

# CRTS Supplement Report

To: General Synod Guelph 2022

From: Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

Dear brothers,

In our main report to General Synod (GS 2022), we noted that, due to the various timelines involved, we would need to send a supplemental report giving further detail concerning financial support for students from our sister church, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA). The full explanation can be found on pages 6-7 of our main report, but here are the pertinent highlights:

- Three previous CanRC Synods (Burlington 2010, Carman 2013 and Dunnville 2016) have encouraged CRTS to consider carefully the needs of Free Reformed Churches in South Africa for theological training.
- Over the past number of years, a strong relationship has grown between the Curators for Theological Training and CRTS. This cooperative, working relationship was confirmed most recently at their General Synod Belhar 2021.
- In the last few years the Lord has blessed that federation with a growing number of men interested in studying for the ministry. Humanly speaking, this surge of interest was not fully anticipated, but it is surely something to be thankful for.
- At this time and for the foreseeable future, the FRCSA will need financial support for theological education and mission work since they are receiving less support from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). In light of these developments a four-way meeting was organized between the curators of the FRCSA, the deputies for interchurch relations of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, members of our CRCA committee, and representatives of the Foreign Student Bursary Fund at CRTS. A proposal came out of that meeting to step ahead with a two-phase plan. In the shorter term, the FRCA would continue to provide support for South Africa's anchor theologian costs and CanRC would consider how it can support theological students coming from South Africa.
- The money that is presently in the Foreign Student Bursary Fund (FSBF) is not sufficient to support the number of students that plan to come to CRTS from the FRCSA.

After that four-way meeting more detailed information, including financial figures, was received from South Africa. They sent the following documents which are appended to this report:

- A formal request for help, addressed to the CRCA committee
- A general budgetary overview 2021-24 for their work in theological education
- More specific projections concerning the costs for supporting FRCSA students

Before turning to the financial matters, we should first address the matter of *who* within the Canadian Reformed Churches should take the lead on this matter. The CRCA has received this letter requesting financial support from the Curators for Theological Education in the FRCSA. At the same time, the CRCA notes the following in its report to GS 2022:

*The CRCA has never had a mandate to financially support other church federations. However, in this situation it may be appropriate to mandate the CER to assist the FRCSA, should further financial assistance be necessary. In collaboration with others involved, the CER could seek out*

*appropriate churches or organizations to responsibly interact with requests for financial assistance (Section on South Africa – Considerations #3).*

At the same time, it is the Foreign Student Bursary Fund at CRTS that normally receives requests from international students who are not able to pay for their studies. Moreover, CRTS is most familiar with the living expenses in the Hamilton area and already has structures in place for financial accountability so that the funds that are given are used appropriately. Perhaps the situation can be summed up as follows: on a formal level this request has been sent to the CRCA but on a practical level it will be the FSBF of CRTS that, in all likelihood, will be responsible for extending the financial support that is needed. For this reason, the CRCA has communicated to CRTS that it agrees with the direction that was suggested at the four-way meeting and that it prefers that CRTS place this matter on the agenda of GS 2022. This matter of “who is responsible” needs to be addressed for the longer term and it would be helpful if GS 2022 would clarify this for the future for all involved. However, in the meantime, arrangements need to be put in place because the students from FRCSA are coming in the next academic year, the Lord willing, and funds will be needed sooner rather than later.

Next then, we turn to the specific matter of financial support. The FSBF faces a challenge. According to the guidelines for this fund, “the necessary funding for the Foreign Student Bursary Fund... [must] be accomplished without any impact whatsoever on the Seminary’s general operating funds or *on the annual assessment to the churches*” (CRTS Handbook 4.3.4.2). Therefore, to this point in its history, the Fund has been built up from occasional donations. This has been sufficient to support international students who, from time to time, need financial assistance.

Also, it should be noted that the original intent of the FSBF was to assist individual, international students but not necessarily all theological students from a certain federation. The mandate of the FSBF is: “The Foreign Student Bursary Fund Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Governors, appointed to administer the Foreign Student Bursary Fund. The purpose of this fund is to provide the necessary financial assistance to qualified foreign students who seek a Reformed theological education who come from federations that are unable to provide sufficient support.” The request from South Africa, then, is beyond the regular capacity of this Fund. It involves a request from a federation concerning six students over the next five years, some of them who are married with children. Occasional donations will not be sufficient for this level of support. The South African churches are committed to doing their part for their students, as much as they are able. Having said that, as the “Projections” appendix indicates, the FRCSA anticipates that an average of just over \$100,000 Cdn of support from Canada will be needed each year for the next five years (2022-2027).<sup>1</sup> Still, in light of previous decisions at CanRC synods, their request should be taken seriously.

So, in short, this is the challenge that the FSBF faces:

- CRTS has received instructions from more than one CanRC general synod to support these students from South Africa.
- The FSBF of CRTS has not received the necessary funding to fulfill this instruction.
- The FSBF cannot simply raise the annual assessment to cover these additional costs since that is against the guidelines for the Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> The total from 2021-27 is \$556,490, but the 2021 costs of \$24,600 have already been paid. That leaves \$531,890, which works out to approximately \$106,000 per annum.

We therefore considered the following possibilities, each with some pros and cons.

- *Option 1 General Synod requests deaconries throughout the CanRC to seriously consider holding one or more special collections each year for “Financial Help for Theological Students from FRCSA”*
  - Pro – Necessary funds would be received as freewill offerings rather than another assessment. Sometimes it is good for a cause to be nearer to the hearts of brothers and sisters rather than being included in a list at the bottom of the annual, congregational budgets.
  - Con – Necessary funds may not come in as required. There are many causes that request to be on the collection schedules of local deaconries. Also, since approximately \$100,000 is needed each year, this works out to about \$5 per annum for each member (approximately 20,000) or \$9 per annum for each communicant member (approx. 11,000) in our federation.
- *Option 2 General Synod creates a new annual assessment specifically for the support of our sister federation in South Africa*
  - Pro – It would be clear to the federation precisely what the assessment is for, and it would provide a steady and reliable source of funding for these students. In the shorter term, and as agreed upon in the four-way meeting, this assessment would be used to cover expenses related to theological students coming from South Africa. However, in the future, if a different kind of financial assistance is required by the FRCSA it could also be gathered via this assessment.
  - Con – As noted in the CRCA report, to the best of our knowledge, our federation has not had this particular kind of assessment in the past. Normally we expect assessments to cover costs within the federation and its various mission works, not in support of another federation. This is not to say that it cannot be done, but it is not familiar and may raise questions. Also, it would add another assessment category, and our federation should be careful about multiplying assessments lest “assessment fatigue” set in and local congregations become resentful about it.
- *Option 3 General Synod could mandate our present Needy Students Fund (NSF) to assess the churches, as needed, for needy students from South Africa as well. To be clear, this would not involve an assessment for all foreign students who might be supported by FSBF, but only those students who come from FRCSA, in light of past decisions of General Synod encouraging support for theological education in the FRCSA.*
  - Pro – Like Option 2, it would provide a steady and reliable source of funding. This is an assessment that is already in place for this kind of support, namely, needy students, so in this respect it would make sense to people. Of course, the new element would be that it would support a certain group of students *from a sister church*, not only students that originate from our own federation. In addition, it is possible that some students from FRCSA would eventually serve within the CanRC or FRCA as well. Therefore, support from our own federation, via our Needy Student Fund, could also be considered appropriate and understandable from this point of view.
  - Con – There would be some potential confusion over whether, practically speaking, the FSBF or the Fund for Needy Students would assess, allocate, and distribute the necessary funds to FRCSA students. However, this could be overcome by good communication between CRTS staff, F&P Committee and NSF, including consultation with a financial advisor to ensure that the laws for charitable donations are all upheld.

The FSBF, as assisted by CRTS office staff, would be well-positioned to distribute the funds, also with a view to not creating extra work for the NSF committee.

Although the Board of Governors is open to all three options listed above, as well as any other option that Synod may deem to be better, our current preference is for Option 3. It provides reliable funding to support theological education for our sister churches, as past general synods have instructed, while at the same time it does not add an additional assessment category. It increases the amount of an existing one. Depending on the current reserves within the NSF, the annual increase could be as high as \$9 per annum. Moreover, whichever option General Synod chooses, it would be prudent to have a three-year review process put in place, recognizing that the number of theological students from South Africa as well as that federation's ability to support its students may change over time.

Thank-you for your attention to this matter and we wish the delegates at General Synod the Lord's wisdom in fulfilling the important mandate given to you by the churches.

On behalf of the Board of Governors,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M.H. Van Luik".

Rev. M.H. Van Luik



Theological Training of the Free  
Reformed Churches in South Africa

# DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:10*

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To the Canadian Reformed Churches

Committee on Relations Churches Abroad

Synod Guelph 2022

Dear brothers

## **Request for support of theological students from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa**

We greet you in the holy Name of Jesus Christ, Head of His world-wide Church. We also pray for His blessings for your coming Synod 2022 in Guelph.

Through this letter the Deputies Needy Students (Art. 19) of your sister-church, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, humbly request your support of the South African students through prayer and funding.

### **Background**

As you may know the FRCSA federation is small and diverse, with eight congregations and six mission churches. We live in a country that is characterised by high economic inequality, extreme poverty and various diverse cultures. Yet, our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us richly. His Word is preached every week, we have two Reformed schools, few vacancies in the ministries, and living churches of members who find their salvation, peace and stewardship in their Lord. May He be praised for His merciful generosity!

Since their beginning in the 1950s, our churches remained committed to provide training for the ministry of the Word by the churches for the churches. At that time resources were lacking to offer such training ourselves, therefore we sent our young men to the Theological School in Kampen. One of your professors, Arjan de Visser, was among that group. Students from our mission congregations studied at the local Mukhanyo Theological College or the George Whitfield College, followed by one-year of FRCSA-specific training through our own ministers. Between 1998 and 2005, three young men were trained by our own pastors. One of these young men is a pastor in Pretoria, one is Director of the Reformational Study Centre (RSC), and one is now pastor in Busselton, WA. Our churches generously sacrificed for the costs of these various study programmes. A further two men and other ministers in Belhar were trained by our pastors from the end of 2002. One of them is now missionary of the church of Cape Town and the other pastor in Belhar. From 2005 – 2011 three more students were trained in South Africa. All three of them are now missionaries in our churches. One of them, Phineas Kgatle, completed his studies with half a year at CRTS in 2011.

### **FRCSA theological studies through the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary**

As our churches were in search of reliable Reformed theological education as an alternative to Kampen, our Synod Bethal of 2014 decided to use the CRTS for the MDiv programme as institution of choice. Initially this occurred using video material from the classes at CRTS in our teaching in South Africa. We were very thankful for the CRTS' kind collaboration in the recording of classes and making

the videos available. For this local instruction, our Deputies for Theological appointed Rev Hannes Breytenbach to do much of the work as a type of anchor theologian, with the help of Rev. Jopie van der Linden of the RSC. Our sister-churches in Australia generously contributed to the funding of the position of Rev. Breytenbach. Although he is retired now, they undertook to extend the support for this work for at least another two years.

Our Deputies decided that future students should do their MDiv in-class at CRTS, trusting that the Lord would provide the funding. It implied that new students would first complete their BA degree (Biblical Languages, Latin, English) at a South African university. Our Deputies for Needy Students support students according to their needs. Students who already had a Bachelor's degree were allowed to obtain Greek III and Hebrew III through online BibleMesh, which is accepted for access to CRTS.

In 2016 our Deputies concluded a formal Memorandum of Understanding with CRTS, which made provision for sharing the costs of training of our students at CRTS (Attachment A). FRCSA would pay for tuition fees, travel, medical insurance and books, while CRTS would carry the living costs through their Foreign Students Bursary Fund. The FRCSA synod of 2021 increased the assessment of our churches for needy students substantially in order to make provision for the escalating costs, but this was only for one year, after which the allocations will be reduced, due to other needs in the federation.

### **The Lord's blessing of the FRCSA theological programme**

Equally important, our churches carried the training work through continuous prayer, for the CRTS, our Deputies, the anchor theologian and his supporting mentors, and for an increase in students. We thank the Lord that He listened to all our prayers. Although Covid-19 caused some challenges, He provided training to two students through CRTS' on-line instruction, and the Lord blessed their studies. Two South African deputies were represented on the CRTS' Distance Education Committee, and we are thankful for the developments that were proposed. Our anchor theologian and the mentors could assist and train the undergraduate students in preparation for CRTS with good results.

We are most thankful that the Lord exceeded our expectations by giving us a further **six** young men who are currently preparing for CRTS. Four of them will DV arrive at CRTS in September 2022, the others in 2023 and 2024. Our Deputies will do their annual promotional/ recruitment presentations at our churches DV in early 2022, and we expect some more students in the next few years, particularly from the mission churches. Indeed, the Lord gives more than we could imagine. Soli Deo Gloria!

### **A blessing with challenges**

However, this gift of six students by the Lord poses a blessed challenge. The total costs of these students (both in South Africa and at CRTS) by far exceeds our resources and those of the Foreign Students Bursary Fund, and these challenges will increase if more young men present themselves for the Theological Training Programme. The attached budget of FRCSA Deputies Needy Students for the period 2022-24 gives an indication of the annual study expenses for our churches (Attachment B). The total amount for 2022 is Can\$47,898, increasing substantially in the next years. These amounts exclude general costs for Theological Training, for which the South African churches remain responsible. Attachment C provides an overview of costs for the FSBF in terms of the MoU with the FRCSA. The FSBF costs start with an estimated annual amount of Can\$24,600 in 2021, substantially increasing from 2022. Together the FRCSA and FSBF costs are therefore substantial, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Total costs of FRCSA students studying at CRTS, 2021-27 in Can\$

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
<b>FRCSA costs</b>	14,831	36,441	52,542	47,034	50,000	25,000
<b>FSBF costs</b>	24,600	105,704	156,930	109,015	109,015	52,266
<b>Total</b>	39,431	142,145	209,472	156,049	159,015	77,266

Although our South African synod 2021 made an increased assessment for needy students for 2021, the annual contributions from our churches will diminish from 2022 because of financial shortages for mission work, due to the Dutch churches decreasing their funding. Our Deputies for Needy Students are preparing a fundraising initiative in our own congregations and trust the Lord that He will open the hearts of members for this important task in His kingdom. However, the needs for other deputies, such as Mission and Needy Churches, are also expected to increase.

### **Request to our Canadian sister churches for student support**

We are aware of recommendations by your previous synods to CRTS for support of the South African theological training. We thank the Lord that this has happened in more ways than we anticipated. Your show of Christian love for us in the past gives us the confidence to approach you for more support of our students in two ways.

First, we ask you to remember us in your prayers. As the Bible teaches us, our prayers are carried to the throne of Him to whom the whole world and its fullness belong. He will listen and provide, as He has done for so many years.

Second, we would like to request your ongoing financial support in the years to come. The blue cells in the FRCSA budget show the total cost of studying at CRTS for the South African deputies, e.g. Can\$36,441 for 2022. If these 'blue' expenses could be made from Canada, e.g. through the FSBF, it would allow for tax deductions, and the Canadian government restrictions on foreign funding could be accommodated. However, you are better informed on what the best way of funding would be.

In our discussions with CRTS and the FSBF it was agreed that they would also include a note on this request in their synod 2022 report.

### **Discussions on CanRC and FRCA funding at our 2021 synod and at meetings**

The request for financial support of our students by the CanRC churches has been raised at our Synod 2021, both by your delegates and our deputies. Subsequently at a meeting between deputies from your churches, CRTS, the Deputies for Inter-Church Relations of the FRCA, and our Deputies for Theological Training and Deputies for Needy Students, held on 20 October 2021, it was agreed that our Deputies would indeed approach the CanRC for help from 2022. Besides resolving the students' challenges, your increased support may also allow the FRCA to reallocate their contributions from our anchor theologian to the FRCSA mission work after 2024. However, we realise that the resulting funding shift will require deeper discussions between deputies from the three church federations within the next year.

Lastly, we have the confidence to submit our needs to you in the realisation that God's gift of students in the FRCSA will not only benefit our federation in South Africa. Several of our students may after their studies be available for calls from all our sister churches abroad. May the Lord bless our students to prepare themselves conscientiously for the ministry, be it in South Africa or elsewhere in His world

May the Lord give you wisdom in your consideration of this request.

In Christ,



Ronald Meeske

Convenor

Deputies Theological Training

Date:



Ernst van Vondel

Convenor

Deputies Needy Students

Attachments:

A: Memorandum of Understanding between CRTS and Deputies Theological Training of the FRCSA

B: Needy Students (Art 19): Budget 2021 to 2024

C: Projection of foreign students to be supported by the Foreign Student Bursary Fund from South Africa



**Needy Students (Art 19)**  
**Budget - 2021 to 2024**

		In Canadian dollars			
	Notes	Budget - 2021	Budget - 2022	Budget - 2023	Budget - 2024
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$50 847</b>	<b>\$29 661</b>	<b>\$25 424</b>	<b>\$16 949</b>
Income from ZAM (Netherlands)		\$8 475	\$4 237	\$0	\$0
Synod allocation		\$42 373	\$25 424	\$25 424	\$16 949
<b>Expenses</b>		<b>\$40 356</b>	<b>\$47 898</b>	<b>\$78 492</b>	<b>\$89 675</b>
<b>Student stipends:</b>		<b>\$15 169</b>	<b>\$7 881</b>	<b>\$12 203</b>	<b>\$25 505</b>
Student 1		\$5 424	\$4 322	\$0	\$0
Student 2		\$9 746	\$3 559	\$0	\$0
Possible students	1	\$0	\$0	\$12 203	\$25 505
<b>Study cost:</b>		<b>\$15 254</b>	<b>\$16 949</b>	<b>\$30 508</b>	<b>\$35 593</b>
Student 1		\$1 695	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student 2		\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390	\$1 695
Student 3		\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390
Student 4		\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390
Student 5		\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390
Student 6		\$0	\$0	\$3 390	\$3 390
Student 7		\$0	\$0	\$3 390	\$3 390
Student 8		\$0	\$3 390	\$3 390	\$3 390
Possible students	1	\$0	\$0	\$6 780	\$13 559
<b>Travel cost:</b>		<b>\$8 051</b>	<b>\$18 644</b>	<b>\$29 661</b>	<b>\$22 458</b>
Student 1		\$0	\$0	\$7 203	\$7 203
Student 2		\$0	\$7 203	\$7 203	\$0
Student 3		\$8 051	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student 4		\$0	\$3 814	\$3 814	\$3 814
Student 5		\$0	\$3 814	\$3 814	\$3 814
Student 6		\$0	\$3 814	\$3 814	\$3 814
Student 7		\$0	\$0	\$3 814	\$3 814
<b>Medical insurance:</b>		<b>\$1 695</b>	<b>\$4 237</b>	<b>\$5 932</b>	<b>\$5 932</b>
Student 1		\$0	\$1 695	\$1 695	\$1 695
Student 2		\$1 695	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student 3		\$0	\$847	\$847	\$847
Student 4		\$0	\$847	\$847	\$847
Student 5		\$0	\$847	\$847	\$847
Student 6		\$0	\$0	\$847	\$847
Student 7		\$0	\$0	\$847	\$847
Bank charges		\$17	\$17	\$17	\$17
Other charges		\$169	\$169	\$169	\$169
<b>Surplus / (shortage)</b>		<b>\$10 492</b>	<b>-\$18 237</b>	<b>-\$53 068</b>	<b>-\$72 725</b>
Opening Balance Bank Account		\$20 051	\$30 542	\$12 305	-\$40 763
Closing Balance Bank Account		\$30 542	\$12 305	-\$40 763	-\$113 488
Cost incurred in Canada	2		\$36 441	\$52 542	\$47 034
Remaining surplus / (shortage)			\$18 203	-\$525	-\$25 692

**Notes**

1. Two possible students from 2023 onwards from our mission churches and another two from 2024 onwards.

2. This excludes cost currently covered by the FSBF for our students studying at CRTS i.e. living costs in Canada. In principle, these costs could be covered by our sister churches in Canada as these costs will be incurred in Canada.

**Projection of foreign students to be supported by the Foreign Student Bursary Fund from South Africa**

Name	Country	Program	Year	Time spent in Canada	Family Details	Children	Anticipated Cost to FSBF per year Living Costs
Student 1	South Africa	Elective courses	2020	6 months	Married	2	24,600
Student 2	South Africa	MDiv	2020	2 academic years	Married	1	47,915
Student 3	South Africa	MDiv	2022	4 academic years	Not married		19,263
Student 4	South Africa	MDiv	2022	4 academic years	Not married		19,263
Student 5	South Africa	MDiv	2022	4 academic years	Not married		19,263
Student 6	South Africa	MDiv	2023	4 academic years	Not married		19,263
Student 7	South Africa	MDiv	2023	4 academic years	Married		31,963

**Cost to Foreign Student Bursary Fund**

TIMELINE	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	Total
	Student 1	Student 2	Student 2				
		Student 3	Student 3	Student 3	Student 3		
		Student 4	Student 4	Student 4	Student 4		
		Student 5	Student 5	Student 5	Student 5		
			Student 6	Student 6	Student 6	Student 6	
			Student 7	Student 7	Student 7	Student 7	
<b>Cost</b>	24,600	105,704	156,930	109,015	109,015	51,226	<b>556,490</b>

**Approximate Costs (not including travel):**

- a. Single Student – approx. \$23,500/year (assuming they are in a shared apartment with another student to split the rent)
- b. Married Student (no kids) – approx. \$36,200/year (assuming basement apartment)
- c. Married Student (with kids) – approx. \$53,000/year (not including any elementary/high school tuition)

NOTE: South Africa curators pay for tuition, books, medical insurance, travel for their students.