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

***REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD
NEERLANDIA, 2001***



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**COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES
ABROAD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES
REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD NEERLANDIA, 2001**

Esteemed Brothers:

We hereby submit to you our report on the activities of the Committee For Relations With Churches Abroad (CRCA) appointed by Synod Fergus, 1998.

1. INTRODUCTION

General Synod Fergus gave our Committee the mandate to:

- 1.1 Continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Korea and the Free Church of Scotland (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, A).
- 1.2 Send an invitation to these churches 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 their churches if invited and when feasible (Acts 1998, Articles 34, IV, D; 40, V, F; 108, V, B; 132, III, D, 2).
- 1.3 Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, D, 1).
- 1.4 Respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, D, 2).
- 1.5 Report on our findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, D, 3).

Along with this general mandate, there were a number of specific items pertaining to the various Church federations. To facilitate reading of this Report, these specific items have been listed at the beginning of the section dealing with each Church federation. The Churches are dealt with in alphabetical order. This is followed by the ICRC. We conclude with miscellaneous items.

**2. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
(FRCA)**

2.1 Mandate

- 2.1.1 Synod mandated the CRCA to convey our commendations to the FRCA for their generous support given to the Theological College in Hamilton (Art. 34,

IV Consideration C).

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".

- 2.3.6 Synod decided to offer sister relations as a first step to full unity to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia if they can agree with statements made by Synod concerning the fencing of the Lord's Supper table, the supervision of the pulpit and the place of children in the covenant. These statements dealt with areas of concern from the previous contacts and declared among other things that: 1. Visiting guests at the table require a testimonial from an office-bearer of their local church, to ensure that they are members in good standing of another church of Christ which displays the three marks of the church. 2. The pulpit ought to be supervised so that only ministers or licentiates who have undergone the proper ecclesiastical examinations will be invited to preach. 3. The covenant is not made only with the elect but with all believers and their children.
- 2.3.7 Synod decided to assess the areas of concern with respect to the contacts with the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Areas of concern are: supervision of the Lord's Supper, supervision of the pulpit, position of children in the covenant, covenanting and purity of worship.
- 2.3.8 Correspondence will be maintained with the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines for the purpose of becoming acquainted.
- 2.3.9 A proposal to grant women the right to participate in the voting for the election of office bearers was rejected. Insufficient material and Scriptural analysis in the submissions were given as the ground.
- 2.3.10 The Free Reformed Churches of Australia continue to support the Theological College in Hamilton, ON by means of assessments as well as in other ways. Plans were made to invite a guest lecturer from the College to visit the churches in Australia.

2.4 Considerations

- 2.4.1 From the general correspondence and the Acts, we may conclude that the FRCA continue to be faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed confessions and the adopted Church Order.
- 2.4.2 Although it becomes clear that the FRCA had to deal with difficult matters at the Synod with regards to the concerns arising from the person of Rev. J. F. van Hulst, we note with thankfulness their sincere desire to test all matters in the light of the Scriptures and confessions. With sadness we note that the controversy resulted in a split in the church of Launceston, Tasmania, and the deposition of Rev. F.J. van Hulst.
- 2.4.3 With thankfulness we note the continued support of the FRCA of the Theological College in Hamilton in various ways.

2.5 Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 2001:

- 2.5.1 Continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free

- 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

designed and delivered by the Free Church College validated as a BTh degree by the University of Edinburgh was adopted by the 1999 Assembly. Concern was expressed that for two successive sessions no new Free Church students had entered the College.

3.4 Division within the Free Church

- 3.4.1 As was reported under 3.2.3, we received a statement from the Free Church informing us of a secession which had taken place. The statement, as found in the appendices, gives an explanation of the circumstances leading up to this sad development. Those who seceded claim to be the legitimate continuation of the Free Church and have taken the name "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)". The Committee received an e-mail dated May 3rd, 2000 inviting us to send a delegate to their General Assembly scheduled for May 22-26, 2000. The Committee did not feel free to send a letter of greeting. This did not mean, however, that we thereby wished to pass judgment at that time. When we reflect on the developments after World War II where the Christian Reformed Church received invitations to attend the General Synods of two groups claiming to be the legitimate continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands but then chose for the larger group without any serious inquiry, we do feel that it is incumbent to make a clear judgment in this matter.
- 3.4.2 Many of the ministers which have seceded were affiliated with the "Free Church Defence Association". In publications of this Association, as available on the Internet, reference is made to various trends in the churches which gave them reason for concern. The center of the concern, however, is the person of Prof. D. Macleod. There continued to be dissatisfaction with the way the accusation of immorality against him was handled. As the Acts show, up till 1999 there was a persistent effort to have the matter dealt with once again after previous General Assemblies had tried to bring closure to the matter. When the matter came to a head in January 2000, it was on the point of ministers refusing to accept the decisions of previous assemblies as settled and binding. They were accused of "contumacy", that is, "defiance of the Presbyterian courts", denying their ordination vows in which they promised to submit to the government and discipline of the church. Those who seceded claim that this was an abuse of power on the part of the Commission of the Assembly called to deal with the issue.
- 3.4.3 In the first rule for Ecclesiastical Fellowship it says, "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". Our task is therefore to determine if the Free Church deviated from its church polity in dealing with this matter. It is important to note that we must judge them by **their** church polity and not ours, for it is not their **polity** that has to be scrutinized but their **adherence** to their polity. In all fairness to those who claim to be the Free Church (Continuing) this requires us

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

the act of secession, at this time it is not possible to fully evaluate the actions of those who seceded. Since the FCS (Continuing) will present itself to the ICRC as the legitimate continuation of the FCS and will ask its judgment, it would seem best at this point to suspend judgment with the hope that perhaps they are reconciled unto each other or that greater clarity will help us come to a responsible conclusion.

- 3.5.3 While rule 3 for Ecclesiastical Fellowship states that "The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties" it must be stated with regret that we were never consulted before the FCS entered into fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Churches of North America.

3.6 Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 2001:

- 3.6.1 Continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland(Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter.
- 3.6.2 Remind the FCS of the rules for Fellowship which include, among others, that churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships.

4. THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF SOUTH AFRICA (FRCSA)

4.1 Mandate

- 4.1.1 To convey our commendations to the FRCSA for their endeavours in establishing a Theological College (Art. 34, IV, Consideration D).

4.2 Correspondence

- 4.2.1 A letter was sent to convey commendations to the FRCSA for their endeavours in establishing a Theological College.
- 4.2.2 The Acts and a summary of the Acts of the 1998 Synod were received.
- 4.2.3 In an e-mail dated August 11, 2000 we were informed that the Rev. C.F. Heiberg had been released from his calling church (Johannesburg) and was available for call.

4.3 Acts of Synod held April 30 and May 1, 1998

- 4.3.1. A Synod of the FRCSA met on Apr. 30 and May 1, 1998. Br. J. Smit, elder of the convening church at Pretoria welcomed those present. He expressed gratitude that this was the first synod of the FRCSA at which 5 churches were represented since the institution of the Pretoria-Maranata

- 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

Colonia Brasolandia in Brasil and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

- 4.3.7. Synod received a report recommending slight revisions of the Church Order to update the language. These were adopted. The recommendation to convene a synod every year to promote greater contact and cooperation among the churches was defeated. Other ways to meet more frequently will be studied.
- 4.3.8. Synod adopted the proposed guidelines for the inclusion of additional hymns from the Committee for Liturgical Music. A soon-to-be completed selection of hymns would be forwarded to the churches with the request to test their suitability and report these findings to the Deputies for their consideration.
- 4.3.9. The next Synod of the FRCSA will be convened in Bethal, SA in 2000, DV.

4.4 Observations

- 4.4.1 The correspondence and Acts of Synod Pretoria 1997 attest that the FRCSA strive to live faithfully according to the Word of God, and the adopted Confessions.
- 4.4.2 The FRCSA, though small in number, display great zeal in missionary activity (five churches supporting 3 missionaries!), as well as the preparation for the ministry (the establishment of their own Theological Training). In addition it appears they carry on extensive contact with and support for concerned members of other Reformed denominations.

4.5 Recommendations

Your Committee recommends to Synod 2001 that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa under the adopted Rules.

5. GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN NEDERLAND (GKN)

5.1 Mandate

With respect to the GKN, Synod mandated the CRCA

- 5.1.1 To be vigilant in applying the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship in regards to any concerns coming to their attention.
- 5.1.2 To as yet inquire about the matters of the "blessing elder" and the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the GKN.
- 5.1.3 To discuss the alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage and the points raised by the Church at Guelph (Acts 1998, Article 40, V.B,C,D).

5.2 Issues Mandated by Synod

5.2.1 *The "Blessing Elder"*. In a letter to *Deputaten Betrekkings 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

Dutch Sister Churches to greater scrutiny than other federations with whom we have fellowship. We think in particular of the fact that the FCS established fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Church of North America as a sister church without any consultation with us (see 3.3.2).

- 5.2.3 *Marriage Form.* The matter of changes to the Form for Marriage was mentioned in the speech our delegate delivered to General Synod Leusden. While the new form does speak about the husband leading and the wife following, the Scriptural terms of "obey" and "submit" are absent. By omitting these words, the Scriptural teaching is diminished.
- 5.2.4 *Points raised by Guelph .* The Committee discussed Synod Fergus' instruction to discuss the points raised by the Church at Guelph based on information from the press dealing with homosexuality. The Committee felt that it was not its task to pursue matters based on information from the press as this would go beyond the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (see Rule 1). The Committee always has had to deal with the *official decisions* of sister churches as found in Acts and Minutes. The Committee has never scrutinized the press of the various churches with which we have fellowship.

5.3 Correspondence

- 5.3.1 In January 1999 an invitation was received to send a delegate to their upcoming General Synod. Rev. E. Kampen was delegated. A copy of the Report of the Deputies BBK to Synod Leusden was also received.
- 5.3.2 In a letter dated Nov. 5, 1998, the Church at Elora requested the Committee to investigate concerns regarding the position of the Dutch sister Churches on homosexuality. In a letter dated Feb. 2, 1999, we responded that we did not see it as our task to investigate items from the press but to go by the official Acts. In a letter dated April 8, 1999, the Church at Elora provided us with a list of references on which they based their concerns. This matter was raised in a discussion with the Dutch Deputies. As Committee, however, we concluded that the information presented was based on press reports, most of them dating back to 1991 and 1992, with one reference from 1995, but there was no reference to any official decision of the churches on this matter. As such, we have no mandate to deal with the matter. The Church at Elora was informed of this in a letter dated June 30, 1999.
- 5.3.3 In a letter dated February 25, 1999 the Church at Elora requested the Committee to investigate whether the appeals regarding women's voting rights were handled properly. In a letter dated June 30, 1999, we responded that we did not see this as our responsibility since Synod Fergus was aware of the number of appeals against this decision but did not mandate the Committee to investigate the matter. The Dutch deputies, when made aware of this question, did give the reminder that all the information is readily available in the Acts. It

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

- 5.4.3 *Examinations for the Ministry*: Synod Leusden approved a new method of ecclesiastical examinations. Graduation from the Theological University is taken as evidence of academic proficiency and a classis no longer will need to examine with a view to factual knowledge. In order to be declared eligible for call, a candidate must provide proof of graduation, a letter in which he expresses his faith experience, motivation for seeking the ministry and his vision of the ministry. He must also submit three sermon proposals (OT, NT, Catechism). The purpose of the classical exam is to evaluate his motivation and Reformed character by means of a number of conversations about his motivational letter, his sermons, and his outlook about such matters as Scripture and Confession. What was formerly known as the peremptory examination has taken on the character of a colloquium doctum. The Church Order was modified in articles 5 and 49 to accommodate this change.
- 5.4.4 *Bible Translation "Groot Nieuws- 1996 edition"*. A request to use this translation in the regular worship services was denied. Room was left to use it in special circumstances (eg., Evangelism among illiterates and refugees who know little Dutch).
- 5.4.5 *Liturgy*: Synod approved for use in the Churches a third order of worship. One of the key features is the the reading of the law after the sermon, the use of the Creed also in the morning service. Three new forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper were approved for use. The motivation for the development of these three forms was to give opportunity for more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper in the morning worship service without taking away from the preaching of the gospel.
- 5.4.6 *Hymns*: Synod approved a selection of about 120 hymns for use within the churches.
- 5.4.7 *Lord's Supper*: Synod gave approval to having Reformed Ministers serving as army chaplains administer the Lord's Supper to all soldiers present at a service regardless of church affiliation. This was one of the conditions imposed by the government for continuing to participate in the chaplaincy program.
- 5.4.8 *Mission and Evangelism*: Synod involved itself in missionary and evangelistic endeavours as it dealt with the IRTT (Institute for Reformed Theological Training), which is meant to help train people from churches in other countries and addressed the development of an organization for national evangelistic efforts. It also gave approval to give financial assistance for church planting in the city of Maastricht.

in deze preek onvoldoende uitkomt, dat in Zondag 38 HC sprake is van een *gebod*, nl. om vooral op de rustdag trouw de kerkdiensten te bezoeken; 3. dat de opvatting van ds. D. Ophoff dat de zondag als *rustdag* niet gegrond is op een goddelijk gebod, niet te veroordelen is; 4. dat er bovendien geen reden is om aan te nemen, dat ds. D. Ophoff in het geheel van zijn functioneren als dienaar van het Woord binnen de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland afwijkt van de leer van de kerk met betrekking tot het vierde gebod van de Wet van de Here.

- 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).

- 5.5.3.2 Article 6 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship reads "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 as possible can take place before a final decision is taken". The CRCA was never consulted concerning the changes to the Church Order resulting from the revision in the manner of examinations. It appears to constitute a major change. By removing this responsibility from the classis they have eliminated one of the safeguards put in place to ensure that candidates are academically qualified. This is now left solely in the hands of the place of theological training. In this respect, too much power is put in the hands of the institute of theological training. It also takes away from the principle of freedom of study since the degree from only one place of theological training, namely, the Theological University in Kampen, seems to be acceptable. Furthermore, the elements of the candidate's faith outlook, motivation, and reformed character were certainly not excluded in the preparatory and peremptory examinations.
- 5.5.3.3 With respect to liturgical matters, the Dutch sister churches continue the pattern of Synodical regulations rather than leaving matters in the freedom of the churches.
- 5.5.3.4 In allowing the celebration of the Lord's Supper by army chaplains, there is a departure from admitting to the celebrating of the Lord's Supper only those who have made profession of the Reformed faith, under the supervision of a consistory. This gives the impression that the Synod seemed more concerned to fit within society rather than maintaining a long standing principled tradition.
- 5.5.3.5 In dealing with matters of Mission and Evangelism Synod Leusden continued the path of centralization. It appears that the nerve centre of church life is shifting from the local congregations to national organizations/committees far removed from the people in their daily life.
- 5.5.3.6 While there is no principial objection to the use of hymns in the worship service, historically the proliferation of hymns has come at the expense of the singing of the Psalms.
- 5.5.3.7 The rise of the "pastoral worker", the granting of permission to those pursuing doctoral studies to practice their preaching skills, and concern to regulate the continuing education of ministers, especially for those new to the ministry suggest a "professionalizing" of the ministry. Further, the development of the Theological University as a "Knowledge Centre" for the Churches signals a departure from the long standing principle that such a school has as its only aim the training of future ministers of the Word.
- 5.5.3.8 The enormous amount of contacts with churches all over the world makes one wonder about the significance of such contacts and how well each church is really known before a relationship is established.

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

mandate (professor exchange [Acts 1995, Art 101, II, C, 2, 3]) was fulfilled" (Art. 120, IV, B). Perusal of the Minutes of the Committee indicated that this matter was discussed in a meeting held on September 16, 1996. At this meeting there was a letter from the Theological College which suggested that an exchange of professors could best be worked out when the delegates attended the ICRC in Korea in October 1997. It can be noted that Prof. Faber visited Korea in August/ September, 1998.

6.2.2 *Lord's Supper Fencing & Confessional Membership.* In a letter dated June 29, 1998, the Fraternal Relations Committee was requested to "provide us with some more information as to how you practice the supervision of the Lord's Supper both with respect to members and guests. Further, we ask if you could provide some information about the way the confessions function in the life of the church. Are all members bound by the confessions or only the officebearers?" A follow up reminder was sent by e-mail a year later, and then again in 1999. To this date, no response has been received.

6.2.3 *Communication.* Communication with the PCK continues to be a difficult matter. It is regrettable that there is little contact as letters requiring answers do not receive a response. The only information received is of the impersonal type in terms of general press releases.

6.3 Correspondence

6.3.1 In a letter dated April 27, 1998, we were informed of some of the decisions of the 47th General Assembly (1997)

6.3.2 Invitations we received to attend the 48th (1998), 49th (1999) and 50th (2000) General Assembly. Letters of greeting were sent.

6.3.3 In an e-mail received on March 25, 1999, some highlights of the 48th General Assembly were passed on.

6.3.4 In a letter dated December 15, 1999, we were informed about the happenings at the Korea Theological Seminary. It was mentioned that for the study year, 120 new students had been admitted.

6.4 Considerations

6.4.1 The matter of the exchange of Professors has been addressed as requested.

6.4.2 From the information provided it is hard for us to determine exactly what is transpiring in Korea. With a view to cultural and language differences perhaps this is all we can expect. However, with a view to the churches having an awareness of the Lord's work in that part of the world filled with its false religions, it is important to maintain the relationship.

6.5 Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that Synod 2001:

6.5.1 Conclude that the matter of exchange of professors had been sufficiently dealt with but this point was inadvertently overlooked in the report to Synod

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

speakers for the Fifth Assembly of the ICRC, to be held at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, June 20-29, 2001.

7.3.3 A number of Address List updates, Mission Newsletters, and Assessments were received. The Assessments were passed on to the Church taking care of the General Fund.

7.4 ICRC 2001

7.4.1 Since the ICRC is scheduled to meet after the date of General Synod (June 20-29, 2001) we are unable to submit a report on its activities and offer an evaluation to Synod Neerlandia 2001.

7.4.2 The Committee has delegated Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. C. Van Spronsen. to this meeting

7.5 Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that Synod 2001:

7.5.1 Either reconsider and withdraw the proposed change to the Constitution or give clarification of what is meant so those delegated can defend this proposal.

7.5.2 Continue the membership of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC.

8. OTHER MATTERS

8.1 Lanka Reformed Church

Synod mandated the CRCA to consult with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and/or the Presbyterian Church in Korea to take up contact with the Lanka Reformed Church (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, B). A letter was sent to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia asking them to take up contact with the Lanka Reformed Church. The Lanka Reformed Church was also informed of this action (Oct 19, 1998). There have been continued efforts to draw attention to the situation of the Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, seeking support in setting up a school network which would have missionary goals. The Committee has recommended that such requests be directed to the Australian Churches (FRCA) since they are geographically closer and are in a position to have a better view of the situation as some of their members have visited there.

8.2 Free Reformed Church in Kenya.

Via the Theological College, a letter was forwarded from the Free Reformed Church in Kenya, requesting a fraternal relationship. A letter of response was sent dated June 30, 1998 requesting more information. No response to this request has been received.

8.3 Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A letter from the Lubumbashi Protestant Theological College, Democratic Republic of the Congo, was received for information.

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.

10. FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1998-2001 AND BUDGET 2001-2004

10.1 Budget 1998-2001

Synod adopted the following budget for the CRCA/ICRC:

Fees	\$3,500
Meeting ICRC 2001	\$1,000
Travel	\$2,500
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$10,000 (Acts 1998, Article 131, III,E)

10.2 Expenditures

With the exception of some minor outstanding expenses, the following is a breakdown of our expenditures for the period 1998-2001:

Printing of 1998 Report	\$ 646.50
Postage of 1998 Report	\$ 270.12
ICRC levy 1998-2000	\$5116.04
Visit Scotland/Netherlands	\$1527.00
<u>Printing & Postage 2001 Report</u>	<u>\$ 1000.00</u> (estimate)
Total:	\$8559.66

10.3 Budget 2001-2004

The CRCA submits for your consideration and approval the following budget for the years 2001-2004

Fees	\$3,500
Meeting ICRC 2001	\$1,000
Travel	\$2,500
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$10,000

11. TERMS

Synod determined the following length of terms for the members of the Committee:

Rev. E. Kampen (convener) (2001), Rev. C. VanSpronsen (2001),
br. H.A. Berends (2001), br. H. Hoogstra (2007) (Acts 1998, Article 143, II).

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.

12.2 Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that Synod 2001:

- 12.2.1 Either refine the structure of the CCCA to enable them to deal with requests for ecclesiastical fellowship from churches in the Americas or to clarify that the CCCA consist of three ad hoc committees and **all** new requests for contact be handled by the CRCA.
- 12.2.2 Consistently refer to the CRCA as the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad".
- 12.2.3 Contact the convener of the Committee or ask one member to be present for part of the discussion at Synod to clear up questions.
- 12.2.4 Increase the number of members on the committee from four to six.
- 12.2.5 Work out a staggered retirement schedule for future appointments.
- 12.2.6 Extend the term of the present convener of the Committee by three years to give greater continuity.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mr. H.A Berends

Mr. H. Hoogstra

Rev. E. Kampen (convener)

Rev. C. VanSpronsen

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

have a unity of mind?

With a sense of privilege as well as responsibility I thus prepared for the task assigned by the CRCA to visit the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Synod of our Sister Churches in the Netherlands, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - Vrijgemaakt) in the month of May of this year. In this article I will give you a report on my experiences there. You will also find a copy of the text used for my address. In a second article you will be able to learn about my experiences in the Netherlands.

First Exposure

Upon arriving in Edinburgh around 6 p.m. on May 11, I was picked up by one of the commissioners (delegates) to the General Assembly who took me to the Assembly being held in the St. Columba Church. This Church is located opposite the Free Church of Scotland College and is the regular location of the General Assembly. We arrived just after the evening session had begun. The session was taken up by Youth Committee Reports, which included a presentation to young people who had excelled in the annual competition for Bible and Confession knowledge, the Psalmody Committee Report, and greetings from various Bible Societies and representatives of a number of sister churches.

Devotions & Committee Reports

May 12 was an historic day in Scotland as its first parliament in over 300 years was to be sworn in. This ceremony was to take place in the building used by the Church of Scotland for its General Assemblies, located across the road from St. Columba Church. To avoid the traffic, my host took me along on the bus - my first ride in a double decker.

The first hour of the Wednesday morning was taken up by devotions. This consisted of Scripture readings, prayer by a number of members of the Assembly, interspersed with Psalm singing. The Psalms are sung without the aid of an organ.

The first regular business that day was the Report by the Committee on Public Questions, Religion and Morals. The FCS sees it as the task of the church to study public matters and promote a Christian view on contemporary social issues. The report dealt with Addiction, Alcohol Abuse, Women's Health, and the Alpha Outreach Course, among others. Interesting material can be found and undoubtedly is beneficial for the members. It appears that the idea is that this information can be used when communicating with the civil officials to let a Christian voice be heard. It is not officially forwarded to the government.

"Trials" and Tribulations

The next item on the agenda was a "Libel" with respect to Prof. D. Macleod. In the FCS, a "Libel" is a written accusation. Here we undoubtedly have the key issue confronting the FCS for the last number of years. This matter has gained public attention and has been reported on rather extensively in the public press, casting the FCS in a very negative public light. It was also reported on rather extensively in the Dutch newspaper, "Nederlands Dagblad". Prof. Macleod, who teaches Systematic Theology at the FCS College, was accused by four women of misconduct. The complaints go back many

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,

that is, of things not seen but believed based on the Word of God. Nevertheless, believers are at times allowed to see with their own eyes the very thing they confess. For, when one is able to visit the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland as a representative from the Canadian Reformed Churches this confession of the catholic church is given very visible expression. A visit like this reminds both the visitor (and those he represents) and those visited that the church of Jesus Christ 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).

It is my privilege to pass on to you as General Assembly, and through you to all the members of the Free Church, the heartfelt greetings of the brotherhood in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

With a view to strengthening our bond as Christians, it will be beneficial to give you a brief update on how we are doing as churches..

At present we have a total membership of approximately 15,000 in 48 congregations. Though we are a federation of Canadian churches, five of the 48 churches which are part of the federation are in the United States. They are known as American Reformed Churches. While there are certain clusters of churches, these various clusters are separated by great distances. A journey from the cluster of churches on the west coast, near Vancouver, to the churches in the province of Ontario would easily take you five or six days of travelling by automobile, while by airplane it would take about 4 hours.

The Lord continues to bless us with growth. In light of our Reformed understanding of Scripture, you will not be surprised to hear that this growth is especially through the generations, or, if you wish, internal growth. On average the total membership increases over the last number of years has been approximately 200 annually. The largest congregation numbers over 600 members, while the smallest one is a "house congregation" in Laurel, MD with 12 members.

Something which deserves mention is the contacts we have with other Reformed Churches in Canada and the U.S. Just like in Scotland with its various Presbyterian churches, in North America we have various "Reformed" Churches. Some of the divisions go back to controversies in the Netherlands. Others have their origin in conflicts which arose in North America. The last 10 years or so has seen many people leaving the Christian Reformed Church because of its unscriptural direction. This unscriptural direction was shown especially in allowing women into the various offices in the Church. Most of those who have left have federated under the name of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URNCA). It involves some 60 churches with a membership of 15,000-20,000. Our past Synod reappointed a Committee for contact with these churches, as well as some other Reformed Churches. Especially with the URCNA, the contacts look very promising. With the Lord's blessing, a union may very well come about in the next few years. Considering that we hold dear the

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.

General Impressions.

It was probably a good thing that this was not the first visit to an Assembly of a Church with Presbyterian Church Government - it might have been too much of a shock with all its formality and procedure. Compared to what can be observed in the OPC or the RCUS, one can definitely say that the FCS comes across as very solemn, formal and dignified. There is a clear resemblance with the British parliamentary tradition. As an aside, comparing that to our Church Polity, it might be interesting to study the relationship between the form of civil government and church government as it has developed in various parts of the world, and to ask which has influenced the other. The Moderator, almost enthroned as he directs the business of the assembly, is honoured and treated almost like a bishop (though, when you speak to him he is a down to earth, ordinary man with no pretensions). In a way one feels to have stepped back in time. Once you look past this time-warp, you see people at work trying to work out their Reformed confession in the present day world. The church does not live in the past, as is clear from the efforts of the Committee on Public Questions, Religion and Morals. There is great missionary zeal. At the same time, there is a more gentle attitude toward interdenominational cooperation in things like the Bible Societies and Mission among the Jews. The problem around Prof. Macleod is certainly the big problem in the FCS. It is no understatement to say that this is draining the church emotionally and hindering its effectiveness in reaching out.

Unity despite Diversity

At the beginning reference was made to the responsibility to act as representative of the Churches. I also see it as a responsibility to report back to the Churches and share what has been learned so that it becomes a sort of communal experience.

In connection with that responsibility, I can say that my visit to the Free Church of Scotland reinforced something I have been learning over the years, namely, that in the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ there is diversity. The Lord of history has not directed His Churches to develop in exactly the same way in every place. Much development is tied to particular historic situations. And yet, that diversity in the end is only superficial. There is a unity in the Reformed faith. The benefit of our contact with the Reformed Churches from Scotland with its rich Presbyterian aroma is that it forces us to deal with the question as to what is truly catholic and what is perhaps more ethnic in our life as churches. It is perhaps a tendency that we quickly evaluate rather than carefully observe, also when it comes to the work of the Lord throughout the world. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to sit back and observe something of the Church of our Lord as He is gathering it in Scotland and sense that fundamental unity despite diversity. At the same time, knowing something of the struggles of the Church in Scotland perhaps we can remember them in a more meaningful way in our prayers.

Rev. E. Kampen

2.2 Statement to Other Churches



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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.

(4) The Church did not prevent these ministers exercising their right to liberty of conscience, and they were allowed to dissent from decisions of the Church courts on grounds of conscience. Our regulations state that "The General Assembly, being the Supreme Court of the Church, there is no room for any other procedure against its decisions except that of dissent with reasons. . . . By dissenting with reasons a man keeps his conscience clear from the responsibility of what he does not approve of, and his appeal goes up to the Head of the Church on high." This protects conscience, but does not excuse disobedience. One cannot appeal to the Head of the Church and at the same time agitate on the matter.

(5) Many efforts were made both by the Church courts and by individuals to seek to persuade these men to cease following a divisive course and restore the peace of the Church; all to no avail.

(6) The secession from the Free Church of Scotland was not caused by any change to the constitution of the Church. The Free Church has not changed in any way its adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith as our subordinate standard and the Scriptures as our supreme standard.

As to the size of this secession, 15 ministers in pastoral charges (out of a total of 108) departed along with 7 retired men. Since then approximately 5% of Free Church people have joined their secession. Although it is sad that even one person has left the Church, the extent of the secession must not be exaggerated. The Free Church is in good heart.

The ministers who have seceded and are therefore no longer ministers of the Free Church of Scotland are: Rev. Maurice J. Roberts, Rev. Bryan H. Baxter, Rev. Graeme Craig, Rev. Hugh M. Ferrier, Rev. John A. Gillies, Rev. James I. Gracie, Rev. Donald M. MacDonald, Rev. Kenneth Macdonald (Snizort), Rev. Allan I. M. MacIver, Rev. Malcolm MacLean, Rev. Donald N. MacLeod, Rev. John MacLeod (Duthil-Dores), Rev. John MacLeod (Tarbat), Rev. M. A. N. MacLeod, Rev. William MacLeod, Rev. John Morrison, Rev. Allan Murray, Rev. David P. Murray, Rev. John J. Murray, Rev. H. R. Moshe Radcliffe, Rev. H. J. T. Woods and Rev. John W. Keddie.

We also wish to correct the impression given by an erroneous report in *The Daily Telegraph* on Saturday 22 January 2000. Rev. Kenny MacDonald (retired of Rosskeen), Rev. Iver Martin (Aberdeen) and Mr Iain Gill (General Treasurer) have NOT left the Free Church of Scotland.

We value the fellowship of brethren in other denominations and the cordial relations we have with many Churches. We ask that you continue to support us in prayer, and if you have any questions about reports about us which do not come from the Free Church of Scotland, please show us the courtesy of asking us concerning these before in any way giving them credence. We look forward to continuing warm fellowship and co-operation with reformed evangelical churches in the cause of Christ worldwide.

Issued by the authority of the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Free Church of Scotland.

28th January 2000.

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

requisite by the party prosecuting in order that a charge incapable of proof may not be proceeded with" (p107).

The General Assembly agreed with the committee's recommendation and declared the matter to be terminated.

Sheriff Court Case

The women then went to the police and in 1996, Prof. MacLeod was charged and tried at Edinburgh Sheriff Court with 4 counts of sexual assault. The Sheriff acquitted him, but in the process of his verdict, said there had been a campaign against Donald MacLeod. Later on that year the Free Church considered whether to investigate the issue of conspiracy but decided that such a charge was almost impossible to determine ecclesiastically. What was conspiracy, and how could a Church investigate something almost impossible to conclusively prove? The Church decided in October 1996 because the matter was beyond its ability to deal decisively with, to humbly confess failure to the Lord and draw a line under the whole issue.

Since that time, a group of ministers, elders and others have refused to accept either the Church's decision in 1995, the Sheriff's verdict in 1996 or the Church's finding in 1996 and have sought to agitate, canvas and campaign to have Donald MacLeod re-tried by a Free Church Court. In 1997, they established themselves formally as the Free Church Defence Association and by means of public meetings, press releases and the quarterly publication Free Church Foundations they have continued to sow seeds of discontentment within and outwith the Free Church, alleging corruption and cover-up.

The Special Reconciliation Committee 1998

In 1998, the General Assembly, in an imaginative attempt to bring parties together, set up a Special Peace Committee consisting of representatives from a variety of perspectives. This committee was to meet regularly and hear whatever complaints were submitted to them to try to bring a halt to the now increasingly contentious matter and to reconcile both parties. In Oct 1998, they produced a set of draft proposals which had been unanimously agreed by the committee and which, when sent out and discussed by Presbyteries in the Church, met with widespread approval. However, at their very next peace committee meeting, the FCDA men who had previously agreed to the proposals now changed their minds and opposed the proposals, essentially destroying months of effort.

In 1999, attempts were yet again made to try Donald MacLeod, this time by means of private libels brought by three ministers. This time the Assembly knew that in order to prevent major breakdown throughout the whole denomination, decisive action had to be taken. They declared that the three ministers had no constitutional right to automatically bring a private libel against a Professor without first having attempted to bring the complaints before the Training of the Ministry Committee. In addition, the Assembly decided that, unless there was new evidence, the whole matter, including references to the Sheriff Court trial should be completely terminated. Furthermore, for the sake of bringing the matter to a decisive conclusion, they warned that nothing more should publicly be said about it. Within days, the FCDA published another magazine in which they once again repeated their claims about Donald MacLeod and accused the Church of further corruption.

The Commission met in October 1999 and declared that the actions of the FCDA were tantamount to a divisive course and hence to hold office in the Free Church was incompatible to holding office in the FCDA. The FCDA replied with a flat refusal to comply. The following Commission in December issued a Pastoral letter in a last ditch attempt to plead with the ministers to be reconciled to the Church and stop agitating outwith Church courts. The letter recognised their right to their own convictions and assured them that such convictions had been registered as dissent and protest, but advised that the FCDA were not at liberty to take the matter into their own hands and cause unrest among Free Church people and the wider Church.

The FCDA response to the letter was chilling...."This letter, issued by the Commission reminds one of the action of Joab who took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him, saying "Art thou in health my brother?" and smote him with the sword under the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground....." (Editorial Foundations January 2000)

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.

6) The Commission has never attempted to bind anyone's conscience. The convictions of those who disagreed with the Church's decisions were made clear, and allowance was made at every stage for them to dissent, and thereby solemnly and publicly appeal to the Christ as Head of the Church.

7) Nobody has ever brought complaints against anyone implicated in the 1996 Sheriff Court trial to a church court. Therefore these men remained in good standing in the Free Church.

8) We acknowledge our failure in many ways in trying to deal with an enormously complex problem.

9) There are men amongst those who seceded have served the Free Church and the cause of Christ for many years. We continue to hold them in the highest esteem.

10) We view the secession with deep regret and sorrow.

There is no doubt that to every argument presented above there is a counter, and to continue ad infinitum to insist upon our own perspective would be futile. Readers may be persuaded as to the merits of one argument or other, but the matter here is not a straight choice between truth and falsehood, black or white; rather it is a differing opinion as to how to best deal with a hugely complicated issue. The Free Church insists that, despite our individual and corporate sinfulness we have dealt with the issue properly, prayerfully, according to our practice, and with the best possible motives.

Finally, the Free Church hopes that, however tarnished our standing may have become in the estimation of our brethren from other Churches, there is yet sufficient trust between us to continue to work together and develop our precious fellowship together in the cause of Christ.

Media Office, Free Church of Scotland (This information can also be found in the "Monthly Record", March 2000, accessible @ "<http://www.freechurch.org/mar00/mar00e.htm>")

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*:

- (a) forbidding office-bearers and members now or henceforth to pursue matters arising from a particular *fama*, involving serious allegations against a minister, in any form whatsoever;
 - (b) ordering the destruction of documents relating to the aforesaid *fama* notwithstanding that issues arising therefrom remain unresolved, thereby prejudicing the rights of interested parties to secure a fair and proper resolution of the said issues;
 - (c) imposing requirements on ministers and office-bearers additional to their ordination vows, and thereby, in particular, infringing their civil rights to freedom of assembly and association by forbidding them, under pain of censure, to hold office in an association professedly aiming to assert and defend the constitution of the historic Free Church of Scotland;
 - (d) annulling the licensing of, and withdrawing recognition as a candidate for the ministry from, a divinity student who had been accepted by the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee after due examination of his credentials and then licensed by his Presbytery in accordance with the law of the Church, and against whom no disciplinary proceedings had been brought, and directing the Presbytery to expunge the decision to proceed to license from its minutes;
- (3rd)** That albeit the Form of Process enacted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1707, and being a constitutional document of the Free Church of Scotland, is binding and obligatory on all Courts of the said Church, Commissioners purporting to exercise lawful judicial authority in the name of the Free Church of Scotland have adopted findings and conducted procedures at variance with, and subversive of, the principles of church discipline set out in the said Form of Process and reflected in the authorised practice and procedure of the Free Church of Scotland, by, *inter alia*:
- (a) endorsing a finding of the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee, in relation to the aforesaid *fama*, without judicial examination of the evidence and without enquiry to ensure that the recognition in the case had been properly conducted and that all relevant witnesses had been duly examined, contrary to the requirement of the Form of Process that when such a matter comes before a church judicatory it ought not to be "negligently inquired into" (Chapter VII, paragraph 2);
 - (b) treating the said decision as judicial notwithstanding that the procedure adopted by the judicatory was not conducted under the Form of Process and the decision was therefore no more than administrative;
 - (c) purporting to terminate the bringing of private libels in relation to the aforesaid *fama*, thereby seeking to prohibit a course of action to which the Form of Process (Chapter VII, paragraph 3) gives a right;
 - (d) conducting disciplinary processes against ministers before the Commission of Assembly as a court of first instance, in violation of the requirement in the Form of Process (Chapter VII, paragraph 1) that all processes against any minister are to begin before his Presbytery, and using the said Commission to institute such processes without authority from the General Assembly;

And that Commissioners exercising a majority in voting in the General Assemblies and Commissions of Assemblies, purporting to act lawfully therein in the name of the Free Church of Scotland, have, by the aforementioned actions, passed acts and resolutions under which the constitution and standards of the Free Church of Scotland can be, and are violated, and have refused to countenance petitions and other requests for redress of the same; whereby the said persons have ceased to constitute authoritative courts of the historic Free Church of Scotland.

In consequence whereof:

We claim our right and profess our duty, according to our ordination vows thereanent, to administer discipline and government consistent with the requirements embodied in the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland and stated in our ordination vows, which vows bind us to maintain the said discipline and government "notwithstanding of whatsoever trouble or persecution may arise";

We protest that by our engagement to the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland, our office in the said Church prevents, and has always prevented, our being bound by any acts or resolutions (including, but not confined to, the foregoing) of the said persons purporting to act lawfully in the name of the Free Church of Scotland, which are contrary to the authorised standards of the Free Church of Scotland;

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

continuing to claim the title of the Free Church of Scotland is prepared to return to the constitution and standards of the historic Free Church of Scotland, and to practise and adhere faithfully to the same, we will see it as our duty to seek reconciliation with our brethren within that body.

In witness whereof these presents are subscribed by us at Edinburgh on 20th January 2000 before the undersigning witnesses.

Baxter, Rev. Bryan (Rtd., Kilwinning)
Compton, Rev. David (Rtd., Toronto)
Craig, Rev. Graeme (Lochalsh & Glenshiel)
Ferrier, Rev. Hugh M. (Rtd., Inverness Free North)
Frew, Rev. James (Kiltearn)
Gillies, Rev. John A. (Partick Highland)
Gracie, Rev. James I. (North Uist & Grimsay)
Harding, Rev. John J. (Shettleston)
Johnston, Rev. Alasdair (Rtd., Dumbarton)
Josey, Rev. Robert W. (Rtd., Resolis)
Keddie, Rev. John W. (Bracadale)
MacDonald, Rev. D.M. (Rtd., Uig)
MacDonald, Rev. Kenneth (Snizort)
MacIver, Rev. Allan I.M. (Strath)
MacKinnon, Rev. Daniel (Kilmorack & Strathglass)
MacLean, Rev. Malcolm (Rtd., North Tolsta)
MacLeod, Rev. Donald N. (Rtd., Glasgow Briton St.)
MacLeod, Rev. John (Duthil-Dores)
MacLeod, Rev. John (Tarbat)
MacLeod, Rev. R. (Rtd., Dundee)
MacLeod, Rev. William (Portree)
MacLeod, Rev. Murdo A.N. (Leverburgh)
MacLeod, Rev. MacAulay (Rtd., Barvas)
Morrison, Rev. John (Kilmuir)
Murray, Rev. Allan (Rogart & Edrachillis)
Murray, Rev. David P. (Lochcarron)
Murray, Rev. John J. (Edinburgh St. Columba's)
Radcliff, Rev. H.R. Moshe
Roberts, Rev. Maurice J. (Inverness Free Greyfriars)
Scott, Rev. William (Dumfries)
Smith, Rev. Kenneth (Rtd., Knock)
Smith, Rev. Iain (Glasgow Partick Crow Road)
Woods, Rev. Harry J.T. (Paisley)

(<http://www.freechurchcontinuing.co.uk/declaration.htm>)

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

dealing with the Hymns.

In the afternoon we were given opportunity to address the Synod. What follows is the text of my address:

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord:

It is a great privilege to be present in your midst as representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches. When one considers the size of respective countries, and that the total membership in our churches is about 15,000 and your total membership is over 120,000, you could say that the little sister from the big country is visiting the big sister in the little country.

It is most fitting that I begin by conveying to you as Synod, and through you to all the churches, heartfelt greetings on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Canada. The greeting carries extra significance because for many members the tie is not merely the gospel of grace but also that of race.

I mention the words "race" and "grace". In church matters great care must be taken never to confuse the two. We know that it was hard for Peter and the early N.T. Church to accept that the gospel was not limited to their race. It is not always so easy for us to make that distinction. That leads to problems inside and outside the church.

With respect to problems "outside" the church, I refer to how the church is seen in the community. To make a clear distinction between your race and the community united around the gospel of grace will not be a problem in the Netherlands like it is in Canada. In a country with great ethnic diversity one's religion is often associated with one's ethnic roots. For example, to many of our fellow Canadians, "Reformed" seems to be a synonym for "Dutch". You mention that you belong to the "Canadian Reformed Church" and often the response is, "O, the Dutch Church". This forces us as churches to struggle with the question as to what is truly catholic and what is ethnic in our history so that we may be a blessing to our fellow Canadians. After all, being Reformed is not the same as being "Dutch".

It also brings problems inside the church. It does that in two ways. First of all, it can be hard for the members to distinguish between race and grace. That means, it is hard to fully accept as equals in the faith those who do not share our history. This is reflected in the careful, hesitant way we go about our interchurch relationships. Though we have been making progress in this matter as can be seen in our relationships with churches of Presbyterian origin, our steps are not always so steady, so sure footed and harmonious. We look to our big sister in the little country and see her walk with apparent sure-footedness. It seems that being such a big sister you take such big steps that we as a small sister get out of breath trying to keep up. I think a difference is that for you, our big sister, it is all far more academic. Scotland, the Netherlands, Korea, they are separated by plenty of water. For us it is very practical. Scotsman, Koreans, and Dutch, with their roots either in the continental Reformed tradition or the Presbyterian tradition, potentially live on the same street! Sometimes it seems that ecclesiastical

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!

There is also the matter of the role of women. It is remarkable that while the proposed new marriage form is very subtle, your delegate to Synod Fergus 1998 stated that the real issue is the question of headship (Acts, p. 202). We wait for your decision on the matter, but we wonder where you are headed with this discussion. Does the very fact it is discussed suggest that as you stand at the crossroads, you are not so sure about the ancient paths anymore? Is there a need for new insight or simply renewed insights? We do indeed get the impression at times that you are not so sure anymore. We hear that too in the comments of br. de Jager when he indicated that "Kampen is rethinking [preaching and liturgy]," and that you are rethinking mission.

Brothers, the prophet Jeremiah called Judah to ask for the ancient paths, the good ways, and to walk in them, so that they might find rest for their souls. That is our challenge. May the LORD grant you the wisdom to hold to the ancient paths and walk on them faithfully, able to apply to eternal truths in the pinpointed concrete situations we as churches face today. Don't be afraid to appear out of step with the times. Just take care to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).

In response to my address, the speaker tied in with a comment I had made about us being the little sister. He thought the good point in being little was that it kept you a humble, something which they as Dutch churches also needed to remember. These speeches kept us busy till the end of the day. It proved to be a very stimulating experience as you could hear about the struggles and triumphs of the Reformed faith all over the world, from India to England to Venezuela.

General Impressions

The Dutch sister Churches received us royally. We were treated as foreign dignitaries, international statesman. It was a truly enjoyable experience to meet so many from so many lands that share the Reformed faith. It broadens your horizon which so quickly becomes fixated as you deal with the daily problems in your own congregation. At the same time, one did not really get an opportunity to interact with members of Synod and to witness how it conducts its business. The experience in Scotland in that respect was more helpful. Nevertheless, from what could be seen a favourable impression could be gathered.

The Dutch churches continue to increase the number of contacts. They are more generous in their evaluation of other churches. We seem to take the approach that a church must be on equal terms with us before we can enter a relationship. The Dutch enter into a relationship with a church in order to help it grow in faithfulness. The latter approach has something to commend it. What good is it to greet your brother and then send him home without food and drink? At the same time, the danger is there that you look at yourself as big brother. Not that the Dutch necessarily are guilty of this, but colonialism is always a threat when dealing with those who have less than we have.

One wonders about the length it takes to conduct the business of Synod. As was mentioned, they began in April and the end may not be till September. It would seem that in this they are unique in the world wide community of Reformed Churches.

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