reiterating their previous request and informing us that their federation consists of nine congregations and 500 members. They also asked if the CanRC would be prepared to recommend them for membership in the ICRC seeing that we had done the same for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
- c. On March 28, 1994, we responded to the letter of the RPCGA by requesting additional information about their churches.
- d. On April 23, 1994, we received additional information from the RPCGA. This information included a list of names of congregations, ministers, and membership figures for each local church. A very informative book called The Book of Church Order was included. In addition, the RPCGA informed us of its hopes of developing closer relations with the OPC, RCUS, Independent CRC of Nicaragua, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Russia, the RCN (Vrijgemaakt) and a long list of other reformed and presbyterian churches around the world. Also, they sent observers to the meeting of the ICRC in Zwolle and to the Alliance of Reformed Churches. They are also in contact with North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).
- e. On April 24, 1994, the RPCGA invited the CRCA to send an observer to their General Assembly to be held on July 26, 1994, in Louisville, Nebraska.
- f. On Oct. 24, 1994, we informed the RPCGA that we had been unable to send an observer to their General Assembly.

2. Considerations

- a. At the present time we are still studying the material sent to us by the RPCGA. In addition, we are asking for information about the RPCGA from our sister churches and from other contacts in the USA.

- b. When the RPCGA stated that we recommended the OPC for membership in the ICRC, they were mistaken. We issued qualified recommendations for the Free Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in the United States.
- c. In all honesty the CRCA is a bit taken aback by the membership figures supplied by the RPCGA and wonders how congregations of 8-10, 20, 25, 30 members can be viable and support a pastor. It is also astonished at the extensive ecumenical plans of this small federation.

3. Recommendation

Your Committee recommends the CRCA be mandated to continue its investigation and report to the next General Synod on its findings with respect to the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly.

XIII. FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1993-1994 AND BUDGET 1995-1998

General Synod 1992 charged the CRCA to present a financial statement and budget to General Synod 1995.

With respect to the Financial Statement, the Church for the General Fund (the Church at Carman) has informed the CRCA that in the period 1993 - 1994 a total of \$14,052.98 was spent. The major expenses related to:

the visit to the FRC of Australia	\$5,048.44
the meeting of the ICRC	\$2,542.00 (approx.)
ICRC membership fee	\$1,896.30
the visits to the RCUS	\$1,600.00 (approx.)
the visit to RCN and FCS	\$1,500.00 (approx.)

With respect to a Budget for 1995-1998

ICRC fees	\$2,500.00
the meeting of the ICRC in Korea	\$4,000.00
meeting with the RCUS	\$1,500.00
misc.	<u>\$4,000.00</u>
	\$12,000.00

XIV. RE-APPOINTMENT

The Rev. Cl. Stam has requested the CRCA to inform General Synod 1995 that he not be re-appointed for personal reasons. As Committee we would like to express our thanks to Rev. Cl. Stam for the work that he has done as a member of the Committee and for the Churches.

Respectfully submitted by your Committee,
January 13, 1995

- Elder H. A. Berends
- Dr. S.H. DeBoer
- Rev. E. Kampen
- Elder A. Nap
- Rev. Cl. Stam
- Dr. J. Vanderstoep
- Rev. C. VanSpronsen
- Dr. J. Visscher (convener)

List of Abbreviations:

CanRC =	Canadian Reformed Churches
CRCA =	Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad
EPCI =	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
ERCS =	Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
ERCZ =	Confessing Reformed Church in Zaire
ERQ =	Reformed Churches in Quebec
FRCA =	Free Reformed Churches in Australia
FCS =	Free Church of Scotland
FRCNA =	Free Reformed Churches of North America
FRCP =	Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines
FRCSA =	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
ICRC =	International Conference of Reformed Churches
NAPARC =	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
OPC =	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCEA =	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCK =	Presbyterian Church in Korea
RCA =	Reformed Churches of Australia
RCN =	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
RCNZ =	Reformed Church of New Zealand
RCSA =	Reformed Churches in South Africa
RCSTS =	Reformed Churches of Sumba-Timor-Savu
RCUS =	Reformed Church in the United States
RCZ =	Reformed Churches in Zaire
RPCGA =	Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly
RPCI =	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

APPENDICES TO REPORT OF THE CRCA:

1. Visit to the 247th Synod of the Reformed Church in the U.S.A. by Rev. E. Kampen
(*Clarion*, July 16, 1993)
2. Address to the Synod of the RCUS by Rev. E. Kampen
3. Third Meeting of the ICRC. by Rev. Cl. Stam
(*Clarion*, Oct. 22, 1993)
4. Meeting of the delegates of the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Canadian Reformed Churches by Rev. Cl. Stam
(*Clarion*, Oct. 22, 1993)
5. A Visit to the Netherlands and Scotland by Rev. J. Visscher
(*Clarion*, Year End Issue 1993 and March 11, 1994)
6. Address to Synod Ommen of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands by Rev. J. Visscher
7. The New Rules for Sister Church Relations in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands adopted by Synod Ommen 1993.
8. Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland by Rev. J. Visscher
(*Clarion*, March 11, 1994)
9. Responding to a Plea: Report on a visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Byford, WA. by Rev. E. Kampen.
(*Clarion*, Sept. 9 and 23, 1994)
10. Addresses to Synod Byford of the FRCA by Rev. E. Kampen
11. Manitowoc (Wisconsin) and Lubumbashi (Zaire) by Mr. A. Nap
(*Clarion*, Year End Issue 1994)
12. Visit to the ERQ (Sept. 16, 17, 1994) by Rev. C. Bosch.
13. Letters Regarding ICRC Membership:
 - i. Dec. 3, 1992, from the ICRC Secretary
 - ii. Dec. 14, 1992, from the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA
 - iii. Jan. 26, 1993, to the ICRC Secretary
 - iv. Jan. 26, 1993, to the External Relations Committee of the FRCNA
 - v. March 16, 1992, from the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS
 - vi. Jan. 26, 1993, to the ICRC Secretary
 - vii. Jan. 25, 1993, to the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS

APPENDIX I

VISIT TO THE 247TH SYNOD OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF THE U.S.A.

Introduction

The Synod held in Lincoln in the fall of 1992 decided "to mandate the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to investigate the Reformed Church in the U.S.A. with a view to entering a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship..." (Acts Synod 1992, Art. 79, recommendations point b). In connection with this decision, the undersigned was appointed by the CRCA to visit the 247th Synod of the Reformed Church in the U.S.A., scheduled for May 24-27, 1993 in Sutton, Nebraska.

History

The readers of *Clarion* will be somewhat familiar with the RCUS through the reports from the Church at Carman some years ago. For the benefit of the readers it will be beneficial to give a brief overview of the history of the RCUS.

As can be noted from the fact that the Synod attended is entitled the 247th Synod, this Church has been around for a long time. Historically, many of its members were of German descent. The late 1800s and early 1900s saw the RCUS also affected by the liberalizing trend found in so many churches. In the 1930s the RCUS decided to join with other Reformed and Lutheran bodies. This union was pursued by basically abandoning all binding to the Reformed confessions. A small group in the RCUS, made up especially of Reformed believers of German Russian descent who had immigrated in the 1870s and settled in the Mid West, resisted this development. This group was concentrated especially in one classical region, namely, the Eureka Classis. When the great majority joined in this union in 1940, this Eureka Classis, refused to join, and declared itself the legitimate continuation of the RCUS. To understand the dramatic character of this decision, it should be realized that what had been a group of 1675 churches with approximately 350,000 members was reduced to a group of 26 churches with approximately 1400 communicant members.

This group of churches continued to bind itself to the Heidelberg Catechism. The 1992 statistics reveal that at present the RCUS consists of 35 churches divided into four classes, with 2 chapels (mission congregations). The total membership at the end of 1992 was 4176, of which 3166 are communicant members. The largest congregation consists of 414 members, while the smallest has 19. Of the 35 congregations, 22 have a membership of less than 100 members.

Observations during the visit

It was my privilege to be able to attend the Synod of the RCUS for three days, from Tuesday morning, May 25 till Thursday evening, May 27. The moment you entered the building where the Synod was held, you knew you were in a Reformed Church: the focal point of the auditorium was the pulpit.

The Synod had officially started with a worship service on the previous evening. On Tuesday morning, however, the real work began. One of the first acts was the election of the Synod executive. These officers not only lead the Synod, but they also serve as a committee between Synods to deal with matters that need attention. That task, however, is rather limited. In that sense they would function like one of our synod appointed committees, charged with a specific task.

Whereas in our churches we are accustomed to send only a certain number of delegates from each Regional Synod, in the RCUS each church is allowed to send two delegates. This made for a rather large meeting of over 50 men. Having this large number of people present made for some lengthy debates. All was done, however, in a very cordial and brotherly atmosphere. It should also be realized that unlike our Synods, which can last a number of weeks, a synod of the RCUS is only a matter of days.

Thus, delegates would not be away from their home churches for too long a period of time. In that respect, it is more like a lengthy classis.

This particular Synod has to spend much time on the report by their committee on Constitutional Revision. In the discussion about that report it could be noticed that the RCUS Constitution is a blend of Reformed and Presbyterian Church polity. The discussion reflected the difficulty that arises when you want to maintain the autonomy of the local church, while at the same time you want to maintain a level of inherent authority for the classis and synod. The overall impression from the discussions on the Constitution was, however, that those present have a real desire to think and act in a Reformed manner. There was a fear of hierarchy. While their present church polity speaks of inherent authority for both classis and synod, it should be realized that this is balanced by the fact that all major decisions must be ratified by the local congregations.

The RCUS maintains fraternal relations with the OPC. It is also seeking membership in NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). This latter desire was somewhat surprising, considering that some members of NAPARC see the RCUS as being too narrow-minded and too inward looking. At present, the RCUS has a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). That relationship came especially through their cooperative efforts among the Reformed believers in Zaire.

It was interesting to observe how the members of Synod can initiate actions. For example, study committees were set up to study and defend the RCUS view of the church and its church government, as well as the role of the women in the military upon the request not of particular churches but upon the request of individual members. Such studies, however, are not meant to become extra confessions, but to be of service to the congregations.

During the Synod another worship service was held, on Wednesday evening. Rev. Gross preached a sermon on Psalm 2. There was also opportunity to hear a number of other ministers explain Scripture, as each morning from 9:45 - 10:00 a.m. the Synod held its morning devotions.

As observer from the Canadian Reformed Churches, I was given opportunity to address the Synod. This opportunity was taken advantage of by giving a brief overview of the Canadian Reformed Churches in terms of history, doctrinal standards and life in the churches. Each member of Synod was given a package of information so they could familiarize themselves more with the situation in Canada.

The Synod also gave much attention to the matter of mission. In cooperation with our sister churches in the Netherlands they support work among the Reformed churches in Zaire. Also, a number of mission congregations or chapels are discussed at Synod and financial support is given via Synod. Synod also supervises the publication of the *Reformed Herald* as well as other material for use within the churches.

Another item that received the attention of the Synod was the proposed revision of the liturgical forms used in the RCUS. Some discussion took place as to what translation to use in this proposed revision. It appears that many are quite attached to the King James Version. The Committee was given the mandate to use the New King James Version in its proposal to the next Synod.

During the visit there was much opportunity to speak with many present. There was a friendliness and openness in all the discussions. There was a willingness to share the struggles and problems that arise from striving to hold to the truth.

Though there are some definite differences, in all the personal discussions as well as listening to the discussions on the floor of Synod one could notice one was present in the company of those who love the Reformed faith, and who strive to do things in the Reformed way. It was very encouraging to notice the strong resistance to Arminianism which glorifies man and the desire to proclaim the message of sovereign grace so that the glory for our whole salvation goes to God and Him alone. Even though the RCUS officially subscribes only to the Heidelberg Catechism, both the Belgic Confession and

the Canons of Dort are well known, and used extensively both to teach the members, as well as in outreach projects. It is worthwhile to note that the matter of adopting the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort is a matter that will be placed before the next Synod again. There appears to be a real desire to adopt those confessions, especially with a view to safeguarding the Church from heresy and to be able to draw nearer to other churches who also hold dear the Reformed faith.

Conclusion

This first official visit gave a very positive impression. It is always a little difficult to approach others who have a different history, and due to different historical developments do things differently. From what could be observed, however, it can be noted that even with only the Heidelberg Catechism, and with a church polity that includes elements of Dort and Presbyterian style polity, here is a group of churches that continues to fight the good fight for the Reformed faith.

From this visit, as well as from having reviewed much material pertaining to the RCUS, the undersigned is convinced that we should first of all rejoice and give thanks to God in finding a group of churches that strives to be Reformed. One can only rejoice that the RCUS has resisted the pull toward liberalism, and has not been afraid in the ocean of Arminianism to boldly stand up for the Reformed faith. Though it should not be downplayed that there will have to be some serious discussions about a number of matters, we should approach the RCUS in an atmosphere of brotherly trust, dealing with them as fellow strugglers in the age-old battle.

May the Lord guide us and give us wisdom to proceed further in this matter to the glory of His Name.

E. Kampen

APPENDIX 2
ADDRESS TO THE SYNOD OF THE RCUS,
MAY 24-28, 1993, HELD IN SUTTON, NE.

Esteemed members of the Synod:

It is an honour and privilege that I may address you this afternoon. As the first official observer sent to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches at one of your Synods you can understand that there is some trepidation on my part. Although much work has been done by the Church at Carman, there is no precedent for me to follow. In many ways my impressions will serve as a precedent. That places a particular burden upon. There is also personal trepidation from the fact that in a sense in this visit there is the visit of a younger sister to a much older sister. By this I mean that the RCUS has a long history in N.A., going back centuries, while the Canadian Reformed Churches are far more recent arrivals on the scene here in N.A. Twice I have spoken of personal trepidation. I also want to speak about personal thankfulness. Yes, there is a thankfulness that by being in your midst I may experience something of what we both confess in L.D. 21:54, namely, "that the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life." The Churches I represent have sent me here because in you they recognize that catholic church gathering work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to have our unity in Christ come to a more clear expression. At this time, though we do not yet have an official relationship, on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches I extend our heartfelt greetings in the Name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Though some of you have had some contact with the Church at Carman, and Rev. Walker attended Synod Lincoln held in the fall of 1992, in general there may not be that much knowledge about the Canadian Reformed Churches. Allow me thus to give a brief introduction.

History

Historically, the Canadian Reformed Churches grew out of the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. You have become familiar with those churches due to your work in Zaire. After W.W. II many Dutch immigrants from those Churches came to Canada. At first, efforts were made to join the Christian Reformed Churches and the Protestant Reformed Churches. The CRC, however, insisted on siding with the so-called "Synodical Reformed Churches," which had bound the believers to unscriptural doctrines concerning baptism and the covenant, and which had rashly deposed ministers and elders for not holding the synodically approved view. The Protestant Reformed Church made a doctrinal pronouncement in the Declaration of 1950. To those of Liberated background this was basically a restatement of the error they had liberated themselves from in the Netherlands. Thus, the need was seen to institute faithful Reformed Churches.

The first church instituted was the Church at Coaldale, in southern Alberta, on April 16, 1950. At present, there are 40 Canadian Reformed Churches. Four American Reformed Churches, are associated with the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches. Our total membership at the end of 1992, including non-communicant members, stood at 13,536. At present, eleven churches are vacant.

Doctrinal Standards and Church Government

As for the doctrinal standards, the Churches subscribe to the three Ecumenical Creeds, and the Three Forms of the Unity, namely, the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Officebearers must sign a subscription form.

With respect to church government, the Church Order of Dort, adapted to the Canadian situation, is maintained. A prominent feature of Dort style church polity as compared to Presbyterian polity is the strong emphasis on the local church. There is no such

concept as the regional or national church. Hence, our name as "Canadian Reformed Churches." Under the principle of local autonomy, churches do not report to a Classis or a Synod about their finances, nor submit their minutes. Likewise, Mission is seen as the responsibility of the local church, not broader assemblies. The Church Federation is set up on a voluntary basis, where the churches agree to live together as an extension of the communion of saints, in order give mutual assistance wherever possible. Further, by belonging to a federation, local churches exercise a sort of mutual discipline. It should be noted the broader assemblies are not seen as having any inherent authority. Recalling also the Liberation in the Netherlands in 1944, there is a rejection of any sort of hierarchy. As you can understand, this does present some difficulty when we meet with churches with a presbyterial polity. In principle, though, through contact with Presbyterian Churches, it has become clear that though we are convinced our approach is more Scriptural, that difference has not proven sufficient to avoid having sister-church contact.

The Churches are organized in four classical regions. Classis as a rule is held every 3 months. Two classical regions form a Regional Synod, which is to be held once a year. Finally, every three years a General Synod is held.

The Churches together have established a Theological College, which has operated since 1969, and is located in the city of Hamilton, ON, currently having four full-time professors. The course of study cover the traditional theological curriculum over four years. Students are expected to have a B.A. degree before entry. This college is governed by a number of governors, who have to give account of their actions to the tri-annual Synod. The Churches have assigned the General Synod the responsibility for the college. Thus, a General Synod is responsible for appointing professors. The college is financially supported through assessments by the churches.

Life within the Churches

In order to give you some idea as to life within the churches, let me briefly review some aspects, beginning with the Lord's Day. Worship services are held twice every Sunday, with the afternoon sermon explaining Scripture as confessed in the H. C. In the worship services, the Psalms are sung on Genevan tunes. There are also 65 hymns which pay attention especially to the work of God as fulfilled in Christ. Many hymns are parts of Scripture put to rhyme. Catechetical instruction is given to all the youth, usually starting around age 12, until they have matured and are sufficiently versed in the Reformed truth to publicly profess their faith. Throughout the week, study societies for the Y.P, men, women, young couples, take place.

The members of the churches have set up Reformed Day Schools, and in a number of congregations children can receive instruction up till grade 12.

Mission-Foreign and at Home

It was mentioned that mission is done by local churches. The practice is to have one sending church, which is then financially supported in its work by other churches. At present missionaries labour in Irian Jaya, Brazil, and a home mission project has been set up for work among the natives in northern B.C. Some copies of the quarterly *Mission News* are available for your information. Evangelism is done to varying degrees by the local congregations, although here is definitely an area where improvement is called for. Pamphlets usually focus on introducing the local congregation. A magazine called *Evangel* is produced four times per year. These magazines are meant for distribution in the neighbourhood. In the summer, a number of churches have Vacation Bible Schools.

Publications

We do not have a "Denominational Publication" as such. We do have privately operated magazines, like the *Clarion*, *Reformed Perspective*, and the youth magazine "*In Holy Array*." Some sample copies will be available for your information. Also, a

yearly "*Yearbook*" is put out giving statistical information about the congregation. Again, a number of copies are here for your information. Perhaps it would be best if they were divided equally among the classes.

The question of the "true Church"

Reviewing the Abstracts of the Minutes of your Classes and Synods, I would be remiss if I did not address a concern raised in your circles concerning our view of the "one true Church." You have shown a willingness to study that issue, although I am not aware what conclusions you have reached in this matter. I wish to assure you, however, that the position of the Canadian Reformed Churches is clearly stated in the Three Forms of Unity. Of particular significance are the articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession.

The Belgic Confession speaks in terms of true and false, rather than more or less pure. It also avoids the distinction of visible and invisible. I think it is safe to say that within our churches there is a recognition of the fact that there is an invisible aspect to the church. After all, man is limited in his vision, so no man can see the whole work of Christ. However, there is an unwillingness to speak of an invisible church as distinct from the visible church. The one catholic church of Jesus Christ becomes quite visible, and we can recognize it by the three marks of the preaching, sacraments and discipline. Where we see a group which answers to those three marks, then we see the catholic Church being gathered. The general contention within the Canadian Reformed Churches is that true churches should not be content to remain on their own, but should seek also organizational unity. That organizational unity must be sought especially at the regional and national level. On the international level we speak of sister churches. Thus, we are not satisfied to accept a sort of status quo where different reformed bodies agree to co-exist, even overlap. Unity of faith requires organizational unity, a unity which at the same time recognizes the autonomy of the local church. It is our hope that such greater unity can be achieved in Canada among the various faithful reformed bodies.

This position is very much in line with that of our sister churches in the Netherlands, as can be seen in their report as printed in your Abstract of 1989, pp. 27-31. Further, that is a position you yourself also seem to be pursuing, considering some of the remarks as found in your President's Report, (eg. Abstract 1986, p. 12, and efforts to work in cooperation with OPC (Abstract 1990, p. 128). (Cf. also Reformed Herald, January 1993, p. 3). Judging also from the remarks throughout your Constitution, and your concern to maintain the Reformed faith, it seems right to assume that also you are not ready to call everything that presents itself as Church truly "Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." It would seem to me that we are not that far apart from each other on this point, and that some more careful discussion would be mutually beneficial. Maybe as young sister we can be of some help to our older sister.

Conclusion

Esteemed brothers, it is time to draw my comments to a close. I have prepared packages of information for you to take home, so you can become more familiar with the younger sister from Canada. Of some things there should be enough for everyone. Other items are less numerous, but there should be sufficient so that each classes should be able to take something home.

May the Lord bless you as you continue with your work as Synod, and may the Lord guide us in such a way that we can come to a more meaningful relationship, and truly live as sister churches, in the unity of faith for mutual upbuilding, but above all, to the glory of our great and gracious God. Thank You.

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches,
Rev. Eric Kampen
Minister of the Canadian Reformed Church
at Port Kells, British Columbia.

APPENDIX 3

THIRD MEETING OF THE ICRC

International Conference of Reformed Churches
held at Zwolle, the Netherlands,
September 1-9, 1993

The third gathering of the ICRC took place in the picturesque, provincial city of Zwolle, the Netherlands, from September 1-9, 1993. The constituent assembly of the ICRC had been held in Groningen, while the first two conferences were held respectively in Edinburgh, Scotland (1985), and Langley, British Columbia, Canada (1989). The 1993 Conference was scheduled to be held in Seoul, South Korea, but because the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) did not yet have suitable facilities, the scene shifted to the brand-new "Koningskerk" ("Church of the King") in Zwolle.

Upon arrival in Zwolle, I noticed immediately how well the Conference had been prepared by the organizing committee of the church in Zwolle-Zuid. A special ICRC flag billowed proudly in the blustery wind beside the Dutch tri-colour. The delegates were promptly signed in, photographed and tagged, provided with informative material, and united with their host families.

The 1993 Conference would prove to be the largest ever yet held in the short history of the fledgling ICRC. Eleven member churches each sent a delegation. Four churches were requesting membership in the Conference: the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA), the Free Church of Central India (FCCI), and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). At least seventeen other churches sent observers to the Conference (see the list of observer-churches elsewhere in this report).

The total number of those who attended the Conference ran around seventy persons, an increase of thirty when compared to the last Conference in 1989. It certainly appears that the ICRC is alive and growing.

Prayer service

As has become the custom, the ICRC is preceded by a prayer service, conducted under the supervision of the hosting church. On August 31, at 7.30 p.m., the Rev. O.J. Douma, chairman of the Dutch Deputies for Contact with Foreign Churches (BBK) led the service.

The sermon was based on Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and tomorrow." The theme of the sermon went as follows, "God delivers us from our pride by focusing us on Jesus Christ." Rev. Douma dealt with two points:

- a. Christ has always been what we should have been, and
- b. He sees to it that we shall be like Him.

It will be of interest to our readers that the entire liturgy for this service was taken from the *Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The Canadian input was evident from the very beginning.

After the prayer service, the delegates, host families, and guests received time to enjoy refreshments and to become acquainted. There was a feeling of positive expectation in the air; the members of the Conference longed to begin the work.

Opening business

The Conference was officially opened the next morning, September 1, by the Rev. J. Hagg of the church at Zwolle-Zuid. He welcomed all the delegates and proceeded to guide the proper constitution of the Conference. The credentials of the delegates of the member churches were checked and found to be in good order. The following member-churches and delegates were present:

Korea:

Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK-KOsin): Dr. Kum Sam Lee and Dr. Soon Gil Hur.

Australia:

Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA): Rev. C. Bouwman, Rev. C. Kleijn.
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA): Rev. W.P. Gadsby, Rev. R.S. Ward.

Indonesia:

Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia: Rev. D.H. Doko.

South Africa:

Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (VGKSA): Mr. F. Hofsink, Rev. E.L. van'tFoort.
Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA): Rev. David S. Fraser, Rev. B.M. Taho.

The Netherlands:

Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (RCN-L): Rev. A. de Jager, Rev. H. van Veen (advisors: Prof. Dr. M. te Velde, Drs. J.C. Haak).

Scotland:

Free Church of Scotland (FCS): Prof. A.I. Macloed, Rev. C. Graham (advisors: Rev. D. MacDonald, Rev. I.R. MacDondald, Prof. A.C. Boyd).

Ireland:

Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCI): Rev. H. Cunningham, Prof. W.N.S. Wilson.
Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPCI): Dr. R.C. Beckett, Rev. M.G. Johnston.

North America:

Canadian Reformed Churches: Rev. Cl. Stam, Dr. J. Visscher (advisors: Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Dr. J. Faber). Rev. M. van Beveren, Mr. H.A. Berends and Mr. J. van Vliet were also present from Canada on behalf of the organizing "interim committee." The four churches which were applying for membership were represented as follows:

North America:

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC): Rev. J.J. Peterson, Dr. R.B. Gaffin Jr. (Rev. G.I. Williamson, advisor).
Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS): Rev. R. Grossman.
Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA): Rev. C. Pronk, Rev. P. van derMeyden.

India:

The Free Church of Central India (FCCI): Rev. W. John.

Upon the proposal of the Interim Committee (the moderamen of the 1989 Conference) the following moderamen was declared elected:

Chairman: Rev. A. de Jager (RCN-L)
Vice-chairman; Dr. S.G. Hur (PCK-Kosin)
Corresponding secretary: Rev. M. van Beveren (CanRC)
Recording secretary: Rev. W. Gadsby (PCEA)
Treasurer: Mr. H.A. Berends (CanRC).

The chairman, Rev. A. de Jager (formerly also minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Neerlandia, Alberta), spoke appropriate words of welcome to all delegates and offered encouragement for the work of the Conference.

The Conference decided to meet according to the following schedule: 9.00 - 12.00 (morning session); 14.30 - 17.30 (afternoon session); 19.30 - 21.00 (evening session). One can easily see that this is a very busy schedule, resulting in long days for the participants.

The evening sessions would feature the speakers who were invited to present papers to the Conference. Each paper would be discussed on the following day in the morning session. During the afternoon sessions the other business of the Conference would be transacted, for example: membership requests, reports, and proposals from the member churches. Also, time was set aside so that the various churches could meet to discuss inter-church relations. An important aspect of such a Conference is always the informal contact which takes place between official sessions and leads to greater understanding of and appreciation for one another.

Membership

One of the first matters to be resolved was the request for membership which had been received from four churches: the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA), and the Free Church of Central India (FCCI).

Various committees were appointed to examine each request and to report to the Conference as soon as possible with recommendations. A request for membership is honoured when a church meets the following standards, as stipulated in the constitution (Art. IV, 1):

- a. faithful adherence to the confessional standards mentioned in the Basis (i.e the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity)
- b. acceptance by a two-thirds majority vote of the member churches, every member church having one vote.

An examination of the subscription form and the form of government is also required. In each case, the Conference could gladly, after discussion, admit the churches which applied for membership.

Longer discussion took place on the request of the RCUS. The point here was whether the RCUS did fully meet the requirements for membership because this church in light of its German background officially has only the Heidelberg Catechism as its confessional standard (and not the Three Forms of Unity). The Conference took note of the fact that the RCUS has never rejected the other two Forms, at one time even subscribed to all three, and is presently considering adopting again the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. Since the RCUS is actively committed to the Reformed faith, the admission of this church to the Conference posed no real problem.

With respect to the admission of the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA), the chairman, Rev. de Jager, expressed the hope that the participation of the FRCNA in the Conference would help to further contacts between Reformed Churches in Canada and the United States. After all, the purpose of the Conference is not only to express unity, but also to *promote* it.

Some of our readers might wonder how the FRCNA could be admitted to the Conference while not actively seeking or maintaining unity in Canada and the United States with the Canadian Reformed Churches. There appears to be some underlying discrepancy or tension here. In response, I suggest that the one (membership in the ICRC) has consequences for the other (unity at home), but that these two are not always simultaneous for reasons of historical differences and doctrinal distinctives. It is expected that meeting one another in the ICRC may prove beneficial and fruitful also for ongoing contact and mutual recognition on the home front. It takes time and effort to bridge a gap that has existed for almost a hundred years.

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

It should be noted that at the beginning of the above-mentioned discussions on membership, the delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia presented a prepared statement to the Conference. From this statement, I quote the following:

“ . . . we wish it to be clear to our co-member churches of the ICRC that our 1990 Synod considered concerns put forward regarding perceived inconsistencies with

our membership in the ICRC. . . . One of the concerns . . . about our continued membership in the ICRC is the matter of whether there is really 'unity of faith' in the ICRC."

The point here is whether we can admit churches into the ICRC with whom we do not yet have a sister church relationship and so recognize one another's membership, ministry, and sacraments. The FRCA see here an ethical problem, "If we cannot express the unity on the local scene, can we maintain that there is unity on the Conference level?" Since the FRCA have not resolved this issue for themselves, the delegates from the FRCA felt compelled to abstain from voting on membership requests.

The Conference simply took note of this statement. The concerns of the FRCA came up from time to time during the discussions on these and related constitutional matters.

Personally, I can understand the Australian concerns, which have also come up in our own discussions here in Canada. However, in our discussions, we have come farther in our understanding that churches of the two different Reformed and Presbyterian traditions do belong together and can also work together, as in the past also today, as long as their differences can be discussed in an open and brotherly manner.

The Canadian Reformed delegates, along with those of the PCK-Kosin, both sister churches of the FRCA, did upon request meet separately with the Australian brethren to discuss their concerns. The consensus among the delegates of the sister churches was quite clear: since the ICRC is a Conference which not only expresses the unity of faith but also seeks to promote this unity, and not some international synod, the member churches are not compromised when they receive churches into the Conference with whom they do not yet have a conclusive ecclesiastical relationship.

This is especially not the case when certain differences in doctrine and church polity have been clearly identified and defined ahead of time. It was felt that the expression, "the unity of faith," does not imply full agreement on each and every point of doctrine, but means (in terms of cooperation in the ICRC) a fundamental agreement in the Reformed faith as the required basis for brotherly discussion.

Hopefully the Australian delegates and churches will benefit from this "consensus" of the sister churches and will wholeheartedly continue their valued participation in the ICRC.

Report on "Theological Affirmation"

At the 1989 Conference in Langley, B.C., a "Committee on Theological Confirmation" was appointed to take up a suggestion of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) "regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a true church and the consequences of such a statement for intercommunion etc." (Minutes 1989, page 53). Informed readers may recall that in 1989, the Canadian delegation abstained from voting on this proposal of the PCEA because the members of our delegation were divided on the issue. This abstention is recorded in the 1989 Minutes (page 56).

My fear at that time was that such an "agreed statement" about the church would become a super-confessional document (i.e. above and beyond the adopted standards), which could begin to lead a life of its own and cause more division than promote unity. What we confess concerning the church is already sufficiently summarized in our creeds and, in my view, no additional statement was required. Others felt, however, that this was an excellent opportunity through an agreed statement to "harmonize" the various traditions concerning the church.

Therefore, I was happy to read that this Committee on Theological Affirmation reported to the 1993 Conference that a separate statement about the church need not be drawn up because we have, indeed, in our respective standards a sufficient declaration on this point. Our Committee for Relations With Churches Abroad had already reported to Synod Lincoln 1992, that the report on Theological Affirmation "takes away any fears that there may have been about the ICRC attempting to come with a new statement about the church," and it now appears that this assessment is correct.

The Conference agreed with the conclusions of the Committee on Theological Affirmation.

The general conclusion of this report is that there is a remarkable consensus between "Reformed" and "Presbyterian" traditions on the doctrine concerning the church and what it means to be sister churches (i.e. opening of the pulpit, intercommunion etc.).

During the discussion of this report, it became apparent that although there is basic agreement on the doctrine concerning the church, there are definitely some distinctive views. The main criticism which was expressed on the committee's report is that it did not really deal with the differences between the Westminster Confession and the Belgic Confession, but concentrated instead on the remarkable similarity between the Belgic Confession and the Scots Confession. Thus, some basic questions were side-stepped. It would have been helpful if clarifying references had been made also to the Westminster Confession. On this point I did not find the report very helpful, but rather somewhat "smooth and glib," as I stated during the discussion.

There is in the two traditions without question a different *approach* to the matter of the church. In the Three Forms of Unity, there is more emphasis on the work of God in His covenant and the calling to be faithful to His norms. In the Westminster tradition, the starting-point is rather in God's work of election, and subsequently the idea of the invisible church comes to the fore. But neither side considered the emphasis of the other to be unscriptural. It was agreed that a proper balancing of these two emphases is required. In this respect the discussions at the ICRC were beneficial in helping the member churches grow towards a greater common understanding of what the Bible teaches us about the church of Christ.

For those interested: the report of the Committee on Theological Affirmation will be included in the printed Proceedings of the 1993 ICRC. It was written by a Committee consisting of Dr. J. Faber (convener), Prof. F.S. Leahy (Ireland), Prof. A.C. Boyd (Scotland), Prof. H.M. Cartwright (Scotland), and Dr. N.H. Gootjes. Again, Canadian Reformed input was certainly not lacking.

Mission activities

One of the stated aims of the ICRC, as explained in its constitution, is "to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the *missionary* and other mandates" (Art. III, 3). To facilitate this cooperation, the 1989 Conference in Langley had re-appointed a Mission Committee with the mandate to give an inventory of the mission activities of the member churches and to give recommendations regarding coordination of and cooperation in these efforts.

The Missions Committee (Dr. K. Deddens, convener) reported on its activities. Various recommendations were made by this committee. As a result the Missions Committee was again appointed with the following mandate:

1. to update information from the member churches regarding mission activities in general, and also about missionary training and methodology of mission in particular;
2. to ask the respective member churches to organize four different mission conferences, two years after each ICRC, one in the West (Curacao, Surinam, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela), one in Africa (South Africa, Ghana, Zaire), one in the East (Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, India, Papua New Guinea) and one in Europe (including Eastern Europe). The reports of these conferences are to be sent at least one and a half years before the next ICRC to the Missions Committee;
3. to ask the churches which are working among the Jews to contact one another and to send their report to the Missions Committee at least one and a half years before the next ICRC;
4. to inform the member churches each and every half year about mission work, stating also their needs and strategies, in a newsletter;
5. to send the report to the Corresponding Secretary at least one year before the next ICRC.

As may be understood, there was considerable discussion on the proposals of the Missions Committee. There were some unanswered questions, as well. Will all this not

mean organizing too many conferences with too much cost and not enough effectiveness? Who will edit and publish the "newsletter"? I personally felt that I, as Canadian delegate, did not have a mandate to endorse such far-reaching proposals and could therefore not give the above my unqualified support.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the work of mission must have and will have an important place in the function of the ICRC. Cooperation in mission is a matter which requires our attention and support so that we can indeed help one another effectively in this world-wide venture. Our Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad will do wise to seek some direction in this matter from the next general synod.

Speakers and speeches

A very important aspect of the ICRC, also at Zwolle, was the presentation and discussion of various papers by qualified speakers. Here is where the member churches can really get down to the basics of ecclesiastical contact, namely, to edify one another in the truth of God's Word.

For this Conference there was a list of respectable speakers with topics arranged mostly around the themes of *preaching* and *mission*. Here is the list of speakers and topics:

Drs. C.J. Haak (the Netherlands): Mission and the Wrath of God. Prof. W.N.S. Wilson (Ireland): Prophecy Today? Dr. N.H. Gootjes (Canada): Catechism Preaching; Rev. R. S. Ward (Australia): Recent Criticisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Drs. H.M. Ohmann (the Netherlands): Redemptive-Historical Preaching. Prof. J. Kamphuis (the Netherlands): Remarks on Church and Tolerance.

As stated earlier, the papers were presented during the evening sessions and discussed the next morning. Usually a very lively and enlightening discussion took place, not only during the meeting, but also during the breaks. I consider this to be one of the prime benefits of the Conference: to study common problems and issues which confront the member churches. Even if there is not always complete agreement on the topics, there still grows a better understanding of one another's positions. I was pleased to notice throughout the many debates the clear, whole-hearted commitment of all participants to the Word of God and the Reformed faith. It is refreshing and stimulating to work in such an atmosphere.

Since the papers will be published in the *Proceedings*, I will refrain from summarizing the contents in this report. But I do want to mention that each of these papers is filled with excellent material which ought to be considered as required reading in each Reformed family!

Introduction of observers

It has become more or less a custom in the ICRC that delegates from observer churches are officially welcomed and given the opportunity to introduce themselves. These observers do not have the right to vote, but may participate in the discussions. I did not notice that this privilege was abused, for the many observers conducted themselves properly as guests.

Still, as the Conference grows, I think that this is one area where perhaps stricter rules might be formulated. After all, it should not happen that observers begin to dominate the discussions and influence the decisions, or use the ICRC as a free forum for their own ideas. The "open" format may have to be tightened.

It may happen that those who attend one Conference as observers, are present at the next Conference as delegates of churches requesting membership. Therefore it is good to include in this report a list of those churches who sent observers to the ICRC 1993: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland, Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, Ely Presbyterian Church (Reformed, Cardiff, Wales), Reformed Churches in South Africa, Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir (Indonesia), Iglesia Christiana de Fe

Reformada (Venezuela) Igreja Prebyteriana do Brazil, Igreja Reformata em Portugal, Netherlands Reformed Churches, Reformed Church in Japan, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Reformed Presbyterian Church (General Assembly – U.S.A.), Reformed Presbyterian Church of India, Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, and Iglesia Evangelica del Peru. I hope that I have not missed anyone.

Also various consistories of Independent Christian Reformed Churches had sent observers. The Conference was pleased to welcome Mr. Tom van den Berg of Telkwa, B.C., Rev. C. Tuininga of Edmonton, Alberta, Rev. J.S. Gangar of Wellandport, Ontario, and Rev. J. Tuininga of Lethbridge, Alberta. It was a pleasure to meet and speak with these brethren and the many other observers, from far and wide, in Zwolle. We pray that this fellowship may lead to further contact and greater recognition. I am sure that all observers came away with very positive impressions.

Looking ahead

The ICRC 1993, also made some arrangements for the future. It was decided to accept the invitation of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK-Kosin) to host the next Conference in Seoul, South Korea, the Lord willing, to be held around August 20, 1997. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church tentatively agreed to function as "alternative host."

The following speakers and topics for 1997 were finalized:

- a. Biblical Principles for the Relation between Church and State, by Dr. R.C. Beckett (EPCI)
- b. A Survey of Mission Opportunities, by elder M. Bube (OPC)
- c. The Ministry of the Word amongst Asian Religious People, by Rev. David John (FCCI)
- d. Dr. Richard Gaffin (OPC), on a yet to be determined topic.
- e. Speaking in Tongues, by Rev. E.A. de Boer (GKN-L).

It is generally the idea that the next Conference will devote special attention to mission matters and to the needs of churches in the so-called "Third World."

In view of some confusion about the exact method of and requirements for receiving new member churches (as e.g. in the case of the RCUS with only one confessional standard), it was agreed that the delegates from the PCEA, Rev. Gadsby and Rev. Ward, will function as a Committee to provide the member churches with a proposal to reword Article IV of the Constitution and also Articles V.3 and VII. 1.e of the Regulations "in order to reformulate the requirements for ICRC membership." The member churches will receive this proposal well in advance so that it can be discussed internally before serving on the next ICRC.

I am rather ambivalent about this decision and I hope that this item will not lead to further constitutional wrangling. Fortunately, Messrs. Gadsby and Ward are capable and seasoned ICRC men, who understand where some of the sensitivities lie.

As usual, the moderamen of this ICRC will function as an "interim committee" to prepare the next Conference. It is noteworthy that Rev. M. van Beveren continues as Corresponding Secretary and br. H.A. Berends as treasurer.

With respect to the finances, it may be reported that the ICRC decided that "no member church would bear more than 49% of the assessment." As the number of member churches grows, the cost per church decreases and can be spread more equitably among the member churches.

The Conference took grateful note of the contribution made by Mr. Jason van Vliet of Hamilton, Canada, who served the moderamen "with his highly efficient behind-the-scenes secretarial work."

In conclusion

The 1993 ICRC may be termed a successful conference with a prevailing relaxed, brotherly atmosphere. In an interview with *Nederlands Dagblad*, the chairman of the

Conference, Rev. A. de Jager gave the following impression, "At the previous Conference (Langley, 1989) the process of getting to know one another clearly played a major role. We had to grow towards one another and this brought along with it some confrontation and a questioning of one another. The attitude of this Conference was more: we have to start working things out and must really progress with each other." Of course, there were still differences apparent. Rev. de Jager admitted that "we are still not finished discussing the basis," but added, "we clearly wanted to get away from the tension which this still caused in Langley."

I believe that Rev. de Jager is correct in his assessment. The ICRC is now past the stage of infancy and is entering a new phase where the emphasis comes to lie more on mutual help. The ICRC will still continue to discuss basic points of disagreement, but the main direction will be towards further cooperation and support, especially for churches from the Third World.

The inevitable question will be asked, "What is now the concrete benefit of such a conference as the ICRC?" The immediate results of all these personal and ecclesiastical contacts can not be easily measured. It takes time to build a city, and small steps are then quite significant.

It became apparent that the smaller Reformed and Presbyterian churches from impoverished areas in the world were greatly encouraged and edified by the fellowship experienced in the Conference. Let me quote Rev. Mohan Chaco of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India, a delighted observer, who spoke moving words, "We need encouragement and direction, because we are a small group and geographically isolated. This Conference has been a great help to us." I believe that Rev. Chaco echoed the feeling of all delegates and observers.

Blessed are the peacemakers

Also through this Conference, the churches can fulfill their ecumenical task: to stand together in a wicked world and to share the gifts of Jesus Christ. Then we are mutually enriched.

Let me conclude this report with a quote from the speech by my former professor and mentor, J. Kamphuis, "Now that we see in our time so much faith destroyed and secularization making swift progress, the ICRC can be a priceless means, a good instrument, a striking symbol of the communion of saints, which does not allow error, but within which there is communal life from Christ's peace – the peace which surpasses all understanding and which can keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. If one word of our Saviour can direct our community of churches, it is what Christ said to His disciples in the sermon on the mount: blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

The 1993 ICRC at Zwolle was, indeed, a gathering of true peacemakers.

Cl. Stam
Hamilton, September 30, 1993

APPENDIX 4
MEETING OF THE DELEGATES OF
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KOREA (KOSIN)
AND THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

During the ICRC at Zwolle, the delegates from the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK-Kosin) and the Canadian Reformed Churches took time for a special meeting. The reason for this meeting was to formalize the fraternal relationship between these two churches. Synod Lincoln 1992, decided to accept the invitation of the PCK-Kosin to enter into a full sister church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Synod also decided to mandate the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad "to formalize this relationship in a manner satisfactory to both federations" (Acts, Art. 111. IV. B.2).

It seemed best to formalize this relationship at the ICRC, thus cutting costs and reducing the workload of the Committee. The meeting was arranged for September 2, 1993. For Canada were present: Rev. Cl. Stam, Dr. J. Visscher and Mr. H.A. Berends (along with the advisors Dr. J. Faber, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, and Rev. M. van Beveren). The Korean churches were represented by Dr. Soon Gil Hur and Dr. Kum Sang Lee.

Dr. Visscher opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. He addressed the Korean deputies with words of thankfulness for the fraternal relationship which has come about. He presented to the Korean brethren a copy of the latest edition of the *Book of Praise* and a copy of the publication *Inheritance Preserved*, written by Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. In this way the Koreans can further acquaint themselves with the history and practice of our Canadian Reformed Churches.

Dr. S.G. Hur responded on behalf of the Korean churches. He expressed gratitude that after 20 years of contact a relationship has finally been established. He sees in this development the hand of God.

The Korean churches invited a delegate to attend their General Assembly to be held later in 1993. Since this cannot be realized at this time, it was agreed that a Canadian delegation may be sent at a later date.

A brief discussion followed on the question how to make this new relationship as fruitful and possible, despite differences in language and culture. It was felt that meaningful contact can be pursued, for example, via the Theological Colleges of the two churches. It was noted that the Korean churches have contact with two Presbyterian Korean churches in Toronto, who are affiliated with an American-Korean Presbyterian denomination made up of immigrants from Korea, many of whom are former Kosin members. It was also agreed that the Kosin churches will send extra copies of an existing brochure about the history and life of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Some discussion took place about the church struggles in Korea among Presbyterians (e.g. the controversy with the Presbyterian Hap-Dong church).

Information is exchanged about the next General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, to be held, the Lord willing, in 1995, in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

The delegates of both churches will report to their major assemblies on this meeting.

Dr. S.G. Hur closed the meeting with thanksgiving to the Lord. The meeting then went outside to pose for a photograph which would be taken home by each delegation.

For the Committee
Cl. Stam

APPENDIX 5

A VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS AND SCOTLAND

Background to the visit

General Synod Lincoln 1992 decided to continue to exercise sister-church relations with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA). It also instructed its Committee on Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA) to maintain contact with these churches, as well as to visit them when they meet in General Synod, if this is deemed feasible.

Synod Lincoln, however, did more than continue long-standing relationships; it ventured into new waters when it decided to invite the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) to enter the ranks of the sister churches and when it accepted an often extended and repeated request from the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) to enter into the same relationship with it.

Naturally, these decisions had repercussions for the CRCA which now found its mandate extended and its duties expanded. Letters had to be written informing all of these churches of the decisions of General Synod 1992. In particular, the Free Church of Scotland was asked to respond to the synod's decision and invitation. In addition, the Presbyterian Church in Korea was informed that their invitation had been accepted and could perhaps be formalized in conjunction with the upcoming meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches scheduled to meet in Zwolle, the Netherlands from September 1-10, 1993.

In due time responses were received. The Committee for Ecumenical Relations of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) informed CRCA that they had unanimously decided to recommend to the 1993 General Assembly that it respond positively to the invitation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. They also requested that our churches send a representative to this assembly. At almost the same time, the CRCA also received a letter from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to send a delegate to their General Synod 1993 scheduled to meet in Ommen. (As for the Presbyterian Church in Korea, they informed the committee that they were very pleased with the acceptance of their invitation and would be happy to formalize this new relationship in Zwolle.)

As a result of these developments, the CRCA decided to delegate the convener of the committee, the undersigned, to attend the Dutch Synod from May 11-14 and the Scottish Assembly from May 17-21, 1993. It should be added that the CRCA had only planned to send a delegation to Zwolle in September as instructed by synod; however, seeing the urging of the FCS and the proximity of its assembly to the RCN Synod, it was decided to send someone who would visit both the Netherlands and Scotland.

At the dutch synod

I arrived in Amsterdam on Tuesday, May 11 at 12:00 noon and made my way to the eastern part of the Netherlands where Synod Ommen was being held. That evening I attended my first session, which was busy dealing with mission work to the Jews, and was introduced to the executive of synod (Chairman: Rev. M. Sliggers; Vice-Chairman: Rev. B. VanZuijlekom; First Clerk: Rev. J. Luiten; Second Clerk: Rev. H. Folkers). They were very pleased to have a representative from the Canadian Reformed Churches in their midst and immediately extended to me the normal privileges of an advisor. What does it mean to be an advisor? It means that one receives the right to take part in all synod discussions, to sit in on all committees, but not to vote.

The next day, May 12, proved to be a full day. In the morning I met with the executive of synod and we exchanged a lot of information about our respective churches. After lunch I was invited to meet with the Synod Advisory Committee dealing with inter-church relations chaired by the Rev. J. Slotman. At the time they were dealing with proposals regarding churches in Brazil and Venezuela. They interrupted their discussions and asked all kinds of questions about the Canadian Reformed Churches.

A surprise

Later on they stated that they had received a Supplementary Report from the Dutch Deputies dealing with foreign churches. They added that they were going to propose to synod to approve the proposal of their Deputies to revise the rules of inter-church relations. In light of my presence they were also curious to know what the reaction to this proposal would be from the Canadian side. Seeing that our committee had not received this additional report, I could not comment until after I had read it. This I proceeded to do; however, it was not long before I sensed that this proposal for new rules had a rather familiar ring to it. I checked the report which the CRCA had sent to Synod Lincoln and discovered that what the Dutch Deputies were proposing to Synod Ommen was an almost exact translation of what the CRCA had proposed to Synod Lincoln. Needless to say, I could hardly object to this, especially not if one considers that for more than 10 years already we have been trying to establish common rules. I informed the advisory committee that from the Canadian Reformed Churches there would be no objections to their proposal, only appreciation.

In addition, I informed them that Synod Lincoln had taken the original proposal of the CRCA and made some changes to it. I explained these changes; however, they were not inclined to take them over. They preferred to stick with the original.

Various matters

That evening synod met in plenary session and dealt with a draft response to a letter it had received from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (commonly called "Synodical"). Those readers who know their Dutch church history are aware that it was this church which disciplined and deposed office-bearers in 1940s who did not agree with its neo-Kuyperian pronouncements. They now offered an apology of sorts and wanted to establish closer ties.

Synod Ommen responded to this letter by saying that it saw little sense in starting some kind of a dialogue seeing that in the intervening years it had become very clear that the two churches were on different wave-lengths. All sorts of divergences from Scripture, confession and church order on the part of the Reformed Church (Synodical) undermine any possibility for fruitful contact.

Synod also dealt with a draft letter to be sent to the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. That legislative body was considering a new anti-discrimination law which could have a very detrimental effect on the hiring practices of the churches and the schools, as well as on other Christian organizations.

The next day, May 13, started in the morning with an informal meeting with some members of the Dutch committee on inter-church relations, namely, with the Revs. A. DeJager and H. VanVeen, as well as with some visiting delegates: Rev. G. Ball of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Rev. D. MacDonald of the Free Church of Scotland, and Rev. N. Hoeflinger of the Reformed Church in the United States.

New rules

That afternoon synod met again in plenary session and proceeded to deal with the proposed new rules for inter-church relations. After ample discussion, the defeat of a certain amendment, the proposal of the Advisory Committee was adopted unanimously by synod.

What do these new rules look like? The most pertinent part read as follows:

"When entering into sister church relationship with a foreign church, this shall be exercised according to the adopted rules. The goal of these rules shall be to insure that as Reformed churches we remain faithful to the Word of God, that we assist each other, and that we encourage each other to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this world by word and deed.

From the side of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the following rules shall apply:

1. The churches shall as much as possible assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith according to the Scriptures in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy.
2. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts (or Minutes) and otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible, in translation).
3. The churches shall inform each other when entering into a sister church relationship with third parties.
4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate.
5. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches. In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:
6. When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation can take place as possible before a final decision is taken.
7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands state that in case a foreign church has its own rules for ecclesiastical relations, and if there is no conflict between the rules of this foreign church and the rules of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, a sister church relationship can be both entertained and exercised."

Next, synod turned its attention to relations with churches in Australia, England, Ireland and Scotland. With respect to Australia, synod debated whether or not a relationship should be entered into with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) at this time. Seeing that their sister churches, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, have not yet taken this step, synod decided to go on record as stating that the PCEA was a true church of our Lord but that formal recognition would not be entered into at this time.

Relations with Australia

In this connection it should be mentioned that the relationship between the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Free Reformed Church of Australia is somewhat strained at this time. The Dutch press gave ample coverage to the fact that the two Dutch delegates to the last Australian synod were not too happy with the criticisms that the Australian churches directed at their churches. It would appear to be a case of the Australian churches being disturbed by what they see as a liberalizing trend in the Dutch sister churches and of the Dutch churches being disturbed by what they see as a sectarian trend in the Australian churches. Since these churches are both sister churches of the Canadian Reformed Churches and we have good relations with both, it should be our fervent desire to see an improvement in relations between the Australians and the Dutch.

Synod Ommen also pledged continued support to the fledgling Presbyterian Association of England and set aside certain sums of money to assist some of the smaller churches there. It continued relations with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland. As for the Free Church of Scotland, synod's decision on new rules for inter-church relations came too late to finalize a sister church relationship with the FCS this year. There is every reason to expect that this will happen at the 1994 General Assembly of the FCS.

In the evening session of synod, the greetings were received from the delegates of the above-mentioned churches. Seeing that all of these greetings were in English, with the

exception of the Canadian Reformed greeting, Rev. A. DeJager was called upon to translate. He did a commendable job, although by the time the RCUS delegate stood up to make his address, he bowed out. Perhaps it was a good thing for him that he did, although I would have dearly loved to hear his translation of some of the quaint American expressions that came from the Rev. N. Hoeflinger. After each address, the Rev. Sliggers, as chairman of synod, responded in English on behalf of the Dutch churches.

The last day

The next day, being Friday, May 14, was my last day at Synod Ommen. The time was spent meeting with the Advisory Committee and helping them to translate the preamble and conclusion of their new rules into proper English, as well as a letter of greetings that they asked me to pass along to the General Assembly of the FCS. Various other matters were dealt with in the afternoon and synod adjourned early for the week-end. Thus my brief stay in Ommen came to an end.

In summing up thus far, I must say that I was very well received by the synod. It is obvious that the Dutch churches continue to prize their close relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. For myself, I found the atmosphere at this synod to be a very hearty one. Quite a few of the members were at a synod for the first time. Quite a few of the elder members of synod were retired; however, I saw no evidence that their age adversely affected their performance. On the whole, it gave the impression of being a fairly united body and this was also reflected by the fact that most of its decisions were made in unanimous fashion.

Whether or not such a spirit would prevail throughout was impossible for me to predict. A number of decisions on contentious issues still had to be made. It is no exaggeration to say that Synod Ommen was saving the most difficult matters for last, but then that seems to be an almost standard approach at major ecclesiastical assemblies.

(Next time, it's on to Scotland.)

A VISIT TO SCOTLAND

(In the Year-End issue of *Clarion* the first part of my trip on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches was reported on. Here follows the concluding portion.)

On to Scotland

Early on the morning of May 15, 1993, I left Hardenberg for Amsterdam and boarded a flight to Edinburgh on Air UK. The flight was uneventful, although I was shocked to see all the snow on the hills around Edinburgh. Apparently they had had a real torrential downpour the previous night and at the higher elevations it had turned to snow.

I was officially welcomed by Mr. Andrew Jack and his two sons. His father, Mr. Donald Jack, was the official organizer for the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, which had requested our churches to send a representative. I was then taken to the home of Professor Emeritus C. Graham, where I had lunch. That afternoon I tried to assist a son-in-law of Prof. Graham's in locating the Rev. J.J. Peterson of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (a man well-known to some of us as "Texas Jack"!). Although we spent quite some time at the train station, we did not find him. We returned to the Graham residence where an excellent supper awaited us. Later that evening I was brought to my place of residence, the Ellwyn Hotel on Moira Terrace. The FCS is in the habit of lodging official delegates to their General Assembly at various hotels in the city at their own expense.

A Sunday in the Free Church

I was picked-up the next morning for worship by Mr. A. MacDonald, an elder in one of the Edinburgh churches. Rev. Cl. Stam and I had made his acquaintance in 1990. Together we went to the Buccleugh and Greyfriars Free Church in central Edinburgh. At

11:00 a.m. the service started under the leadership of a guest minister, the Rev. Robert Smith. He preached on Luke 23:34 and presented a very Scriptural, Christ-centered sermon. The Psalms 123, 119, 8 and 20 were sung.

For your information it should be noted that offerings are placed in large brass bowls as one enters the auditorium. Whenever prayers are uttered, the entire congregation stands. Singing is done seated. The liturgy is very simple and consists of prayer, singing, Scripture reading and sermon. No vatum. and salutation are given, but there is always a benediction. In the morning the children left the service for Bible classes after part of the sermon was addressed to them. In the evening they remained throughout. Apparently that practice varies, as does the matter of Bible translation. Some churches use the KJV, others the NIV.

For lunch and the afternoon (including high tea) I went to the home of Elder MacDonald, along with Dr. C. Andrews, a retired medical missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia (PCEA), and Prof. Graham.

That evening at 6:30 p.m. I listened again to the Rev. R. Smith. This time his text was Job 19:23-27. Again the sermon was true to Scripture, sound in doctrine and warm in application. Altogether it was not as well-structured as the morning sermon, with the result that the preacher fell into repetition. (But then, what minister does not?)

After the service, Elder MacDonald took me to his house again where he attempted to feed me once more. (I have observed throughout my Scottish experience that this is a people who know how to eat. I am surprised that their dimensions do not more often reflect their appetite.) Later that evening I was brought back to my hotel.

The Opening of the General Assembly

Monday, May 17 turned out to be somewhat of a free day. I took the bus to the heart of the city, brought an official document to Rev. J.J. Petersen at the Carlton Hotel. (He had suddenly appeared the previous evening when he walked into the evening service at B & G. Apparently he had arrived early in Edinburgh on Saturday, tried to contact Prof. Graham but had not succeeded, managed to get a good deal at one of the better hotels in town, and suddenly there he was.)

For lunch, I and a number of other members of the Free Church were taken to the Mount Royal Hotel. It was very good, even if it was lamb. That afternoon I went to the Free Church College which overlooks the heart of the city and historic Princess Street and spent my time reading reports that would be dealt with at the General Assembly.

At 6:00 p.m. the General Assembly opened with a prayer meeting at which the Rev. D. MacDonald, the retiring Moderator, preached a sound Biblical sermon on Is. 49:4-6. After the service, the new Moderator was installed. He was the Rev. Clement Graham, emeritus professor of the Free Church College and Principal Clerk of the Assembly. This was Prof. Graham's second time as Moderator. He had also been Moderator in 1969. As such he was being accorded a singular honour seeing that very few men have served twice in that position. It may be noted that he is in his mid-seventies and he was approaching fifty years in the ministry. (After seeing him in action as Moderator I must say that he did a most amazing job. Blending rich Scottish humour with a deep knowledge of Presbyterian polity, he led the Assembly with great skill.)

Later that evening there was the official Moderator's reception to which I was formally invited. It took place in the Assembly Hall of the College, a very old and ornate room, filled with historic momentos and an exquisite ceiling. After some short and humorous speeches addressed to the chairman, we were invited to help ourselves to food and refreshments laid out on an enormous table in the center of the hall. During this standing reception, I renewed acquaintance with Rev. Bill UnderHay who serves on PEI, with Rev. Jim Gillies who serves in Glasgow and had been in Langley in 1989 and the Rev. John Macleod who serves in the northern Highlands and whom I had met at the ICRC (Edinburgh) in 1985.

Towards the close of the evening a video about the Free Church was shown and proved very informative. (I was going to buy a copy; however, it is recorded on the European

format and has to be transferred. I was told that this would be done in the future and that then a copy could be ordered and sent. I hope that several copies can be purchased and that arrangements can be made for it to be shown in Canada in order to familiarize our people with the FCS.)

At the close of the evening, Rev. Petersen (who was now staying at the same hotel) and I were chauffeured back to the Ellwyn Hotel. Yes, you read right "chauffeured." From now on and for the duration of the Assembly, we are picked up every morning and brought back by a man in a black suit driving a black Ford limo. Another Free Church custom, it appears.

The Assembly begins its work

At 10:00 a.m. the Assembly was convened in the St. Columba's Church situated on the historic Royal Mile (a road which runs from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Palace, in between one finds all kinds of ancient buildings: St. Giles – the church of John Knox, Knox House, where the Reformer was born, etc, and places: a cemetery where Adam Smith of Wealth of Nations fame is buried.)

Prof. C. Graham as the newly installed Moderator gave his address entitled, "The Two-Fold Ministry of the Church." It was a very interesting piece of work, especially because it contained a lot of history about the Free Church. In it Prof. Graham reminded his audience about the temporal and spiritual ministry of the church. He especially elaborated on the temporal or social ministry of the church in terms of its diaconal calling. He pointed to Thomas Chalmers and his work among the poor in Glasgow. He spoke about Chalmers' vision for Scotland in which he saw a church and school in every village. He emphasized the fact that social needs are the business of the church by going back to Moses, the Psalms, the Minor Prophets, the Lord Jesus in Luke 4, Paul and James. The Gospel, he said, must address the whole man in all of his needs.

After his address, the Assembly approved its customary letter of greeting and best wishes to the Queen.

Responding to the Canadian Reformed invitation

The Reporter of the Ecumenical Relations Committee, the Rev. D. MacDonald, then took the floor. He spoke about his recent visit to the Netherlands and Synod Ommen, noting that the Dutch churches were giving considerable support to the Presbyterian Association of England (PAE), that the Rules for Sister Churches had been changed removing the last obstacles to a sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands-Liberated (GKN). He welcomed Dr. J.C. Andrews of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. He mentioned the upcoming ICRC. Finally, he welcomed the representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches and spoke briefly about our churches.

In the ensuing discussion, it became clear that the FCS is on record as wanting and striving for the unity of the church. It desires to see one church of Jesus Christ in Scotland based on and committed to the Westminster Standards. A member of the Assembly also stood up and publicly expressed appreciation to the Dutch churches for the support being given to the Presbyterian Association of England. Finally, a number of comments were made and questions were asked about the Canadian Reformed Churches to which the reporter responded.

Thereafter, the Proposed Deliverances were moved. Number 7 reads, "The General Assembly gladly accept a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, in terms of the Rules for such fellowship agreed by both denominations." It was adopted without dissent.

By its actions the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland officially received and responded positively to the invitation of General Synod Lincoln 1992 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. It means that as churches we now have an additional sister church, or church in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Needless to say this sister exhibits some differences due to her Scottish background, Presbyterian polity

and unique procedures; nevertheless, there is no doubt that in her confession and walk she is Reformed and belongs to the same family of faith.

In the afternoon session the Assembly considered reports from the Publications Committee, the Eventide Homes Committee (dealing with retirement homes), and the Psalmody Committee. Attention was also paid to various letters received from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, The Reformed Churches of South Africa and the Free Church in Southern Africa.

Remembering the disruption

That evening at 6:15 the Assembly re-convened and a presentation was made to Prof. Graham who had been the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly for the last 30 years and would soon retire. His place will be taken by Prof. J.L. McKay, Professor of OT at the Free Church College.

Thereafter, the Assembly went over to a commemoration of the Disruption which took place on this day in 1843. In his opening remarks, Prof. Graham made a number of remarks that may be of special interest to us to the affect that the Free Church "craves an outward expression of the unity of the church" but then it must be on the basis of the inerrant Word of God as foundation, that they were celebrating a principle that night and not a name and that whether the Free Church continued mattered little as long as the truth of the Gospel was maintained.

These and other remarks were followed by an introduction by Prof. H.M. Cartwright entitle, "What Was The Disruption and What Did It Achieve?" He pointed out that the basic issue at stake was the headship of Jesus Christ over His church.

Next, some time was set aside to award prizes to the three Lyle Orr Award recipients. These prizes are given annually to young people of various ages who memorize the whole Shorter Catechism. (It struck me that in the Free Church there is a considerable stress on the Shorter Catechism and that children are encouraged, if they are able, to learn it all by heart. Something for us to consider in relation to all, or part, of the Heidelberg Catechism?)

Thereafter, greetings were received from various churches abroad. Dr. J.C. Andrews of the PCEA brought the official greetings of that church. Rev. George Ball brought the official greetings of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and, as Reformed Presbyterians are wont to do, stressed the Solemn League and Covenants of 1643. Rev. J.J. Petersen of the OPC, a church which has a Fraternal Relationship with the FCS, brought greetings and also passed on some information about his churches to the Assembly (The OPC has 20,000 members, 170 congregations, 300+ ministers, 25+ missionaries. It is also back in Eriteria and has taken over the Kenya mission field from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Petersen mentioned that the center of the Reformed Church in America (PCA). Petersen mentioned that the center of the Reformed world is today in central Africa. There are more Reformed Christians there than anywhere else in the world.)

The Assembly also heard three brief speeches on the topic: "Why I Belong to the Free Church?" Finally, it heard an address by the Rev. F.A.J. MacDonald, head of the Scottish Bible Society and a Free Church minister on the subject, "Our Impact on Scotland Today." In it he pointed out the main theological issue today is the person of Jesus Christ and His two natures. He also dealt with Islam, which denies this and which is becoming more evident in Scotland. In addition, he showed that the Disruption of 1843 was not a clerical movement, but a movement of the common people. Today too the church as the people of God must be faithful and active.

The Queen's Representative addresses the Assembly

At 9:00 a.m. the Assembly opened and immediately went over into devotional exercises. A number of Scripture passages were read and a number of different members of the

Assembly took turns praying for the needs of the church and its task in the world. This was followed by the Report of Public Questions Committee. As the name suggests this Committee deals with public issues which are of particular concern to the life of the church and society. The Report of this Committee comments on and expresses dismay at the establishment of a national lottery, the erosion of the sanctity of the Lord's day, the increase in lawlessness. It also examined the role of the Deacons. At 12:00 noon the Assembly received a visit from the Lord High Commissioner who is the Queen's representative in Scotland. Accompanied by a large retinue of people, the Lord High Commissioner came and brought the greetings of the Queen to the Assembly. In a speech of about 10 minutes he made a number of fitting comments. In the afternoon the Assembly received representatives from a number of different organizations: the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Lord's Day Observance Society, and the FIEC. In addition, a report was received from the Welfare of Youth Committee. This Committee deals with such matters as Sabbath (Sunday) School, education, youth camps, and publications. (In 1992 there were 22 camps in various places in Scotland and England held under the auspices of the FCS. These camps attracted 660 campers. They form an increasingly active role in outreach to young people. The FCS also publishes a magazine for young people called *The Instructor*.) In the evening the Assembly dealt with a report from the Widow's and Orphans' Committee. This Committee sees to it that widows and orphans of ministers in the FCS are properly cared for.

After this it was on to the reception of more delegates. The Rev. F.A.G. MacDonald brought the greetings of the National Bible Society of Scotland.

Thereafter I received the floor. I first acted on behalf of the Dutch sister churches, translating and presenting to the Assembly the letter of the GKN. Finally, I spoke on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

I was followed by a representative of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland and of the British Evangelical Council. The latter is a loose organization of churches in England and Scotland who act together in matters of mutual concern.

After we had received the floor each speaker was presented with a copy of the newly published book, *Crown Him Lord of All*, edited by Cl. Graham. It should also be noted that earlier in the day I had been a guest at a special luncheon hosted by the Moderator.

More Assembly business

Almost all of Thursday morning and afternoon were spent dealing with various petitions and reports. Petitions were received from a number of churches, presbyteries and ministers. The petitions dealt with local churches who wanted to merge, with churches wanting further financial support, with ministers wanting to be released or retained.

The reports that were dealt with had to do with the Training for the Ministry and other matters relating to the Free Church College.

In the evening the Assembly received the report of the Foreign, Overseas and Jewish Missions Board Committee, as well as representatives from the various mission fields of the FCS. Words of greeting were spoken by men from the mission fields in Peru, Southern Africa, India, North America, Israel and Eastern Europe.

(It should be mentioned that one of the ministerial representatives was a certain Rev. David Miller. Earlier already this young minister had stood up and spoke some very positive words about the need for Christian schooling in the FCS, as well as on the mission field. In doing so he paid tribute to a very beneficial but brief exposure that he had, to Christian schooling in a school operated by members of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia in Launceston, Tasmania. In later speaking to him it turns out that he had been a pupil of the Principal of our Teachers' College, Mr. T.M.P. VanderVen.)

The Assembly comes to a close

The Assembly again convened at 9:00 a.m. for what was to be its last day. More reports dealing with nominations, assembly arrangements, records, and printing of

Acts were dealt with. Tributes were also read about elders and ministers who had died during the previous year.

It was decided to convene the next General Assembly D.V. on May 23, 1994 at 6:00 p.m.

Early in the afternoon the Assembly was brought to a close with fitting words and prayer by the Moderator.

Homeward bound

Early Saturday morning I was brought to the airport. I left Edinburgh on schedule, went to Amsterdam and from there caught a plane back to Vancouver. The trip was uneventful. The only negative note was the fact that KLM gave my assigned seat to someone else and placed me in the smoking section. What a fraternity of puffers sits in those last six rows and what an army of participants that section attracts from other parts of the airplane! The result was that I arrived in Vancouver early but feeling rather sick. I decided to make appropriate protestations to the offending airline.

In closing

A few personal comments are in order:

- a) The action of the General Assembly in accepting our offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship means that the Canadian Reformed churches now have an official relationship with a fourth federation of churches. (The relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea was to be formalized later in September of 1993 at the ICRC in Zwolle.)
- b) There is no doubt that in many respects the FCS does things in a different way than we do. Their polity, but even more perhaps their history, has led to the development of a Presbyterian church that is in many respects unique. Even a life-long Presbyterian like the Rev. J.J. Petersen was often surprised, if not perplexed, by the proceedings. To suggest that Presbyterians in Scotland are the same as Presbyterians in America or Korea is about as simplistic a statement as to suggest that all Reformed can also be lumped together as conforming in all things to the same mould.
- c) To give you but one example of uniqueness: in the Assembly we rarely saw matters voted on with a show of hands. Most of the time the brethren simply stomped their feet on the wooden floor of the Assembly Hall. Somehow the Moderator could discern from that whether a matter was adopted or rejected.
- d) At first sight several practices in the FCS appear to be hierarchical. Take for example the fact that they do not really formally nominate a Moderator or hold an election between several brothers. At first glance this appears to be a case of backroom maneuvering. Further investigation showed, however, that the Moderator is nominated by the Assembly Arrangements Committee and that the nomination is usually based on the year of ordination. Those who have served the churches the longest, and are thus among the oldest, are given priority.
- e) Time and again I was stuck by the fact that they do things so differently than us. They receive a lot more representatives at their Assembly. (Is that because they are so much older and more established than we are?) They deal with issues that we would not normally deal with at all. (Many of these matters seem to have a long history within the context of Scotland and its past upheavals.) Obviously then there are differences between our respective churches, but I could find no evidence that they were of a major nature nor are they so surprising if one looks at the broader context and understands the history of these churches.
- f) I came away with the overwhelming impression that while the FCS may be a small church, it is nevertheless a true one. It has been fighting the fight of faith for centuries. It has suffered much. Take only the oppression in the Highlands where sheep were more important than people and where many believers were terribly

oppressed. Take the Disruption of 1843 when scores of ministers found themselves out on the street. The suffering in this land has been immense. Life has been hard. In many respects it is still a harsh life. Nevertheless, the Gospel is being proclaimed and there is a true witness to Jesus Christ and His Lordship. May God bless it in every possible way.

- g) Finally, I must express my appreciation for the warm hospitality that was extended to me everywhere I went. I took it not simply as a reflection on my person but on the churches that I represented. The climate of Scotland may at times be cold and forbidding, but no one can say that about the hearts of our brothers and sisters in the Free Church of Scotland.

J. Visscher

APPENDIX 6

ADDRESS TO GENERAL SYNOD OMMEN OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ! Members of Synod!

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful that you have given me the floor in order to say a few words. Let me begin by officially conveying to you the greetings and best wishes of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Seeing that you are one of our sister churches it stands to reason that we should be interested in your church life in general, as well as in the decisions of this major assembly in particular. Nevertheless, you will understand that our interest in you is more than ordinary. For even though the number of immigrants from the Netherlands to Canada has shrunk drastically over the last decades, it is true to say that many of our older members still have deep attachments to your land and to your churches. Many of them remember the depression years of the 1930s, the war years of the 1940s, as well as the church struggles of that time. You have, and always will have, a special place in the hearts of many of our members.

At the same time it is also true that things have changed. As churches we have now been in Canada for more than forty years and that means that a new generation is growing up that does not speak the Dutch language and is not familiar with Dutch ways. I shall not comment on whether or not this is a positive or negative development, except to say that it is a natural one. It stands to reason that as the immigrants from the Netherlands came to Canada, they and their children would begin to adjust to living in a new land.

As a result, the language of our churches is now English and the ways of our members have much in common with Canadian habits and outlooks. In addition, our members have become more involved in what is happening on the church scene in North America. At the present time we are following closely the latest developments in those churches that have left the Christian Reformed Church. We are making contacts with the Free Reformed Church. We are also continuing to struggle with our relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In short, we are becoming more and more what our name states, namely, **Canadian** Reformed Churches.

Nevertheless, in the process we do not want to become nationalistic and isolated. We want to have an open eye for the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ in a certain land must always maintain its catholic vision, as well as its Reformed character. We are glad that together with you we may confess to be the object of the church gathering work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are glad that we may share the same confessions and the same church order. In one sense we are growing apart but in another sense we shall always be one, if we continue to hold fast to the same Word of God.

In order to maintain and promote this unity between us as sister churches, let me also bring you up to date on recent developments in our churches. The 1993 Yearbook reveals that we have 13,536 members spread over Canada and the United States. We have 44 churches, with 42 active ministers, missionaries and professors, as well as 11 retired ministers and professors. Over the last number of years we have been growing by about one church per year.

Our Theological College in Hamilton continues to serve the needs of the churches. At present we have four full-time professors, all of whom have studied at your seminary in Kampen. Fifteen students are enrolled and more are preparing themselves to enter the College.

Our churches are also active in foreign, native and home mission. Six missionaries are serving overseas: one in Irian Jaya and five in Brazil. One missionary vacancy exists for work among the native people of Canada. Home mission work is done and takes many forms: radio broadcasting, Bible study groups for outsiders, summer schools for neighbourhood children, Bible courses.

Our last General Synod was held in 1992 in Lincoln, Ontario and made some decisions that may also be of interest to you. It instructed the Bible Translation Committee to recommend a new Bible translation to our churches seeing that the translation that we are presently using is no longer being printed. It completed the work on our church book, the *Book of Praise*. It also appointed a new committee called "Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity" which has as its task to further unity between our churches and those believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church.

With respect to inter-church relations, Synod Lincoln decided to maintain our relations with your churches, as well as the sister churches in Australia and South Africa. Our membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches was also continued, which means that our Churches will also be represent at the meeting to be held in Zwolle this summer.

As far as new developments are concerned, Synod decided to accept the offer of the Presbyterian Church in Korea to enter into sister church relations, and it also decided to offer such a relationship to the Free Church of Scotland. It decided to investigate the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to entering into sister church relations. With respect to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Synod decided to continue the contact relationship and gave the Committee dealing with this matter a more specific mandate.

You will be interested to know too that we have received word that the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, which meets next week in Edinburgh, will be dealing with a recommendation from its standing committee to accept our offer for a sister church relationship with the Free Church. Our Churches have been invited to be present at this special occasion and in response our Committee has delegated me to travel next to Scotland to finalise this new relationship.

How has this new development come about? It would appear to be a direct result of the fact that Synod Lincoln decided to make some changes to the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which addressed the reservations that the Free Church had about our old rules. Perhaps our "breakthrough" in this matter can be of some help to you in your attempts to enter into the same kind of relationship with the Free Church.

Brothers, let me draw my words to a close by saying that as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ we need each other. We live in a world that is more and more in rebellion against God. On every side the Evil One assaults us and seeks to draw us away from the Lord and His service. It is essential, therefore, that as Reformed Churches we remain faithful to the Lord our God, that we heed His Word and defend the faith which He has entrusted to us. May Jesus Christ the King of the Church be with you in your work as General Synod Ommen and cause it to be to the glory of His Name, to the well-being of His church here in the Netherlands and a witness in this world to the coming of His kingdom.

J. Visscher

APPENDIX 7

THE NEW RULES FOR SISTER CHURCH RELATIONS IN THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF THE NETHERLANDS ADOPTED BY SYNOD OMMEN 1993

Rules for Sister Church Relations

When entering into a sister church relationship with a foreign church, this shall be exercised according to the adopted rules. The goal of these rules shall be to insure that as Reformed Churches we remain faithful to the Word of God, that we assist each other, and that we encourage each other to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this world by word and deed.

From the side of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the following rules shall apply:

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

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

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

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands state that in case a foreign church has its own rules for ecclesiastical relations, and if there is no conflict between the rules of this foreign church and the rules of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, a sister church relationship can be both entertained and exercised.

APPENDIX 8
ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
HELD FROM MAY 17-21, 1993 IN EDINBURGH

Esteemed Chairman, Members of the Assembly, Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our churches may not be all that well-known to you so let me begin with some background information.

The first Canadian Reformed church was instituted in the city of Lethbridge, in the province of Alberta, in April of 1950. The members were almost exclusively composed of immigrants who had come from the Netherlands. Since that small beginning more than forty years ago we have grown to a total membership of 13,536 spread mostly throughout Canada, with some members living in the United States. Today we are still experiencing a steady, if unspectacular, growth, mostly from within but also increasingly from without. At present we have 44 churches and are growing at a rate of about one new church a year. We also have 42 active ministers, missionaries and professors, as well as 11 retired ministers and professors.

Our churches have their own institution for the training of the ministry called The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed churches located in Hamilton, Ontario. It is staffed by four full-time professors and has a current enrollment of fifteen students.

Our foreign missionary activity is centered in Indonesia (Irian Jaya) and Brazil. In Canada itself we are involved in missionary work among the native people. This work is presently being done in the northern part of the province of British Columbia. Our home mission work or evangelism work is done by each local congregation, frequently making use of radio broadcasts, literature distribution, summer Bible schools, and other efforts. Although not directly tied to the churches, Christian schooling remains a priority and is available to most of the children in our federation. Locally parents have established primary and secondary schools with the result that today we have more than twenty elementary schools, six regional high schools, staffed by hundreds of teachers and populated with thousands of students. I should also add that most of these schools are not subsidized by the state with the result that parental costs vary from between \$3,000 to \$8,000 a year.

Moving from the internal to the external, our churches have formal relations with different churches in this world. We call that relationship "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" and have established it with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. Together with you, we are founding members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

As far as recent developments are concerned, the 1992 General Synod of our churches decided to offer to your churches a relationship called Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the details of which you are no doubt aware. Our Synod also accepted the offer of the Presbyterian Church in Korea to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. It decided to take up contact with the Reformed Church in the United States with a view to establishing it. It also decided to continue the contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Having passed along these words of introduction, let me speak more specifically to the occasion. I am here today as a representative of our churches and such a role always must be viewed as an honour. Still, I would go so far as to say that my presence here represents a special honour. Why? In the first place, because never before has a representative from our churches addressed your esteemed assembly. In the second place, if your Assembly decides to accept our offer of Ecclesiastical Fellowship it will mean that our churches will be linked together in a common relationship.

In our terminology we would say that this makes us "sister churches." In other words, we become members of the same household. We recognize the need to work together, to assist and help each other, to encourage and, if need be, correct each other. And that is a great thing. Our world is a world of ever increasing apostasy and rebellion against the Lord and His Anointed One. The forces of unbelief advance. Meanwhile, it so often seems that the church of our Lord in this world is cowering in its foxhole, being bombarded from without and divided from within. It appears as if we are losing, not just the battles, but also the war.

Nevertheless, appearances are deceiving. We believe and we confess that in actual fact the situation is far different. This week Thursday is Ascension Day and what is that Day but a reminder of the fact that Christ Jesus our Lord is alive and active. He is reigning and ruling, gathering His people together, sending forth His Spirit, leading all things to that day of glorious consummation. Thus while at first glance things look hopeless for the church, the reality is that we have every reason for hope and confidence because we have such a great, active and living Saviour. He rules His church still.

In addition, there can be no doubt that He rejoices whenever His church in different parts of the world meets and seeks to express its common faith and life in Him. Yes, we have so much in common as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the same Saviour. We hold fast to the same Word of God. We confess the same truths in our creedal statements. We have often fought the same battles for the truth.

This year 1993 marks the 150th anniversary of the Disruption. As I read about it and considered the issues involved, I was struck by the similarities between the Disruption of 1843 and the Secession of 1834 which our forefathers in the Netherlands experienced. Both defended the authority of the Word to govern the life of the church, both resisted the encroachments of the state to determine the life of the church, both insisted that in spite of their numbers that they were not starting a new church but continuing the line of the true church in their land.

Dr. R.S. Candlish, one of your leaders in the Disruption, said, "We are still the Church of Scotland – the only church that deserves the name, the only church that can be known and recognized by the maintaining of those principles to which the church of our fathers was true, when she was on the mountain and on the field when she was under persecution, when she was an outcast from the world. And, believing that we are not seceders from the church, but are the church separated from the State – believing that we are not a sect separated from the Established church, but that we are the Church of Scotland separated from the State, we hold ourselves entitled, without any disparagement to other religious bodies, to assume and act upon the principle that we are to maintain the character of the National Church of Scotland."

Brothers, the Canadian Reformed churches have studied your history, your confessions and your handling of the truth, and we are convinced that you are the Church of Scotland still. Your numbers may not be large but the truth knows no size. In men like John Knox, Andrew Melville, Thomas Chalmers, Robert Murray McCheyne, and so many others we see men of faith and Reformed conviction. The Lord Jesus Christ has raised them up to defend and preserve His church. He has done it in your history here in Scotland. He has done it in our history in Canada and in the Netherlands.

We have so much in common and therefore it is right that we extend to each other the right hand of fellowship and that as church of Our Lord Jesus Christ we recognize each other and embrace each other. May He enable us to be a hand and a foot to each other always. May in this small way His prayer that "they all may be one" be honoured and promoted. May we together as the Free Church of Scotland and the Canadian Reformed churches realize that our real name is one that knows no national distinctions and borders. We are the church of Jesus Christ. May He, with the power of His Word and Spirit, keep us faithful and keep us working until that great day when the church of toil and tribulation will be the church victorious and the church at rest.

J. Visscher

APPENDIX 9

RESPONDING TO A PLEA:

Report on a visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Byford, WA.

Introduction

It is always an honour and privilege when you may represent the federation of churches at the broadest assembly of a federation of sister churches. That honour and privilege fell upon Rev. M. van Beveren and myself when we were appointed to visit the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

A question may arise as to why a delegation was sent to Australia at this time. Further, the makeup of the delegation may be somewhat surprising. It is good therefore to briefly explain.

Why these ministers? Why this year?

Our relationship with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia of course goes back many years. We both look back to the same country of origin, the Netherlands. We share the same confessional and church political tradition. As churches we are the fruit of immigration into English speaking lands. A number of congregations in Canada have had to say farewell to their ministers as they departed for Australian churches, and some have managed to obtain a minister from Australia. Further, a number of families have seen sons and daughters find their life partner on the under side of the earth. Also, over the years more and more Australian sons have headed for Hamilton in order to study for the ministry of the gospel. Our church life is thus marked by strong historic, ethnic and family ties. Yet, despite these ties, it had never yet happened that either church federation had sent a delegation to the broadest assembly of its ecclesiastical sister. It seems that the Dutch Synods were more diligently visited. Whether that was because it gave an opportunity to visit the "old country" for some of the delegates, or whether it was because those synods were more interesting, that is hard to say. Maybe there was a little of a "mother/daughter" feeling. Whatever it may have been, the time had arrived for a meeting of English speaking sisters.

Yet, the question may come up: why this year? The reason was that the standard invitation to sister churches this time was not "standard." In the letter of invitation the deputies wrote, ". . . we would plead with you to send a delegation to our next synod." In particular they stated that our input would be appreciated on matters of Bible translation and the ICRC, both of which were issues of great concern and even contention in the churches. The word "plead" gave an urgency to the invitation.

As to the makeup of delegation, it so happened that the familiar travel team for the committee had been on a number of assignments which saw them miss a considerable amount of time from their congregations. Thus, the task fell to another committee member. Since a second committee member was not available, Rev. van Beveren was the natural choice because of his long service on the Committee up till his retirement, along with his extensive experience in the matter of the ICRC. In this way the inexperience of one delegate was nicely balanced by the experience of the other delegate.

Travelling far from home but still feeling at home

We departed for Australia on June 8, 1994. The Lord granted us a safe, eventful journey, as we arrived at around midnight, June 10.

Having been given one day to overcome travel fatigue, we both were honoured with an invitation to preach in several churches on Sunday. Here you could see concretely something of the catholicity of the church, for though we are geographically thousands of miles apart, the people assemble to hear the same gospel and sing the same praises to God for His grace as we may do in Canada.

The mood in the churches about the Synod.

It is no secret that there was considerable tension in the churches about this Synod. Rev. Veldman, in an editorial in *Una Sancta* (Australia's "Clarion") wrote, "What should be a highlight in church life has become a dreaded event." In response to his own question of "Why?" he states: "At bottom I believe that in certain instances there is mistrust. From our entrenched positions we have already labelled others beforehand." (*Una Sancta*, Vol. 41, p. 366). Rev. Bouwman, in his sermon held during a prayer service for Synod called by the Byford consistory also spoke about the nervousness in the churches about the upcoming Synod. It should be noted that a prayer service for Synod is not customary in Australia like here in Canada and thus is only a local initiative.

What was the reason for this tension? To put it as compactly as possible, it came down to two issues, the first being Bible translation, and the second "Presbyterianism," as the churches were confronted with it in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and the contacts with the Presbyterian churches, especially the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia (PCEA). In the issues of *Una Sancta* in the months leading up to Synod the reports of the deputies had been published. It is no overstatement to speak of two camps. With respect to the ICRC, for example, the issue was: Continued membership justified versus continued membership not justified. In this second issue, "Presbyterianism," of course we too will have a keen interest since that continues to be a point of discussion in Canada too. The bulk of the reports for Synod we had studied was devoted to the Presbyterian question in one form or another.

Synod looks like our Classis

On Tuesday morning, June 14, Synod was opened. Since there are only 8 Free Reformed Churches altogether in Australia, each church sends a minister and an elder, or two elders. Due to their size they simply cannot operate fully according to the C.O. of Dort. Some of the tasks done by our classes are done by what they call a "Classis Church." Synods are held every two years. In that all churches have two delegates, an Australian synod is more like a classis with a very large agenda. Rev. W. Huizinga was elected chairman. It is a typical feature of Australian church life that the first clerk of Synod was an elder.

Church Order

The main order of business from Tuesday till the end of the Thursday afternoon session was the Australian version of the Church Order in the style of Dort. For many years deputies and Synods had been working towards an Australian church order that would be as close as possible to Dort as well as the C.O. used in the Canadian Reformed Churches. It was somewhat surprising that after all the effort spent in our churches to come up with a Canadian Church Order, to read comments like, for example, about article 16, that "its language is pathetic and the rambling sentence improperly constructed." The result was a much reduced article 16 in the Australian C.O., based on the ground that the longer Canadian version unnecessarily duplicated the form for the ordination of ministers. There was a similar trend in the articles about the elders and deacons.

Of special interest is art. 53 of the Australian C.O., titled, "Baptism Promise and Education." As adopted it reads,

"The consistory shall make sure that the parents honour their vows to instruct their children, to the utmost of their power, in the doctrine of the Scriptures as summarized in the confession, and to have them instructed in the same by the instruction provided by the consistory. In accordance with the same vow, the consistory shall see to it that the parents, to the best of their ability, and with the cooperation of the communion of saints, give their children education (as stipulated by the civil government) which is based on Scripture and Confession."

From the discussions both on the floor of Synod and on a personal level, it became clear that it was felt this article was needed if the elders were going to be able to properly do their work and tell the parents to send their children to our own school. The impression was received that without such an article the almost total support for the schools could not be maintained. This reasoning gives some reason for concern, for if the matter of reformed schooling is made a matter of legislation rather education of the membership on this matter you may indeed obtain whole, but not wholehearted support. Further, the communal support is now even encoded in the C.O. A consequence of tying this to the baptism vow would seem to be that church discipline would be used for those who do not send their children to our own school, or for those in the community who do not support it.

It appears as a little too much regulation. Reformed education is definitely important, but this does not seem the best way to ensure it.

The overall impression from listening to these discussions was that in an effort to make a typical Australian C.O., there was some unnecessary duplication of work done abroad, with at times too much regulation.

Fraternal address and response

On Tuesday evening opportunity was given to address the Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Brotherly greetings were passed on, along with an expression of understanding about their situation, since we are both immigrant churches. Special comment was made about the Presbyterian question, since this too is a mutual problem as we have to deal not just with Presbyterians far away, but much closer at home, basically in our backyard. We stated that though we did not have ready answers, and that we were facing the same issues in our own federation, it was our desire to be of service to the Synod wherever possible.

On Friday evening, Br. M. Bruning replied on behalf of the Australian churches, indicating appreciation for the presence of a delegation from Canada.

Bible translations

On Thursday evening, in the presence of a large audience, Synod began to deal with one of the contentious issues: Bible translation. The debate was: which version to endorse for use in the churches, the NKJV or the NIV. The two positions were as follows: endorse the NKJV, while granting (for some time) the use of the NIV, or to allow both versions alongside each other, placing them on par. This is an issue on which feelings ran deep. From personal conversations this was confirmed. It appears that the RSV never really took hold in Australia, only having gained official approval in 1983.

The discussion got quite emotional at times, with both elders and ministers making lengthy addresses. The lengthy discourses were mainly in favour of the NKJV. Some of the information presented on the floor of Synod was very technical, even including references to the Hebrew. It appeared indeed that the matter of Bible translation had become a bit of a shibboleth, with positions quite entrenched.

The chairman, at the start of the discussion, had invited us to participate in the discussion at the end of the round. As it turned out, during the round, some questions arose from the delegates about the situation in Canada. When given the opportunity to speak, the Synod was informed that the issue is not as pressing in Canada, as there are sufficient RSV's available for now. It was pointed out that the Acts of Synod Lincoln mention that Premier could possibly print more, although this certainly was not preferable for we don't want to be an island in terms of the translation we use. Further, it was pointed out that the reason the NKJV is being studied in Canada is especially since the Australian churches requested this. This was important to mention, for the Australian churches sometimes have the impression that in Canada we don't listen to them. Synod was informed that there is not much interest in the NKJV at this time. It was suggested that in the matter of Bible translations it might be better to educate rather than legislate. Especially since the discussion was so intense, it might be good to

step back from it, wait and see what Canada does, and in the meantime leave each other free.

The discussion about Bible translations came to a conclusion on Friday evening. The key part of that decision is as follows:

3. To endorse the NKJV as a faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches, as well as for study, instruction and family purposes;
4. To allow the NIV to be used in the church service, and for study, instruction and family purposes.

In the grounds it is stated:

3. It is highly desirable that all the churches in the bond use the same translation of the Bible. However, since the question of which Bible translation to use is not one of principle but rather one of preference, room should be left in the churches for a degree of variation.

In the discussions it became evident that there was a real pressure by the proponents of the NKJV to make a decision now. There seemed to be a fear that if a decision was not made by this Synod, it would be too late. This seems to suggest that if a decision for the NKJV was not made, the NIV would take over due to its readability. What was somewhat troublesome in the debate was the unwillingness to leave each other some freedom. The decision is somewhat hierarchical, in that it gives dominance to the NKJV, and it appears only an act of generosity to leave, for the time being, room for the NIV. A decision made in Canada a number of years ago to use the RSV for the official forms and leave the churches freedom in the use of either the KJV, RSV, or NASB, seems to give more room for the autonomy of the local congregations in this matter.

Monday, June 20: ICRC

At long last the matter of the ICRC was tabled for discussion. As was expected, this was the big issue for this Synod. In the first round, nearly every member of Synod asked the floor, and each spoke at great length. Each round tended to last a whole morning/afternoon. Listening to the speeches gave a real insight into the tension about the issue. It was interesting to note how the division between the delegates about this issue ran nearly along the same line as about the issue of Bible translation.

It is impossible to relate everything said. Since the issue, however, is of great interest in Canada too, it will be beneficial to review some of the arguments brought in against continued membership. In a sense, we hear an echo of what is said in Canada. Inevitably the focus will fall on the arguments against continued membership. That is because this would mean a change of the current direction of the Australian churches. The arguments "for" are thus less noticeable at this point. The arguments can be summarized as follows:

- a. *"Presbyterianism"*: The first few speakers took aim in different ways at the fact that at the Conference Reformed and Presbyterians were put on par. This was most clearly expressed by one brother who said that there are contradictions between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster standards. He took issue with the idea that Presbyterian churches are true, and the Westminster Standards are Reformed confessions. His main argumentation was a statement by a Synod in 1948, and a reference to comments made by P. Deddens with respect to church government that Westminster is hierarchical whereas Dort is Scriptural. By a number of speakers it was expressed that by participating in the ICRC we let things in the back door by which we would lose our heritage gained from the liberation.
- b. *Sister church relations dictated by the ICRC*: It was felt that by participating in the ICRC, speaking about unity of faith, we were compelled to recognize as true churches all the member churches of the ICRC. The Australian churches would thus lose their autonomy with respect to sister church relationships as the ICRC pre-empted their own decision making process.

- c. *Ethical conflict*: It was considered unethical to tell the PCEA at the ICRC you are true church, when you could not make that statement in your own country.
- d. *Losing our children* (argument of fear): All the things taught to the children over the years would be lost. They would now think they could go to these other churches and join them, as well as intermarry. It could impact on who should be allowed to attend the schools, who could join the FRC political party, etc. The FRC identity would change.
- e. *Unity of faith*: It was felt that you could not speak of the unity of faith as long as you did not officially recognize one another and have a sister church relationship. There would need to be greater *uniformity* before one can truly speak of *unity*.

In support of the ICRC one member of Synod noted that the issue had been blown out of proportion. A minor issue had been made a major one. He felt that those opposed handled the matter in a far too technical manner, and that they should show more respect for the work of Jesus Christ. He felt the problem arose from a misunderstanding of what is a true church. He sensed that in the line of argumentation favouring withdrawing one takes the norm of art. 29, applies it to oneself, and then makes oneself the norm.

As advisors, we were allowed to participate in the discussion. Some of the points made were:

- a. In the attacks on the ICRC, it seems that the history of the Liberation had become the norm in the sense of: this is how it was done then, so now we should still do it the same. It was stressed that even though we may be thankful for the lessons learned from history, history is not the norm but Scripture. The norms are the same but each generation must apply them anew for each generation faces new situations.
- b. In some cases very openly, in other cases implicitly, there was the assumption that Presbyterianism is not reformed. Even those who denied that they were anti-Presbyterian time and again buttressed their arguments by attacking the reformed character of the Westminster Standards, often doing so by making caricatures of such things as their ecclesiology or speaking about the place of children in the covenant. This is not the position of the Canadian, or Australian churches for that matter.
- c. There seemed to be an attempt to schematize too much, making everything fit into a logical system. It was almost like the Dutch situation was applied to the immigrant situation. There is need to see the dynamic work of Jesus Christ, and how we have to adjust to it. In connection with this, already in the fraternal address it had been stressed that we are not in the Netherlands anymore, and the neat and understandable categories that fit there, do not fit once we come into a different country. In the fraternal address reference had been made to the fact that in the previous century, the Reformed churches had no difficulty with the Scottish Presbyterians, recognizing it as the work of the Lord. If the water of the North Sea was not too deep to lead to this mutual recognition, to see each other as children of the same King, it would be a shame if we could now not find one another, when as children of those very same churches, we found each other in the same country.

At the end of the second round, again opportunity was given to address the issue. The following is a summary of what was said:

1. It was noted that the brothers tried to take the whole matter seriously, yet it was questionable whether they had the right approach. The matter of fear about the consequences of belonging to the ICRC was taken up. The consequences indeed were being felt in the FRC as they were now forced to think about the doctrine of the church, namely, about the catholicity of the church and how to bring it into word and practice. This was beneficial.
2. There seemed to be an underlying assumption that the ICRC was not acceptable, so the brothers opposed would bring in all sorts of arguments to support their view,

arguments which are scholastic. An example was the distinction "unity of faith" and "unity in Christ." This is an arbitrary distinction, for when you have unity in Christ you have everything.

3. The Australian churches should take their own decisions with respect to the Presbyterian churches seriously (there have been fraternal contact with various Presbyterian churches in Scotland and Ireland for years, as well as with the Presbyterian Church in Korea). It appears as if some are speaking about a *perfect* church. If you reject the ICRC because of the Westminster Standards then you should phase out all other contacts and take the next logical step and call them *false* churches. Then you are honest. This, however, would lead to isolation, for you will have to accuse the Dutch and Canadian churches of not being true due to their association with Presbyterian churches and acceptance of their standards as reformed.
4. "Judgment of charity" as used by proponents of staying in ICRC is not a good term. It is rather condescending, as if we are better. In ICRC you accept each other on the same level.

The discussion that afternoon was concluded with some remarks by Rev. de Jager, representing the Dutch churches. He also counselled to stay involved in the ICRC, remarks which he further expanded in his fraternal address that evening.

Tuesday, June 21

As the discussion was reopened, it became clear that the advice of the foreign delegates was not receiving unanimous appreciation. Some felt that their speeches were too bombastic, even threatening and instilling fear in speaking about the consequences of pulling out of the ICRC. Another felt the foreigners didn't understand the situation in Australia well enough and had painted caricatures. It was stated too that the FRC was not anti-Presbyterian, as previous Synods had clearly shown.

As foreign delegates we were given another opportunity to participate in the discussion. Response was made to a number of questions from the round. It was made clear that the ICRC does not force us to come to full ecclesiastical unity. The purpose of the ICRC is to express and promote unity in Christ, and if possible and necessary to come to fellowship. The alleged ethical conflict was then addressed. It was asked rhetorically on what basis the FRC had contact with the PCEA, for example, for all the years past? What kind of unity do you have when you address their broadest assembly, when you read Scripture together, pray together? Do you approach them as heathens, or "Christians"? Do the discussions with them not imply that you have unity in Christ? *If* the discussions were honest, there was unity of faith. If not, then the whole situation would be unethical! It was asked if indeed they had been honest in their approach to the PCEA. The mistake regarding the ICRC was that you are not compelled to have sister church relationship, but you are free to discuss and pursue it. It was also pointed out that we might not have full ecclesiastical unity (organizationally), but we have unity in Christ. The Lord willing, the next step will come. We have unity and we hope we can build on it. It was a little awkward, but due to the tension caused by comments as advisors, it became necessary to give somewhat of a self-defence. It was asked: why did you invite us as advisors? Certainly not as ornaments, for that would make us very expensive ornaments. The Canadian churches have to pay a bill of approximately \$5,000.00. Certainly, we were not expected to sit by passively. With respect to being aware of the situation, it was pointed out that a clear picture could be gathered from the *Una Sancta* articles as well as the Synod Reports. Further, we are confronted with the same issues in Canada. The comment about Presbyterianism was repeated, for despite denials, it always seemed to come down to the Westminster Standards again.

As the afternoon session drew to a close, it was felt that the matter had been discussed enough. To give the whole matter a chance to sink in, it was decided to leave the making of the decision till the next morning.

Wednesday, June 22: ICRC & PCEA

The time had finally come for a decision on the ICRC. The decision in the end was to continue membership in the ICRC, although the next Conference would be made aware of some of the concerns of the Australian churches.

After a coffee break, the Synod began to deal with the PCEA. The ICRC discussion had set the pace for this. A proposal was on the table from the church at Legana to recognize the PCEA as a true church and in that framework continue the discussions. During this discussion it was pointed out by your delegation that the Canadian Reformed churches have worked with the OPC in this framework of mutual recognition. The question is not true or false but how we can live together ecclesiastically. Our problem is somewhat different in that we are in different countries.

Farewell and journey home

Before a decision on the PCEA was reached, the time arrived for your delegates to say farewell, as our plane would be leaving that evening. In the farewell address the synod was pointed to Phil. 4:2,3, where we read about Euodia and Syntyche, two women who loved the Lord but who were in some sort of conflict. Based on Paul's advice in that passage, the brothers were urged to deal with matters as brothers in equal standing before the Lord, for good discussion cannot take place in such a climate of polarization. We sang Hymn 40:1,2 together, and prayer was offered up both for the Synod as it had to continue its work, and for the churches in Australia.

The Lord granted safety in our journey, and we were both able to return to the presence of our loved ones.

Conclusion

In light of the common ground we have with each other as English speaking sisters churches, and the common problems we face, it appears perhaps that it would have been more fruitful for both federations in years gone by to have concentrated their energies on these type of visits, rather than visiting the "mother" country. Perhaps then we might have helped the brotherhood in Australia prevent the polarization they faced on certain issues. We are not a large federation, but the federation in Australia is far smaller yet! The smaller the circle, the more quickly issues get bogged down. Further, being so small, manpower is so limited! Especially in the Australian situation the load falls on such a small number of ministers who become overloaded with monumental assignments. It makes one wonder if in the age of the electronic information highway, we could possibly do more together, rather than trying to do everything in our own federation? I think here especially of the matters as Bible translations and Church Order. After all, we are only finite and we should realize our limitations.

As this report draws to a close, there is one aspect I as yet wish to raise. The impression might have arisen that we sat in judgment over the Australian churches, as if we ourselves are far better, and we have all the answers. It was made clear already to the Synod that we did not come with all the answers. Rather, we had come to show sympathy, support, and to help in whichever way we could, even though the very same issues also were present in our own country. Our presence was an expression of the catholicity of the church and the communion of saints. We could only serve them with the wisdom given to us.

It is our hope that our presence indicated to the brotherhood in Australia that we are certainly concerned about their well-being. Most of all, though, it is our hope that our presence on behalf of the Canadian churches will have been to their edification and to God's glory.

May the Lord bless our humble efforts, and may He bless His churches in Australia.

Rev. E. Kampen

APPENDIX 10

ADDRESS TO THE SYNOD OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ:

It is a great honour and privilege to be in your midst and have the opportunity to address you. When I speak of honour and privilege then I do not think in the first place of being allowed to enjoy your hospitality and fellowship, although that too is an honour and privilege, but in this sense that by being in your midst we may experience something of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess that "the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself ... a church chosen to everlasting life." We have come from the land that stretches nearly to the top of the world, to the land down under, about as close as you would want to get to the bottom of the world, and yet we notice that we are at home with each other, because we are members of that same household of faith, expecting our salvation in Jesus Christ, washed by His blood and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, in being here we may experience the unity and catholicity of the church of Jesus Christ, as people separated by great distances are joined and united with heart and will in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith. To further pursue that aspect of honour and privilege, it is also our honour and privilege to be able to officially represent the Canadian Reformed Churches, indeed, to be the first ever delegation sent to Australia. We have a long relationship as churches together but up till this point it had never yet come to sending representatives. It is only proper then that on behalf of those who sent us we extend to you our heartfelt greetings, and to express the desire that our gracious Lord will equip you with His Spirit also as you are assembled in this Synod so that you may have the necessary wisdom to deal with all the matters at hand in such a way that He is glorified and His churches are edified.

It was noted that this is the first time for a delegation from Canada. It need not be kept a secret that there is a particular reason for this. Our last Synod did give the mandate to the CRCA to "have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible." This however was not the main motivation. Rather, the main motivation was the letter sent to the committee by your Deputies in which they stated: "we would plead with you to send a delegation to our next synod." It was not merely an invitation but a plea! It would go too far to equate it with Paul's Macedonian call where in a vision he saw a man "beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9), which Paul obeyed by crossing the Aegean Sea, but it cannot be denied that the plea of the letter led to the decision to send us to cross the Pacific Ocean. We make no pretension, having come this far, to any apostolic office. We come, however, holding, with you, to the apostolic teaching.

Having stated our limitations, at the same time, we can also state that we have a certain qualification that places us in a special position. That qualification lies in our common situation with you, a situation we also share with the FRCSA. That qualification is this, that we are churches that have developed through immigration from a common ancestral home, with a common confessional heritage. Of course by now most of the members in our respective churches are born and raised in English speaking lands, but we cannot deny our ties to the Netherlands. Our forefathers, and perhaps a good number of us here today, were immigrants. That history of immigration presents us with common difficulties and challenges, which those who stayed in the land of their forefathers would never have to deal with in the same way. That common challenge is: how do we deal with the church gathering work of Jesus Christ? In the country of our forefathers, matters developed in certain ways we could comprehend. The historic lines were relatively easy to understand. But, what now in the new land where the Lord has placed us?

In humble obedience our forefathers had to make a new start in their new land. For a variety of reasons they could not in good conscience join the churches called "reformed." The establishing of new congregations was done in simple obedience to the Lord.

But, that was not the end of the matter. For, being immigrants it was soon found out that the neat compartments of the home country did not always fit. In our new lands and continents we met Presbyterians. Now Presbyterians did not present so much of a problem when our forefathers lived in the Netherlands and the Presbyterians lived in Scotland. It is well known how the Secession churches had good relations with the Presbyterians. It is one thing when you are separated by a large body of water. What do you do, however, when you nearly live in each other's backyard?

We hope that you will not take it ill of us that we touch this point. We have read the material for your Synod, and we know you struggle with this. Brothers, we struggle with this too. And sad to say, we don't have an answer for you on how to solve this, for we haven't figured it out for ourselves. This does not mean our presence is useless. Rather, may it serve as an encouragement. The apostle Paul says that "no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13) Those words put our struggle in perspective, namely, our struggle is not the worst in the world. Others face those struggles too. But even more, it gives us hope, for the Lord will give the way out. Notice, the Lord will provide the way of escape.

If I may add a personal note: Many years ago I came across a little poem. The details, and the author's name, are lost in my memory, but the message lingers, "There were two children of the king, but they couldn't find each other, for the water was way too deep." In our effort to find out how we as the King's children from Dutch descent, and as the King's children from Scottish/British descent should live together in, for both of us, a new land, let us remember: we are the King's children. If the water of the North Sea was not too deep to recognize each other as the work of Jesus Christ, we must take care not to turn the sand between our homes into quicksand. It may be good to remind ourselves sometimes that our primary struggle is not with the faithful Presbyterians, but that with the faithful Presbyterians we strive to walk in the way of the Lord, yes, together we fight against the spiritual host of wickedness. That is not to minimize the problems, but it is to keep it in perspective. Again, as a personal comment, is there not a danger that we are so busy striving for the purity of the doctrine of the church that we fall behind in our struggle for the purity of the life of the church? Perhaps our inter-church relationships would make more positive progress if we did not ask first of all: "what do you think of the church," but, "what do you think about the Christ"? I say this as one who may at times himself have been guilty of asking the wrong question.

This of course brings to mind the matter of the ICRC. Again, we can sympathize with many of your concerns. We can see how they are tied to the "Presbyterian" problem. Again, we share that difficulty of churches in our own country being recognized as true while yet there is not the unity as a federation of churches. (eg. FRC, RCUS, OPC). That only drives home the fact that the scheme of things in the Netherlands doesn't fit so neatly here in the countries where God in His providence has led us. The course chosen, however, by our Synods, is the continued involvement in the ICRC. Should you withdraw, your presence and good contributions to the ICRC would be missed. Consider the obligation put upon us by the confession of the communion of saints, namely, that we should readily and cheerfully use our talents and gifts for the well-being of our brothers and sisters. Suppose there would be no personal gain for you in participating in this conference, there is always the aspect of striving to be a blessing to others. We think especially of the churches in the third world countries.

We realize that many other matters will have your attention too, among them the matter of Bible translations. Again, we struggle with the same issue. No doubt our committees on Bible translation can complement each other, to avoid unnecessary duplication. We also notice your work on the Church Order, the close similarities to the

one we use, with of course the Australian adaptations. May you have much wisdom in these matters.

Yes, we have much in common, in our history, in our experiences and challenges. There are many links between our federations. Many of the ministers we meet here have also sat around the tables of the broader assemblies in the Canadian Reformed Churches. As a matter of fact, some of them are former class mates! That reminds us of another tie, namely, the Theological College. Your young men go there to study, not always to return to their native land, but you have harvested some of the fruits of that college as can be seen by the faces at this Synod. Your support is greatly appreciated, and it is one of the special ties that binds us. There are also family ties, as some of our young brs. and srs. have gone to the other side of the earth to find a spouse. When we see all that, then we realize that this visit was long overdue!

Brothers, we have responded to your plea to cross the ocean. We have come, not with ready answers, nor just with sympathy, but for your encouragement and to offer you our assistance in whatever way we are able. May the Lord give you all that is needed, now at this Synod, but also every day in the local congregations to do what is right and pleasing in His sight so that His Name be glorified as we look forward, and work toward the coming of His kingdom in glory.

Thank you.
E. Kampen

FAREWELL ADDRESS TO FRC SYNOD, JUNE 22, 1994

Br. Chairman, esteemed br. delegates:

We have been in your midst since the opening of your Synod last week Tuesday. By listening to your discussions, as well as through many personal conversations both with members of Synod and church members, the impression received both via the articles in *Una Sancta* and via the reports to Synod that you are faced with polarization was confirmed time and again. Though strangers to this part of God's creation, what we found in terms of spiritual climate was not altogether strange. Further, to some degree the spiritual climate found in Australia is also present in Canada. What is different, I would say, is the intensity.

You realize that it is impossible for me to give some sort of official word of farewell which has been approved by the churches in Canada. All I can do when you come right down to it is speak some personal words. I speak these words with some hesitation, but my pastor's heart compels me. You could say then that my remarks are pastoral.

Brothers, reflecting on what to say as farewell, a passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians came to mind. I preached on this passage quite some time ago. I would like to read it with you. It is found in the letter to the Philippians, chapter 4. We read there in the verses 1-3:.....

This is an intriguing passage. There was this problem between two sisters in the congregation that was very public. So public, as a matter of fact that Paul addressed it in a public letter. Since this letter is in the Canon, even we today know about it. What was their problem? We don't have to know. What we have to know is that there was a polarization. It is striking how Paul does not pick sides. He does not question the integrity of either sister. He puts them on a par. As a matter of fact, he states clearly that they "laboured side by side with me in the gospel..." and that their "names are in the book of life." You see, there is no question about their status before the Lord. This does not take away from the fact that they should resolve their conflicts. They must agree in the Lord. Brothers, the polarization here is as clear as a bell. I sincerely hope that no one questions the other's position before the face of God. With the words of the apostle Paul I would urge you, brothers, "agree in the Lord." Look at each others always as equals in the sight of God. Fighting is not pleasing in the eyes of the Lord and does not help His

kingdom. Stop trying to score in your own goal. If you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

Going back to Paul's letter to the Philippians, it should not escape our notice how this exhortation to the two sisters is followed by the command to rejoice in the Lord always, to pray, and the "peace of God which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Stick indeed to the apostolic teaching, "and the God of peace will be with you" (vs. 9).

Brothers, it is time to come the end now. We wish to thank you for your excellent hospitality and the Christian fellowship we could enjoy. Though far from home we could feel at home for when we are with God's people we are always at home. We thank you for the opportunity to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments in your midst. If we have caused you offense because of weakness, please forgive us. If we have caused offense because we spoke the truth, please heed us. As we take our leave it is our prayer that God may bless you and keep you, make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

I would ask that we sing together Hy. 40:1,2.

Thank You.
Rev. E. Kampen

APPENDIX 11

MANITOWOC (WISCONSIN) AND LUBUMBASHI (ZAIRE)

After a nod from the school board and best wishes for a "nice break" from my colleagues at the William of Orange Christian School, I left for Manitowoc, Wisconsin. I was asked to represent the Canadian Reformed churches at the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, to be held in Manitowoc from May 16 - 19, 1994.

It was easy to feel at home at the synod of the R.C.U.S. Those feelings were not primarily the result of excellent Bratwurst, Sauerkraut, und Hochzeits Kartoffeln.

The first synod of these Reformed, German emigrants was held in 1746. The Manitowoc synod was their 248th!

Rev. Pollema, the chairman of the synod said in a part of his report on the state of the church:

"The commitment to the Reformed faith is evident in all of the reports. Such commitment is further demonstrated in the proposal to adopt the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort as additional confessional standards. Adopting these creeds would be contrary to the modern trend which is to revise or abandon the historic creeds. The Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, along with the Heidelberg Catechism, have served to identify, strengthen, preserve, and unify the Reformed faith. They reflect the faith of our fathers, 'the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3). A confession was recognized as a form of unity because it was an expression of a common faith. The three together have come to be known as the 'Three Forms of Unity'."

During the four days at the synod, I not only witnessed healthy, Reformed vigilance, but also noticed deep appreciation for being Reformed, a gift of God.

I felt that the brothers dealt sincerely with questions arising from their contacts with the Canadian Reformed churches initiated by Carman, and with the G.K.N. (Reformed churches in the Netherlands). The R.C.U.S. and the G.K.N. have established a sister church relationship, a direct result from joint mission work in Zaire. A synodical committee was struck so that those questions about ecclesiology and church government could be dealt with properly. Rev. J. Merica expects that this committee work will take another year. I am convinced that the study results of this committee will be apologetic in character and helpful for further discussion of outstanding issues, such as: views of the church, church government, and the Lord's Supper.

On day three visitors received (a bit of) time to address the members of synod. I touched upon some key moments from the last four years.

1990: A sister church relationship is established between the R.C.U.S. and the G.K.N.

1991: The R.C.U.S. invites the Canadian Reformed churches to establish a fraternal relationship.

1992: The Canadian Reformed churches answers positively. The synod Lincoln mandates its committee for relations with churches abroad to establish contacts. Rev. F. Walker visits the synod Lincoln.

1993: Rev. E. Kampen visits the synod of the R.C.U.S.

After this I said:

"You have old German roots, we have Dutch roots. For us the events of 1944, the Liberation of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, are very important. We learned a lot, but have a lot to learn too. Canadian Reformed speakers and writers often maneuver themselves in less apologetic positions when they discuss the articles 27, 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession. We suffer from sloganism when we present the rich contents of those articles in a reduction formula. The contents of those profound articles is improperly reduced in statements like: "There is only one true church in one place." When we use such slogans it does not take long before we hear the loaded question: "Is, in your mind, the Canadian Reformed church the

only true church?" After this begins the tiring task of explaining away these self-inflicted misunderstandings. The Canadian Reformed churches are accountable to the complete contents of those articles, to nothing more, to nothing less."

On the last day of synod the discussion about the proposal to adopt the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort began. Interesting questions were asked: Does having the Three Forms of Unity protect the R.C.U.S. better? Some churches with those confessions are not better protected against liberalism. Does acceptance of additional confessions reduce the importance of the Heidelberg Catechism? Is the H. C. first in order of importance? Do we swear an oath of allegiance to every word of those new confessions? Did Paul indeed write Hebrews? The answers given to those questions were very stimulating. When the question was asked why these changes were necessary, several answers were given. "We use them in our mission work." "This is a return to what we adopted at our first synod in 1746."

Before I report further on those discussions I have to pause for a moment.

Lubumbashi

The R.C.U.S. supports Reformed mission work in Zaire. On Monday, May 19, it was announced the Rev. Kishimba from Lubumbashi, Zaire, would visit the synod. Rev. Kishimba speaks French, the official language of Zaire. However, the translator whose services the synod was going to use, could not come. I hesitated to offer my services since my French is covered under layers of Portuguese. It became a wonderful experience. Through God's providence, I was allowed to translate an amazing story about the wondrous works of the Lord.

When he was young, Rev. Kishimba listened to the Reformed mission programs from the "Back to God Hour." That same organization made it possible for him to study theology for 4 years in Aix-en-Provence, France. Student Kishimba's wife and two children stayed behind in Zaire.

About 10 years ago Rev. Kishimba started his work as a minister in Zaire. Now there are 250 congregations (100,000 [?] members). Those 250 congregations have only two ministers. So the training of ministers is of utmost importance. The G.K.N. (Spakenburg) have already sent two missionaries for the training of ministers. Soon a third and a possible fourth will follow. The Dutch Mission Aid organization also has a worker in Zaire.

At this moment Zaire experiences a famine. Rev. Kishimba spoke about suffering congregation members as well as about another threat the famine poses to the young churches in Zaire. It is the question: How can a sovereign God allow this to happen? Is He really sovereign?

Since many people in Zaire do not speak French, the Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into three different languages.

Adopted

We have to go back to the synodical discussions about the confessions for a moment. You should have seen how the eyes of Rev. Kishimba lit up when I translated the results of the final vote: 39 yeas, 13 nays.

He told me:

"In Zaire, many years ago, before the help from the U.S.A. and Holland, someone said: 'Not every church that calls itself Reformed is really Reformed. But I can recommend the R.C.U.S. They have the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession.'"

After telling me this we agreed that the R.C.U.S. followed the good example of the Zairian churches.

On May 20 I flew home. After all it was a nice break indeed. A break in which I learned a lot about the providence of God.

Let us praise His name for all His wondrous works.

A. Nap

APPENDIX 12
VISIT TO THE ERQ
September 16, 17, 1994

A. Introduction

Accompanied by Rev. J. Van Popta we traveled via VIA and arrived at Dorval station at 9:00 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 16. It turned out this was the wrong place to exit consequently it took us some time to arrive down-town Montreal. The Brs. Mario Veilleux, minister of the ERQ of St. Georges and Benoit Jacques, an elder of the same church were waiting for us. All four of us stayed overnight at the home of one of the members of the ERQ of Saint-Lambert.

After a hearty breakfast we left for a local Baptist church where *le Conseil regional d'Eglise Reformee du Quebec* was held. Here we met delegates from the six churches in their federation. In total there were ten delegates and two observers. The observers were members of one of the churches and were present because of an agenda item pertaining to their church.

We were heartily welcomed and invited to take a place at their table. Rev. John Zoellner volunteered to act as interpreter. He assisted us in a most able manner during the course of the meeting.

B. Regional Council

The Regional Council of the ERQ functions much like our classical meetings. They meet quarterly to consider and decide on a variety of matters pertaining to the churches. The officers of the Council serve for one year, when new officers are chosen. Although there are some eight pastors in the ERQ not all of the churches have consistories. Consequently Council is very much involved in the care of these small churches. Various committees appointed by Council function in the midst of the churches. These report to Council on a regular basis. There is a shortage of manpower and the brothers are hard-pressed to complete their work. These churches are yet in formation and programs of instruction for the youth and as well as adult members are being worked on. One of the committees is working on a series of Bible studies; another is considering the task of the elders. All are involved in outreach to the community.

Meetings of Council are always opened with a period of devotions. The Saturday we attended this included a twenty minute meditation on Psalm 131, individual and communal prayer as well as singing. The Word of God is central and the needs of the various congregations are placed before the Lord.

When new delegates are present they are required to state their written agreement with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession.

C. Ecclesiastical Fellowship With The ERQ

The meeting allowed substantial time to discuss proposed affiliation with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The Canadian Reformed church of Ottawa had drawn up a proposal which it intends to present to Classis Ontario North, December 1994. The ERQ was in possession of this document, as well as our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Rev. Van Popta spoke on behalf of our churches, outlining our history and desire for unity with those who confess the same Reformed faith as ourselves. He also explained our Rules for Ecclesiastical fellowship.

The meeting took considerable time to debate the matter of ecclesiastical fellowship. Questions asked and concerns raised included:

- Will ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed churches place restrictions on our identity as independent, French speaking churches?
- Ought we not to move more slowly and cautiously in this matter?
- Do we have a clear understanding of what is involved in ecclesiastical fellowship?

- There is a document concerning the ERQ. Do we not need one concerning the Canadian Reformed churches?

Observations:

We were able to answer a number of questions concerning our churches. One or two of the delegates were concerned with a feared loss of identity resulting from ecclesiastical fellowship. Others spoke very positively of the prospect of joining in close fellowship with us. A brother made this telling comment. "I hear you saying that you do not desire an ecumenicity based on feelings but one which is based on the Word of God. This is the ecumenicity we desire."

From the documentation as well as the information provided at this 'synod' it is evident that the ERQ is in the process of formation. Although the ERQ is united in its commitment to the reformed faith many practices which have a long and well-established history in our churches are new or as yet unknown in the ERQ. There is no regular catechetical instruction of the youth of the church, though Bible Study groups exist in all of the churches. Before anyone is joined to the church there is a period of thorough instruction. In the case of some this may be only of a few weeks duration while others are instructed for a year or more before making profession of faith. Regular church attendance is considered a measure of faithfulness and there is no haste involved in the process of coming to church membership. The ERQ requires a credible profession of faith of its members, while its office bearers must knowledgeably subscribe to the confessions.

Delegates expressed the concern that the members come to a better understanding of the Word of God and the confessions. They see linking with ourselves as a means to this end.

Ottawa's "**Overture to Classis. . . .**" spells out in detail the policies and practices of the ERQ and I will not repeat what is written in this document. Suffice it to say that there are as yet no uniform standards in the ERQ regarding various matters such as the supervision of the Lord's Supper table, the issuing of attestations to departing members etc. At least one of their churches has recently adopted a practice which allows only communicant members of the ERQ to partake of the Lord's Supper.

It was evident from this meeting as well as from private discussions with some of the delegates that here is a small group of Reformed churches which want to be faithful to the Lord. They have taken pains to adopt a Church Order which does justice to the Word of God. (see enclosed) They are determined, D.V., to be a light in the midst of a secularized, French-speaking society.

Their background is different from that of our own. In some of their documents you 'hear' the Heidelberg Catechism and in their practices, elements of presbyterianism are noticeable. They owe a debt to the PCA who have lent them missionaries and to the Chr. Ref. Church which has given them financial support.

It is crystal clear that they value their independence as French-speaking churches. In this regard, (though our borders are still open) they might well be regarded as, "churches abroad." They have adopted a unique church order which, though reformed is not a copy of the church order of Dort.

We did not have time to discuss at length issues such as the fencing of the Lord's Supper and women in the office of deacon. This particular meeting had to decide whether or not it wanted to enter into close affiliation with ourselves or not and it spent much time discussing this issue. The thought was expressed that more in depth discussion regarding matters of doctrine and church order would be desirable.

I was asked whether I would recommend that the ERQ pursue ecclesiastical fellowship with us rather than a less formal, freer association. On the basis of Christ's prayerful demand for the unity of all true believers I could only answer in the affirmative.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad approach the ERQ with a request to visit their churches as soon as possible. I think this is essential if our

synod 1995 is to make an informed decision in the matter. (Although I believe the approach taken by Ottawa, viz., to go via classis, is a valid one, the churches would be well-served by a report of your committee.)

Such a visit would surely want to concentrate more fully on the implications of ecclesiastical fellowship and would thoroughly discuss any outstanding differences in ecclesiastical practice between the ERQ and ourselves.

Respectfully Submitted with Sincere Christian Greetings,
C. Bosch
600 Deborah Crescent,
Burlington, ON L7T 2N1

APPENDIX 13
LETTERS REGARDING ICRC MEMBERSHIP:
DECEMBER 3, 1992, FROM THE ICRC SECRETARY

*The International Conference
of Reformed Churches*

Secretary:

Rev. M. van Beveren
13904 - 86 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5E 3C1
Tel. (403) 478-5852

December 3, 1992

The Committee on Relations with
Churches Abroad,
c/o Dr. J. Visscher,
5734 - 191A Street,
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9

Esteemed Brethren,

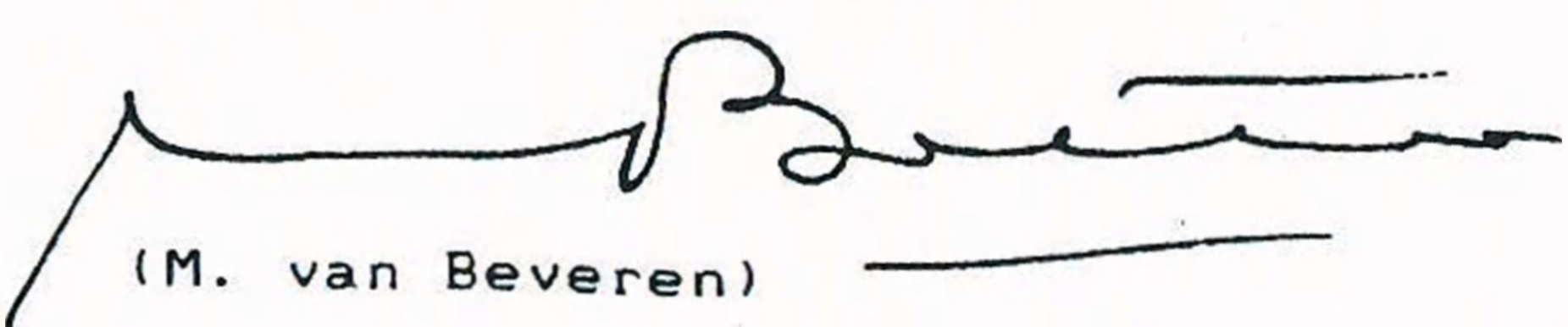
While you are aware of the fact that the *Free Reformed Church of North America* and the *Reformed Church in the United States* are applying for membership in the I.C.R.C., I would like to draw your attention to the fact that due to their limited contact with other churches, those applying churches have difficulty to be sponsored by two I.C.R.C. member churches.

At this moment the RCUS is recommended by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands only, whereas the Free Reformed Church of North America has not yet any sponsor.

That is why I kindly ask you whether your Committee would be willing to consider to recommend those two churches for membership in the I.C.R.C. in accordance with Art.VII,e and Art.V,3 of the *Regulations* of the I.C.R.C.

I wish you the Lord's blessings in all your endeavours.

With brotherly greetings,


(M. van Beveren)

DECEMBER 14, 1992, FROM THE
EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE FRCNA

EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
Rev. C. Pronk, Secretary
163 St. George St. St. Thomas, Ont. N5P 2M3

CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES
Dr. J. Visscher,
5734-191 A Street,
Surrey, B. C. Canada V3S 4N9

December 14, 1992

Esteemed brothers,

At its Synod meeting held in June, 1992 the Free Reformed Churches decided to apply for membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We understand that in order for our membership application to be approved we need a recommendation from two member churches. May we therefore ask the Canadian Reformed Churches to recommend us to the Conference? We plan to make a similar request to the Free Church of Scotland.

We would further inform you that our churches hold to the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt. Our Church Order is essentially that of Dordt with minor changes to adapt to the needs of the times and the North American scene.

We hope that the above information will suffice. Please address any questions you may have to the undersigned.

Thank you.

With brotherly greetings,

Yours in Christ,

Rev. C. Pronk, secretary.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Pronk', with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the signature.

**JANUARY 26, 1993,
TO THE ICRC SECRETARY**

**THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

Secretary:
Dr. J. Visscher
5734-191A St,
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9
Canada

January 26, 1993

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
External Relations Committee
Rev. C. Pronk, Secretary
163 George St.,
St. Thomas, Ontario
N5P 2M3

Dear Brothers,

Greetings! In your letter of December 14, 1992, you inquired about the possibility of the Free Reformed Church of North America receiving a letter of recommendation from the Canadian Reformed Churches with a view to your application to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

On the one hand, our Committee is convinced that the Constitution of the ICRC does not require you to submit two letters of recommendation. This matter is mentioned under the Regulations - Article VII 1(e) but there it has to do with sending observers to the Conference.

On the other hand, we recognize that the Secretary of the ICRC has a different interpretation regarding this matter and that you are thus caught in the midst of what may be called a question of constitutional interpretation. Hopefully, the next meeting of the Conference will resolve this matter once and for all.

As for your request to us, we have to admit that it is complicated by the fact that at the moment there is no official relationship between our respective Churches. Notwithstanding that, we have taken note of the fact that, historically speaking, the Canadian Reformed Churches have always regarded the Free Reformed Church of N.A. as a faithful church of our Lord, that students from the Free Reformed Church of N.A. receive their training for the ministry at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario, and that a number of local churches in both federations have had and continue to have discussions to promote greater unity.

In conclusion, our Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby encloses a letter that you can pass on to the International Conference of Reformed Churches recommending that it accept the Free Reformed Church of North America as a member of the ICRC.

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you, as well as promote greater unity between our respective churches.

With brotherly greetings,
For the Committee,

J. Visscher, convener/secretary

**JANUARY 26, 1993, TO THE
EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE FRCNA**

**THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

Secretary:
Dr. J. Visscher
5734-191A St,
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9
Canada

January 26, 1993

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Secretary: Rev. M. van Beveren
13904 - 86 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta
T5E 3C1 CANADA

Dear Rev. M. van Beveren,

The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby recommends that the **FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA** be admitted as a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Although the Canadian Reformed Churches have at present no formal ecclesiastical relationship with the Free Reformed Church, they have long recognized that in the Free Reformed Church of North America, we have to do with a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Free Reformed Church is committed to the inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures, has adopted and maintains the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, and regulates its ecclesiastical life on the basis of the church polity of the Synod of Dort.

We trust that the above constitutes a sufficient testimony to support the application of the Free Reformed Church of North America to join the ICRC.

In closing, we remain

Yours in the Lord,

J. Visscher, convener/secretary

MARCH 16, 1992, FROM THE
INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE RCUS

**REFORMED CHURCH IN THE U. S.
Interchurch Relations Committee**

March 16, 1992

Dr. J. Visscher
5734-191 A Street
Surrey, B.C.
V3S4N9 Canada

Dear Dr. Visscher,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who has shed His grace, mercy and peace upon us.

It is our prayer that our Lord will continue to give us His wisdom, guidance and blessing as we work toward establishing fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. We are presently seeking membership status in the International Conference of Reformed Churches and are hoping by that to have a closer working relationship with conservative Reformed Churches worldwide.

The purpose of this letter is first to encourage the Canadian Reformed Churches to have an observer present at our 246th Annual Synodical meeting which shall convene on the evening of April 20, 1992 and shall adjourn April 23, 1992.

The other reason for writing this letter is to inquire about the possibilities of the RCUS receiving from the Canadian Reformed Churches a letter of recommendation to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We need two recommendations from two member churches. We requested a recommendation from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and, if possible, we would appreciate one from your church as well.

We will be keeping in contact with you regarding the progress of establishing fraternal relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. If there is any further questions or clarifications please call me at (209) 367-0552 or write to 245 E. Vine Street, Lodi, CA 95240.

May God bless our churches.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Jonathan Merica

Rev. Jonathan Merica, Chairman
RCUS Interchurch Relations

**JANUARY 26, 1993,
TO THE ICRC SECRETARY**

**THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

Secretary:
Dr. J. Visscher
5734-191A St,
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9
Canada

January 26, 1993

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Secretary: Rev. M. van Beveren
13904 - 86 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta
T5E 3C1 CANADA

Dear Rev. M. van Beveren,

The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby recommends that the REFORMED CHURCH IN THE U.S. be admitted as a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Although the Canadian Reformed Churches have at present no formal ecclesiastical relationship with the Reformed Church in the U.S., they are in the process of investigating the Reformed Church in the U.S. with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with this church and is increasingly coming to the recognition that in this federation, we have to do with a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Reformed Church in the U.S. is committed to the inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures, has adopted and maintains the Heidelberg Catechism.

We trust that the above constitutes a sufficient testimony to support the application of the Reformed Church in the U.S. to join the ICRC.

In closing, we remain

Yours in the Lord,

J. Visscher, convener/secretary

**JANUARY 25, 1993, TO THE
INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE RCUS
THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

Secretary:
Dr. J. Visscher
5734-191A St,
Surrey, B.C. V3S 4N9
Canada

January 25, 1993

THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
Interchurch Relations Committee
245 E. Vine Street,
Lodi, CA 95240
USA

Dear Brothers,

Greetings! In your letter of March 16, 1992, you inquired about the possibility of the Reformed Church in the U.S. receiving a letter of recommendation from the Canadian Reformed Churches with a view to your application to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

On the one hand, our Committee is convinced that the Constitution of the ICRC does not require you to submit two letters of recommendation. This matter is mentioned under the Regulations - Article VII 1(e) but there it has to do with sending observers to the Conference.

On the other hand, we recognize that the Secretary of the ICRC has a different interpretation of this matter and that you are thus caught in the midst of what may be called a question of constitutional interpretation. Hopefully, the next meeting of the Conference will resolve this matter once and for all.

As for your request to us, we have to admit that it is complicated by the fact that at the moment there is no official relationship between our respective Churches. Notwithstanding that we have taken note of the fact that General Synod 1992 of the Canadian Reformed Churches instructed us to investigate your Churches with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Church in the U.S. Such a mandate is only given when a General Synod is convinced that there is good reason to believe that we have to do here with a Church that is faithful to the Lord and to the Reformed faith. The contact that there has been in the past between one of our local churches, the Church at Carman, and several churches in the RCUS has served also to promote this conviction at our General Synod 1992.

Furthermore, the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church in the U.S. have a common sister church in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, gives us a further degree of certainty that in the RCUS we have to do with a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby encloses a letter that you can pass on to the International Conference of Reformed Churches recommending that it accept the Reformed Church in the U.S. as a member of the ICRC.

May the Lord continue to bless and keep you, as well as promote greater unity between our respective churches.

With brotherly greetings,
For the Committee,