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2.2 Correspondence

- 2.2.1 A letter was sent to the FRCA commending them for their generous support given to the Theological College in Hamilton
- 2.2.2 The Acts of Synod Launceston 1998 were received.
- 2.2.3 A copy of a letter sent to the GKN concerning the deposed Rev. F.J. van Hulst was received.
- 2.2.4 An invitation was received to send a delegate to the Synod to be convened on July 5, 2000 in Albany. A letter of greeting was sent.

2.3 Acts of Synod Launceston 1998

This Synod met in Launceston from June 2 - 15 and September 8 - 17. From the Acts we glean the following highlights:

- 2.3.1 The following officers were elected: Chairman - Rev. C. Bouwman; Vice Chairman - Rev. C. Kleyn, while later Rev. A. vanDelden was added; First Clerk - Elder J. Eikelboom, Second Clerk - Rev. J. Poppe.
- 2.3.2 As a result of the required expression of agreement with the Three Forms of Unity at the beginning of the meeting a number of churches in their instructions had raised concerns about the confessional integrity of Rev. F. J. van Hulst of Launceston. In line with the Subscription Form Rev. F. van Hulst was asked to provide "further explanations" regarding the concerns brought forward by the churches which were considered to be of a public nature. Synod concluded that his "teachings on regeneration, and conversion, the church, and the forgiveness of sins are not in accordance with Scripture and confession". Synod therefore decided that Rev. F. J. van Hulst could not remain seated as member of Synod. A committee was appointed to investigate his teachings regarding the law. In a later session it was concluded that his teachings of regeneration and conversion affect his teachings on the law, and so distort the full biblical message.
- 2.3.3 The Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided to continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia, the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the established rules.
- 2.3.4 Contacts with the Reformed Churches of Australia will continue in face-to-face meetings.
- 2.3.5 Deputies were mandated to strive for sister relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Their existing relationship with the Reformed Churches of Australia was still considered to be an impediment. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand as well as the Free Reformed Churches have sent a letter of appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia to "return to a distinctly reformed direction".

- Reformed Churches of Australia under the adopted rules.
- 2.5.2 Express appreciation to the FRCA for their continued support of the Theological College.

3. THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (FCS)

3.1 Mandate

- 3.1.1 Synod mandated the CRCA to express the prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches of the Free Church of Scotland as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation. (Acts 1998, Article 120, V,B1,2).

3.2 Correspondence

- 3.2.1 A letter was sent to express the prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches of the Free Church of Scotland as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation.
- 3.2.2 An invitation was received to attend the General Assembly scheduled for May 1999. Rev. E. Kampen was delegated to represent the Churches. His report is found in the appendices.
- 3.2.3 An official "Statement to Other Churches" dated January 28, 2000 was received in which an explanation is given of the schism which occurred in the Free Church on January 20, 2000 (see: Appendices).
- 3.2.4 An invitation was received to attend the General Assembly scheduled for May 2000. A letter of greeting was sent.

3.3 Acts of the General Assemblies

- 3.3.1 The Acts of the General Assemblies held in May 1998 and May 1999 were scrutinized. These Acts make it clear that while the Free Church strives to attend to all its regular activities, the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod refuses to go away. The 1999 Assembly also had a number of submissions which tried to get the matter reopened. The appellants refuse to consider the decisions made by previous Assemblies as binding. The Commission of the Assembly was appointed to deal further with these matters.
- 3.3.2 At the 1999 Assembly, Prof. D. Macleod was appointed as principal of the Free Church College in Edinburgh.
- 3.3.3 In 1998 the FCS established fraternal relations with the Evangelical Presbyterian Reformed Churches of England and Wales. While the FCS is seeking to establish contact with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, in 1999 it established fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Churches of North America.
- 3.3.4 *Free Church College.* A proposal to have a degree course which is

to evaluate their "Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland". This document was obtained via their web site and is included in the appendices.

- 3.4.4 The aforementioned "Declaration" gives three reasons for secession. In this "Declaration" all the factors which have been at play in the background over the years seem to come together. It has to be kept in mind that with a view to the actual secession, the point at issue was the handling of the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod and the refusal of a number of ministers to accept the decisions made. The other issues raised in the Declaration do not appear in the Acts of the General Assemblies as issues which had reached the stage of an impossible impasse. In light of that, the only relevant ground for secession would appear to be that there was a violation of the Form of Process in that the Commission of the General Assembly pursued the charges of contumacy while according to the Form of Process all processes against any minister are to begin before his Presbytery (Chapter VII, paragraph 1). This is understandable as in Presbyterian polity the minister is minister of Presbytery, not of the local session.
- 3.4.5 While it appears that the Form of Process was not adhered to in that the Commission began conducting the disciplinary process, those who seceded made no effort to appeal that action to the forthcoming General Assembly but ended the process by seceding. While this action may reflect a lack of confidence in the General Assembly, it would nevertheless be incumbent upon them to defend themselves. Beginning a process of discipline is not the same as being removed from office. It appears that those who seceded forfeited the opportunity to defend themselves. They have not shown that the process was exhausted.
- 3.4.6 Even though the action of secession cannot be justified based on the information available, one is left to wonder if everything possible was done to remove the root cause, namely, the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod. This is all the more so in light of what is said in the same Chapter VII "Concerning Processes against Ministers" at the start of Paragraph 3, namely, "And because a scandal committed by a minister hath on these accounts many aggravations, and once raised, though it may be found to be without any ground, yet it is not easily wiped off;...".

3.5 Considerations

- 3.5.1 From the Acts of the General Assemblies received it continues to be clear that the Free Church takes its task in the world seriously. It has a real concern for mission both at home and abroad. It is also concerned to give a Christian testimony to the issues of the day.
- 3.5.2 While there are questions about the discipline process leading to a secession, there is no evidence at this point to conclude that we should discontinue our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church (Majority). Further, while there may be concern about the appropriateness of

- congregation. Each church had delegated three members; in addition, three missionaries, one emeritus minister and two Dutch ministers were present as advisers.
- 4.3.2. Synod rejected the overture that the Acts should be published with "Considerations" and "Conclusions". Instead clearly formulated decisions will express the motivation that led to these. The Acts, excluding confidential matters, will be posted on the computer.
- 4.3.3. Synod spent a considerable amount of time on the Theological Training, established during the Ad. Hoc Synod of July 4, 1997, and in operation since Jan. 1998. A Constitution, regulating matters as purpose, government, staffing, study requirements, etc. was adopted. The curators and lecturers presented their reports regarding the first term of operation. Also, offers to possibly operate under the auspices of the Theological University of Kampen, The Netherlands, or the Theological College in Hamilton, ON, Canada had been declined in favour of an independent institution. The possibility of rounding off the study by attending classes in Kampen upon completing training in South Africa would be pursued.
- 4.3.4. Synod considered the report from the Mission Committee (Sendings depute). It was decided not to deal with the proposed Mission Agreement between the FRCSA and the supporting churches in The Netherlands. (Regional Synod Friesland and Classis Grootegast). Examination of the document by the sending churches in South Africa and their recommendation for adoption was deemed necessary before Synod could discuss the matter. A report by the deputies looking into the matter of the office of evangelist in mission stated that more time was required to study this issue.
- 4.3.5. The Deputies for Contact with Churches within South Africa presented their report. Synod considered the written information and encouraged the continuation of contact with various concerned members, ministers, and seceded congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and Reformed Churches of South Africa, as well as the English Reformed Church of Randburg. A few ministers of the Reformed Churches of South Africa were present at this synod as observers and received the opportunity to address the delegates. Their call for continued contact was heeded, but Synod did charge the Deputies to focus on essential aspects of church life within these churches.
- 4.3.6. Synod dealt with a lengthy report of the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad. It was decided to continue sister-church relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. Brotherly contact will be maintained with the Reformed Churches of Indonesia and the Presbyterian Church of Korea. Exploratory contact with the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire, Reformed Fellowship in Kenya and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA will be continued, and possibly with the Christian Reformed Fellowship of Kenya, the Igreja Reformada

5.2 Issues Mandated by Synod

5.2.1 *The "Blessing Elder"*. In a letter to *Deputaten Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken* (BBK) dated Oct. 19, 1998 it was requested that they as yet "interact with the consideration of Synod 1995 about "the blessing elder" and its impact on the distinction between the offices of elder and minister" (Acts 195, article 19, IV E).

Response was received via an e-mail on Jan. 22, 1999, which was confirmed in a personal conversation on May 17, 1999 with the BBK by our delegate to the General Synod of the Dutch Churches. The Dutch brothers were of the opinion that all the necessary information about the blessing elder was contained in the Reports and Acts. They indicated that there was no impact at all on the distinction between the offices of elder and minister. The distinction as clearly stated in the Church Order and Confessions is in no way obliterated.

In our review of the Acts of Synod Ommen, 1993, we noted that this point was specifically addressed in Ground 4 for the decision that the blessing could be given unaltered in a worship service where someone other than a minister conducts the worship service (see Acts Synod Ommen GKN 1993, p. 75).

It was also drawn to our attention that the Free Reformed Churches of Africa have the same practice already for a number of years, and the Dutch Deputies made use of their study on this matter.

Finally, in our discussion of this point as Committee, we also came to the conclusion that this whole matter is actually not regulated by our Church Order at all but rather is a matter of custom. As such, the decision of the GKN cannot be seen as going against the Church Order.

5.2.2 *Inform*. With respect to the difference between the word "inform" rather than "consult", the response from the deputies BBK was that they were not eager to reopen this discussion. Experience showed that a common approach was not always possible, especially in their contacts with churches which were unknown to us. They reiterated, however, that before entering into a relationship with a church in a country where they already had a sister Church, there had to be good communication with this sister Church before proceeding. In such situations, it was indicated, "inform" certainly meant "consult". This approach was spelled out time and again in relevant Synod decisions.

As Committee we feel that this answer takes away any fear that different approaches could potentially lead to difficulties where both church federations are working toward a relationship with the same third party (Acts 1995, Article 19, IV, F). It should also be noted that in this respect we subject the

was also pointed out that if a Church suspected there was a problem, the onus lies on that Church to study the matter and come with grounds to show deviation on the part of a sister Church.

- 5.3.4 In a letter dated June 6, 1999, the Church at Yarrow called upon our Committee to pursue the matter raised by the Church at Guelph, and to be proactive also in such issues as the increased number of hymns. The Church at Yarrow was answered in line with the response to the Church at Elora, namely, that we deal with official decisions and our Committee can only act upon information based on the official decisions of the Sister Churches.
- 5.3.5 In July 2000 a copy was received of the BBK publication "Wereldwijd" ("World wide") which contains information about the various churches with which the GKN has contact.
- 5.3.6 The Committee received a copy of a letter by M. Noort addressed to Synod Leusden while it was still in session in which he expressed his concern about decisions of former Synods as well as the present Synod calling for a reconsideration on the issues raised by him.

5.4 Acts of Synod Leusden

- 5.4.1 Synod met from April till December 1999. By the time the Report had to be prepared to send to the Churches, the printed Acts had not yet been sent to us. The electronic version available on the Web was reviewed. The order of the items which follow are not necessarily in this order in the Acts.
- 5.4.2 *Fourth Commandment*: Synod had to deal with an appeal concerning a statement made by Rev. D. Ophoff in a sermon on Lord's Day 38 HC in Nieuwegein on June 2 1996. He had stated, among other things, "Let it be known how valuable the day is to you. As far as I am concerned, not based on an absolute, divine command. But because it is a good thing that we together have a day of rest every week, after the example of Israel's sabbath".¹ An appeal concerning this sermon had been denied by a classis but granted by a regional synod. The appeal to General Synod came from the consistory of the church at Nieuwegein. Synod judged that in the sermon in question a) the importance of the worship service had clearly been presented; b) that in *this* sermon it did not come to the fore clear enough that in LD 38 there is a command, namely, that especially on the day of rest one should attend the worship services; c) that the opinion of Rev. Ophoff that the Sunday as *day of rest* not being based on a divine command, cannot be condemned; d) that there is no reason to assume that Rev. Ophoff in his functioning as Minister of the Word in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands departs from the teaching of the church with respect to the fourth commandment.²

1 In deze preek stelt hij o.a.: "Laat merken hoeveel die dag je waard is. Wat mij betreft, niet op grond van een absoluut, goddelijk gebod. Maar wel omdat het goed is samen een dag in de week rust te nemen, naar het voorbeeld van Israëls sabbat."

2 *Besluit 4*: uit te spreken: 1. dat in de preek van ds. D. Ophoff van 2 juni 1996 over Zondag 38 HC het belang van de erediensten en van de ruimte daarvoor duidelijk naar voren zijn gekomen; 2. dat evenwel

- 5.4.9 Synod mandated a committee to study the position of a "pastoral worker" (kerkelijke werker), including how such a position would stand in relation to the other offices of the Church.
- 5.4.10 It was reported to Synod that major changes were being implemented at the Theological University in Kampen in order to have it function as a "Knowledge Centre" (Kenniscentrum) for the Churches in which the training for the ministry would be one of the functions. This shift in emphasis had not been requested or mandated by any previous Synod. Upon request from the Theological University, Synod gave permission to students who had finished their theological training, but are doing further studies, to preach in the churches in the classis in which they reside. The rationale was to give them practice to retain the things they had learned.
- 5.4.11 Regulations were also put in place concerning continuing education of ministers, especially for those new to the ministry.
- 5.4.12 Relations with Churches Abroad: Synod decided to continue contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. It was decided to enter into a sister church relationship with the OPC. Further contact would be sought with the United Reformed Churches of North America. There was to be a continuation of the contact with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB). In these matters the relevant committees were to be in contact with Committees from our Churches. Many other contacts are maintained.
- 5.4.13 Contact with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken has come to an impasse at the federal level. At the same time, there is room for allowing pulpit exchanges and admission to the Lord's Supper in local situations.

5.5 Considerations

- 5.5.1 The discussion concerning the blessing elder and the word "inform" has taken place and all the relevant information has been gathered. It appears that the discussion has been exhausted.
- 5.5.2 The CRCA is bound by the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which specify that we deal with sister churches based on their official decisions and not information from the press (see Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship #1). It has to be kept in mind that things published in the press do not reflect the official position of churches but merely the sentiments of some individuals. Further, these discussions take place in a broad context with nuances which cannot always be fully appreciated by those living in other countries.
- 5.5.3 A number of the decisions of Synod Leusden give reason for concern:
- 5.5.3.1 By allowing the opinion that the Sunday as a day of rest is not based on a divine command, and that LD 38 only emphasizes the command to attend the worship services, Synod has taken away any real ground for calling people to obedience to the fourth commandment as traditionally understood (i.e. not working and not causing others to work).

5.5.4 The letter of M. Noort was directed at Synod Leusden. The CRCA does not have a mandate to interact with private submissions of members of other church federations but has to make its own evaluation of official information received.

5.5.5 While it is understandable that the GKN is scrutinized with particular interest due to our historic ties, at times it appears that they are put to greater scrutiny than the other churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Care must be taken to remain fair in the points raised and not meddle in the affairs of the GKN. This does not take away the need to sound a warning cry where there seems to be a departure from a long and well worn path.

5.6 Recommendations

Your committee recommends that Synod 2001:

5.6.1 Continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules.

5.6.2 Conclude that the matter of the "blessing elder" and the matter of the word "inform" have been dealt with sufficiently.

5.6.3 Decide that the mandate to discuss the points raised by the Church at Guelph went beyond the basic mandate of the Committee.

5.6.4 Instruct the CRCA to address the next Synod of the GKN expressing the concern that they seem to be drifting away from the old Reformed paths as is evident in the weakening of the Scriptural language in the Form for Marriage, the increasing centralization in church life, the increase in the number of hymns which historically has come at the expense of the singing of the Psalms, the shift of the focus of the Theological University from an institution for the training for the ministry to a "Knowledge Centre", and an apparent professionalizing of the ministry.

6. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (PCK)

6.1 Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA:

1.6.1 To investigate the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan [Acts 1995, Art 101, II, C, 2, 3]

1.6.2 That every attempt be made to improve communications between our respective churches. (Acts 1998, Article 120, V,A,1,2,3)

1.6.3 To further investigate the practices regarding the fencing of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership in the PCK and report to the next Synod (Acts 1998, Article 108,V.B).

6.2 Issues Mandated by Synod

6.2.1 *Professor Exchange*. Synod Fergus in its considerations pertaining to the PCK noted that "there is no evidence in the report of the Committee that this

1998.

- 6.5.2 Mandate the Committee to continue to pursue the questions concerning the Fencing of the Lord's Supper and Confessional Membership.
- 6.5.3 Continue ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCK under the adopted rules.

7. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)

7.1 Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA to:

- 7.1.1 Continue to participate in the ICRC and submit a report to General Synod 2001 on the activities of the Conference, along with an evaluation.
- 7.1.2 Represent the Canadian Reformed Churches at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in the USA in 2001 by two voting delegates.
- 7.1.3 Make and support membership recommendations at the ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations.
- 7.1.4 Convey to the next meeting of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches disapprove of the change made in the Constitution Article IV.1.a. and to recommend that this Article be changed in such a way that the concerns of the Canadian Reformed Churches are addressed. (Acts 1998, Article 52, V.B,C.D.E.F).

7.2 Issues Mandated by Synod

- 7.2.1 In letter dated April 26, 1999, the concern raised by Synod Fergus 1998 was forwarded to the secretary of the ICRC.
- 7.2.2 While the concern was forwarded, as Committee we have trouble with the conclusion of Synod Fergus. When it says in the revised article that *"Those churches shall be admitted as members: a. which faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed faith"* it is clear that the "Reformed faith" is not left as some nebulous, undefined entity but is clearly delineated in the confessional documents listed in the basis.

7.3 Correspondence

- 7.3.1 In a letter dated April 30, 1999, the Secretary of the ICRC passed on the proposed changes to the ICRC constitution. The concern expressed by Synod Fergus 1998 is shared by the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). The RCUS also requests that the Constitution be changed to require positive reaffirmation of membership after every second meeting after initial approval of a church.
- 7.3.2 In a Newsletter dated June 14, 1999 we were informed of the topics and

8.4 Brazil

An invitation was received to attend the constituent assembly of the Reformed Churches in Brazil, scheduled for July 5, 2000. Rev. C. Van Spronsen was delegated to represent the Churches at this momentous occasion as he was present also as a delegate from the Church at Surrey-Maranatha. The Churches organized themselves as a federation with the Three Forms of Unity and the Ecumenical Creeds as their basis. Their Church Order is patterned after the Dort model and shows the influences of the Church Order as adopted by our Churches. Their official name as federation is the "Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil" (IRB). They have requested sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Your Committee recommends, based on the fact that these churches are in part a fruit of the missionary work of our churches and stand on the same basis as the Canadian Reformed Churches, that Synod offers to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Igreja Reformadas do Brasil under the adopted rules.

9. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

9.1 Declarations

9.1.1 The following ministers and professors planning to travel abroad requested and received a declaration that they were ministers in good standing in the Churches: Rev. C. Bosch, Rev. J DeGelder, Rev. R.J. Eikelboom, Dr. J. Faber, Rev. K. Jonker, Rev. G. A. Snip, Dr. C. Van Dam.

9.1.2 The CRCA was informed that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia had issued a declaration to Rev. C. Bouwman and Rev. J. Poppe.

9.2 Acts of Synod Fergus

When the Acts of General Synod Fergus 1998 were received, copies were sent to those churches with which we maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

9.2 Notifications and Invitations

When the date for the next Synod was made known, letters of invitation were sent out to the Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

9.3 Interim Information to the Churches.

A report was published in Clarion Volume 48, #'s 17 & 18 on the visit made by Rev. E. Kampen to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland and the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in May 1999. Copies of these reports are found in the appendices.

12. ORGANIZATIONAL AND RELATED MATTERS

12.1 Considerations

- 12.1.1. The decision of Synod Fergus 1998 to revise the structure of the various committees dealing with other Churches into the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with the Churches in the Americas (CCCA), has resulted in a gap in the matter of interchurch relationships. This gap becomes apparent when it is noted that Synod mandated both the CRCA and the CCCA to "investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship" and to "respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meeting of other churches" (Art. 132 III D, 1,2). The CCCA, however, is not truly a Standing Committee but is in fact three ad hoc committees to work through current contacts. Since there is no such Committee as a CCCA, there is no one to deal with requests for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship which come from churches in the Americas. It seems that insufficient thought was given to all the implications. By default requests (like the request from Brazil and the information from NAPARC) come to the CRCA but it is not truly within our mandate. Refinement and clarification are thus called for either in terms of making the CCCA truly a Committee with three subcommittees or recognizing the ad hoc nature of the three committees and leaving all new requests the responsibility of the CRCA.
- 12.1.2. From the Acts it appears that there is uncertainty as to whether the CRCA is the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad" or the "Committee *for* Relations with Churches Abroad" (cf. Appendix 5, p. 248 ff, note title of report and headings of appendix!). It should be noted that both the Committee letterhead and the name on the Reports over the years speak of the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad". A Synod is free to change this but up till the time the change is officially made the Committee should be called by the name it has been assigned.
- 12.1.3. While a Committee will try to make as full a report as possible, items can be overlooked. Further, items taken for granted by Committee members may be unclear to Synod members. For that reason, it may be beneficial to have a Committee member present for consultation. In this way, it can be avoided that minor items of a mandate are carried on year after year (eg. Korea, professor exchange), or that Committees are given instructions the logic of which eludes them (eg. ICRC Constitution).
- 12.1.4. While the CCCA has 12 members over 3 sub-committees to deal with three churches, the CRCA, having been released of the responsibility of dealing only with the RCUS, was reduced to only 4 members to cover the rest of the world. For the purpose of discussion and workload in terms of visiting the churches, 6 is a better number.
- 12.1.5. The present Committee has three of its four members coming to the end of their term in 2001. This is not very beneficial for the sake of continuity.

Appendices

1. Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship

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 Synod Lincoln 1992, Art. 50, IV B 1-7)

2. Free Church of Scotland

2.1 Report of Visit to General Assembly

Report on visit to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, May 11-13, 1999

Privilege and Responsibility

One of the privileges of serving on the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) is the opportunity to visit sister churches in foreign lands as representative of the Churches. At the same time, this is quite a responsibility. Particular care must be taken not to speak one's own mind but to convey the mind of the Churches one represents. That is a double challenge. It is far easier to speak your own mind. Furthermore, can we truly speak of a collective mind when on many issues we do not

years. In 1995 the Church courts considered the moral misconduct charges and judged that the charges were unfounded. Some members of the FCS then took it to the civil court in 1996. The civil judge also judged that the charges were unfounded. These people, however, have not been willing to accept that decision and have continued to agitate to have the case reopened. They have formed a "Free Church Defense Association" (FCDA). At this Assembly three ministers presented libels.

It is interesting to observe how such a situation is handled in Presbyterian churches. Whereas we are accustomed to have only documents which must be judged by the assembly, the FCS has a Trial. The appellants orally present their case, which has also been submitted previously in written form. Since they are appealing the action of a lower body (Synod), all members of the GA who are members of churches in the territory of that Synod, are seated at the "bar". They cannot participate in the Trial, as they are "on trial". A representative will make a defense. Once both sides have presented their case, the members of the Assembly can ask questions. Next someone will need to make a motion which is then voted on.

The conclusion of this trial was that the General Assembly voted against the appellants. However, the matter was to come back. Later that day, there was another trial related to this matter. Furthermore, among the tasks of the Assembly was the appointment of a new Principal for the College of the Free Church. The logical candidate for the position was the same Prof. Macleod at the center of this controversy. This appointment process was to take place on the Thursday and Friday. Much of this was dealt with in closed sessions. The General Assembly did appoint Prof. Macleod as principal, indicating he has the trust and confidence of the great majority of the members. Since I was only able to attend the GA till Thursday evening, I was not present when this situation came to a confrontation with all who had been agitating against him on Friday. This matter was reported on extensively in the press both in Scotland and in the Netherlands. There is the potential of a schism.

All these things are mentioned here to give you some sense of what lives in the Churches in Scotland, and what tribulations they are faced with.

Back to regular business & Address

Going back to the events of Wednesday, May 12, at noon the Lord High Commissioner, the Queen's representative, visited the Assembly with all the attendant pomp and ceremony.

The evening session had a report of Church extension (Home Mission). The FCS takes this very seriously. This was followed by visiting delegates being given the opportunity to address the Assembly. During this time opportunity was also given to me to pass on the greetings and say a few words about our life as churches. The following is the text of that speech.

Esteemed Brothers:

As Christians we confess one, holy catholic church, made up from people of all tribes and tongues and nations. Confessions are basically statements of faith,

same confessions and use the same form of Church government, the only obstacle would be human stubbornness and pride. A further goal, though much more difficult to achieve, would be full integration of all faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Our experience is that while it is easy to recognize each other when far apart, it is more difficult to work through the implications of unity in faith when one has different historical and cultural developments. That is the challenge for churches which are the fruit of immigration. Humanly speaking it often appears impossible to blend Reformed and Presbyterian churches, though it has been achieved in New Zealand. In the end we may find courage in the fact that the Church is the Lord's work. He has done marvelous things in gathering his church. Who knows what we may witness in our lifetime.

Allow me also a word about the spiritual struggles we face, struggles undoubtedly familiar to you too. There is the struggle against the seductive ways of the world. It can be very hard to hold fast to the faith, to the things not seen, when we are tempted by the many things that can be seen. Materialism is a big danger as we are prone to seek our joy in the abundance of possession rather than in knowing the Lord. There is also the struggle to uphold the Reformed faith in the North American religious context which is strongly shaped by Arminian evangelicalism. Compared to many evangelical churches, Reformed worship is far less appealing to the senses because of the strong emphasis on the preaching of the gospel. It is a real challenge to teach that the Reformed faith is Scriptural, and that in all of life, including our worship of the Lord, we must be led by his Word and not merely by our emotions. It is a great challenge to faithfully teach the youth the riches they have received out of grace. It is just as much a challenge to keep those who have grown up in the faith filled with joy over their heavenly treasure and to live in humble obedience.

Brothers, it was good to have the opportunity to give you a brief update on our life as Christ's church in Canada. As you can see, there are exciting prospects in the future in terms of possible union. There continues to be the struggle to remain faithful. What comfort that we do not have to do this in our own strength but that the Lord preserves and gathers his church. We are mere instruments.

May the Lord bless you as you continue your work as General Assembly, and may He bless you as churches to remain faithful to His Word.

More of the same

On Thursday, after brief opening devotions, the GA busied itself with the Trustees Report and the College. It appears that they are trying to obtain accreditation through affiliation with the University of Edinburgh. As indicated earlier, part of the day was spent in closed sessions. In the evening, we heard the report of the Missions Committee. The FCS has wide missionary interests, although it has very few missionaries in its direct employ. The missionary report was very enthusiastic. This was a bright contrast to the antagonism in any matters involving Prof. Macleod.

2.2 Statement to Other Churches



FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
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STATEMENT TO OTHER CHURCHES

With regret we wish to inform our brethren in other denominations that a secession has taken place from the Free Church of Scotland. During a meeting of the Commission of Assembly on Thursday 20 January 2000, a statement on behalf of several ministers was read out, in which they declared their refusal to recognise the authority of the Commission. They then left the building to meet elsewhere, and constituted themselves under the designation Free Church Continuing — a name which has already caused confusion.

This secession took place immediately after the Commission had decided that these ministers would face disciplinary charges at the General Assembly in May and until then they were suspended from the ministry on full pay and without prejudice. However, when they seceded from the Church, they were immediately suspended without limit of time (a disciplinary sentence that involved stopping their stipends) and their pastoral ties were dissolved.

We wish to assure everyone that when this secession took place we were carrying out disciplinary procedures in accordance with our constitution and in faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Confession of Faith.

In light of misleading information which has been widely circulated, we also wish to make clear the following:

(1) The charge which these ministers faced was contumacy, that is, defiance of the Presbyterian courts of this Church by following a divisive course from the government and discipline of the Church. The General Assembly and Commission of Assembly have reached decisions on various disciplinary matters over recent years. Our disciplinary procedures forbid us to proceed with charges incapable of proof. This was the decision with regard to Principal Donald Macleod: the evidence presented was incapable of proving censurable conduct against him. This is supported by a verdict reached in Edinburgh Sheriff Court when criminal charges were subsequently brought against Principal Macleod and he was acquitted.

(2) All Free Church ministers have promised at their ordinations to submit "to the said government and discipline, to concur with the same, and not to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof, but . . . to maintain support and defend the said discipline and Presbyterian government by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies" and to submit "willingly and humbly in the spirit of meekness, unto the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, and to be subject to them, and to all other Presbyteries and superior judicatories of this Church" and to maintain "the unity and peace of this Church against error and schism, notwithstanding of whatsoever trouble or persecution may arise" and to follow "no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this Church."

(3) However, the seceding ministers became the office-bearers of the self-styled Free Church Defence Association which in all its publications opposed the disciplinary decisions of the Assembly and Commission, agitated the Church on these matters, and fomented a divisive party spirit in the Church.

2.3 The Free Church Division of January 2000 - A Free Church Perspective

The Free Church of Scotland has long enjoyed good and mutually respectful relationships with other evangelical churches. Now it seems that such fellowship is in jeopardy because of misinformation which has been spread throughout the evangelical world but which has failed to take into account the facts of what has become a long and complex nightmare which the Free Church has attempted in every way to deal with sensibly and Scripturally.

We thank you for the opportunity to put our case and we hope that your readers will recognize that even if they do not agree with or understand our position, we stand today, in all our deficiencies, committed to the gospel of Jesus and the historic reformed faith.

On 20th January this year, a number of both active and retired Free Church ministers, belonging to the Free Church Defence Association walked out of the Commission of Assembly which had earlier brought charges against them. The walk out was the culmination of a five year controversy which has torn apart families, congregations and even communities and, if allowed to continue, would have meant the destruction of the Free Church of Scotland. Several attempts were made, both privately and corporately by the Free Church to effect reconciliation between brethren caught up in the dispute, and only when it became evident that no such effort was going to be successful did the Church begin disciplinary proceedings against the ministers concerned. It did so because there was simply no other alternative.

Background

Every Free Church minister upon his ordination makes the following promise:

"Do you promise to submit yourself willingly and humbly, in the spirit of meekness, unto the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, and to be subject to them, and all other Presbyteries and superior judicatories of this Church.....and that you shall maintain the unity and peace of this church against error and schism.....and that you shall follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, discipline and government of this Church?"

This vow contains two undertakings: One is founded upon Ephesians 4:3 "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". The other recognises the authority which Christ has conferred upon Church structures to administer his word in teaching and discipline. Eph 5:21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

In 1999 the General Assembly and its subsequent Commissions came to the conclusion that the activities of the Free Church Defence Association were tantamount to a breach of the above vow on both its counts. Its magazines, press statements and public meetings misinformed Free Church people and attempted to shake their confidence in the leadership and structures of the Church. When the Commission requested them to stop, the FCDA refused.

The FCDA claim was that the Free Church failed (amongst other things) to deal properly with Professor Donald MacLeod when in 1995 the General Assembly terminated an investigation into claims about an alleged affair in Australia in 1985, together with claims that he had sexually assaulted five women. Furthermore, when in 1996 the assault allegations were brought before a Scottish Sheriff Court, Prof. MacLeod was acquitted; but during the trial it was claimed that there had been a campaign against him involving ministers and elders. Over the past three years the FCDA have demanded that the case against Prof. MacLeod be reopened, this time by a church court, and that anyone implicated in the Sheriff court case as a "conspirator" be also investigated.

Investigation in 1995

The Free Church has insisted all along that the allegations against Prof. MacLeod were fully investigated by the Training of the Ministry Committee. In 1995, after a long investigative process the committee reported to the General Assembly that the evidence presented was incapable of proving a charge. They recommended that the Assembly should not proceed to trial. Our "Code of Practice" warns very solemnly that: "in all cases which may lead to a libel, a careful preliminary examination of proposed witnesses is

The men were cited to appear at the January commission and be required once again to resign from the FCDA. They all refused and were subsequently suspended on full pay and without prejudice until the May Assembly. At that point, they declared their refusal to accept the authority of the Commission and walked out. They have since established themselves as the so-called "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)".

The Commission's Power?

It is also being alleged that the Commissions in 1999 and Jan 2000 had no power to begin a case against the ministers. That question can only be finally decided by the forthcoming May 2000 Assembly. The "Practice" states that "The Commission cannot take up any cause or matter which has not been specially referred to it by the General Assembly, except when anything of public interest occurs, which is of general concern to the whole Church. In this case, it is instructed to advert to the matter, and to see that the Church does not suffer or sustain any prejudice which it can prevent, as its members shall be answerable."

The FCDA were making intolerable public statements which were both untrue and which brought the Free Church into terrible disrepute both in Scottish society and in the wider evangelical world. They claimed that decisions made by Assembly were "opposed plainly to the Word of God" (Aug 99 pg. 2) without giving any scriptural basis for their claim. They claimed that "justice and truth are being driven from our church" (Aug 99 pg. 16). They claimed that Rev Maurice Roberts had been "unjustly dismissed from his pulpit" by a "hostile majority" with "much laughter, joking and hilarity". (Aug 99) They furthermore summed up their perception of the corrupt Free Church in the following terms: "The rudder has gone. The crew is becoming mutinous. Many passengers are asleep. Worst of all, the Captain is being cast overboard." (Aug 99 pg. 3).

In their October 1999 edition, the FCDA went to even further depths and suggested that several ministers were having affairs. "Why are so many fanatical in their attempt to keep him (Donald MacLeod) from a Church trial? Why are they prepared to split the Church over this? Is it that they feel guilty because of their own immoral relationships and that he or others may expose them?" In the same issue the FCDA set out a Manifesto of a new Church which they called the "Free Church Constitutional". In it they described the kind of Church they aimed at establishing, hence further destabilising the confidence of our people.

Meanwhile, the same ministers who were responsible for writing these most outrageous allegations and planning to set up their own denomination were simultaneously drawing a salary from the Church which they insisted was corrupt. The Commission rightly decided that this was a issue which affected the interests of the whole church and if it did not act now it would fail in its responsibility to see that the Church did not suffer or sustain prejudice.

At the same time the Commission did not want to proceed with a determination of guilt or innocence firstly because it felt that it would be fairer to leave that final judgement to the forthcoming May Assembly. Second, the FCDA had issued public threats of legal action against the Church so it was important to proceed in terms of advice given from our lawyers. Furthermore, the time allowed by leaving final judgement till May would give more opportunity for any conciliatory talks to take place. So the Commission only went as far as to adjudge that the charges were valid and formally served them upon the ministers concerned. At that point the ministers were automatically suspended on full pay without prejudice, pending a full trial at the forthcoming General Assembly.

To summarise, we are concerned to assure our brethren in other denominations that:

- 1) There has been no constitutional or theological shift in the Free Church of Scotland
- 2) When pleaded with to return to fellowship with the rest of the Free Church, the FCDA refused except on condition that Donald MacLeod be tried. This was essentially blackmail and the Church could not agree to such demands.
- 3) The Commission of Assembly only started disciplinary proceedings when it was clearly evident that the FCDA would not shift their position.
- 4) All along opportunity was given for anyone in the Commission to suggest alternatives to discipline.
- 5) The Donald MacLeod issue is not a cover-up. The Church has done everything according to its procedures to deal with allegations against him.

2.4 Declaration of the Free Church (Continuing)

DECLARATION OF RECONSTITUTION OF THE HISTORIC FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

We the undersigned Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland,

Considering that the constitution of the said Church is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the Westminster Confession of Faith as approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, the First and Second Books of Discipline, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Claim, Declaration, and Protest of 1842, the Protest of 1843, the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission executed in 1843, the Formula appointed to be subscribed by probationers before receiving licence and by all office-bearers at the time of their admission together with the Questions appointed to be put to the said parties at ordination and admission, and the Acts of Assembly of the Church of Scotland prior to 1843; and now seeing:

(1st) That Commissioners exercising a majority in voting in the General Assemblies and Commissions of the Free Church of Scotland, and purporting to enact and make findings in the name of the Free Church of Scotland and by authority as office-bearers according to the rule of Christ and the constitution of the Church, have of late years applied in an arbitrary and tyrannical way the resolutions of its General Assemblies and Commissions, establishing these as ultimate rules of conduct, and treating as contumacious any conscientious inability to give obedience to edicts of the said Assemblies and Commissions, contrary to Chapter XXXI Section IV of the Confession of Faith, which states: "All Synods or Councils since the Apostles" times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both"; and Chapter XX Section II which states: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship, so that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also": by, *inter alia*:

(a) deeming it censurable to refuse to obey instructions of a Church Court which are in violation of the Word of God and the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland, regardless of whether obedience could be rendered in conscience or not;

(b) bringing disciplinary processes against ministers and elders in respect of matters which have not been declared censurable in Scripture;

(c) treating as potentially contumacious any suggestion to revisit an administrative decision of the General Assembly notwithstanding that such decisions are not unalterable and are open at all times to review, and instituting disciplinary processes against ministers who called for such review;

(d) appointing general assessors to a Presbytery in order to impose the will of the General Assembly and its Commission on the will of the substantial majority of the Presbytery conscientiously expressed;

(e) declaring sinfully schismatic, without proof before the Courts of the Church, the action of a body of believers who withdrew from their local congregation for conscience" sake and out of concern for the correct observance of the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland, and forbidding ministers and office-bearers, under pain of censure, to preach to or have fellowship with the said body of believers notwithstanding that they have not departed from the constitution and principles of the Church;

(2nd) That Commissioners purporting to exercise lawful judicial authority in the name of the Free Church of Scotland have breached fundamental principles of equity and natural justice, contrary to Chapter XIX, Section V of the Confession of Faith, which states: "The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither doth Christ in the gospel anyway dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation": by, *inter alia*:

We declare that in accordance with the Word of God and the authorised standards of the Free Church of Scotland, we are not and can never be under the jurisdiction of individuals and courts purporting to act in the name of the Free Church of Scotland, yet against the said Word and standards, without doing violence to our consciences and our faithfulness to our ordination vows.

Wherefore -

We have resolved to declare that the Free Church of Scotland is separate from all church courts seeking to impose acts and findings contrary to the constitution of the historic Free Church of Scotland, and we claim still to be the true bona fide representatives of the original protesters of 1843 and to be carrying out the objects of the Protest more faithfully than the majority.

In order the more formally and effectually to carry out the said resolution, we, the Ministers and Elders of the historic Free Church of Scotland under-subscribing, for ourselves and all who may now or hereafter adhere to us, affirming that we and they now adhere as we and they have heretofore done to the constitution and standards of the historic Free Church of Scotland, declare that we hereby disassociate ourselves from any residual subsisting body claiming the title of the Free Church of Scotland; and we further specially provide and declare:

That we for ourselves, and all who may now or hereafter adhere to us, in no degree abandon, impair or waive the rights belonging to us as ministers of Christ's gospel, and pastors and elders of particular congregations, to perform fully and freely the functions of our offices towards our respective congregations, or such portions thereof as may adhere to us;

That signature of or adherence to this Declaration shall in no way prejudice our right to maintain the doctrines and principles of the historic Free Church of Scotland as set forth in her authorised standards and authoritative documents and to take all steps that may be necessary to vindicate the said doctrines and principles;

That we are and shall be free to exercise government and discipline in our several judicatories according to the Word of God and consistent with the constitution and standards of the historic Free Church of Scotland;

That henceforth we are not and shall not be subject in any respect to the ecclesiastical judicatories of any residual subsisting body claiming the title of the Free Church of Scotland;

That meanwhile, to distinguish the reconstituted Free Church of Scotland (solely for purposes of administration) from any residual body claiming that title we may be called the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing);

That the rights and benefits accruing to the ministers subscribing, or who may hereafter adhere hereto, from the pension and other funds of the Free Church of Scotland are hereby reserved;

That this Declaration shall in no way be held as a renunciation on the part of the said ministers of their rights to the ownership, enjoyment and occupation of the property and funds of the Free Church of Scotland, including but not limited to churches, manses, halls and other heritable properties, nor of any rights which may be found to belong to such ministers or to their congregations or to the office bearers of such congregations or to existing or future trustees on behalf of such congregations or their kirk-sessions in regard to the same;

That there is hereby reserved to us, the subscribers hereto, and to all who may now or hereafter adhere to us, power and authority to take all steps that may be necessary or expedient to declare, vindicate, enforce and preserve the status, rights and privileges of every kind, both ecclesiastical and civil, of and attaching now and in the future to us and all who may now or hereafter adhere to us, as those remaining faithful to the doctrine, government and principles embodied in the supreme and subordinate standards of the historic Free Church of Scotland.

The subscribers call to witness the Christian people of this land, and of the Reformed fellowship throughout the world, that this action is not lightly entered into. It is taken in sorrow at the enforced parting from brethren with whom we have had fellowship in the Lord, but also in defence of truth and justice and of the historic principles and practice of the Free Church of Scotland. We declare that if any residual body

3. Report on visit to Synod Leusden of Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

Report on visit to the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt), May 1999.

Special Privilege

As the visit to the Free Church of Scotland on behalf of the Churches in Canada was a privilege, the visit to the Netherlands did fall in the category of a special privilege. This was not because the Churches in the Netherlands are viewed with higher esteem. Rather, there was the personal dimension that it was the first visit back to my country of birth since immigrating in 1970.

Format

Compared to a General Assembly which conducts its business at a hectic pace in order to be done within a week, the Synod of our Dutch sister churches comes across as a leisurely enterprise. Synod began the second week of April. By mid-May most of the time had been spent in committee meetings. In order to allow delegates to be home on Sunday, meetings finish early Friday afternoon and resume late Monday morning. By the start of July, they were far from done and Synod went into recess for summer vacation.

This format makes it rather difficult to receive foreign delegates who like to observe Synod in plenary session. The Dutch Churches thus decided to have a special day in which to receive the delegates from the sister churches. The day chosen for this was May 19. Foreign delegates were invited to be the guests of the Dutch Churches from May 17-21. As a result, foreign delegates descended upon the Netherlands, coming not only from Canada but also from Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales, India, Spain, Venezuela, Japan and Korea.

The Rev. Knigge and his wife, undoubtedly still known by many of the readers as the first missionary couple sent out by the Canadian Reformed Churches, had been appointed as our host. They performed their task most admirably. Rooms had been reserved at a conference center near the city of Leusden where Synod was being held. This arrangement gave opportunity to meet people from all over the world. This was an interesting experience.

Though we were not expected at Synod till Wednesday, May 19, when it was learned that Synod was to hold a plenary session on Tuesday evening, the opportunity was seized to attend. The discussion that evening dealt with pastoral care in the military as well as relationships with foreign churches.

International Day

On Wednesday, May the 19th, we were taken by bus to the Church building where Synod was being held. In the morning we were invited to choose one of the Synod Committees and discuss the matters they were busy with. I choose the Committee

apartheid is the best solution under the circumstances. With the Lord's blessing, we will make progress.

It was said that there are two problems inside the church because of the grace/race factor. The second is this, that the younger generation in the church equates Reformed with being Dutch. The experiential, sensational approach, of evangelical groups has much appeal. It is a challenge to show the youth that we believe what we believe, and we do what we do not because of our race but because it is in harmony with the gospel of grace. In a religious climate where the buzz word is innovation, our only antidote is to clearly explain the gospel truths rediscovered in the Great Reformation. In the words of Jeremiah, we have to point to the ancient paths, the ways of God's covenant, calling the members to walk on them so that they may find rest for their souls (Jer. 6:16). This is quite a challenge in a society where new is seen as better. Often the desire is there for something new because no one has bothered to clearly explain the old.

In this you can see that though we are only a small sister, we have a big challenge. Thankfully, we don't have to do it in our own strength but we do it in dependence upon the Lord our God.

I trust you did not consider it selfish to speak a little about our life as churches. In accordance with our rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, where we promise to "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" (Rule 1), I take the liberty to also make a few comments about the matters before you as Synod. Though it is not possible to speak of a collective Canadian Reformed mind on these matters, you should be aware of some of the thoughts that live in our midst.

First of all, you have an impressive agenda. To go back to our image, our Big Sister has big plans! Though we live in a big country, we like to think small. Your Synod deals with matters of evangelism and liturgy. Perhaps it is the great distances between most of our congregations, spread over a number of time zones, but these matters never make it to our Synod. They are left at the local level - yes, even liturgy is left in the freedom of the churches.

We see an extensive report on hymns (255!). Of course it is only for evaluation. We have had 65 hymns for some years already, laid out in the pattern of the Apostles' Creed. We do hear clamouring for more hymns from time to time. It may be of interest to you that in our North American context, a common refrain among those who experience reformation is the need to return to singing the Psalms. Not that hymns are to be excluded but there is to be a preponderance of Psalms. The problem with the Psalms is that often people are not sufficiently Biblically literate to understand them also as they speak of God's salvation in Christ. The cry for hymns may be an indictment of the teaching efforts of the church! Further, it should be kept in mind that it is better to know a few songs well than to have 400 songs which are unknown. You can have too much choice!

Most have a far more definitive time frame, often in terms of days rather than weeks. The duration of the Synod means that only elders who have retired are able to be delegated to Synod for no ordinary labourer can miss half a year of work. Further, ministers are taken out of their congregation for a long period of time.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from what was actually observed at the Synod. After all, the focus fell on the foreign delegates. If anything, the benefit of the visit was not so much in getting to know the Dutch churches better but to get a better sense of how Christ's church "is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith" (B.C. 27). In due time, the Acts of Synod Leusden will have to be evaluated to see where our Dutch sister Churches are headed.

Appreciation

In reflecting on both visits, I appreciate the opportunity to represent the Churches in travelling to a land foreign to most of us yet rich in Reformed history, Scotland, as well as to the land of personal interest to so many Church members, the Netherlands. It is my hope that by these reports you may have gained increased sensitivity for the catholicity of Christ's Church. After all, it is the confession of "a holy, catholic church" which is the basis of having a Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad.

Rev. E. Kampen