

Committee on Ecumenical Relations Reports to GS 2025

INTRODUCTION

We respectfully present to you the report of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER), covering the period since GS 2022 (Guelph-Emmanuel).

Prior to GS 2022, ecumenical relations of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) were facilitated by a number of committees. GS 2022 decided to merge these committees into a single committee, the CER. This consolidation has created more consistency in approach and made communicating with the CanRC by other churches more efficient. As the committee consisted of 12 members, spread throughout Canada, most meetings took place via video conferencing. Maintaining the tradition of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA), in 2023 and 2024 two in-person meetings were held, the first in Manitoba, the second in Ontario. Both meetings spanned two days.

The reports before you cover the period the world came out of pandemic travel restrictions. Whereas during the period 2019-2022 there was little travel, during the period 2022-2025 there was an extra urge to see each other in person. As such, CER travel expenses are much higher for the period 2022-2025 compared with the combined CCCNA and CRCA travel expenses for the period 2019-2022.

Regarding this document, a few general pointers.

- Rather than submit a single report, we are submitting 25 reports; there is a report for each (set of) mandate(s) the CER has. This is to allow for every item to receive its own agenda number at general synod.
- Reports on ecumenical relations have tended to be long and, filled with acronyms and abbreviations, can be difficult to read. To facilitate the reading of the reports, we have included in each report a summary section at the start.
- In the digital version of the reports, the tags can be used for navigation.
- A list of acronyms and abbreviations used in this report can be found at the end of this collection of reports.

May the Lord continue to bless churches in their relationship with each other, as it displays the ever-expanding Kingdom of Christ and brings glory to our Triune God.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Gerrit Bos, Mr. Otto Bouwman, Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes, Mr. Harry de Boer, Mr. William Gortemaker, Rev. Marc Jagt, Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen, Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol, Mr. Henry Schouten, Rev. Dr. Jeff Temple, Rev. Carl Van Dam, Rev. Steve Vandevelde.

Current Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF)¹

For the sake of completeness and ease of reference, we reproduce the current rules for EF:

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 in principle open their pulpits for each other’s ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.*
- In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:*
6. *When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation can take place as possible before a final decision is taken.*
 7. *The churches shall receive each other’s delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to participate as much as local regulations permit.*

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¹ GS 1992 Art. 50 and updated thereafter. Republished as Appendix 30 in GS 2022 Acts.

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REPORT 1: GENERAL MANDATE

89 **Introduction**

90 Up until GS 2022 the CanRC were served by multiple committees in the exercise of ecumenical
91 relationships as per Church Order article 50 (CO art. 50). GS 2022 merged the then still existing
92 committees, the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact
93 with Churches in North America (CCCNA), into a single committee, the Committee on Ecumenical
94 Relations (CER).

95 **Summary of the Main Report**

96 Since GS 2022 the 12-member CER has met 14 times, 12 times via video conferencing and 2 times in-
97 person.

98 In a sense the CER is the “face” of the CanRC to the outside world. As such we sometimes receive
99 communications of various sorts from churches abroad. We do not report on every contact we have had.
100 There has been report-worthy interaction with the following churches: the Sudanese Reformed Churches
101 (SRC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW), and the Reformed Presbyterian
102 Church in Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE). Regarding these the CER has no specific
103 recommendations other than that it be noted these continue to be on the CER’s radar.

104 The reality of CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) restrictions on the funding of offshore projects by
105 Canadian charities continues to have the CER’s attention. Thankfully a solution has been found where
106 helping our sister churches in South Africa is concerned.

107 As per current practice (GS 2013 art. 177, Part 1.4), a confidential recommendation regarding
108 appointments will be submitted directly to GS 2025 at least 6 weeks before Synod convenes.

109 Practising interchurch relations globally requires finances. Our total costs for the 2.5 years in executing
110 the decisions of GS 2022 come to \$ 90,092.44. This does not yet include the costs related to NAPARC 2024.

111 **Decisions of GS 2022**

112 GS 2022 (art. 121) decided:

- 113 3.1 *To discharge all members of the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA)*
114 *and Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) from their present tasks;*
- 115 3.2 *To thank the following members of the CCCNA for their years of service to the churches: Rev. Doug*
116 *Vandeburgt, Henry van Delden, Les Vanderveen and Peter Veenendaal;*
- 117 3.3 *To thank the following member of the CRCA for his years of service to the churches: Rev. Arend*
118 *Witten;*
- 119 3.4 *To appoint twelve members to the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER);*
- 120 3.5 *To give the CER the following general mandate:*
 - 121 a) *To continue contact with churches with whom we are in ecumenical relations;*
 - 122 b) *To send an appropriate number of delegates to represent the CanRC churches at the*
123 *meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and North American*
124 *Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);*
 - 125 c) *To work in consultation with individual CanRC churches and classes that maintain contact*
126 *with churches for which the CER also has a mandate;*
 - 127 d) *Upon request, to advise CanRC churches regarding the identity of other churches and our*
128 *relationship with them;*
 - 129 e) *To report on any contact with a church with whom we are not in an ecumenical relationship;*
 - 130 f) *To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund*
131 *all expenses being submitted for committee work;*
 - 132 g) *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of general synod (a*

133 *supplementary report can be submitted if necessary);*
 134 h) *To facilitate hospitality support for fraternal delegates and observers, in consultation with*
 135 *the convening church, at each general synod.*

136 GS 2022 (art. 170) appointed the following twelve individuals to the CER:

137 2.3 *Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

138 2.3.1 *Gerrit Bos (2025), Otto Bouwman (2025), Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes (2034), Harry de Boer (2031),*
 139 *William Gortemaker (2034), Rev. Marc Jagt (2028), Rev. Karlo Janssen (2028) (Convener),*
 140 *Rev. Andrew Pol (2031), Henry Schouten (2028), Rev. Jeff Temple (2028), Rev. Carl Van Dam*
 141 *(2028), Rev. Steve Vandavelde (2028).*

142 **Execution of the Mandate**

143 With common accord the CER appointed Br. Bouwman as its chairman, Rev. Jagt as its vice chairman,
 144 Rev. Janssen as secretary, and Br. Schouten as treasurer to liaise with the General Fund.

145 For each mandate, a primary point-person and a partner were appointed. This was as follows:

Church / Body	Primary point-person	Partner
ARPC (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church)	Rev. Temple	Rev. Bruintjes
ERQ (Reformed Church in Quebec)	Br. Bos	Rev. Pol
FRCNA (Free Reformed Churches in North America)	Rev. Jagt	Rev. Janssen
HRCNA (Heritage Reformed Churches in Nth Am)	Rev. Jagt	Rev. Janssen
KPCA (Kosin) (Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin)	Rev. Bruintjes	Rev. Jagt
OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church)	Rev. Temple	Rev. Van Dam
RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States)	Br. Gortemaker	Rev. Vandavelde
RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church in Nth Am)	Rev. Vandavelde	Br. Bouwman
URCNA (United Reformed Churches in Nth Am)	Rev. Vandavelde	Br. Schouten
FRCA (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)	Rev. Van Dam	Br. De Boer
IRB (Reformed Churches of Brazil)	Br. Schouten	Br. Gortemaker
GGRCI (Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia)	Rev. Pol	Br. Bos
GGRI (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)	Rev. Pol	Br. Bos
GGRI-T (Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor)	Rev. Pol	Br. Bos
KPCK (Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea)	Rev. Bruintjes	Rev. Jagt
DGK (The Reformed Churches [The Netherlands])	Rev. Janssen	Br. De Boer
GKN (Reformed Churches The Netherlands)	Rev. Janssen	Br. De Boer
RCNZ (Reformed Churches of New Zealand)	Br. Schouten	Rev. Vandavelde
FCC (Free Church of Scotland – Continuing)	Br. Bouwman	Rev. Van Dam
FCS (Free Church of Scotland)	Br. Bouwman	Rev. Van Dam
FRCSA (Free Reformed Churches in South Africa)	Rev. Bruintjes	Rev. Temple
NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)	Rev. Jagt	Br. Bouwman
ICRC (International Council of Reformed Churches)	Rev. Temple	Rev. Janssen

146 The CER is at times assisted by non-members in the execution of its mandates. With gratitude we
 147 mention in particular the involvement of Rev. Henderik Versteeg (Indonesia) and Rev. Jan de Gelder (New
 148 Zealand).

149 The CER met on the following dates:

- 150 • In 2022 on June 21, August 23, and November 2
- 151 • In 2023 on January 11, March 22-23, May 31, September 13, and October 25
- 152 • In 2024 on January 30-31, March 7, April 24, June 10, September 18&25, and October 9.

153 One more meeting is planned for early 2025, with a view to nominations for new committee members
154 and arrangements for CER responsibilities during GS 2025.

155 Due to the geographic spread of CER members, most meetings were held via video conferencing. The
156 meetings on March 22-23, 2023, and January 30-31, 2024, were held in-person. Some business was also
157 conducted via email.

158 All sister churches and other churches with whom we maintain contact were informed of the decisions
159 of GS 2022, specifically any decisions that regarded them.

160 ***Interactions with churches not part of our mandate***

161 Sometimes the CER interacts with churches for whom there is no specific synod mandate. This is
162 covered by a general mandate (GS 2022 art. 121 decision 3.5e). Regarding such contacts, we report the
163 following:

164 **Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC):** The SRC sent us a letter requesting a formal relationship with us.
165 CanRC delegates to the ICRC in 2022 met with SRC delegates. Sensing that the SRC were primarily looking
166 for various forms of assistance, which are not part of our mandate, we advised the SRC to look in its own
167 context for relationships. Our understanding is that the SRC has some sort of relationship with several
168 ICRC member churches including the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
169 (OPC), and the United Reformed Churches (URCNA).

170 **Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW):** The EPCEW are more or less the
171 equivalent of the OPC in England and Wales. This small federation had a warm relationship with the
172 Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) in the past but had to cut ties with the GKv. It is
173 a long-standing member of the ICRC and involved in many ecumenical activities in Europe. Among others,
174 the EPCEW has EF with the OPC. We recently became aware that the contacts between the EPCEW and
175 the newly formed GK are intensifying. At the ICRC 2022 our delegates met formally with the EPCEW
176 delegates.

177 **Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE):** The RPCCEE, with churches
178 in Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine, came onto our radar via the ICRC, the fact that it became a channel
179 for funds from the CRWRF (Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund) for aid to Ukrainian refugees, and the
180 reality that two members of the CER were personally well-acquainted with these churches. The RPCCEE
181 was admitted into ICRC membership in 2022. Though limited in resources, the RPCCEE is active in seeking
182 out relationships in its geographic context. The OPC and URCNA are intensifying their contact with the
183 RPCCEE. We recently became aware that the contacts between the RPCCEE and the newly formed GK are
184 intensifying. At the ICRC 2022 our delegates met formally with the RPCCEE delegates.

185 ***Study Mandate re the Exercise of Interchurch Relations***

186 Following an in-person meeting in March 2023, a two-man team consisting of Rev. Jagt and Rev.
187 Janssen was appointed to draft recommendations re the text of CO art. 50. A four-man team consisting of
188 Rev. Van Dam, Rev. Temple, Br. Bos, and Br. Schouten was appointed to draft recommendations re the
189 Rules for Ecumenical Relations. Initial drafts were presented during earlier CER meetings. In January 2024
190 the CER met in-person for two days in Ontario, during which both reports were discussed at length by the
191 whole committee. Final drafts were prepared. These were then sent to our sister churches for input.
192 Several acknowledged receipt of the material and appreciation for it. Two, the FRCA and FRCSA, submitted
193 a substantial response. This led to a further clarification of some matters in the draft reports.

194 ***Interaction with churches and classes***

195 As per its mandate, the CER reached out to the eight classes within the CanRC to be informed of their
196 ecumenical activities so that we might be aware where consultation might be required. We received the
197 information we requested from all the classes. This general synod mandate appears to have encouraged

198 classes to ensure a measure of deliberateness where ecumenical relations are concerned. We have great
 199 appreciation for the activities of our smallest classis, Classis Manitoba. In general it would seem that there
 200 is an increase in interchurch relations activity at the grassroots level of local church and classes, especially
 201 where NAPARC member churches are concerned.

202 **General Matters**

203 **Restrictions on the use of Canadian funds outside Canada**

204 The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will not allow Canadian charities to fund offshore projects unless
 205 the funding charity has control of the project. As CanRCs are charitable organizations, this reality limits
 206 providing assistance to churches abroad. We understand this has played or is playing a role in two
 207 Presbyterian churches in North America, dividing their churches into a US and a Canadian church: the
 208 RPCNA forming the RPCC in March 2023, and the ARPC to form the ARPC-Canada in 2025. This restriction
 209 on funding has had consequences for our relationship with our sister churches in South Africa, the Free
 210 Reformed Churches (FRCSA). Thankfully, a manner has been found in which the CanRC can financially
 211 assist the FRCSA. We note that this restriction may also have consequences for our relationship with other
 212 sister churches, such as those in Brazil and Indonesia.

213 **Finances**

214 The CER has maintained a record of its costs over the period since GS 2022. Br. Schouten was appointed
 215 as verifier of claims and liaison with the General Fund treasurer. We are grateful to the treasurer, sr.
 216 Kooiker, for the very prompt manner in which reimbursements are issued.

217 All the costs of CER relate to visits made and meetings held in accordance with the various mandates
 218 given us by GS 2022. We note that GS 2016 explicitly stated in a number of decisions that a sister church
 219 relationship cannot be considered meaningful if we do not regularly send a delegation to the broadest
 220 assembly of a sister church (e.g. GS 2016 art. 45 rec. 4.2.1). “Regularly” is understood to mean once every
 221 three years.

222 Our total costs for the period June 2022 – October 2024 come to: \$ 90,092.44 (not yet including costs
 223 connected with NAPARC 2024). If a comparison is made with the period 2019-2022, the comparison would
 224 be with the costs of the CCCNA and CRCA together; that comparison would be skewed, though, by travel
 225 restrictions in place for much of that period. We observe that since the pandemic, travel costs have
 226 increased substantially. If a comparison is made with the period 2016-2019, the comparison would be
 227 with the combined costs of the CCCNA, CRCA, SRN-CRCA (The Netherlands sub-committee), and CCU
 228 (Committee for Church Unity).

229 **Appointments**

230 Between GS 2022 and GS 2025 the following brothers served on the CER.

Name	Year to retire	Name	Year to retire
G. Bos	2025	S.C. Van Dam	2028
O. Bouwman	2025	S. Vandeveldde	2028
M. Jagt	2028	H. de Boer	2031
R.C. Janssen	2028	A.J. Pol	2031
H. Schouten	2028	G. Bruintjes	2034
J. Temple	2028	W. Gortemaker	2034

231 GS 2022 merged the CRCA, consisting of 7 members, and CCNA, consisting of 8 members, into the CER,
 232 consisting of 12 members. It also determined that members could serve for a maximum of 12 consecutive
 233 years.

234 The merging of the CRCA and CCCNA has worked very profitably. Processes have streamlined by using

235 the best from the two former committees. There is far more consistency in the exercise of ecumenical
236 relations with churches in North America and churches beyond North America. Other churches have
237 expressed appreciation for the fact that there is now one address for them to go to for contact and
238 consultation.

239 For the sake of consistency in practices and for the sake of experience and up-to-date knowledge in
240 ecumenical relationships, it is important that every relationship the CanRC has with another church is
241 overseen by a member on the CER. Should synod decide to an increased number of relationships for the
242 committee to deal with, or an intensification of existing relationships, we note that this also means an
243 increased workload. We do recognize that it is not necessary for only CER members to be delegated to
244 sister churches on behalf of the CanRC.

245 Most meetings of the CER took place via videoconferencing on Wednesday mornings for 2–3 hours,
246 even when CER members were abroad. That has worked very well. A good working relationship was
247 fostered by organizing two in-person meetings lasting the better part of two days. This experience
248 suggests that appointment to the CER need not take the location of the appointee into consideration,
249 which in turn implies that consideration should be given to appointing individuals from across the
250 federation (including Alberta).

251 Regarding appointments to the CER by GS 2025, the following observations should be taken into
252 consideration:

- 253 1. Ideally the CER would consist of 6 ministers and 6 non-ministers. Currently it consists of 7 ministers
254 and 5 non-ministers.
- 255 2. Half of the current CER members are to retire in 2028.

256 The CER will be sending a confidential letter to GS 2025 with recommendations of related to
257 retirements from the committee and who could be appointed to the CER to fill possible vacancies.

258 ***Recommendations***

259 The CER recommends that synod decide the following:

260 To give the CER the following general mandate:

- 261 1. To continue contact with churches with whom we are in ecumenical relations according to
262 the adopted rules;
- 263 2. To convey the relevant decisions of general synods to churches with whom we have an
264 ecumenical relation;
- 265 3. To work in consultation with individual CanRC churches and classes that maintain contact
266 with churches for which the CER also has a mandate;
- 267 4. Upon request, to advise CanRC churches regarding the identity of other churches and our
268 relationship with them;
- 269 5. To report on any contact with a church with whom we are not in an ecumenical
270 relationship;
- 271 6. To appoint one of its members to validate and submit to the treasurer of the General Fund
272 all expenses being submitted for committee work;
- 273 7. To submit its report on the general mandate to the churches 6 months prior to the
274 convening of general synod (a supplementary report can be submitted if necessary);
- 275 8. To facilitate hospitality support for fraternal delegates and observers, in consultation with
276 the convening church, at the next general synod.

277 **Grounds:**

- 278 1. Re 1: As the CER proposal re Rules for Ecumenical Relations have been adopted, the general
279 mandate broadens somewhat in scope. It is wise to then specify in the mandate the existence of
280 these rules. Hence the phrase “according to the adopted rules” has been added.
- 281 2. Re 2: This is in line with past practice: it works better if the CER rather than the Second Clerk

- 282 communicates these decisions.
283 3. Re 3: Consultation between the synod appointed committee and the classes (be it directly or via
284 their committees) will encourage consistency and efficiency in ecumenical relations.
285 4. Re 4: Because of its activities, the CER is a knowledge bank of the identity of other churches and
286 understands possible CanRC sensitivities. As such, the CER can serve the CanRCs well in an
287 advisory capacity.
288 5. Re 5: The CER is the face of the CanRC and other churches will most likely approach it, rather
289 than a local church, for a relationship.
290 6. Re 6: as per GS 2022 art. 32 dec. 3.7.
291 7. Re 7: interchurch relations is an ongoing activity, implying that there may be matters that take
292 place in the six months prior to synod convening regarding which synod should be informed.
293 8. Re 8: as per GS 2022 art. 108 dec. 3.6 & 3.7.

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REPORT 2: CER STUDY MANDATE

Introduction

GS 2019 gave the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) a study mandate. The CRCA and CCCNA reported to GS 2022. This general synod decided the following relevant for this report:

3. Decisions

Synod decided:

3.8 *To request the CER to further consider the mandate of GS 2019 (art. 149 rec. 4.1.1), specifically taking into account the input received from the churches in response to the majority and minority reports regarding the matters of:*

3.8.1 *Categories of Ecumenical Relationships (Recommendation 1);*

3.8.2 *Rules for Ecumenical Relationships (Recommendation 2);*

3.8.3 *Revision of Church Order Article 50 (Recommendation 3):*

3.8.3.1 *To consider, if a change to CO Art. 50 is deemed necessary, whether this should be initiated by a local church;*

3.9 *To request the CER:*

3.9.1 *To ensure that rule 6 of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship is honoured;*

3.9.2 *To demonstrate in its report the consistency of its proposals with Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.*

4. Grounds

4.2 *Re 3.8, 3.9:*

4.2.1 *Opportunity was not afforded to the members of the committees to fully interact with both the Majority and Minority Reports before they were submitted to GS 2022.*

4.2.2 *Though much work has been done, there are matters in the report that appear unfinished and could lead to unintended consequences. For example, see letter of Ancaster (8.3.1.1) which indicates that there may be unintentional loss of pulpit fellowship for foreign churches who had an EF relationship but have been moved to Corresponding Relationship.*

4.2.3 *Adopting a new structure for ecclesiastical relations is very significant for the churches. Though some churches speak of a local urgency, the weightiness of this matter and the significant amount of feedback received from the churches calls for prudence.*

4.2.4 *Re 3.9.1: it was ascertained that the adopted Rules for EF were not fully followed. Rule 6 states “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”.*

4.2.5 *Re 3.9.2: it is important that the churches understand the rationale of any proposed changes.*

The CER divided the work between two sub-committees, one on Church Order Article 50 (subsection A), the other on Rules for Ecclesiastical Relations (subsection B). The work of these two sub-committees was repeatedly evaluated by the CER as a whole. The CER reports the following in fulfilment of the study mandate it was given by GS 2022.

338 **A: Study Mandate re Church Order Article 50**

339 **Background**

340 Our current Church Order Article 50 (hereafter: CO Art. 50), reads:

341 **Article 50: Churches Abroad**

342 *The relation with churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod. With foreign*
343 *churches of Reformed confession a sister-church relationship shall be maintained as much*
344 *as possible. On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad*
345 *shall not be rejected.*

346 In response to a request from the CRCA and CCCNA, as well as observations from the churches noting
347 that the ecclesiastical landscape of the 21st century differs from that of the 17th, GS 2019 instructed both
348 the CRCA and CCCNA to “do a thorough study on how CO Art. 50 can best be executed in today’s
349 ecclesiastical realities.” ([GS 2019 art. 149](#))

350 Two reports were written to the next Synod (majority and minority). There was agreement on the
351 proposed revision to Art. 50. This read as follows:

352 *“Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered*
353 *into where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by*
354 *general synod. Minor differences on points of doctrine, worship and governance should not*
355 *be an obstacle to ecumenical relationships.”*

356 For a description of the reasoning underlying this proposed revision, see Appendix 1 to this subsection
357 of the report.

358 Of the 44 submissions from the churches on this report considered by GS 2022 ([art. 108 mat. 1.3](#)), 16
359 interacted with this proposal.

- 360 - Seven letters expressed complete approval of the recommendation;
- 361 - Two letters expressed conditional approval of the recommendation;
- 362 - Three letters expressed partial approval and partial disapproval of the recommendation;
- 363 - Four letters expressed complete disapproval of the recommendation.

364 In light of these responses, GS 2022 ([art. 108](#)) gave the CER the following mandate:

365 *3.8 To request the CER to further consider the mandate of GS 2019 ([art. 149 rec. 4.1.1](#)), specifically*
366 *taking into account the input received from the churches in response to the majority and minority*
367 *reports regarding the matters of:*

368 *3.8.3 Revision of Church Order Article 50 (Recommendation 3):*

369 *3.8.3.1 To consider, if a change to CO Art. 50 is deemed necessary, whether this should be*
370 *initiated by a local church;*

371 **Matters raised by churches to GS 2022**

372 Surveying the submissions to GS 2022, we note the following relevant areas of concern:

- 373 1. The expressions “churches abroad” and “foreign churches” in the current CO Article 50
- 374 2. Whether it is appropriate for a committee to suggest revision of the Church Order on its own
375 initiative (see also [GS 2022 art. 108 dec. 3.8.3.1](#))
- 376 3. The phrase “minor differences on points of doctrine”
- 377 4. Who or what determines what is “minor” and what is “major” given the expression “minor
378 differences on points of doctrine, worship, and governance” in the proposed text.
- 379 5. The phrase “according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod”
- 380 6. The expression “should not be”

381

382 **Proposal to GS 2025**

383 Having considered the matters raised by churches to GS 2022, the CER is now proposing the following
384 revised version of CO Art. 50:

385 ***Article 50: Ecumenical Relationships***

386 *Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into*
387 *where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by*
388 *general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall*
389 *not be rejected.*

390 The first sentence of this newly proposed version is identical to that proposed to GS 2022. The second
391 sentence differs from that proposed to GS 2022.

392 **Rationale**

393 The following rationale underlies the above proposal and is the CER’s response to matters raised by the
394 churches.

395 ***1. Is the ecclesiastical route required for revision of the Church Order?***

396 In its submission to GS 2022, one church stated: “While a proposal from a committee to change the
397 church order may be efficient, we do not find it appropriate, especially as it was not in their original
398 mandate.” It provided the following reasoning: “Following this process ensures that local churches can
399 give the proposed changes due attention through their work in the minor assemblies.” Further, GS 2022
400 gave the CER the mandate: “To consider, if a change to CO Art. 50 is deemed necessary, whether this
401 should be initiated by a local church.”

402 We first consider **the procedural question** of whether the CRCA and CCCNA had a mandate to consider
403 possible revision of CO Art. 50. We note three matters:

- 404 1. GS 2019 received a report from the CRCA and CCCNA requesting a study mandate. One
405 consideration for requesting that study mandate was: “The study should result in
406 recommendations as to how the findings of the study might become part of our ecclesiastical
407 regulations (e.g. **Church Order**, Rules for EF, Synod Guidelines).” (emphasis added) (*Combined*
408 *CRCA-CCCNA Report to GS 2019*, Consideration 6).
- 409 2. Toronto-Bethel’s submission to GS 2019 (agenda item 8.3.2.4) observed:
410 *4. While our practice and rules consider Article 50 of the Church Order to cover local ecclesiastical*
411 *fellowship, it speaks of “churches abroad” and “foreign churches.”*
412 *5. It is not clear that our church order explicitly governs fellowship with other Continental church*
413 *federations.*
- 414 3. GS 2019 included in its mandate: *Do a thorough study on how CO Art. 50 can best be executed in*
415 *today’s ecclesiastical realities. The items flagged in Observations 2.2-5 should be incorporated*
416 *into the study.* Observation 2.2 is the combined CRCA-CCCNA report and observation 2.3 is the
417 submission from the church just quoted.

418 The CRCA & CCCNA of 2019-2022 felt their mandate was broad enough to allow for recommending
419 revisions of CO Art. 50. We believe this is reasonable, for the 2019 CRCA-CCCNA report proposing that the
420 study might recommend changes to the Church Order had been seen by all the churches. Out of 44
421 submissions, only one church flagged a procedural concern here in 2022. We as CER believe the mandate
422 was sufficiently broad, although, with hindsight, we realize it would have been wiser if this had been
423 stated more explicitly.

424 We note that, if the original mandate would be deemed too narrow to allow for a committee proposal
425 to change the church order, this would be true for all proposed changes, including that addressed in point
426 2 below (removing the words “foreign” and “abroad”).

427 We next consider **the ecclesiastical route** as substantial argumentation. It was said that following the

428 ecclesiastical route “ensures that local churches give the proposed changes due attention through their
429 work in the minor assemblies.”

430 We observe that going the ecclesiastical route gives local churches more opportunity to give proposed
431 changes due attention than by way of committee report. However, that is only true for those local
432 churches that are part of the minor assemblies considering the overture. Roughly half the local churches
433 would not see the proposal (aka overture) until it has been adopted by a regional synod and distributed
434 no less than 5 months prior to a general synod.

435 We further observe that the CRCA and CCCNA, recognizing the importance of the study report, made it
436 available to the local churches not 6 months, as mandated, but already 9 months prior to GS 2022. All
437 local churches thus had ample opportunity to give the report due attention. Indeed, local churches could
438 even consult formally with each other at a classis regarding the report, something that would be difficult
439 to do if the report had been submitted by the deadline set for this report (early November 2022), and
440 near impossible if the deadline for the ecclesiastical route is followed (as November would then be
441 December).

442 With a view to current standing decisions on the ecclesiastical route we note:

- 443 1. The process of allowing a synod committee to recommend a change to the Church Order does
444 not sideline the churches but involves them all equally and properly (as per [GS 2010 art. 62 cons.
445 3.4-6 and rec. 4.2](#))²
- 446 2. As GS 2019 had mandated the study, the ecclesiastical route was not needed to “eliminate
447 unnecessary matters before synod” (as per [GS 2013 art. 99 cons. 3.2 & 3.4](#))

448 We observe that there is no precedent since the “ecclesiastical route” was codified at GS 2013 and there
449 are no examples since then of changes to the Church Order being made other than via the route of an
450 overture. We also note, however, that a change to the Confessions was adopted at the proposal of a synod
451 committee, without the change originating with a local church or going the ecclesiastical route.³ As a
452 change to the text of the confession is of greater weight than a change to the text of the Church Order,
453 and since it was permitted to change the text of a confession upon the proposal of a committee, we hold
454 it should be permitted to change the text of the Church Order upon the proposal of a committee as
455 mandated by synod.

456 **2. The expressions “churches abroad” and “foreign churches”**

457 In a letter to GS 2019, Toronto-Bethel noted that the expression “foreign churches” requires revision.
458 Four of our sister churches – the ERQ, OPC, RCUS, and URCNA – are found in Canada and the USA, and
459 thus do not qualify as “foreign” but “domestic.”

460 One submission to GS 2022 explicitly expressed agreement with the intention of removing the words
461 “abroad” and “foreign” and, on this point, proposed wording identical to that of the reports.

462 The recommendation of the CRCA-CCCNA reports to GS 2022 suggested that the first two sentences be
463 merged into one, that the expression “the relation with churches abroad” be replaced with “ecumenical
464 relations” and that the expression “foreign churches of Reformed confession” be replaced with “other
465 churches of Reformed confession”.

466 **3. The phrase “minor points of doctrine”**

467 Several submissions, some in quite strong language, objected to the idea that there could be “minor
468 points of doctrine.” Others indicated, at least by implication, that they are fine with this idea.

469 The CER carefully weighed the concerns expressed by some churches. In substance, the qualifier “of
470 Reformed confession” in the expression “ecumenical relations with other churches of Reformed

² Though GS 2013 (art. 99) rescinded the decision of GS 2010, it did not disagree with the principle articulated in the referenced text of GS 2010.

³ See [GS 2019 art. 145 cons. 3.8 and rec. 4.2.7](#).

471 confession” indicates that the confessions of the churches express the boundaries. The confessions guide
 472 us in determining what is major and what is minor. Our reluctance to binding beyond the confessions is
 473 displayed in The Liberation (1944) in The Netherlands and subsequent interactions in North America with
 474 the Christian Reformed Churches and Protestant Reformed Churches, interactions that eventually led to
 475 the formation of the Canadian Reformed Churches as a distinct federation of churches.

476 In our past, establishing relationships with other churches has always involved discussing differences
 477 in confession (aka divergencies), implying the reality of minor points of doctrine as per current EF Rules 1
 478 & 6.⁴ The weight of these points of difference has been determined by ecclesiastical assemblies. The CER
 479 therefore believes there is no need to codify our current practice any further by adding a phrase into the
 480 Church Order. Hence the CER is no longer proposing to include the phrase “minor points of doctrine” in
 481 the text of CO Art. 50.

482 **4. “Minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice”**

483 The CER is suggesting a linguistic revision of the expression “Church Order”. The expression “Church
 484 Order” has a “Dort” ring to it (e.g., note the capitalization) that could suggest that one’s basis is to be
 485 taken in the Church Order of Dort. With Belgic Confession Art. 32, however, we confess that it is good for
 486 “those who govern to establish a certain order”; the indefinite article “a” before “certain order” indicates
 487 that various orders are possible. One such order is the Westminster Form of Government. To be clear
 488 about the fact that CO Art. 50 is speaking of the government of the church, we recommend replacing the
 489 expression “Church Order” with “ecclesiastical governance.”

490 For the sake of completeness, we note that the expression “ecclesiastical practice”, given its history,
 491 refers to worship practices. We also note that in the expression “ecclesiastical governance and practice”
 492 the adjective “ecclesiastical” modifies both “governance” and “practice”.

493 **5. “According to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod.”**

494 Currently CO Art. 50 stipulates that “the relation with churches abroad **shall be regulated by general**
 495 **synod.**” This is frequently understood to mean that only a general synod actually deals with relations with
 496 other churches. However, the expression “to regulate” means “to determine the process”. It may, but
 497 does not necessarily include, the exercise of the process. For example, although general synods regulate
 498 aspects of eligibility for call to the ministry, they do not exercise this; classes do (cf. CO Article 4.B.2).

499 The CRCA-CCCNA Majority Report, given requests from local churches, recommended a process that
 500 would involve classes as well. To make sure that a certain interpretation of CO Art. 50 would not be used
 501 to make this illegitimate, the phrasing “according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod”
 502 was proposed. This maintains the principle that the churches in common (assembled in general synod)
 503 determine the *process* for ecumenical relations, while it is clearer that, besides general synods, classes
 504 also can be involved in the *execution* of that process. Hence, the CER is again recommending this phrasing.

505 Regarding this revision, one church wrote: “Not to change Art 50 of the CO. We would be forced into
 506 having to refer to ‘the rules adopted for this purpose’. In essence this would increase the scope of Art 50
 507 far beyond what we have now.” In response, we note that we already operate by adopted rules: the Rules
 508 for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. As such the revision would not increase the scope of Art 50 far beyond what
 509 we have now. The scope is not being increased; rather, the scope of the existing article is being clarified.

510 **6. “Should not be” or “shall not be”**

511 The current CO Art. 50 stipulates “On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practices

⁴ EF Rule 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. EF Rule 6: In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following: 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.

512 churches **shall** not be rejected.” The version proposed to GS 2022 suggested: “Minor differences on points
513 of doctrine, worship and governance **should** not be an obstacle to entering into ecumenical relationships
514 with these churches.” In response, one church suggested that the phrase “minor differences” is already
515 “vague language” and “should” is vague as well. The church suggested using “shall”, “must”, or “as in
516 other CO articles, ‘as a rule’ to indicate a very strong preference without binding.”

517 We recognize that “should” can indeed be considered rather vague. We suggest sticking with the word
518 “shall”, as it is also used elsewhere in the Church Order. We feel that adding the phrase “as a rule”
519 reintroduces a vagueness that will make the application of this article problematic.

520 We therefore recommend sticking with “shall”, without adding any modifiers.

521 **Recommendation**

522 The CER thus recommends:

523 That Synod decide:

524 1. To adopt the following text for Church Order article 50:

525 ***Article 50: Ecumenical Relationships***

526 *Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into*
527 *where feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by*
528 *general synod. On minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice churches shall*
529 *not be rejected.*

530 **Grounds:**

- 531 1. Re process: The CRCA and CCCNA requested GS 2019 to mandate a study report that could lead
532 to recommendations to revise the church order. The churches were fully involved in weighing
533 this mandate in the run-up to GS 2019, and in weighing the recommendation in the run-up to GS
534 2022. Further, GS 2019 ([art. 145](#)) adopted a revision of the confessions without this originating
535 with the churches via an overture. There is, thus, no need for this revision of CO Art. 50 to follow
536 the ecclesiastical route.
- 537 2. Re “abroad” and “foreign”: these terms do not adequately or accurately cover sister church
538 relationships. The expressions “ecumenical relations” (to replace “the relation with churches
539 abroad”) and “other churches of Reformed Confession” (to replace “foreign churches of
540 Reformed Confession”) do so better.
- 541 3. Re “rules adopted for this purpose”: it is the role of general synods to determine the process for
542 ecumenical relations but it is not necessarily their task to exercise and supervise all ecumenical
543 relations.
- 544 4. Re “minor points of ecclesiastical governance and practice”: this wording is a linguistic
545 improvement to “minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice.”
- 546 5. Re “should or “shall”: the text of the church order ought not to be vague. Thus, it is better to
547 retain “shall” than to introduce “should”.

548

549 **Appendix 1 to Sub-report A: Proposal to GS 2022 re CO Article 50**

550 Following are the sections of the CRCA-CCCNA Study Report submitted to GS 2022 that are relevant to
551 the text that was proposed for CO Article 50.

552

553 **B2. Church Order**

554 *Given the results of our study of how CO 50 can be best executed in today’s ecumenical realities it is*
555 *apparent that the current wording of the article is dated and that a revision is warranted. At present this*
556 *article reads, “The relation with churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod. With foreign*
557 *churches of Reformed confession a sister-church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. On*
558 *minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.”*

559 *A revision is warranted in the following areas:*

- 560 1. The designation of other churches as “churches abroad” and “foreign churches” does not reflect
561 the reality that we have numerous relationships that involve churches that are both “foreign”
562 and “domestic”.³⁰
- 563 2. The term “sister-church relationship” does not reflect the spectrum of the ecumenical
564 relationships that we presently have.
- 565 3. The phrase “minor points” needs reformulation to fit our current context. That current context
566 217 is that minor differences on points of doctrine, worship and governance should not be an
567 obstacle to ecumenical relationships. Regarding the triad “doctrine, worship, and governance”
568 we note:
 - 569 a. These reflect the three marks of the true church (BC article 29)
 - 570 b. Including a reference to “doctrine” reflects the position we have come to while we discussed
571 “divergencies” and “differences” with other churches.³¹
 - 572 c. “Worship” and “governance” reflects “Church Order and ecclesiastical practice”
 - 573 d. The phrase “Reformed confession” in the first sentence points out the standard for determining
574 whether something is “minor” or not.

575 -----[begin footnotes]

576 ³⁰ For example, the ERQ, RCUS, and OPC.

577 ³¹ GS 2007 art. 80.4.6 stated: “The [CRCA] correctly observes that the goal of growing together in
578 the unity of faith can be pursued under [EF Rules]. Existing differences in confession and polity have not
579 proven to be impediments for [EF]. Thus, within the context of [EF], the one can learn from the other
580 about varying legitimate ways to summarize God’s Word and how to put into practice its principles,
581 understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each. We can also learn from each other about other
582 matters of common concern which develop from time to time in the life of the churches. From such
583 interaction, as opportunities arise, each federation can sharpen the other as iron sharpens iron.” For a
584 broader description see the “Historical Overview”. [end of footnotes]

585 -----[end footnotes]

586 **C3 Revision of Church Order article 50**

587 *We recommend that CO 50 be reworded as follows:*

588 *Ecumenical relationships with other churches of Reformed confession shall be entered into where*
589 *feasible and be maintained according to the rules adopted for this purpose by general synod. Minor*
590 *differences on points of doctrine, worship and governance should not be an obstacle to entering into*
591 *ecumenical relationships with these churches.*

592

593 ***B: Study Mandate re Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship***

594 **Introduction**

595 General Synod 2019 (Edmonton-Immanuel) mandated the then two ecumenical committees (CRCA
596 and CCCNA) to undertake a thorough study on how best to carry out Church Order Article 50 in our current
597 ecclesiastical context (Acts, art. 149, 4.1.1.) In carrying out this mandate, the committees presented
598 General Synod 2022 (Guelph-Emmanuel) with both a majority and a minority report. In response, GS 2022
599 gave the Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) a mandate to submit a report which interacts with
600 the input received from the churches' responses to the majority and minority reports.⁵

601 To that end, this report begins by briefly outlining some Scriptural principles regarding the church-
602 gathering work of Jesus Christ, of which we are called to be a part. We will then discuss a number of the
603 challenges and considerations with which the committee wrestled as we sought to fulfill our mandate.
604 Finally, this report contains a number of recommendations for moving forward in our current ecclesiastical
605 context.

606 **Scriptural Principles**

607 Our Lord Jesus Christ gathers his church throughout all times and places. The Canadian and American
608 Reformed Churches are privileged to be part of this one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Jesus is the
609 Good Shepherd of his sheep, gathering lost sinners to listen to his voice, and so forming one flock with
610 one Shepherd (John 10:16). In his High Priestly prayer, Jesus also prayed for the unity of his people, the
611 church. In that prayer, he petitioned his Father that “they may become perfectly one, so that the world
612 may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me” (John 17:23).

613 Since this church-gathering work is the work of the Triune God himself, the scope of that work is far
614 greater than our ability to fully perceive or comprehend. Nevertheless, we must strive to give expression
615 to the unity that believers have in Christ by entering into relationships with other faithful churches when
616 it is consistent with biblical unity and truth. In so doing, we demonstrate that believers throughout this
617 world are united in Christ and that this unity exists despite historical, cultural, and geographical
618 differences.

619 In Ephesians 4, Paul articulates another principle regarding the unity of Christ's people. This epistle
620 was written to the saints in Ephesus and, therefore, to believers who lived in a particular local context. In
621 this letter Paul urges the Ephesian believers to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of
622 peace. There is one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all”
623 (Eph 4:3-6). Thus, even in local circumstances, where there may be considerable diversity among believers

⁵ The full wording of GS 2022 on this point is as follows:

Article 108 – CRCA-CCCNA Study Reports on the Execution of CO Art. 50

3.8 To request the CER to further consider the mandate of GS 2019 (Art. 149 rec. 4.1.1), specifically taking into account the input received from the churches in response to the majority and minority reports regarding the matters of:

3.8.1 Categories of Ecumenical Relationships (Recommendation 1);

3.8.2 Rules for Ecumenical Relationships (Recommendation 2);

3.8.3 Revision of Church Order Article 50 (Recommendation 3):

3.8.3.1 To consider, if a change to CO Art. 50 is deemed necessary, whether this should be initiated by a local church;

3.9 To request the CER:

3.9.1 To ensure that rule 6 of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship is honoured;

3.9.2 To demonstrate in its report the consistency of its proposals with Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.

624 with many and varied gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-30), there remains an urgent call to express
625 and maintain the unity that believers have in Christ.

626 The unity of believers, therefore, exists both on a local level as well as throughout the world. Though
627 we are a weak and finite people who dwell in the midst of a broken world, these principles must govern
628 and direct our efforts to manifest our unity with fellow believers. Furthermore, our LORD calls us to
629 proceed in faith, trusting him to bless our efforts to fulfill his desire that we be one.

630 It should be noted, however, that although the work of establishing and maintaining our ecclesiastical
631 relationships must be conducted considering the above-mentioned principles, many of the matters under
632 consideration in the following report are matters of practical wisdom; the Scriptures do not always
633 provide us with specific direction regarding how such matters should be handled. We know, for instance,
634 that we have been called to visibly manifest the global catholicity of the church. The Scriptures, however,
635 do not contain a blueprint which precisely defines how those relationships can best be organized and
636 maintained. Equally, the Scriptures do not specifically reveal how we can resolve the inescapable tension
637 that results from maintaining relationships at both the local and the federative level. Practical wisdom will
638 also need to guide us as we think about what is feasible and edifying, given the finite resources and
639 capabilities of local congregations within the federation.

640 Moving forward, then, we must acknowledge that it will not always be possible, or wise, to attempt to
641 justify decisions of practical wisdom with specific references to Scripture, the confessions, or the Church
642 Order. Rather, as we advance, we will need to be dependent on Spirit-led wisdom and faith, trusting that
643 Christ himself will bless and sanctify our sincere desire to obey His commands. We can also learn from
644 past ecclesiastical decisions and seek advice from one another. “Where there is no guidance, a people
645 falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14)

646 **Challenges and Considerations**

647 ***Goals & Outcomes***

648 A survey of decisions made by past general synods⁶ will show that, as a federation, we have not always
649 had a clear or consistent view of what we hope to achieve in and through our ecclesiastical relationships.
650 This appears to be a consequence of the apparent tension between principled desires and practical
651 realities.

652 Our efforts to manifest the unity of Christ’s church are often obstructed by the realities of life in a vast
653 and broken world. In this respect, history and experience have shown that the goal of uniting separate
654 federations (each with its own history and, often, distinctives) has proven exceedingly difficult to achieve.
655 Differences in geography, language, culture, and history often prove to be significant barriers to achieving
656 a fully integrated union between faithful federations. Consequently, it is difficult to anticipate achieving a
657 full federative union with many of the federations with which we have EF. Indeed, with respect to
658 federations such as the ERQ and the RCUS, past general synods have explicitly stated that pursuing such
659 union would be neither feasible, nor desirable (ERQ: [GS 2001 art. 22](#); RCUS: [GS 1992 art. 79](#)).

660 Moving forward, then, there is a need to acknowledge this tension. Certainly, our LORD’s desire to see
661 his people bound together in him and in true faith must continue to be our guiding principle and hearts’
662 desire. Our prayer must be that the Holy Spirit would grant us the wisdom we need to reckon with these
663 realities.

⁶ To provide historical context for this topic, committee member Rev. Janssen engaged in an extensive historical review of decisions related to ecumenical relationships taken by our general synods since the establishment of our federation. Titled “Historical Overview of the Exercise of CO Article 50 by the CanRC”, it documents the varied and sometimes contradictory approaches our synods have taken. Should readers wish to access this material, the study is available at www.officebearers.com under TOPICS.

664 ***The Current Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship***

665 Our current rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship have been in place since 1992. Within the framework of
666 those rules, there is only one official category of ecumenical relationship that can be established – which
667 is that of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF). The challenge, however, is that, increasingly, the ‘one-size-fits-all’
668 approach does not mesh well with our contemporary ecclesiastical context.

669 This challenge is not necessarily a new one. A review of decisions made by past General Synods will
670 show that, as a federation, there have been times when there has been a need to define what it means
671 to be in EF in a number of different ways.⁷ Nevertheless, this challenge has been felt more acutely in
672 recent years as our churches have become more integrated into their particular communities and regional
673 ecclesiastical landscapes.

674 ***History, Culture & Context***

675 As a consequence of a range of historical and contextual realities, we are not always able to maintain
676 the same degree of interaction with every federation with which we have contact. The reasons for this
677 are varied. At times, geographical distance prohibits more frequent interaction. In other instances,
678 linguistic or cultural differences may restrict the possibility of entering deeper fellowship. Different
679 ecclesiastical histories can also serve as a barrier to the adoption of a more formalized and structured
680 institutional unity. Pragmatic considerations are also a factor here. As a committee, CER does not possess
681 the necessary financial and human resources to engage meaningfully and equally with every federation
682 with which we have some degree of ecclesiastical contact.

683 A comparison of two different experiences of ecclesiastical engagement may be a helpful way of
684 illustrating this point. The sense of historical and cultural similarity which the CanRC shares with the Free
685 Reformed Churches of Australia, for instance, has drawn those federations into an intense and vibrant
686 relationship, despite their geographical separation. By contrast, while we cherish the spiritual unity we
687 enjoy with the Free Church of Scotland, the absence of such historical and cultural similarity has
688 significantly reduced our degree of engagement with them. Reasonably, these kinds of distinct
689 experiences should be acknowledged and considered as we establish and maintain fellowship with other

⁷ Prior to 1992 a number of General Synods have made decisions regarding categories of ecclesiastical relationships. GS 1977 (Coaldale) decided to offer the OPC a temporary relationship called “ecclesiastical contact” as a next step to what then was termed “full correspondence” or EF as we know it today. But when the church at Surrey requested GS 1980 (Smithville) to appoint a committee to study “the feasibility of having another, less comprehensive relationship (i.e. a relationship different from correspondence) with the OPC and possibly other churches of our Lord...which stand in a different tradition”, Synod denied Surrey’s request. GS 1980 concluded: “There is no reason to establish a different form of permanent ecclesiastical relationship with other churches in the world than as regulated in the rules for correspondence”.

GS 1986 (Cloverdale) instructed the ‘Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad’ that in its discussions with sister churches they were to urge the sister churches “to maintain correspondence according to the adopted rules as the only form of permanent ecclesiastical relationship.” This was followed by a further instruction to inform the sister churches that it was not “common practice to formalize ecclesiastical contacts with Churches with which correspondence cannot be established.” The same Synod also underlined that the relationship of “temporary contract” with the OPC was an “exceptional measure” and not intended to become a common practice for formalizing relations with churches with which correspondence had not yet been established.

This topic received renewed attention when, prior to GS 2010 (Burlington), the CRCA recommended adopting four categories of ecumenical relationships. However, the CRCA’s proposal was not supported by the churches. As a result, GS 2010 decided not to accept the proposal, thereby reinforcing the choice through the decades to have only one official category of ecumenical relationship, namely, EF. However, the historical resistance to having multiple categories with distinct rules continued to bump up against the reality that one size does not fit all. Indeed, since 2010 our synods have effectively implemented various *de facto* categories of ecumenical relationships.

690 faithful churches around the world.

691 Considering these realities, and in light of [GS 2019 art. 149 obs. 2.4 and 2.5](#), it would be advantageous
692 to define and adopt several levels and categories of ecumenical relationship.⁸ Such an approach would
693 enable our federation to enter into relationships of varying degrees of intensity, while simultaneously
694 giving expression to the essential spiritual unity which faithful churches share. There would be two levels
695 of relationship. The one level would be for churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship (aka
696 sister churches), the other level would be for churches with whom we have ecclesiastical contact. Where
697 ecclesiastical fellowship is concerned, there would be two categories: one for a more intense relationship
698 and one for a less intense relationship

699 Notably, the practice of having varied levels and/or categories of ecumenical relationships is widely
700 used in the Reformed/Presbyterian world. By way of just two examples: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
701 has defined three categories of ecclesiastical relationship; and the Heritage Reformed Churches work with
702 five potential levels of relationship.⁹

703 ***Organizational Contact***

704 Given the impossibility of entering and maintaining a relationship of EF with every faithful church on
705 this earth, the CanRC has historically focused its energies on fostering relationships with those who are
706 the most geographically proximate to us and with those with whom there have been strong historical or
707 missional ties. Our membership in NAPARC and the ICRC has enabled us to enjoy meaningful contact with
708 a range of federations, in a way that is logistically and financially sustainable. Given the richness of our
709 ecclesiastical heritage, we thankfully note that our presence and contributions in those forums is
710 appreciated by others.

711 **An Argument for Revision**

712 CO Article 50 currently states that: “the relationship with churches abroad shall be regulated by general
713 synod.” Such language is reflective of a time when ecclesiastical relationships were limited to churches
714 which were literally “abroad.” Currently, however, and especially within North America, the CanRC exists
715 in a context where confessionally faithful churches live side by side in local and regional settings.
716 Individuals in those confessionally faithful churches quite often find themselves working collaboratively
717 with each other in causes related to the advancement of God’s kingdom, including things like ARPA, Word
718 and Deed, and various educational efforts. Some of these churches have significant historical and cultural
719 similarities; in other situations, there are few such commonalities. In such circumstances, fulfilling the
720 LORD’s command to give visible expression to our unity as fellow believers may require a revision of our
721 current procedures. These considerations motivated GS 2019 to mandate the CCCNA & CRCA to study

⁸ The word “category” may be preferable to alternatives such as “stages” or “levels” since progressing towards full federative union, though desirable (John 17), may not always be feasible.

⁹ The Heritage Reformed Churches have five levels of relationship, in which the intention is to move from one (lower) level to the next (higher) level culminating in full federative unity. In our review of the challenges of ecumenical relationships we concluded that this approach cannot be adopted since it does not make allowance for our current ecclesiastical reality in which some existing ecumenical relationships would never move to the ‘next’ level.

The OPC have three categories: *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*, *Corresponding Relationship* and *Ecumenical Contact*. A Corresponding Relationship is entered into when mutual contact with another church is undertaken to become better acquainted with a view to entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship in the not-too distant future. Such a church would have to be either situated in North America or have some form of substantial contact or history with the OPC. *Ecumenical Contact* is for churches outside of North America.

The matters of pulpit access and admittance to the Lord’s Table of each other’s members are non-issues in the OPC, as both these matters are regulated by the local session and not by the rules for ecclesiastical relationships.

722 how best to carry out the requirements of CO Art. 50 within our current ecclesiastical context ([GS 2019](#)
723 [art. 149. obs. 2.3](#)).

724 Within the framework of our existing rules, most ecclesiastical relationships are established and
725 maintained primarily through the work of the CER, which functions under the oversight of general synod.
726 The process of establishing a relationship usually begins with a contact a local church has. This church
727 then presents an overture to a general synod via the ecclesiastical route, requesting a relationship be
728 established. Next, at the direction of general synods, the CER gathers information related to the possibility
729 of establishing new ecclesiastical relationships. In such cases, the CER may at some point present a general
730 synod with a proposal to enter into a new relationship of EF with a particular federation. The churches
731 then have opportunity to engage with these proposals by submitting letters to general synod.

732 There are advantages to working through the efforts of the CER. Following this pathway enables the
733 churches to collectively evaluate the wisdom of forming new ecclesiastical relationships. There are also
734 some disadvantages to this approach. Most specifically, it can be the case that churches being considered
735 for EF will continue to be largely unknown to many of the congregations within the federation.

736 In the recent past, not only the predecessors of the CER, CRCA and CCCNA, but also local churches
737 could propose new relationships. A local congregation could carefully investigate another church and/or
738 federation to determine whether it is a confessionally faithful church. Assuming that to be the case, a local
739 consistory could then draft a proposal to enter EF with that church. Such a proposal would follow the
740 “ecclesiastical route,” making its way from consistory, to classis, to regional synod and, ultimately, to
741 general synod. Should general synod approve the proposal, a relationship of EF would be established, and
742 the CER would be given a mandate regarding that church. The advantage of this approach is that the role
743 of the local church is emphasized. On the other hand, the broader federation of churches may still have a
744 very limited awareness of the church that is being proposed for EF.

745 An additional complicating reality must also be acknowledged. It can be the case that there is a
746 diversity of practice/thought within another federation. As a result, while it might be desirable to allow
747 for a greater degree of fellowship with a particular congregation(s), or with a particular classis/presbytery,
748 it may not be wise to quickly enter a relationship of EF with the whole of a particular
749 federation/denomination. Indeed, in certain situations, developing such a relationship may not even be
750 possible.¹⁰

751 Considering the above realities, as committee we believe that, to fulfil our LORD’s command to seek
752 and maintain the unity of his church, there must be acknowledgement of the possibility of the local church
753 to interact with other faithful churches, when, in the Lord’s providence, other faithful churches are found
754 in close proximity. This understanding acknowledges that we all (not only synodical committees) have the
755 responsibility to seek and maintain the unity of the church, and that the best manner to effectively know
756 others is on a local level. In more isolated areas within our federation, the need and blessing to find other
757 faithful churches has often been apparent (e.g. Ottawa, Vernon, and previously Denver). The local
758 responsibility to seek and maintain unity is also recognized by many other faithful federations and
759 denominations who encourage their churches to express this at the local level.¹¹

760 In an environment of mutual accountability, there should be provision for occasional table fellowship
761 and pulpit fellowship in circumstances where a relationship of EF does not yet, or may never, exist at a
762 federative level. To draw from the wisdom of many counsellors, local churches should ensure classis is
763 aware of local relations. In situations where occasional pulpit fellowship would be desirable, involvement

¹⁰ An example could be the PCA. The PCA is a ‘big tent’ in which there is a wide spectrum of thought and practice. But there are contexts where a deeper local relationship could be mutually beneficial. A few years ago, the churches of Classis Niagara had contact, for instance, with a more isolated PCA in Buffalo (Armor PCA Orchard Park – which has since joined the OPC).

¹¹ These churches include the IRB, URCNA, FRCNA, and FRCSA.

764 of classis and the deputies of regional synod would be required.

765 It should be noted that such an approach remains in accord with C.O. Article 4B.1&2 which places
766 access to the pulpit within the supervision of the local church, with the oversight of classis and regional
767 synod. [GS 2022 \(art. 155 grounds 4.1\)](#) repeated this “principle of classical involvement in the granting of
768 access to the pulpit” and noted this also pertained to what was called “temporary pulpit access.”
769 Furthermore, Art. 15 C.O. also acknowledges the authority of a local consistory over its pulpit.

770 Finally, such an approach, which requires a level of trust within our federation, would not be entirely
771 new. The Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO), which was provisionally adopted by GS 2010 (Burlington)
772 included it. Article 32 of the PJCO made allowance for “preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord’s
773 Supper” by a local church in its ecumenical activities, on the condition of classical approbation. We also
774 note that our sister churches in Australia have revised their practice of interchurch relations along similar
775 lines; for more see the CER report to GS 2025 on the FRCA.

776 **Conclusion**

777 As CER we have personally, collectively, and most importantly prayerfully, wrestled with these matters.
778 We have also diligently considered the direction of past general synods, as well the feedback received
779 from the churches. Having done so, in a sincere desire to submit to the commands of our great King Jesus
780 Christ, and to manifest as fully as possible his desire that his people should be one, we unanimously
781 present the following to GS 2025.

782 **Recommendations**

783 The CER recommends that GS 2025 decide:

784

785 The rules for establishing and maintaining ecclesiastical relationships are as follows:

786 ***Rule 1***

787 ***Level 1 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship***

788 At a federative level, the following shall apply by decision of General Synod:

789 **Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Category A** is with other churches of Reformed Confession according to

790 C.O. Art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with which we have **intense contact**.

791 This relationship is to be exercised where possible and desirable by:

- 792 (1) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- 793 (2) The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity.
- 794 (3) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- 795 (4) Pulpit fellowship.
- 796 (5) Reception of members at the LORD’s Supper according to local regulations.
- 797 (6) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- 798 (7) Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly prior to instituting changes in doctrine,
799 worship and governance which might affect the basis of the fellowship.
- 800 (8) Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
- 801 (9) Exchange of relevant ecclesiastical materials, including:
 - 802 a. The Minutes/Acts of major assemblies;
 - 803 b. Yearbooks/Directories of the churches;
 - 804 c. The most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
 - 805 d. The most recent published edition of the Church Order;
 - 806 e. The most recently published edition of an approved psalter, or psalter-hymnal.

807 **Ecclesiastical Fellowship - Category B** is with other churches of Reformed Confession according to

808 C.O. Art. 50. This relationship is maintained with churches with whom we have **less intense**
809 **contact** for geographical, linguistic, or historical reasons. This relationship is to be exercised

810 where possible and desirable by:

- 811 (1) Welcome of fraternal observers at appropriate major assemblies.
- 812 (2) Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- 813 (3) Pulpit fellowship.
- 814 (4) Reception of members at the LORD's Supper according to local regulations.
- 815 (5) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- 816 (6) Communication on issues of joint concern.
- 817 (7) Review relevant ecclesiastical materials and monitor faithfulness to the Reformed
- 818 confessions.

819 Level 2 – Ecclesiastical Contact

820 **Ecclesiastical Contact** is with other churches of Reformed Confession with which we do not have
821 Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Such churches may include churches with membership in NAPARC, or
822 the ICRC, as well as other churches as determined by general synod. This relationship is to be
823 exercised where possible and desirable by:

- 824 (1) Meetings, both formal and informal, of delegates to the meetings of NAPARC and the ICRC
825 and on other occasions that may arise.
- 826 (2) Mutual labours as members of NAPARC and the ICRC in the discharge of the purposes of
827 the council/conference.
- 828 (3) Welcome of fraternal observers at major assemblies.
- 829 (4) Other duties as directed by general synod.

830 The Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) shall periodically review our ecumenical relationships
831 to ensure we are honouring our commitments to each other. Furthermore, the CER may make
832 recommendations, without prejudice, to General Synod regarding the optimal placement of federations
833 within these categories.

834 **Rule 2**

835 In circumstances where no federative fellowship (Rule 1) exists, churches may engage in ecumenical
836 relationships with other local churches as per CO Article 50, in accordance with the following protocols:

- 837 (1) Pulpit fellowship may occur with the concurring advice of classis and the deputies of regional
838 synod. This fellowship will be implemented in a manner determined by classis.
- 839 (2) Reception of members at the LORD's Supper according to local regulations.
- 840 (3) Reception of members into the local congregation, according to local regulations.
- 841 (4) Churches shall give an account of their ecumenical activities to their respective classis.

842 **Conclusion to the Study Report**

843 It is our prayer that this manner of exercising inter church relations may contribute to and express the
844 unity of Christ's Church which He gathers, defends, and preserves throughout the world. The Church is
845 not ours but Christ's. To God be the glory.

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REPORT 3: ASSOCIATE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (ARPC)

848 **Introduction**

849 There has been contact with the ARPC through the Committee since 2017. With respect to General
850 Synod, there has been contact with the ARPC since GS 2019 (art. 61). Like the CanRC, the ARPC is a
851 member of NAPARC and ICRC.

852 **Summary of The Report**

853 The ARPC is a large and historic Presbyterian denomination in the U.S.A. The heartland of the
854 denomination can be found in the Carolinas. The ARPC is a member church of both NAPARC and ICRC. The
855 ARPC has a Canadian Presbytery which is comprised of congregations in Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova
856 Scotia. In 2024, the General Synod of the ARPC acceded to the request of the Canadian Presbytery to be
857 honourably released from the denomination, with a view to establishing a new Canadian denomination
858 as of 1 September 2025.

859 In light of the intensifying contact, and the blessings thereof, the CER is recommending that the CanRC
860 enter into EF with the ARPC. The CER further recommends that it be mandated to establish contact with
861 the new Canadian ARPC when it comes into existence in September 2025.

862 **Brief History**

863 The ARPC traces its origins to two separations out of the Kirk of Scotland during the 1700s, leading to
864 the formation of the Associate Presbyterians (aka “Seceders”) and Reformed Presbyterians (aka
865 “Covenanters”). Immigrants from the APC and RPC in North America merged together in 1782 as the
866 Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC). In 1822 the ARPC divided into two, due to the large
867 geographical distance between the two groups. What is today known as the ARPC is the southern church.
868 The ARPC-north merged with another church in 1850 to form the United Presbyterian Church of North
869 America; through a further merger, the UPCNA became today’s Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA). The
870 ARPC went through a period of liberalization during the second half of the 20th century. In the very late
871 20th and early 21st century it returned firmly to Reformed convictions.

872 **Brief Description**

873 Source: ARPC documents and NAPARC 2023 documents

Location	<i>The ARPC is primarily located in the United States and the heartland of the denomination can be found in the Carolinas. There is a Canadian Presbytery with congregations in Ontario, as well as congregations in Moncton, NB and Halifax, NS.</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Officially organized on 1 November 1782 as a union of the Associate Presbyterians and the Reformed Presbyterians – each of which traced their origins back to Scotland.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>270 (approx.)</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>25,000 (approx.)</i>		
Assemblies, number	<i>Session</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Presbytery</i>		<i>Three stated meetings annually.</i>
	<i>General Synod / Assembly</i>		<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Erskine Theological Seminary is officially the</i>		

	<i>denominational seminary. Men who have graduated from other confessionally Reformed & Presbyterian institutions may also be ordained.</i>
Website	www.arpchurch.org

874 ***History of the Relationship***

875 CanRC contact with the ARPC was born out of relationships forged at the annual meetings of NAPARC.
 876 As those relationships developed the Inter-Church Committee of the ARPC extended an invitation to the
 877 then Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) to send observers to the meeting
 878 of their General Synod in 2017. The CCCNA gratefully accepted that invitation and, as a result, CanRC
 879 committee members have been welcomed as guests to the General Synods of the ARPC in
 880 2017/18/19/22/23 (the exceptions being the COVID years). As a federation, we have reciprocated by
 881 inviting the ARPC Inter-Church Committee to send fraternal observers to GS 2019 (Edmonton) and GS
 882 2022 (Guelph). On both occasions we were blessed to receive their delegates and much encouraged by
 883 their engagement and fraternal greetings. Further, in Ontario, brothers from both denominations have
 884 been present as fraternal observers at meetings of both Classis Ontario West (COW) and the Canadian
 885 Presbytery of the ARPC.

886 GS 2019 (art. 61) mandated the Committee to engage in contact with the ARPC. GS 2022 (art. 168)
 887 repeated the mandate.

888 The relationship with the ARPC has not only developed at a federative level, however. In SW Ontario,
 889 where there has been considerable ‘grassroots’ engagement between congregations in COW and those
 890 in the Canadian Presbytery of the ARPC. Additionally, many CanRC families worship regularly in ARPC
 891 congregations while travelling in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

892 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

- 893 - The CER delegated Rev. Temple to attend the 2022 meeting of the General Synod of the ARPC.
- 894 - Our delegates to ICRC 2022 met with the ARPC delegates to ICRC 2022.
- 895 - The CER delegated Rev. Brintjes and Rev. Temple to attend the 2023 and the 2024 meetings of the
 896 General Synod of the ARPC;
- 897 - Delegates from the CER, have regularly engaged in bi-lateral meetings with delegates from the ARPC at
 898 the meetings of NAPARC during the period 2022-2024.
- 899 - Delegates from the CER met, and worked closely with, delegates from the ARPC at the meeting of the
 900 ICRC in 2022.

901 ***Observations & Considerations:***

902 The ARPC has become known to us as a denomination that is sincerely committed to being
 903 confessionally Reformed. As a result, it has been a blessing to see the relationship between the CanRC
 904 and the ARPC steadily deepening since it began in 2017. It was a particular blessing to welcome, and
 905 receive greetings from, Rev. Bill Baron at GS 2019 and the Revs. Tim Collins and Jeff Kingswood at GS 2022.

906 A particularly warm relationship has developed between the CanRC and the ARPC within the context
 907 of both NAPARC and the ICRC. Since 2017, there have been regular bilateral meetings between our
 908 respective delegates at the meetings of NAPARC. Those meetings have proven to be times of sweet
 909 fellowship and encouragement. The brothers from the ARPC were of particular encouragement to the
 910 CanRC at the meeting of the ICRC in 2022. At that meeting the matter of terminating the membership of
 911 the GKv was being dealt with and the ARPC delegates provided the blessings of wisdom, comfort and
 912 encouragement during that difficult time.

913 There was a time (in the 1980s) when the ARPC appeared to be headed in a decidedly ‘liberal’
 914 direction. By God’s grace and in God’s strength, that drift was halted, and reversed, by godly brothers who

915 'stood in the breach' and returned the denomination to its historic Reformed convictions.

916 As a denomination, the ARPC has expressed its commitment to orthodox Reformed doctrines in
917 statements that have been made about a number of essential theological issues, including:

918 1. The authority of the Scriptures:

919 - *"The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God without error in all that it*
920 *teaches." (Minutes of the General Synod, 1979, p. 23)*

921 - *"The position of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church on Scripture is that the Bible alone,*
922 *being God-breathed, is the word of God written, infallible in all that it teaches, and inerrant*
923 *in the original manuscripts." (Minutes of the General Synod, 2008, p. 514)*

924 2. The historicity of Adam:

925 - *"We affirm that Adam and Eve were special, unique direct creations of God, created in His image,*
926 *with Adam being formed from the dust of the ground and Eve being made from his side; as*
927 *such, they were real human beings and the first man and woman;*

928 - *We affirm that the account of the creation of Adam and Eve as found in Genesis 1 and 2 is*
929 *history;*

930 - *We deny any teaching that claims that the account of creation of Adam and Eve, as found in*
931 *Genesis 1 and 2, is mythology;*

932 - *We deny any theory that teaches that Adam and Eve descended from other biological life forms*
933 *and that such a theory can be reasonably reconciled with either the Standards of the*
934 *Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church or Holy Scripture." (Minutes of the General Synod,*
935 *2012, pp. 503, 505)*

936 3. A biblical view of marriage & human sexuality:

937 - *"The General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church affirms the Biblical standard*
938 *for marriage, one man and one woman." (Minutes of the General Synod, 2012, p. 564)*

939 - *"Thinking biblically about the particular issue of sexual orientation is itself grounded in the bonds*
940 *of Gospel love of neighbor, self, and of God. If it be the case that the believer is to love the*
941 *commandments (John 14:15), then any kind of intercourse outside the bonds of marriage*
942 *set by the Lord Jesus Christ is in and of itself always sin (Gen. 2:24, Ex. 20:14, Lev. 18:22,*
943 *Deut 7:2-4, Matt. 19:4-5, Rom. 1:24-27, 1 Cor. 5:1, 1 Cor. 6:18-20, 2 Cor. 6:14-5, Gal. 5:19-*
944 *21, 1 Thess. 4:3-5, Heb. 13:4). As was noted before, this includes not only the act of*
945 *fornication, but the consideration of concupiscence, i.e., the lusts of the flesh by the heart*
946 *and the mind (Jer. 13:27). The only orientation recognized as lawful by the Holy Scriptures*
947 *is that which places our being to the glory of God and His Word." (Excerpted from: The*
948 *Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church Position Statement On Human Sexuality.*
949 *Available here: [https://arpchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Human-Sexuality-](https://arpchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Human-Sexuality-Position-Statement-2019.pdf)*
950 *[Position-Statement-2019.pdf](https://arpchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Human-Sexuality-Position-Statement-2019.pdf)*

951 4. The matter of women in ecclesiastical office:

952 - *"The qualifications for serving as an elder or minister are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Because the*
953 *qualifications are phrased in male terms and because of the teaching in the previous*
954 *chapter (1 Timothy 2:11-15) that "a woman is not to teach or to have authority over a man,"*
955 *the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church has rightly concluded that Scripture does not*
956 *permit women to serve in the office of elder, and that the role of spiritually authoritative*
957 *teaching and discipline in the church is reserved for male leadership." Quoted from: **Women***
958 ***In The Life of the Church** (Section VI – What May Women Do?) [https://arpchurch.org/wp-](https://arpchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Women-In-the-Church.pdf)*
959 *[content/uploads/2018/05/Women-In-the-Church.pdf](https://arpchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Women-In-the-Church.pdf)*

960 While the ARPC has taken a strong position against the ordination of women to the office of pastor
961 and elder, a provision has been made in their Form of Government which allows local sessions to install
962 women as deacons. This provision was introduced to the ARPC Form of Government in 1969, with the

963 understanding that an exegetical argument could be made in which the diaconate is not understood to
964 be an authoritative office in the church. Sessions were thus granted the freedom to install women as
965 deacons, with the understanding that their work was to be carried out under the supervision and authority
966 of the session. At this time, at a rough estimate, less than 10% of sessions within the ARPC have elected
967 to make use of this provision. Furthermore, the number of sessions making use of this provision appears
968 to be declining.

969 There has also been vigorous debate about the continued existence of this provision at the past several
970 synods. In fact, the intensity of the debate at GS 2023 resulted in synod establishing a committee that was
971 tasked with drafting a report that would consider the nature, work and scope of the diaconal office. It is
972 noteworthy that, within the context of this debate, the fathers and brothers of the Canadian Presbytery
973 have been particularly vocal about their desire to see this provision removed from the Form of
974 Government. By way of final comment, while the CanRC has expressed concern about this issue in various
975 other contexts (for instance, in discussions about entering into EF with the Reformed Presbyterian Church
976 in North America (RPCNA)), the existence of a local option which allows for women to serve as deacons
977 has not proven to be a barrier to entering into EF with the Reformed Church in Quebec (ERQ).

978 The commitment of the ARPC to continue the work of constantly reforming itself in accordance with
979 God's Word and the Reformed confessions can clearly be seen in the ecumenical relationships that it has
980 both ceased and sought to forge in recent years. To that end, the ARPC ended some of its most long-
981 standing relationships (e.g. with the PCUSA), and has endeavoured to establish new relationships which
982 they believe will actively encourage their denomination to continue growing in its awareness of, and
983 commitment to, orthodox Reformed doctrine. For example, the ARPC has EF with the Orthodox Presby-
984 terian Church (OPC). To that end, in 2022, the General Synod of the ARPC unanimously voted in favour of
985 extending an offer of Fraternal Fellowship to both the CanRC and the URCNA. In terms of ecclesiastical
986 relations, the ARPC has only one level/category of relationship and that is Fraternal Fellowship. Fraternal
987 Fellowship is essentially analogous to our relationship of EF. As such, the affection and respect being
988 conveyed by their invitation should not escape our attention or fail to provoke our thanksgiving!

989 Responding to this very gracious invitation, however, will involve reckoning with a subsequent decision
990 that was made by their following General Synod in 2023. At that time, General Synod assented to the
991 request of the Canadian Presbytery to withdraw from ARPC in order to form a new Canadian
992 denomination. This request was provoked by the increasing challenges posed by the Canadian-American
993 border, particularly with respect to the movement of clergy and monies. The LORD willing, the new
994 Canadian ARPC denomination will come into existence on September 1, 2025.

995 It is noteworthy that the blessings of that growing relationship have been experienced at a 'grassroots'
996 as well as federative level. In that respect, there has been considerable, and intensifying, contact between
997 some CanRC and ARPC congregations in SW Ontario. Within that region:

- 998 - a number of CanRC families have been received as members of Grace ARPC (Woodstock) and
999 Riverside ARPC (Cambridge);
- 1000 - there has been a particularly close relationship between the Chatham-Ebenezer CanRC and Trinity
1001 ARPC (Chatham);
- 1002 - delegates from COW have been welcomed as fraternal observers at stated meetings of the
1003 Canadian Presbytery – and have, likewise, welcomed delegates from the ARPC to meetings of
1004 COW;
- 1005 - a number of CanRC pastors have been privileged to lead worship in Trinity ARPC (Chatham) and in
1006 Riverside ARPC (Cambridge);
- 1007 - there have been a range of young adult events (e.g. Freedom Conference) which young people from
1008 the CanRC and ARPC have both organized and attended;
- 1009 - a number of CanRC young people have enrolled in the university prep-year program at Gillespie
1010 Academy in Woodstock.

1011 **Recommendations**

1012 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1013 1 To receive with thankfulness the offer of Fraternal Fellowship extended to the CanRC by the
1014 General Synod of the ARPC (2023).
- 1015 2 To enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category B with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian
1016 Church (ARPC) according to the adopted rules and to communicate that decision to the next
1017 meeting of the General Synod of the ARPC (2025).
- 1018 3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
- 1019 3.1 To convey this decision to the ARPC as soon as possible;
- 1020 3.2 To establish contact with the Canadian denomination of the ARPC when it comes into
1021 existence in 2025;
- 1022 3.3 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ARPC to the churches 6 months
1023 prior the convening of the next general synod.

1024 **Grounds:**

- 1025 1 Re 1: The ARPC has given ample evidence of sincere and continued faithfulness to both God’s
1026 Word and the Reformed confessions. Those commitments have been clearly demonstrated in
1027 the faithful manner in which the fathers and brothers of ARPC have conducted themselves within
1028 the higher courts of the church. The sincerity of their Reformed conviction can also be seen in
1029 the doctrinal/positional statements which have been adopted by their general synod. Further
1030 evidence can be found in the way that the ARPC has steadily divested itself of ecclesiastical
1031 relationships with denominations that have progressed down theologically ‘liberal’ pathways.
1032 Furthermore, the ARPC has intentionally endeavoured to strengthen and establish ecclesiastical
1033 relationships with denominations/federations of strong historic Reformed conviction. To that
1034 end, they have strengthened their relationship with the OPC, with which they enjoy full Fraternal
1035 Fellowship. Additionally, they have extended offers of Fraternal Fellowship to both the CanRC
1036 and URCNA, and have done so with the express intention of forming relationships which they
1037 believe will continue to strengthen their own sense of Reformed identity and conviction. In this
1038 they are seeking the help and assistance of the CanRC. As a federation we have the opportunity
1039 to serve and encourage the saints of the ARPC by extending the right-hand of fellowship to them.
- 1040 2 Re 2: There has been meaningful contact between our respective churches at both a grassroots
1041 and at a federative level. That contact warrants formalizing our relationship in this way.
- 1042 3 Re 2: A relationship of EF-Category B is intended to function in circumstances where there is good
1043 reason for recognizing another federation/denomination as a true church of the LORD Jesus
1044 Christ, while simultaneously acknowledging that culture, distance and history may limit the
1045 intensity with which that relationship can be exercised. Such is the case here. The bulk of the
1046 ARPC is located in the Southern US. While it would be a blessing to continue developing the
1047 relationships that have been formed with the ARPC (especially within the context of NAPARC and
1048 the ICRC), the relative distance between our people will necessarily limit the degree of our
1049 regular interaction. At the same time, while interaction with the American contingent of the
1050 ARPC may not be a frequent occurrence for many of our own churches, it would be a blessing to
1051 be able to demonstrate our unity in Christ when such occasions arise. As such, EF-Category B
1052 would be the best ‘fit’ for our relationship with the ARPC.
- 1053 3 Re 3.1: Establishing ecclesiastical fellowship has immediate consequences (e.g. table and pulpit
1054 fellowship); the ARPC should be aware of its existence as soon as possible.
- 1055 4 Re. 3.2: At the current time, the area of greatest contact between the CanRC and the ARPC is in
1056 SW Ontario. When the new Canadian denomination comes into existence, it would be a blessing
1057 to be able to continue that relationship. We may also be able to be of encouragement to our
1058 Canadian brothers and sisters as they undertake the hard work of instituting as a new synod.

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Should the Recommendations of the CER found in the Study Report not be adopted, the CER recommends that synod decide:

1. *To receive with thankfulness the offer of Fraternal Fellowship extended to the CanRC by the General Synod of the ARPC (2023);*
2. *To enter into a relationship of EF with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) and to communicate that decision to the next General Synod of the ARPC;*
- 3 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
 - 3.1 *To convey this decision to the ARPC as soon as possible;*
 - 3.2 *To meet with the delegates of the ARPC Inter Church Committee at scheduled meetings of NAPARC;*
 - 3.3 *To occasionally delegate members of the CER to attend meetings of the General Synod of the ARPC;*
 - 3.4 *To establish contact with the Canadian denomination of the ARPC when it comes into existence in 2025;*
 - 3.5 *To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general synod.*

Grounds:

- 1 *Re 1: The ARPC has given ample evidence of sincere and continued faithfulness to both God’s Word and the Reformed confessions. Those commitments have been clearly demonstrated in the faithful manner in which the fathers and brothers of ARPC have conducted themselves within the higher courts of the church. The sincerity of their Reformed conviction can also be seen in the doctrinal/positional statements which have been adopted by their general synod. Further evidence can be found in the way that the ARPC has steadily divested itself of ecclesiastical relationships with denominations that have progressed down theologically ‘liberal’ pathways. Furthermore, the ARPC has intentionally endeavoured to strengthen and establish ecclesiastical relationships with denominations/federations of strong historic Reformed conviction. To that end, they have strengthened their relationship with the OPC, with which they enjoy full fraternal fellowship. Additionally, they have extended offers of Fraternal Fellowship to both the CanRC and URCNA, and have done so with the express intention of forming relationships which they believe will continue to strengthen their own sense of Reformed identity and conviction. In this they are seeking the help and assistance of the CanRC. As a federation we have the opportunity to serve and encourage the saints of the ARPC by extending the right-hand of fellowship to them.*
- 2 *Re 2: There has been meaningful contact between our respective churches at both a grassroots and at a federative level. That contact warrants formalizing our relationship in this way.*
- 3 *Re 3.1: Establishing ecclesiastical fellowship has immediate consequences (e.g. table and pulpit fellowship); the ARPC should be aware of its existence as soon as possible.*
- 4 *Re 3.2 & 3.3: While there is good reason to recognize the ARPC as a true church of the LORD Jesus Christ, it needs to be acknowledged that culture, distance and history will limit the intensity with which the relationship of EF can be exercised. The bulk of the ARPC is located in the Southern US. While it would be a blessing to continue developing the relationships that have been formed with the ARPC (especially within the context of NAPARC and the ICRC, where there has been considerable fruitful engagement), the relative distance between our people will necessarily limit the degree of our regular interaction. At the same time, while interaction with the American contingent of the ARPC may not be a frequent occurrence for many of our own churches, it would be a blessing to be able to demonstrate our unity in Christ when such occasions arise. Hence it is wise to describe what the exercise of this relationship will look like.*
- 5 *Re. 3.4: At the current time, the area of greatest contact between the CanRC and the ARPC is in SW Ontario. When the new Canadian denomination comes into existence, it would be a blessing to be able to continue that relationship. We may also be able to be of encouragement to our Canadian brothers and sisters as they undertake the hard work of instituting as a new synod.*

1110

REPORT 4: REFORMED CHURCH OF QUEBEC (ERQ)

1111 **Introduction**

1112 The CanRC have been in contact with the ERQ since a decision of GS 2007 (art. 75). Like the CanRC, the
1113 ERQ is a member of NAPARC.

1114 **Summary of the Report**

1115 The Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship continues to be mutually beneficial. Your committee is
1116 recommending continuing Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the ERQ.

1117 **Brief History**

1118 Some members of the ERQ trace their origin to Huguenot settlers who came to Canada after the Edict
1119 of Nantes in 1685.

1120 The ERQ was formed in 1980 after a decision by the Presbyterian Church of Canada not to include the
1121 French-speaking congregations in Québec. It was further formed in November 1988 out of mission efforts
1122 of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Christian
1123 Reformed Church (CRCNA).

1124 **Brief Description**

1125 Source of church data: NAPARC 2023 Dockets, Church Websites, Individual contact

Location	<i>Québec, Canada</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Mission efforts of the PCC, PCA and CRC.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds, Three Forms of Unity, Westminster Standards, and La Rochelle Confession of Faith</i>		
Polity	<i>Based on Church Order of Dort</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>5 established churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>~350</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory / Council</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Synode</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3 times per year, usually February, May, and November</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>None officially. There is a close relationship with Farel Reformed Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	https://erq.qc.ca/		

1126 **History of the Relationship**

1127 Responding to overtures from the ERQ and Classis Ontario North, GS 1995 (art. 73) mandated contact
1128 with the ERQ via deputies Reports of contact and study were received at GS 1998 (art. 97), GS 2001 (art.
1129 22), and GS 2004 (art. 25). GS 2007 (art. 75) entered into Ecclesiastic Fellowship with the ERQ, and the
1130 relationship of EF has been maintained since that time (GS 2010 art. 29, GS 2013 art. 21, GS 2016 art. 59,
1131 GS 2019 art. 22).

1132 **GS 2022 Decision**

1133 GS 2022 (art. 160) decided:

- 1134 *3.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in*
1135 *Quebec (ERQ) under the adopted rules;*
1136 *3.2 To encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their missionary*
1137 *endeavours and special projects;*

- 1138 *3.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
1139 *3.3.1 To maintain contact with the ERQ according to the adopted rules;*
1140 *3.3.2 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
1141 *synod.*

1142 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

1143 There has been some turn-over in responsibilities at the ERQ, as well as in the CER. In addition, due to
1144 moves further west by a CER committee member, the in-person visits have been fewer than during past
1145 mandates. Nevertheless, there has been regular communication with the deputies of the ERQ via
1146 electronic means. An in-person visit was made by Rev. Pol and Br. Bos to the ERQ Synode of June 2023,
1147 during which we were well-received. Written greetings were brought to several intervening synods. In
1148 addition, related to decision 3.2 above, the CER was able to facilitate an explicit request for financial
1149 assistance for a building project in Charny (near Québec City). Finally, bilateral meetings were held on
1150 November 8, 2022 and November 16, 2023 at NAPARC, which the ERQ also is a member of and regularly
1151 attends. The ERQ has expressed thankfulness for the functioning of the relationship, and your committee
1152 agrees that the relationship is mutually encouraging.

1153 Unrelated to the direct work of CER, the Owen Sound CanRC sponsors several projects under the
1154 auspices of the ERQ in St. George de Beauce, translating Reformed material into French, for use by
1155 francophone churches world-wide, especially in Africa.

1156 ***Observations & Considerations***

1157 The ERQ continues to be a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The relationship of Ecclesiastical
1158 Fellowship is mutually encouraging. The broadest ecclesiastical assembly of the ERQ is their Synode, which
1159 typically takes place three times annually. Regular attendance by CER committee members is appreciated
1160 but became more difficult during this mandate due to geographic distance and time and travel
1161 commitments to attend.

1162 Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
1163 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and
1164 confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.

1165 ***Recommendations***

1166 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1167 1 To express thankfulness to the Lord for the faithfulness of the ERQ;
1168 2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A¹² with the Reformed Church of Quebec
1169 (ERQ) according to the adopted rules;
1170 3 To continue to encourage the churches to support the ERQ prayerfully and financially in their
1171 missionary endeavours and special projects;
1172 4 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
1173 4.1 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ERQ to the churches 6 months prior
1174 the convening of the next general synod.

1175 **Grounds:**

- 1176 1 Re 2: As far as can be determined, the ERQ continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
1177 church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction, a close relationship between the CanRC and
1178 the ERQ is mutually beneficial.
1179 2 Re 3: The ERQ appreciates the ongoing contributions from the CanRC both in terms of human as
1180 well as financial resources.

¹² If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

1181

REPORT 5: FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA (FRCNA)

1182 **Introduction**

1183 During the 1990s there was contact between the CanRC and FRCNA. This contact ended in 2004 but
 1184 was resumed in 2017. The CanRC has a relationship with the FRCNA according to their ‘level one’ category
 1185 since 2019 (GS 2019 art. 148). Like the CanRC, the FRCNA is a member of NAPARC and ICRC.

1186 **Summary of Report**

1187 The CER has had contact with the FRCNA. There has been no measurable progress or regress in that
 1188 contact. The CER is recommending that this contact be continued.

1189 **Brief History**

1190 During the 1950s, members of the Secession Churches and the Reformed Alliance (*Gereformeerde*
 1191 *Bond*) within the Dutch Reformed Church immigrated from the Netherlands to Canada and the USA. These
 1192 immigrants did not feel comfortable joining the Christian Reformed Churches in North America (CRCNA)
 1193 because of its view of presumptive regeneration regarding baptism and a lack of experiential preaching.
 1194 A federation of churches was formed, including the Old Christian Reformed Church in Gand Rapids. In
 1195 1974 these churches adopted the name Free Reformed Churches of North America.

1196 **Brief Description**

1197 Source of church data: NAPARC Member Report 2023

Location	<i>Canada and the United States of America</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Immigration from HKN and CGK in Netherlands (oldest church est. 1921)</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	23		
Membership numbers	<i>5420 members of whom 3130 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	Consistory / Council	23	Monthly
	Combined Consistory	1	At least annual
	General Synod / Assembly	1	Annually
Training of Theological Students	<i>Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	https://frcna.org/		

1198 **History of the relationship**

1199 During the 1970s, two overtures to take up contact with the FRCNA were denied as insufficient
 1200 information was presented to general synod (GS 1974 art. 20, GS 1977 art. 94). The CanRC and the FRCNA
 1201 had an active working relationship with one another at the federative level for the period 1998-2007 (GS
 1202 1995 art. 52, GS 1998 art. 98, GS 2001 art. 92, GS 2004 art. 85). This relationship broke down towards the
 1203 end of that period. In 2007 the CanRC, in response to certain concerns of the FRCNA, chose to cease
 1204 pursuing discussions with the FRCNA until such time as they requested resumption of contact (GS 2007
 1205 art. 105, GS 2010 art. 30). That contact resumed at the beginning of 2017. As a result, GS 2019 (art. 148)
 1206 decided to enter into the FRC Level One ecclesiastical relationship.

1207 **Decisions of GS 2022**

1208 GS 2022 (art. 161) decided:

1209 3.1 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

1210 3.1.1 *To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North*

- 1211 *America (FRCNA);*
1212 *3.1.2 To meet simultaneously with the Heritage Reformed churches in North America (HRCNA)*
1213 *and FRCNA ecumenicity committees;*
1214 *3.1.3 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
1215 *synod.*

1216 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

1217 **2022:**

- 1218 - The committee met with the FRCNA at NAPARC 2022.

1219 **2023:**

- 1220 - Committee members Rev. Jagt, Rev. Janssen, and Rev. Van Dam, met on March 2 with their
1221 committee to discuss a document we had put together about covenant and the appropriation of
1222 salvation.
1223 - We gave greetings but were not able to attend their Synod in June.
1224 - The committee met with the FRCNA at NAPARC 2023.

1225 ***Observations & Considerations***

- 1226 - We are thankful to be invited every other year to their General Synods and bring greetings.
1227 - Regarding our relationship, FRCNA Formal Contact (Level One) includes:
1228 1. This level begins with formal approval by the Synod that the committee continue its informal work
1229 with the denomination/ congregation;
1230 2. It includes periodically inviting those at this level to attend and address our broadest assembly and
1231 anticipate them to do the same;
1232 3. Copies of the official minutes, without confidential material, are sent to the other denomination/
1233 congregation’s representatives with the understanding that they in turn send us their minutes as
1234 well;
1235 4. Cooperation is encouraged in areas such as: para-church mission and world relief organizations,
1236 and Christian education;
1237 5. Representatives from each other’s interchurch relations committees or other delegates meet to
1238 seek confirmation of the unreserved commitment to, and agreement with
1239 a. The infallibility and inerrancy of Scriptures as the Word of God and
1240 b. The validity and relevance of our Confessions;
1241 c. Develop an appreciation of each other’s history;
1242 d. Discuss what we have in common, and where we differ;
1243 e. Gauge the degree of doctrinal and spiritual affinity.
1244 - Progress towards organic unity with the HRC appears to have stalled. Their joint unity committee has
1245 not been disbanded but its focus is now more on “grassroots” activity.
1246 - The FRCNA uses PRTS as its primary vehicle for seminary training. It has called and financially supports
1247 two of the professors.
1248 - The FRCNA has full ecclesiastical relations with the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America (HRC),
1249 the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CGKN), an independent Reformed Church in
1250 Kalamazoo, as well as more limited relations with the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC), the
1251 Restored Reformed Church in The Netherlands (HHK), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC), as
1252 well as formal contact in North America with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), United
1253 Reformed Churches (URCNA), and the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).
1254 - The FRCNA continues to closely monitor its relationship with the CGKN and has sent them a formal letter
1255 of concern over the matters of women in office.
1256 - We were unable to meet simultaneously with the FRCNA and HRC ecumenical committees.

- 1257 - On a local level, and in various organizations (ARPA etc.), we are involved with the FRCNA. Some CanRC
1258 ministers preach on occasion at FRCNA churches. Summer vacations see some of our members
1259 worshipping in FRCNA congregations (e.g. Powassan, Ontario.) Family members are also members of
1260 FRCNA congregations.
- 1261 - We (Rev. Jagt, Rev. Van Dam and Rev. Janssen) met for over 2hrs in March 2023 to discuss the document
1262 that we had written that focused on the nature of the covenant and the people of God. (Their
1263 committee is tasked to “gauge the degree of doctrine and spiritual affinity”. Some of the FRCNA
1264 brothers expressed the concern that our preaching, in general, was not discriminatory enough, that
1265 we make too many positive assumptions about those in the pew). We graciously acknowledged the
1266 importance of calling all, believers included, to faith and repentance. We remain convinced that these
1267 discussions and emphases can take place within a bond of brotherly fellowship within the bounds of
1268 Scripture and confession.
- 1269 - The FRCNA expresses its appreciation for the discussions we have had over the past three years as well
1270 as its desire to continue to talk with us more often, and not just at the annual meeting of NAPARC.

1271 **Recommendations**

1272 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1273 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Free Reformed Churches in North America
1274 (FRCNA) according to the adopted rules with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship
1275 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).
- 1276 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 1277 2.1 To convey this decision to the FRCNA;
 - 1278 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCNA to the churches 6 months
1279 prior the convening of the next general synod.

1280 **Grounds:**

- 1281 1 Re 1:
 - 1282 1.1 We currently enjoy a relationship with the FRCNA under their “Level 1” category (Formal
1283 Contact) as per the decision of GS 2019 (art. 148).
 - 1284 1.2 The FRCNA are members of NAPARC.
 - 1285 1.3 We share the same confessional basis (Three Forms of Unity) with the FRCNA.
 - 1286 1.4 Historically, we have strong connections with the FRCNA that go back to the 19th century.
1287 These brothers were unwilling to join with the Dutch synodical churches in 1892 for fear of
1288 the influence of Abraham Kuyper and his teachings. The roots of our federation also go
1289 back to the imposition of Kuyperian teachings upon the churches during WW2.
 - 1290 1.5 We have good connections and relations with the FRCNA on several local levels in some
1291 areas.

1292
1293 *Should the Recommendations of the CER found in the Study Report not be adopted, the CER recommends*
1294 *that synod decide:*

- 1295 1 *To continue the relationship with the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA) under*
1296 *their “Level 1” category (Formal Contact) with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship*
1297 *of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).*
- 1298 2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
 - 1299 2.1 *To convey this decision to the FRCNA;*
 - 1300 2.2 *To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCNA to the churches 6 months*
1301 *prior the convening of the next general synod.*

1302 **Grounds:**

- 1303 1 Re 1.1:
 - 1304 1.1 *We currently enjoy a relationship with the FRCNA under their “Level 1” category (Formal*

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- 1305 *Contact) as per the decision of GS 2019 (art. 148).*
- 1306 1.2 *The FRCNA are members of NAPARC.*
- 1307 1.3 *We share the same confessional basis (Three Forms of Unity) with the FRCNA.*
- 1308 1.4 *Historically, we have strong connections with the FRCNA that go back to the 19th century.*
- 1309 *These brothers were unwilling to join with the Dutch synodical churches in 1892 for fear of*
- 1310 *the influence of Abraham Kuyper and his teachings. The roots of our federation also go back*
- 1311 *to the imposition of Kuyperian teachings upon the churches during WW2.*
- 1312 1.5 *We have good connections and relations with the FRCNA on local levels.*

1313

REPORT 6: HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATIONS (HRC)

1314 **Introduction**

1315 The CanRC has a relationship with the HRC under their ‘level two’ category since 2022 (GS 2022 art.
1316 162). Like the CanRC, the HRC is a member of NAPARC and ICRC.

1317 **Summary of the Report**

1318 The CER has interacted on several occasions since 2022 with the HRC. The CER is recommending that
1319 this contact be continued.

1320 **Brief History**

1321 The HRC has its roots in the Secession of 1834 in The Netherlands. One group of churches that came
1322 out of the Secession were known as the “Reformed Congregations”. Members of these churches
1323 immigrated from The Netherlands to North America and established the Netherlands Reformed
1324 Congregations (NRC). In 1993 several churches left the NRC on account of church-orderly and theological
1325 issues. The most substantive underlying issue was Christ-centred preaching, combined with preaching of
1326 an unconditional offer of grace. The churches that left, together with other churches in later years, formed
1327 the Heritage Reformed Congregations (aka Heritage Reformed Churches).

1328 **Brief Description**

1329 Source of church data: NAPARC Member Report 2023

Location	<i>Canada and the United States of America</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>The HRC trace their roots to the Secession of 1834 in The Netherlands. As federation they were formed in the 1990s when they separated out of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>10</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>2186 members of whom 1309 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	Consistory / Council	<i>10</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	Synod	<i>1</i>	<i>Annual</i>
General Assembly	<i>Annually</i>		
Training of Theological Students	<i>Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	https://heritagereformed.com/		

1330 **History of the Relationship**

1331 The CanRC and the HRC made initial contact around the year 2015. Since 2017 we have had regular bi-
1332 lateral meetings at NAPARC. We are almost always invited to their broadest assembly. There are various
1333 HRCs in our vicinity – Chilliwack, B.C., Grand Rapids, MI, Jordan, Ontario. Various HRC ministers, for
1334 instance Dr. Joel Beeke, have spoken at our ministerial conferences in eastern Canada. In 2019 we entered
1335 into an HRC Level One relationship; in 2022 we entered into an HRC Level Two relationship. (Do note that
1336 the “levels” were changed by the HRC after GS-CanRC 2022.)

1337 **Decisions of GS 2022**

1338 GS 2022 (art. 162) decided:

1339 *3.1 To accept the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America (HRCNA) Level 2 relationship of*

- 1340 “Formal Correspondence”;
1341 3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
1342 3.2.1 To continue discussions with the HRCNA in an effort to work towards Ecclesiastical
1343 Fellowship (EF);
1344 3.2.2 To meet simultaneously with the HRCNA and Free Reformed Churches of North America
1345 (FRCNA) ecumenicity committees;
1346 3.2.3 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general
1347 synod.

1348 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

1349 **2022:**

- 1350 - The committee met with the HRC at NAPARC 2022.

1351 **2023:**

- 1352 - Rev. Jagt attended the HRC Synod in June 2023.
1353 - The committee met with the HRC at NAPARC 2023.

1354 **2024:**

- 1355 - Rev. Jagt attended the HRC Synod in June 2024.

1356 **Observations & Considerations**

- 1357 - We continue to receive annual invites to the HRC General Synods – usually, but not always, held
1358 concurrently with the FRCNA, in Ontario.
1359 - The HRC have the following levels of ecumenical relations:
1360 A. Level 1: Approved Communication (see previous CCCNA report for details of A,C,D&E
1361 <https://canrc.org/documents/9158>.)
1362 B. Level 2: Formal Correspondence
1363 This level would include everything under Level 1 and the following:
1364 1. Periodically inviting those at this level to attend and address our broadest assembly and
1365 anticipate them to do the same;
1366 2. Copies of the official minutes, without confidential material, are sent to the other
1367 denomination/congregation’s representatives with the understanding they in turn send us
1368 their minutes as well;
1369 3. Cooperation is encouraged in areas such as: para-church mission and world relief
1370 organizations, and Christian education;
1371 C. Level 3: Formal Fellowship
1372 D. Level 4: Complete Correspondence
1373 E. Level 5: Complete Fellowship
1374 - The progress towards organic unity with the FRCNA appears to have stalled. Their joint unity committee
1375 has not been disbanded, but its focus is now more on “grassroots” activity.
1376 - We have not yet been able to meet simultaneously with the FRCNA and HRC unity committees (logistics
1377 at NAPARC have not worked out).
1378 - The psalter revision project, with the FRCNA and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), is nearing its
1379 completion. (www.thepsalter.net)
1380 - The HRC have expressed to us their appreciation for the individual and institutional collaboration
1381 between Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) and our CRTS. PRTS, which is under the
1382 supervision of the HRC, serves various denominations and has over 500 students overseas with partner
1383 seminaries.
1384 - On the International scene our paths cross with the HRC in Scotland (FCC), Brazil and China (through
1385 PRTS), South Africa (Mukhanyo Seminary) as well as in Indonesia (the HRC have a foreign mission work

1386 in Sumba, which has just celebrated its 25th year) and The Netherlands (the HRC have been in dialogue
1387 with the Restored Reformed Church (HHK)).

1388 - The HRC has closer ties with the Free Church Continuing (their level 3) and others who have an
1389 “experiential, Puritan flavoured” style of preaching. For a complete list of churches with whom the HRC
1390 have some sort of formal relationship, see below.

1391 **Recommendations**

1392 The CER recommends that synod decide:

1393 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact (EC) with the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America
1394 (HRC) according to the adopted rules with a view to possibly advancing this to a relationship of
1395 Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF).

1396 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

1397 2.1 To convey this decision to the HRC;

1398 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the HRC to the churches 6 months prior
1399 the convening of the next general synod.

1400 **Grounds:**

1401 1 Re 1:

1402 1.1 We share the same Reformed confessional standards as the HRC.

1403 1.2 We have found the HRC brothers to be faithful to Scripture and the gospel of Christ.

1404 1.3 The HRC is receptive to dialogue and discussion with us and we are already in their “Level
1405 2” relationship.

1406 1.4 The HRC work together with us on a local level as well as through our respective seminaries,
1407 PRTS and CRTS.

1408 1.5 The HRC are members of NAPARC.

1409

1410 *Should the Recommendations of the CER found in the Study Report not be adopted, the CER recommends*
1411 *that synod decide:*

1412 1 *To continue the relationship with the Heritage Reformed Churches in North America (HRC) under*
1413 *their “Level 2” category in an effort to work towards Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF)*

1414 2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

1415 2.1 *To convey this decision to the HRC;*

1416 2.2 *To submit its report on its activities with respect to the HRC to the churches 6 months prior*
1417 *the convening of the next general synod.*

1418 **Grounds:**

1419 1 Re. 1.1:

1420 1.1 *We share the same Reformed confessional standards as the HRC.*

1421 1.2 *We have found the HRC brothers to be faithful to Scripture and the gospel of Christ.*

1422 1.3 *The HRC is receptive to dialogue and discussion with us and we are already in their “Level*
1423 *2” relationship.*

1424 1.4 *The HRC work together with us on a local level as well as through PRTS and CRTS.*

1425 1.5 *The HRC are members of NAPARC.*

1426

1427 **Appendix: HRC current levels of ecclesiastical relations**
 1428 **June 2024**

1429	Denomination/Federation	Level	Latest Change
1430	Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)	4	2014
1431	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCSC)	3	2010
1432	United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)	2	2013
1433	Presbyterian Reformed Churches	2	2014
1434	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)	2	2019
1435	Bible Presbyterian Churches (BPC)	2	2019
1436	Orthodox Presbyterian Churches (OPC)	2	2020
1437	Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)	2	2020
1438	Bekennende Evangelische Reformierte Gemeinden (BERG)	2	2020
1439	Southern Presbyterian Churches (SPC)	1	2007
1440	Reformed Churches of the United States (RCUS)	1	2014
1441	Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK)	1	2016
1442	Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches (ARPC)	1	2017
1443	Korean American Presbyterian Churches (KAPC)	1	2017
1444	Korean Presbyterian Churches in America (KPCA)	1	2017
1445	Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK)	1	2020
1446	First Evangelical Church of Singapore (FECS)	1	2024
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REPORT 7: KOREAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA – KOSIN (KPCA-K)

1449 **Introduction**

1450 The CanRC have had contact with the KPCA-K since GS 2016 (art. 26). Like the CanRC, the KPCA-K is a
1451 member of NAPARC.

1452 **Summary of the Report**

1453 While there has been no substantial contact with the KPCA-K in the last three years, our relationship
1454 with the “mother” church in Korea (KPCCK) has intensified in the past few years. We believe that this
1455 presents an opportunity to re-invigorate our contact with the KPCA-K in the coming years.

1456 Your committee is recommending that general contact be maintained and that your committee be
1457 mandated to attempt renewed contact with the KPCA-K through NAPARC.

1458 **Brief History**

1459 Other than that the KPCA-K is the immigrant church of Koreans who have their roots in the KPCCK, the
1460 CER has little knowledge of their history.

1461 **Brief Description**

1462 Source of church data: NAPARC Membership Report 2023

Location	<i>United States of America and Canada</i>	
Origin(s)	<i>Established 1985 by immigrants from our sister church, the Korean Presbyterian Church (Kosin)</i>	
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>	
Number of churches & church plants	<i>118</i>	
Membership numbers	<i>No Data</i>	
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary</i>	
Website	www.kosinusa.org (is in Korean)	

1463 **History of the relationship**

1464 GS 2001 (art. 74) mandated the CCCA (Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas) to
1465 contact the KPCA-K as per information submitted by the Willoughby Heights CanRC. Contact was
1466 attempted but, due largely to the language barrier, it bore little fruit. GS 2004 (art. 26) mandated the
1467 CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America with the help of our sister churches
1468 in Korea. GS 2007 (art. 152) did not renew this mandate. After that time, some informal acquaintances
1469 with the KPCA-K began to emerge at NAPARC meetings. GS 2013 (art. 78) received a supplementary report
1470 of the CCCNA and voted in favour of the KPCA-K’s application to NAPARC. Renewed acquaintance
1471 culminated with an invitation to attend their 30th General Assembly in 2014. We held two bi-lateral
1472 meetings with their inter-church relations committee at NAPARC 2014 and 2015. These meetings did not
1473 result in any significant further development of relationships. GS 2016 (art. 26) expressed gratitude to the
1474 Lord for the establishment of contact with the KPCA-K and mandated continued dialogue where feasible.
1475 GS 2019 (art. 79) repeated the mandate of 2016. Through Covid times contact was non-existent. Since
1476 then, there have been brief encounters at NAPARC and other broader assemblies, but these have led to
1477 no further developments in the relationship.

1478 **Decisions of GS 2022**

1479 GS 2022 (art. 163) decided:

1480 3.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

- 1481 3.1.1 *To continue dialogue with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K)*
1482 *where feasible, with a view to getting to know the KPCA-K better over time;*
1483 3.1.2 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
1484 *synod.*

1485 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

1486 While there were some informal conversations in the past three years at NAPARC and other
1487 assemblies, these did not lead to any substantial contact with the KPCA-K.

1488 ***Observations & Considerations***

- 1489 - Geographic presence: The KPCA-K is predominantly located in the USA. Currently, their website lists
1490 seven congregations in Canada: Toronto (3), Waterloo (1), Edmonton (1), and New
1491 Westminster/Surrey (2). Some of these congregations are quite small.
1492 - The denomination remains predominantly Korean speaking. However, the CanRC has been blessed with
1493 the addition of Korean-speaking ministers to our federation, which could aid future communication.
1494 - The KPCA-K is a member church of NAPARC and has close sister-church relationships with the KPCK
1495 (“mother church” in Korea). Our relationship with the KPCK has experienced renewed vigour (see
1496 report), which makes renewed contact with the KPCA-K here in North America realistic.

1497 ***Recommendations***

1498 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1499 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA-
1500 K) according to the adopted rules;
1501 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
1502 2.1 To convey this decision to the KPCA-K and attempt renewed contact with the KPCA-K
1503 through the regular NAPARC meetings.
1504 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCA-K to the churches 6 months
1505 prior the convening of the next general synod

1506 ***Grounds:***

- 1507 1 Re 1: Given what is known at this point in time, it would seem the KPCA-K is a true and faithful
1508 church of Jesus Christ. However, our knowledge of the KPCA-K is not sufficient for ecclesiastical
1509 fellowship. Moreover, some KPCA-K are in close proximity to some CanRC, suggesting a
1510 relationship might be of mutual benefit as well as feasible for the CanRC to maintain.
1511 2 Re 2.1: Our renewed relationship with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) opens the
1512 door to learning more about the KPCA-K in North America. The mutual membership in NAPARC
1513 and brief history of relationship between 2015-2019 makes this contact feasible.

1514
1515 *Should the Recommendations of the CER found in the Study Report not be adopted, the CER recommends*
1516 *that synod decide:*

- 1517 1 *To continue seeking contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA-K);*
1518 2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
1519 2.1 *To convey this decision to the KPCA-K and attempt renewed contact with the KPCA-K*
1520 *through the regular NAPARC meetings.*
1521 2.2 *To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCA-K to the churches 6 months*
1522 *prior the convening of the next general synod.*

1523 ***Grounds:***

- 1524 1 *Re 1: Given what is known at this point in time, it would seem the KPCA-K is a true and faithful*
1525 *church of Jesus Christ. However, our knowledge of the KPCA-K is not sufficient for ecclesiastical*
1526 *fellowship. Moreover, some KPCA-K are in close proximity to some CanRC, suggesting a*

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relationship might be of mutual benefit as well as feasible for the CanRC to maintain.
2 *Re 2.1: Our renewed relationship with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK) opens the door to learning more about the KPCA-K in North America. The mutual membership in NAPARC and brief history of relationship between 2015-2019 makes this contact feasible.*

REPORT 8: ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (OPC)

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Introduction

The CanRC entered into a relationship of EF with the OPC via a decision of GS 2001. Like the CanRC, the OPC is a member of both the ICRC and NAPARC.

Summary of the Report

The CanRC has been blessed to enjoy a relationship of EF with the OPC since 2001. The fruits of that relationship have been experienced at both a local and a federative level. In particular, there has been close cooperation between us at NAPARC and the ICRC.

The CER is recommending that we continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC.

Brief History

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) was established in 1936 in response to modernist influences within the (northern) Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Disillusioned by the church's drift towards liberal theology, J. Gresham Machen, a prominent theologian and scholar, and a group of like-minded individuals sought to preserve traditional Reformed beliefs and uphold the authority of Scripture. They withdrew and in December 1936, founded the OPC (initially known as the Presbyterian Church of America), affirming their commitment to the Westminster standards as their foundational documents.

After Machen's death in 1937, a group separated from the OPC over a range of issues including abstinence and premillennialism. This group later formed the Bible Presbyterian Church. In the Providence of God, however, the relationship between the OPC and BPC was restored and since 2017 they have been in full EF.

During the 1980s there were attempts to overcome splits within Presbyterianism dating back to the civil war. Among them were attempts to merge the (northern) OPC and (southern) Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Both attempts failed. The OPC and PCA are in an EF relationship.

Throughout its history, the OPC has focused on evangelism, church planting, and theological education. The OPC established Westminster Theological Seminary in order to train men for Gospel ministry. The OPC has established ecumenical relationships with other like-minded Reformed churches both in North America and globally. The OPC is a member church of both NAPARC and the ICRC.

Brief Description

Source of Statistical Information: OPC-CEIR

Location	<i>U.S.A & Canada</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) was founded in 1936 as a conservative response to modernism in the PCUSA. Spearheaded by J. Gresham Machen and orthodox Reformed theologians, the OPC sought to uphold traditional Reformed theology and biblical authority.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>305 particularized churches; 36 mission works.</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>33,520</i>		
Assemblies, number	<i>Session</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Presbytery</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Two to four times annually – depending on the geographical size of the presbytery.</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Westminster Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	www.opc.org		

1560 ***History of the relationship***

1561 Our relationship with the OPC began in the 1970s. The road to EF was a long and often contentious
1562 one. During the that journey many discussions were had, and reports written, regarding ‘outstanding
1563 divergencies’. The key ‘divergencies’ were those of confessional membership and the fencing of the
1564 LORD’s Table. As a result, relations progressed slowly, beginning with the establishment of ‘Ecclesiastical
1565 Contact’ by GS 1977 (art. 91). Subsequent synods mandated the discussion of divergencies: GS 1980 art.
1566 152, GS 1983 art 55, GS 1986 art. 126, GS 1989 art. 94, GS 1992 art. 72, GS 1995 art. 106, and GS 1998 art.
1567 130.

1568 GS 2001 (art. 45) decided to establish EF with the OPC. The relationship of EF was confirmed by
1569 subsequent synod decisions: GS 2004 art. 88, GS 2007 art. 131, GS 2010 art. 34, GS 2013 art. 43, GS 2016
1570 art. 61 and GS 2022 art. 164.

1571 Since 2001, our relationship with the OPC has proven to be a source of great blessing and
1572 encouragement for our federation.

1573 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

1574 GS 2022 (art. 164) decided:

1575 *3.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Orthodox Presbyterian*
1576 *Church (OPC) under the adopted rules.*

1577 *3.2 To mandate the Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) to submit its report to the churches*
1578 *six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.*

1579 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

1580 In fulfillment of its mandate:

- 1581 - The CER delegated Rev. Temple to attend the 2022 meeting of the OPC GA.
- 1582 - As CER delegates to ICRC 2022, Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple met with the OPC delegates to ICRC
1583 2022.
- 1584 - The CER delegated Mr. Bouwman and Rev. Janssen to attend the 2024 meeting of the OPC GA.
- 1585 - Delegates from the CER met regularly with delegates from the Committee on Ecumenicity and
1586 Interchurch Relations (CEIR) in bi-lateral meetings at the 2022-2023 meetings of NAPARC.

1587 ***Observations & Considerations:***

1588 At this time, there has been a long and fruitful relationship between the CanRC and the OPC. In his
1589 mercy, the LORD has caused that relationship to bear fruit in a number of different contexts. Within the
1590 context of NAPARC, for instance, our respective delegates have been able to engage in regular bi-lateral
1591 meetings, in which we have been able to call each other to continued faithfulness, as well as encourage
1592 one another in various labours within Christ’s Kingdom. Over the past number of years, our delegates
1593 have worked very closely within the context of the ICRC. This was particularly the case as the CanRC and
1594 OPC stood together, and worked together, in navigating the challenge of terminating the GKv’s
1595 membership in the ICRC. There also continue to be strong relationships between some local CanRC and
1596 OPC congregations. Finally, we have been much encouraged by the commitment of the OPC to the
1597 formation and maintenance of vibrant ecclesiastical relationships.

1598 ***Recommendations:***

1599 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1600 1 To express our thankfulness for the blessing of enjoying a lengthy and fruitful relationship of EF
1601 with the OPC;

- 1602 2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A¹³ with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
1603 (OPC) according to the adopted rules;
1604 3 To mandate the CER to:
1605 3.1 To send delegates to meetings of the OPC GA at least once every two years.
1606 3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the OPC to the churches 6 months prior
1607 the convening of the next general synod.

1608 **Grounds:**

- 1609 1 Re 2: As far as can be determined, the OPC continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
1610 church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction, a close relationship between the CanRC and
1611 the OPC is mutually beneficial.
1612 2 Re 3.1: The OPC General Assembly takes place every year. To be present just once every three
1613 years could give the wrong impression of how we value the relationship. To be present every
1614 year might not be financially prudent.

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¹³ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

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REPORT 9: REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES (RCUS)

1617 **Introduction**

1618 The CanRC entered into EF with the RCUS by a decision of GS 2001 (art. 59). Like the CanRC, the RCUS
1619 is a member of NAPARC and ICRC.

1620 **Summary of the Report**

1621 Informal contact has been kept with the RCUS Inter-church Relations Committee (IRC). Official contact
1622 included bilateral meetings at NAPARC and visits to the RCUS Synods. The CER is recommending that EF
1623 with the RCUS be continued under the adopted rules.

1624 **Brief History**

1625 The present-day Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) is the continuing remnant of the
1626 German immigrant denomination of the same name, which was founded in 1725 by the Rev. John Philip
1627 Boehm. The old RCUS continued as a separate denomination until 1933-34 when the larger part of it
1628 united with the Evangelical Synod of North America to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church. This
1629 new church merged with the Congregational Christian Churches in 1957 to form the United Church of
1630 Christ (UCC).

1631 One classis, the Eureka Classis, refused to participate in the 1934 merger. This classis continued as a
1632 separate entity for the next five decades. During this time, several congregations of like mind became part
1633 of it. The North Dakota Classis dissolved in 1936 and its ministers and churches joined the Eureka Classis.
1634 During the 1950s, congregations at Menno, SD, Manitowoc, WI, Garner, IA, Sutton, NE, and Shafter and
1635 Bakersfield, CA, which had either left the Evangelical and Reformed Church or had been independent,
1636 joined the Eureka Classis. The 1970s welcomed the arrival of several churches from the General
1637 Association of Regular Baptists that had become Reformed. In subsequent years, several groups (some as
1638 whole congregations) have left the UCC to join the RCUS. Today, the RCUS numbers about forty
1639 congregations.

1640 At its annual meeting in 1986, the Eureka Classis dissolved to form the Synod of the Reformed Church
1641 in the United States. Today, instead of one classis, the RCUS consists of four classes: Covenant East,
1642 Northern Plains, South Central and Western. Source: www.rcus.org

1643 **Brief Description**

1644 Source of church data: RCUS Synod docket

Location	<i>United States, with concentrations in the Midwest and California</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Reformed emigrants from Germany in the early 1700s, originally 'German Reformed Church'</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	46		
Membership numbers	3,438		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Spiritual Council / Consistory</i>		<i>As needed</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	4	<i>Annually</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	1	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Approved seminaries supported: Mid-America Reformed Seminary; City Seminary; New Geneva Theological Seminary; Heidelberg Theological Seminary; Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; Seminario Reformado de las Américas</i>		

Website	www.rcus.org
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1645 **History of the Relationship**

1646 There has been (official) contact with the RCUS as early as 1984. The Carman CanRC had official and
 1647 regular contact from 1987-1992. In 1989 an RCUS minister was welcomed at GS 1989 (art. 45). In 1991,
 1648 the RCUS requested the establishment of fraternal relations. GS 1992 (art. 79) decided to make contact
 1649 with the RCUS a federative matter. GS 1998 (art. 51) declined an invitation to EF and mandated further
 1650 investigation into a number of matters including Lord’s Supper celebration, Sunday observance, and the
 1651 doctrine of the church. GS 2001 (art. 59) decided to enter into EF with the RCUS. Since then EF has been
 1652 continued (GS 2004 art. 24, GS 2007, art. 17, GS 2010 art. 28, GS 2013 art. 93, GS 2016 art. 60, GS 2019
 1653 art. 60). There is contact between the Classes Manitoba and Pacific East of the CanRC with classes of the
 1654 RCUS. Delegates from the CER (formerly CCCNA) have regularly attended RCUS Synods.

1655 **GS 2022 Decisions**

1656 GS 2022 GS 2022 (art. 165) decided:

- 1657 3.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)*
 1658 *under the adopted rules;*
 1659 3.2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) to submit its report to the churches*
 1660 *six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.*

1661 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

1662 May 2022: The CER delegated Rev. Vandevelde to attend RCUS Synod in Kansas City, MO.

1663 November 2022: Members of the CER met with RCUS delegation for a bi-lateral meeting at NAPARC.

1664 January 2023: An exchange of *Clarion* and *Reformed Herald* was arranged.

1665 May 2023: A letter of greetings and regrets were sent to RCUS Synod in Bakersfield, CA.

1666 November 2023: Members of the CER met with RCUS delegation for a bi-lateral meeting at NAPARC.

1667 April 2024: At their request, CER submitted an article to *Reformed Herald* in response to its request for an
 1668 introduction to the CanRC for its readers.

1669 May 2024: CER delegated Br. Gortemaker to attend RCUS Synod in Menno, SD.

1670 **Observations & Considerations**

- 1671 - Much appreciation is expressed officially and unofficially for the CanRC’s diligence in sending fraternal
 1672 delegates to RCUS Classes and Synods. If the CanRC is not represented at their Synods, it is noticed.
 1673 - The RCUS is celebrating its tri-centennial in June 2025, with Synod to be held in Rapid City, SD and an
 1674 official tri-centennial celebration at nearby Mount Rushmore.
 1675 - CanRC Classis Manitoba’s Committee for Contact with Neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries regularly
 1676 sends delegates to the meetings of the RCUS’s Northern Plains Classis. In the last three years, at least
 1677 two RCUS ministers have attended Classis Manitoba as fraternal delegates and led worship services in
 1678 Manitoba on the following Sunday. In the most recent case (September 2024), a CanRC minister filled
 1679 the pulpit of the RCUS pastor’s church.
 1680 - CanRC Classis Pacific East has received an RCUS minister at one or two of its meetings in the past three
 1681 years. The Nooksack Valley ARC is actively involved on behalf of Classic Pacific East in finding ways to
 1682 financially support churches in RCUS’s Western Classis.
 1683 - The remaining members of the Denver ARC (formerly of CanRC’s Classis Manitoba) were supported by
 1684 Rev. George Horner of the RCUS. This led to their being received into the RCUS.
 1685 - The RCUS has seen recent growth in membership, in new congregations being received, and in pastors
 1686 being received into their churches. The RCUS has become deliberate and proactive in welcoming
 1687 contact with groups of Reformed believers, whether they be very small groups or whole churches

1688 looking for a home. The CanRC can learn from the RCUS focus on and experience in home missions as
1689 we look to local missions work.

1690 - Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
1691 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture
1692 and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.

1693 - Based on the rules for EF, the CanRC and the RCUS can effectively assist each other via pulpit exchanges,
1694 visiting RCUS churches, participating in youth camps/conferences held by the various churches, and
1695 the exchange of articles in magazines supported by church members.

1696 **Recommendations**

1697 The CER recommends that synod decide:

1698 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A¹⁴ with the Reformed Church in the United
1699 States (RCUS) according to the adopted rules;

1700 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER)

1701 2.1 To send delegates to meetings of the RCUS synod at least once every two years.

1702 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RCUS to the churches 6 months
1703 prior the convening of the next general synod.

1704 **Grounds:**

1705 1 Re 1:

1706 1.1 As far as can be determined, the RCUS continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
1707 church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction, a close relationship between the CanRC
1708 and the RCUS is mutually beneficial.

1709 1.2 The RCUS very much appreciates the developing relationship with the CanRC. They
1710 especially appreciate having fraternal delegates attend major assemblies.

1711 1.3 The CanRC and the RCUS can effectively assist each other via pulpit exchanges, visiting each
1712 other's churches, participating in youth camps/conferences held by the various churches
1713 and the exchange of articles in magazines supported by church members.

1714 2 Re 2.1: The RCUS synod takes place every year. To be present just once every three years could
1715 give the wrong impression of how we value the relationship. To be present every year might not
1716 be financially prudent.

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¹⁴ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words "category A" should be dropped.

1719 **REPORT 10: REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA (RPCNA)**

1720 **Introduction**

1721 The CanRC has had regular ecumenical contact with the RPCNA since GS Neerlandia 2001.
 1722 The CanRC does not have ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA. Like the CanRC, the RPCNA is a
 1723 member of NAPARC and ICRC.

1724 **Summary of the Report**

1725 Your committee has been maintaining the course with the RPCNA by engaging in regular ecumenical
 1726 contact annually at NAPARC meetings and by welcoming each other to our broader assemblies. We
 1727 continue to note their faithfulness to God’s Word in public and private ministry. Your committee is
 1728 recommending that this contact be continued.

1729 Further, with the development of a new Canadian denomination, the RPCC, that emerged from the
 1730 RPCNA, this committee is recommending that Synod receive our separate RPCC report and issue a
 1731 separate mandate for the RPCC.

1732 **Brief History**

1733 The RPCNA was established in North America in 1793, having come from the Reformed Presbyterians
 1734 in Scotland, the so-called “Covenanters” who left the Presbyterian Church of Scotland during the 1730s.
 1735 In North America the Reformed Presbyterians merged with the Associate Presbyterians in 1782 but some
 1736 left the ARPC again in 1793. In 1833 the RPCNA divided into two, forming the “Old Lights” and “New
 1737 Lights”. Through mergers, the “New Lights” eventually became part of the Presbyterian Church in America
 1738 (PCA). The RPCNA today is the “Old Lights”.

1739 **Brief Description**

1740 Source of church data: NAPARC Member Report 2023

Location	<i>North America</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Scottish immigrants to USA in 1798</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechism, Reformed Presbyterian Testimony</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>101</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>7625 members of whom 5306 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Session</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>meets monthly</i>
	<i>Presbytery</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>meets 2-4x/yr</i>
	<i>Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>meets annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>The RPCNA makes use of their denominational seminary in Pennsylvania: the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary.</i>		
Website	www.reformedpresbyterian.org		

1741 **History of the Relationship**

1742 Early contact with the RPCNA began on a grassroots level in Ottawa as early as 1983. As early as 2004
 1743 our committee began to familiarize ourselves with the RPCNA and we began to recommend to Synod to
 1744 enter into EF with the RPCNA. GS 2007 (art. 163), GS 2010 (art. 77), and GS 2013 (art. 76) continued to
 1745 mandate the committee to further investigate our divergencies. GS 2016 (art. 90) decided not to enter
 1746 into EF with the RPCNA, given the divergencies, though it did mandate continued contact. GS 2019 (art.
 1747 80) mandated continued contact as well.

1748 **Decisions of GS 2022**

1749 GS 2022 (art. 166) decided:

1750 3.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

1751 3.1.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in
1752 North America (RPCNA), particularly at meetings of the North American Presbyterian and
1753 Reformed Council (NAPARC), and when appropriate, to discuss the matters that hinder
1754 Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF);

1755 3.1.2 To take up dialogue and contact with the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada
1756 (RPCC) once it is formed;

1757 3.1.3 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general
1758 synod.

1759 3.2 To not be a sponsoring church for the RPCC if it applies for membership in NAPARC.

1760 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

1761 Members of the CER met with the RPCNA for a bi-lateral meeting in November 2022, 2023, and 2024
1762 at NAPARC. Rev. Temple attended a portion of the RPCNA Synod in June 2024 in Beaver Falls, PA.

1763 **Observations & Considerations**

1764 - With the endorsement of the RPCNA, in March 2023, the six Canadian congregations of the RPCNA
1765 formed a new denomination: the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC).

1766 - In the past, our interchurch relations committees has frequently made reference to the CanRC churches
1767 which were geographical neighbours to the RPCNA: the churches of Ottawa, Elora, Fergus, and Guelph.
1768 Since the formation of the RPCC, the RPCNA no longer has congregations or preaching points
1769 geographically close to CanRC churches.

1770 - At NAPARC 2023, the CER sought clarity about what category of EF the RPCNA had offered the CanRC.
1771 The CER learned it was not our understanding of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (as reported to GS 2016 by
1772 the CCCNA) but of contact, with elements from both our Ecclesiastical Fellowship Category B and our
1773 proposed Ecclesiastical Contact.

1774 - The CCCNA has twice recommended to a General Synod that EF be extended to the RPCNA (2013, 2016).
1775 The recommendation was not adopted at GS 2016 because of two issues. The first is their practice and
1776 exegetical defense of ordaining female deacons. The second issue is reservations about the place and
1777 function of *The Testimony* (GS 2016 art. 90 cons. 3.2, 3.3, 3.5).

1778 - GS 2016 did acknowledge that the RPCNA can be recognized for their faithfulness to the Word of God
1779 and their strong Reformed convictions (GS 2016 art. 90 cons. 3.5 & rec. 4.1). We continue to rejoice in
1780 the faithfulness of the RPCNA and their strong defense of Reformed faith and practice.

1781 - In its report to GS 2022, the CCCNA published the observation that the RPCNA has historically allowed
1782 for women deacons, but their trend has been to distance themselves from this practice.

1783 - The formation of the RPCC now enables the CanRC to take a distinct approach to that denomination.

1784 **Recommendations**

1785 The CER recommends that synod decide:

1786 1. To continue Ecclesiastical Contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America
1787 (RPCNA) according to the adopted rules;

1788 2. To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

1789 2.1 To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the RPCNA, particularly at NAPARC;

1790 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RPCNA to the churches 6 months
1791 prior the convening of the next general synod.

1792 **Grounds:**

1793 1 Re 1:

1794 1.1 Given what is known at this point in time, it would seem the RPCNA is a true and faithful
1795 church of Jesus Christ.

1796 1.2 The RPCNA is receptive to dialogue and discussion with us and have requested that we
1797 reopen consideration about entering into fraternal relations with the RPCNA. Ecclesiastical
1798 Contact approximates what the RPCNA requested and is consistent with the decision taken
1799 by GS 2016 (art. 90).

1800 1.3 The RPCNA is a member of NAPARC.

1801
1802 *Should the Recommendations of the CER found in the Study Report not be adopted, the CER recommends*
1803 *that synod decide:*

1804 1 *To continue contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA);*

1805 2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

1806 2.1 *To engage in continued dialogue and contact with the RPCNA, particularly at NAPARC;*

1807 2.2 *To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RPCNA to the churches 6 months*
1808 *prior the convening of the next general synod.*

1809 **Grounds:**

1810 1 Re 1:

1811 1.1 *Given what is known at this point in time, it would seem the RPCNA is a true and faithful*
1812 *church of Jesus Christ.*

1813 1.2 *The RPCNA is receptive to dialogue and discussion with us and have requested that we*
1814 *reopen consideration about entering into fraternal relations with the RPCNA.*

1815 1.3 *The RPCNA is a member of NAPARC.*

1816

REPORT 11: REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA (RPCC)

1817

Introduction and Summary

1818

The RPCC is a new denomination that formed in March 2023 with the endorsement of the RPCNA, consisting of six Canadian congregations at the time.

1820

The RPCC has not yet sought membership in NAPARC. The CanRC do not have ecclesiastical fellowship with them but does have contact with the RPCNA.

1822

The committee is recommending further discussion and exploration with the RPCC to determine an appropriate category of EF with the RPCC.

1823

1824

Brief History

1825

The RPCC was formed out of the RPCNA in March 2023 as the RPCNA decided to create churches respecting national boundaries. For a further background, see the report on the RPCNA.

1826

1827

Brief Description

1828

Source of church data: www.rpccanada.org

Location	Canada
Origin(s)	Scottish immigrants to North America
Confessional Documents	Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechism, Reformed Presbyterian Testimony
Number of churches & church plants	9
Training of Theological Students	RPCC makes use of their denominational seminary in Pennsylvania: the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary.
Website	www.rpccanada.org

1829

Decision of GS 2022

1830

GS 2022 (art. 166) decided:

1831

3.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

1832

...

1833

3.1.2 To take up dialogue and contact with the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) once it is formed;

1834

3.1.3 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

1835

1836

1837

3.2 To not be a sponsoring church for the RPCC if it applies for membership in NAPARC.

1838

Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024

1839

There has only been limited success to formal and informal efforts from the CER to the RPCC to express our desire to become acquainted. The CER hopes to have a meeting with the RPCC in November 2024 at NAPARC.

1840

1841

1842

Observations & Considerations

1843

- In March 2023, six Canadian congregations of the RPCNA formed the RPCC.

1844

- The reasons for their formation predate the border crossing issues connected with the Covid pandemic.

1845

Being rooted in the Covenanters of Scotland, they believe that their church borders should match those of the nation's borders, to aid its interaction with the government. In addition, Canada Revenue Agency regulations created challenges for the flow of money between the countries in the RPCNA.

1846

1847

- 1848 - Since the RPCC formed, their initial administrative loads have hindered their ecumenical contact.
1849 - At the time of this report, the RPCC consists of 5 churches in Ontario (Almonte, Kitchener, Ottawa, Russell
1850 and Toronto), 1 church in Vancouver, BC, and 3 mission congregations in BC (Squamish, Surrey, and
1851 West Vancouver - 2 of which are Mandarin speaking). The mandarin speaking Surrey RPCC worships in
1852 the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC building.
1853 - The grassroots fellowship formerly enjoyed with the RPCNA now continues with the RPCC.
1854 - The CER has learned from the RPCNA that the RPCC has no plans to make use of *The Testimony*, a
1855 document that had been considered a hinderance to EF between the RPCNA and the CanRC.
1856 - The CER has learned from the RPCNA that the RPCC has no intention to allow for women deacons, a
1857 practice that had been considered a hinderance to EF between the RPCNA and the CanRC.
1858 - The RPCC plans to become a member church of NAPARC.
1859 - The CER has had insufficient contact with the newly formed RPCC to be able to make a recommendation
1860 to Synod regarding ecumenical relations.

1861 **Recommendations**

1862 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1863 1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
1864 1.1 To pursue discussion and further exploration with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of
1865 Canada (RPCC);
1866 1.2 To investigate thoroughly in order to make an appropriate recommendation regarding
1867 ecumenical relations with the RPCC;
1868 1.3 To submit its report on its findings with respect to the RPCC to the churches 6 months prior
1869 the convening of the next general synod.

1870 **Ground:**

- 1871 1 Re 1.1 & 1.2: These are logical and appropriate next steps, considering our previous history with
1872 the RPCNA, and the decisions of GS 2022 to mandate the CER “To take up dialogue and contact
1873 with the new Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) once it is formed” (GS 2022 art.
1874 166 dec. 3.1.2)

1875

1876

REPORT 12: UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA (URCNA)

1877 **Introduction**

1878 The CanRC entered into EF with the URCNA by a decision of GS 2001 (art. 63). Like the CanRC, the
1879 URCNA is a member of NAPARC and ICRC.

1880 **Summary of the Report**

1881 Where geographically proximate, many churches of the CanRC and URCNA continue to work together
1882 with pulpit exchanges, joint community and mission projects, and study opportunities for their mutual
1883 benefit.

1884 The CER is recommending that EF with the URCNA be continued and that the CER be mandated to
1885 monitor developments within the URNCA and to encourage the churches to continue to foster
1886 relationships with local URCNA churches.

1887 **Brief History**

1888 During the 1840s, many Seceders moved from the Netherlands to North America. Through various
1889 paths many of these immigrants in 1857 formed what would eventually become the Christian Reformed
1890 Church in North America (CRCNA). The URCNA was established in North America in 1996, largely made up
1891 of churches/members who had left the CRCNA, mainly over issues surrounding the ordination of women.
1892 In 2008 the URCNA received the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC), churches that left the
1893 CRCNA during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

1894 The URCNA has formal fraternal relations (EF) with a number of churches, including these sister
1895 churches of the CanRC: OPC, RCUS, ERQ, GGRI, and GGRCI. Further information about the URCNA may be
1896 obtained by visiting its website: <https://www.urchna.org/>

1897 **Brief Description**

1898 Source of church data: NAPARC 2023 Report

Location	<i>North America</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Various, including Christian Reformed Church</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Apostles' Creed; Nicene Creed; Athanasian Creed; Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>134 of which 121 are organized churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>25236 members of whom 16690 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory / Council</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2-4x/yr</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Bi-Annual</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Various institutions including Mid-America Reformed Seminary</i>		
Website	www.urchna.org		

1899 **History of the relationship**

1900 Early contact with the URCNA began on a grassroots level in the 1990s as Independent Christian
1901 Reformed Churches formed. GS 1992 (art. 36) established a committee to promote ecclesiastical unity
1902 with the URCNA; this committee eventually became known as the CCU (Committee for Church Unity).
1903 Similar decisions were taken by GS 1995 (art. 86) and GS 1998 (art. 96). GS 2001 (art. 63 & 73) decided to
1904 enter into EF with the URCNA, moving on to “Phase 2”, which saw the establishment of various sub-
1905 committees for theological education, a common church order and a common songbook. Mandates were
1906 continued by GS 2004 (art. 75-77, 98), GS 2007 (art. 98, 99, 103, 104), GS 2010 (art. 63, 71, 87, 151), and

1907 GS 2013 (art. 129-131, 149). URCNA Synod Wyoming 2016 decided to place unity talks on an indefinite
1908 hold. Nevertheless, GS 2016 (art. 77-80) continued the mandate. GS 2019 (art. 139) decided to discontinue
1909 the CCU and move its mandate to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA),
1910 now CER.

1911 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

1912 GS 2022 (art. 167) decided:

1913 *3.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

1914 *3.1.1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the United Reformed Churches in North*
1915 *America (URCNA) according to the adopted rules;*

1916 *3.1.2 To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches;*
1917 *these activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community and*
1918 *mission projects, and study opportunities;*

1919 *3.1.3 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
1920 *synod.*

1921 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

1922 **2022:**

1923 - The committee delegated Rev. Vandavelde and Rev. Bruintjes to URCNA Synod Niagara 2022 in
1924 Buffalo, NY.

1925 - Members of the CER met with Committee on Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) for a
1926 bi-lateral meeting in November 2022 at NAPARC.

1927 **2023:**

1928 - Members of the CER met with CERCU for a bi-lateral meeting in November 2023 at NAPARC.

1929 **2024:**

1930 - The committee delegated Rev. Steve Vandavelde to URCNA Synod Escondido 2024, in Escondido,
1931 CA.

1932 ***Observations & Considerations***

1933 - The URCNA Committee on Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) presented Synod Niagara
1934 2022 with an internal report that surveyed the URCNA about having unity with the CanRC. About 50%
1935 of the churches responded to their survey and, in general, were either positive regarding furthering
1936 unity with the CanRC or expressed various concerns about further unity; responses notably reflected
1937 that quite a number of URCs are unfamiliar with the CanRC. CERCU shared this survey and its report
1938 with us and invited interaction at NAPARC 2022 and 2023.

1939 - Our committees (CERCU and CER) recognize that moving towards greater unity requires further
1940 grassroots movement building contact and trust. Geographical and cultural challenges, also within the
1941 URCNA itself, continue to be something of a hindrance. Many URCNA churches have little if any contact
1942 or familiarity with the CanRC.

1943 - Our committees continually seek to learn how we might overcome some of these challenges.

1944 - At NAPARC 2023, the committee shared our draft proposals regarding rules for EF and Church Order
1945 Article 50 with CERCU for feedback.

1946 - The CERCU continues to follow their mandate, according to Phase 2 of EF, the intent being recognition
1947 and acceptance of each other as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1948 - Synod Wyoming 2016 of the URCNA adopted a “hold” on unity talks (“a breather” as per GS-CanRC 2019
1949 art. 139). CERCU has said this is not the end of moving forward in federative unity, but during this time
1950 there remains opportunity for one or more of the URCNA churches to suggest ways to their synods to
1951 move forward in our relationship.

- 1952 - In many places in Canada the relationship continues to grow. Pulpit exchanges, collaboration in
1953 education, conferences, seminary use, youth camps, mission works, and church plants are all being
1954 blessed by the Lord. Unity is frequently expressed by marriage among each other’s members. Church
1955 unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 1956 - Since there is a substantial amount of interaction among our respective classes and local churches, the
1957 CER has begun to reach out to the CanRC classes to get a better idea of all that is presently happening
1958 between local CanRC and URCNA churches. Some classes have appointed committees to liaise with
1959 CER.
- 1960 - URCNA Synod Escondido 2024 entertained a recommendation from CERCU to set aside funds in order to
1961 remove financial hinderances for the pulpit exchanges between distant URC and CanRC. For various
1962 reasons the recommendation was not adopted.
- 1963 - Synod Escondido 2024 adopted a “Pastoral Advice on Digital Media and Worship” and a “Pastoral Advice
1964 on Human Sexuality”. These can found here: https://www.urchna.org/pastoral_advice. The CER has not
1965 interacted with these documents or the Synod decisions. We note that the URC gives the following
1966 description of Pastoral Advice: “Pastoral Advice is Synod’s application of the Scriptures and the
1967 Confessions to particular circumstances in the life of the churches. Pastoral Advice expresses the
1968 collective wisdom of synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care. Pastoral Advice should be
1969 received with respect. It would be unwise to disregard Pastoral Advice in preaching or writing. It may
1970 not however, serve as grounds in matters of discipline. Pastoral Advice may be appealed as outlined in
1971 Church Order Articles 29 and 31.”
- 1972 - Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
1973 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture
1974 and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.
- 1975 - At their meeting at NAPARC 2024 the committees (CERCU and CER) intend to continue discussions on
1976 the matters highlighted above.

1977 **Recommendations**

1978 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 1979 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A¹⁵ with the United Reformed Churches in
1980 North America (URCNA) according to the adopted rules;
- 1981 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
- 1982 2.1 To encourage the churches to continue to foster relationships with local URCNA churches.
1983 These activities could include, but are not limited to, pulpit exchanges, joint community
1984 and mission projects, and study opportunities;
- 1985 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the URCNA to the churches 6 months
1986 prior the convening of the next general synod.

1987 **Grounds:**

- 1988 1 Re 1: The URCNA continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ.
1989 Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC
1990 and URCNA is mutually beneficial.
- 1991 2 Re 2.1: Given the continued desire on our part for the highest expression of unity with the URCNA
1992 and given the proximity of most CanRCs to many URCs, it is appropriate to encourage maximum
1993 interaction. The CER is well-positioned to repeatedly facilitate this encouragement.

¹⁵ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

1994

REPORT 13: FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA (FRCA)

1995

Introduction

1996

The CanRC entered into EF with the FRCA by a decision of GS 1958 (art. 95).

1997

Summary of the Report

1998

We experience a very close bond with the FRCA. During the period 2022-2025, we were able to have good contact at the committee level with them as well as visit their Synod in 2024. This visit was very beneficial and underlined the excellent fellowship we enjoy in Christ and the good cooperation in ecumenical relations and theological training, as their theological students pursue their studies at the CRTS and the FRCA supports the CRTS generously.

2000

The CER is recommending that EF with the FRCA be continued according to the adopted rules for EF.

2004

Brief History

2005

The FRCA was formed in the early 1950s by immigrants from The Netherlands from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv).

2006

2007

Brief Description

2008

Source of church data: Yearbook 2024 and FRCA website

Location	<i>Australia with largest concentration in Western Australia</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Mostly GK(v) immigrants after World War II</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>18 congregations and 1 home congregation</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>5422 members of whom 3254 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>		<i>Quarterly</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>		<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	http://frca.org.au/		

2009

History of the relationship

2010

GS 1954 (art. 54) decided to seek correspondence with the FRCA. GS 1958 (art. 95) noted with thankfulness that this was accepted by the FRCA. Since then the EF relationship has been continued.

2011

For references see: GS 1962 art. 138, GS 1965 art. 77, GS 1968 art. 79 , GS 1971 art. 14, GS 1974 art. 140 , GS 1977 art. 107, GS 1980 art. 153, GS 1983 art. 99, GS 1986 art. 145, GS 1989 art. 102, GS 1992 art. 49, GS 1995 art. 19, GS 1998 art. 34, GS 2001 art. 33, GS 2004, art. 51, GS 2007 art. 160, GS 2010 art. 33, GS 2013 art. 123, GS 2016 art. 21, and GS 2019 art. 117.

2012

Since the relationship began there has been a high level of cooperation. The FRCA have used the CanRC *Book of Praise* and sent students to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). The CanRC have cooperated with the FRCA in mission work, calling each other's ministers, and consulted about 3rd party ecclesiastical relationships. There is strong mutual bond between the CanRC and the FRCA, for which both federations are very thankful. The FRCA is currently exploring the possibility of establishing theological training in Australia.

2016

Decisions of GS 2022

2017

GS 2022 (art. 169) decided:

- 2024 3.1 *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches of*
2025 *Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules;*
- 2026 3.2 *To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA’s ongoing support for and interest in the*
2027 *Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), including financial support;*
- 2028 3.3 *To encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of the CRTS to continue contact with the*
2029 *deputyship for theological education in the FRCA to explore the feasibility and benefits of*
2030 *delivering theological education in Australia;*
- 2031 3.4 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
- 2032 3.4.1 *To maintain close contact with the deputyship of the FRCA in matters of relations with*
2033 *sister-churches abroad and informing the FRCA of changes or developments in third-party*
2034 *relationships;*
- 2035 3.4.2 *To invite the various deputyships of the FRCA to seek direct contact with the corresponding*
2036 *CanRC committees (e.g., our Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise,*
2037 *Committee on Bible Translations) in areas of mutual interest where the CER’s mandate does*
2038 *not reach;*
- 2039 3.4.3 *To communicate to the FRCA the value of the International Conference of Reformed*
2040 *Churches (ICRC) and encourage them to consider membership;*
- 2041 3.4.4 *To send a delegation to the next FRCA synod in 2024;*
- 2042 3.4.5 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
2043 *synod.*

2044 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

2045 The decisions of GS 2022 regarding the FRCA were made known to the FRCA via letter. The CanRC rules
2046 for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Acts of GS 2022 and the Press Release were sent to the FRCA. Since Synod
2047 2022, there has been correspondence with the FRCA deputyship for Interchurch Relations regarding the
2048 sharing of reports and input regarding restructuring of our ecumenical relationships. In November 2023,
2049 a video conference was held between representatives of CER and the FRCA deputyship for Interchurch
2050 Relations, in which matters of mutual interest and updates in various developments relating to
2051 ecumenical relationships were discussed in a beneficial and upbuilding way.

2052 In response to the invitation received to send delegates to the FRCA Synod in Darling Downs in June
2053 2024, Rev. Van Dam and Br. De Boer traveled to Australia to attend. We were thankful to be able to send
2054 delegates in person since this was not possible at their previous Synod in 2021. Greetings from the CanRC
2055 were conveyed at their Synod on June 18, 2024. We expressed sincere thankfulness for the very close
2056 bond which we may enjoy, gave updates on various developments in ecumenical relations, and also
2057 communicated the heartfelt desire that the FRCA would again join the ICRC. Throughout Synod there was
2058 very good interaction with the FRCA delegates. We were able to speak in plenary sessions, where
2059 appropriate, and could participate in committee meetings. During the visit, Rev. Van Dam preached in 5
2060 different congregations in Western Australia, and this also helped to further strengthen the bond between
2061 our federations.

2062 ***Highlights from FRCA Synod 2024***

- 2063 1. Canadian Reformed Churches: The FRCA Synod decided to continue sister church relations with the
2064 CanRC according to the established rules. The ground for this decision is that “the CanRC show
2065 continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and the Church
2066 Order.” As per the established rules, the FRCA deputies will continue to monitor developments in the
2067 CanRC on areas of church polity, liturgy and any other areas of potential concern; no areas of concern
2068 were brought forward at the FRCA Synod.
- 2069 2. Other ecumenical relations of interest:

- 2070 a) DGK/GKN: It was decided that contact would be continued with these churches. The hope is
2071 expressed that it will be possible to enter into a sister church relationship with a merged church
2072 federation in the future.
- 2073 b) URCNA: As of 2022, the URCNA has entered into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the FRCA. The
2074 FRCA Synod responded to the URCNA with thankfulness, and will assist the URCNA in
2075 implementing this step, where possible and desirable. The FRCA does not have an exactly
2076 equivalent category, but they have expressed the desire to maintain mutual contact. The fact
2077 that the CanRC and URCNA are sister churches was noted, even though official unity talks
2078 between the two have stalled.
- 2079 3. Interchurch Relationships: FRCA Synod 2021 had mandated their deputies for Interchurch Relations to
2080 propose to this Synod a set of guidelines about with whom, how, and when to establish sister church
2081 relations or possibly other kinds of relationships. In the end, it was decided to adopt, in addition to a
2082 sister church relationship, a new category of relationship, namely, that of Ecclesiastical Contact, with
2083 churches “whom the FRCA have recognised as true and faithful but for whom the relationship,
2084 although meaningful, is deemed not sufficiently manageable to establish a sister church relationship
2085 at this point of time” (art. 95, p.74). Church federations in this level of ecclesiastical contact shall inform
2086 each other of their broadest assemblies and receive them as observers at these assemblies,
2087 acknowledge each other’s attestations, admit members to the sacraments, and not ordinarily open
2088 pulpits to their ministers but only by way of exception or if for a longer period through concurring
2089 advice from classis.
- 2090 4. International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC): By way of background context, it is noted that
2091 in 1996 the FRCA withdrew their membership from the ICRC. Membership in the ICRC has been a
2092 controversial matter in the FRCA because the initial idea of the ICRC for many in the FRCA is that it was
2093 to be a conference for sister churches. Over the years the ICRC has included more church federations
2094 than only those which are sister churches. After much discussion, FRCA Synod 2024 decided to send
2095 observers to the next two plenary meetings of the ICRC. It is hoped that these visits will give the FRCA
2096 sufficient information towards making a final decision about whether or not to rejoin the ICRC.
- 2097 5. Training for the Ministry: The FRCA is very thankful with the quality and the faithfulness of the
2098 instruction of their theological students at the CRTS. Nevertheless, there is also a desire among some
2099 in the FRCA to work towards establishing their own training of theological students. Over the past few
2100 years, deputies from the FRCA have been working together with the CRTS Board of Governors to see
2101 what options there might be. After substantial deliberation, FRCA Synod 2024 decided to mandate the
2102 deputies to develop a strategic long-term plan for a possible future Australian Reformed Theological
2103 Seminary. Investigating whether this is feasible would involve assessing the interest among churches
2104 in the Asia Pacific region for such a seminary, what steps need to be taken regarding accreditation in
2105 Australia, the financial implications for the churches, and whether there is broad support for an
2106 Australian seminary (as opposed to continuing with the CRTS) within the FRCA. In the grounds, it was
2107 further noted, among other things, that an Australian seminary should not be inferior in quality to the
2108 CRTS and that it should only begin “once the CRTS approaches 50 students and has at least eight
2109 brothers available for professor in the CanRC and FRCA” (art. 70, p.35).

2110 ***Observations and Considerations***

2111 We are thankful for the close bond which we may have with the FRCA. We share a very similar history
2112 and are of mutual support to one another. The FRCA send their theological students to the CRTS and they
2113 contribute substantially to the support of the CRTS and are thankful for the high quality of the training
2114 and its faithfulness to Scripture.

2115 **Recommendations**

2116 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 2117 1 To express thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA’s ongoing prayerful and financial support
2118 for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)
- 2119 2 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A¹⁶ with the Free Reformed
2120 Churches of Australia (FRCA) under the adopted rules.
- 2121 3 To express appreciation for the fact that the FRCA has decided to send observers to the next
2122 International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and to continue to encourage the FRCA
2123 to consider membership in the ICRC;
- 2124 4 To mandate the CER:
- 2125 3.1 To maintain close contact with the deputyships of the FRCA in matters of common interest,
2126 such as, e.g., ecumenical relations and changes in third party relationships;
- 2127 3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCA to the churches 6 months
2128 prior the convening of the next general synod

2129 **Grounds:**

- 2130 1 Re 2: The FRCA continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given
2131 frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and
2132 FRCA is mutually beneficial.
- 2133 2 Re 3: As the ICRC is a forum where churches meet who profess and seek to be faithful to Scripture
2134 as summarized in Reformed confessions, FRCA membership in the ICRC would be of benefit to
2135 ICRC member churches and to the FRCA itself.

2136

¹⁶ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

2137

REPORT 14: REFORMED CHURCHES IN BRAZIL (IRB)

2138 **Introduction**

2139 The CanRC entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the IRB by a decision of GS 2001 (art. 55).
2140 Like the CanRC, the IRB is a member of the ICRC.

2141 **Summary of the Report**

2142 The CanRC has full EF with the IRB and so the relationship is like, for example, the relationship the
2143 CanRC has with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). A difference is, though, that the IRB looks
2144 to the CanRC as a big sister and very much appreciates the assistance that is given to them in many ways.

2145 The CRCA is recommending that EF with the IRB be continued and further that it be mandated to visit
2146 with the IRB between now and our next synod to continue to encourage this young federation of churches.

2147 **Brief History**

2148 After World War II, immigrants from the Netherlands with a background in Reformed Churches settled
2149 in colonies in Brazil and instituted churches. Though the colonies for the most part failed, Brazil became a
2150 mission field of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) and the CanRC. In 2001 the
2151 churches formed by this mission work, together with the “colony” church in Unai, united to form the
2152 Reformed Churches in Brazil (IRB).

2153 **Brief Description**

2154 Source of church data: Br. Chris Boersema (Mission Brazil – Aldergrove)

Location	<i>Various areas of Brazil with a concentration in the North East</i>		
Origins	<i>The federation was established through the mission work of the CanRC churches of Surrey and Hamilton in north-east Brazil, and of GKv in Unai and in the southern part of the country. The federation was formed in 2000.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & Church plants	<i>18 congregations (9 are instituted Churches)</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>1061 members of which 693 are communicant</i>		
Office bearer numbers	<i>Elders – 26; Deacons – 25</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Every 6 months</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>John Calvin Institute (IJC) Currently 3 full-time students</i>		
Website	www.igrejasreformadasdobrasil.org		

2155 **History of the relationship**

2156 Though there was an EF relationship with a church in Brazil in the distant past, that relationship ended
2157 when the church ceased to exist. In 1970 the CanRC of New Westminster (later Surrey-Maranatha) began
2158 missionary work in São José, Pernambuco and in 1992 the Hamilton CanRC began a mission project in
2159 Maceió, Alagoas. In 2000 (June) the IRB held its first *Concílio* (Synod) and became a federation. At this
2160 *Concílio* the IRB decided to request a sister church relationship with the CanRC.

2161 GS 2001 decided to offer a relationship of EF to the IRB. This relationship was accepted. At all general
2162 synods since then EF was continued and the committee for contact with the IRB was mandated to

2163 continue the relationship of EF with the IRB under the adopted rules, to use every opportunity to have
2164 contact with the IRB, and to provide encouragement to these churches. The Committee has sent delegates
2165 to several IRB *ConcÍlios* since the relationship of EF began in 2001. The Committee has also made use of
2166 brothers sent to Brazil by the sending Church of Surrey as well as the sending Church of Aldergrove, who
2167 took over the work from the Church of Surrey in 2012, and the Church of Hamilton.

2168 The decisions of the various synods can be found here: GS 2004 art. 28, GS 2007 art. 128, GS 2010 art.
2169 157, GS 2013 art. 133, GS 2016 art. 88, and GS 2019 art. 87.

2170 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

2171 GS 2022 (art. 124) decided:

- 2172 3.1 *To express gratitude for the continued desire of the IRB to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;*
2173 3.2 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB) under the*
2174 *adopted rules;*
2175 3.3 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
2176 3.3.1 *To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to this*
2177 *federation of churches;*
2178 3.3.2 *To visit the IRB at least twice before the next synod;*
2179 3.3.3 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton-*
2180 *Cornerstone CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;*
2181 3.3.4 *To submit its report to the churches six months before the convening of the next general*
2182 *synod.*

2183 ***Execution of this mandate in the period of summer 2022 to fall 2024***

2184 The following lists the contacts with the IRB since Synod 2022 up to the time of the writing of this
2185 report in August 2024:

- 2186 • Received and reviewed Acts of the 38th *ConcÍlio* of the IRB held in Maceió from May 9 to 13, 2022.
2187 • Br. Schouten and Br. Gortemaker attended the 39th *ConcÍlio* of the IRB held in Brasilia from
2188 November 7 to 11, 2022.
2189 • Following the 39th *ConcÍlio*, the CER delegates visited the Aldeia Training Centre, home of the IJC
2190 (IRB seminary), and observed classes in progress. They also attended Sunday worship services in
2191 Maragogi.
2192 • Received and reviewed Acts of the 40th *ConcÍlio* of the IRB held in Caruaru, PE from May 8 to 12,
2193 2023.
2194 • Received and reviewed Acts of the 41st *ConcÍlio* of the IRB held in Camaragibe (Aldeia), PE from
2195 October 2 to 6, 2023.
2196 • Attended the 41st *ConcÍlio* of the IRB held in Esperança, PB from May 6 to 10, 2024. Br. Gortemaker
2197 attended and was received as a fraternal delegate. (Due to health issues in the family, Br. Schouten
2198 was unable at the last minute to attend.)
2199 • Following the 41st *ConcÍlio*, the CER delegate attended Sunday worship services in Maragogi and
2200 Barra Grande.

2201 ***Observations & Considerations***

2202 It is of great benefit when we can regularly visit their *ConcÍlios* and have personal contact with the
2203 brothers in the IRB. Even with few translators and some who speak broken English, face-to-face
2204 communication is very helpful and builds relationships that result in the back-and-forth flow of
2205 information.

2206 Observing the IRB Concílio at work gives reason for thankfulness. The work of looking after the people
2207 of God is taken very seriously. Much of their time is focused on the training of ministers of the Word, on
2208 the exercise of discipline in the churches, on the spread of the gospel in Brazil, and generally on the care
2209 for the members of the churches. It was also very clear that there is a strong desire to be a faithful
2210 Reformed church. The following are some of the matters dealt with by the two *Concílios* attended.

- 2211 - *Concílio* approved a request from the church of Unaí that the mission congregation under their
2212 supervision in Brasilia be instituted.
- 2213 - Three churches interested in joining the IRB sent observers to *Concílio* – there continues to be
2214 interest from other churches moving in a Reformed direction.
- 2215 - The IRB is perpetually working under financial pressure.
- 2216 - They are nearing completion of a new psalter-hymnal complete with the *Three Forms of Unity*
2217 and forms, etc.
- 2218 - The IRB received official communications from Reformed churches in Venezuela and decided to
2219 investigate sending or receiving a delegation.
- 2220 - At the first Concilio attended, Concílio for the second time dealt with requests for entry into the
2221 ministry via CO-IRB art. 7 (=CO-CanRC art. 8, “Exceptional Gifts”); in one case a brother did not
2222 sustain his exam, and in the second case, it was judged that insufficient evidence of exceptional
2223 gifts was presented. At the second Concilio attended, this was again dealt with. Concilio’s
2224 decision made it clear that the seminary route is the normal way, and that truly exceptional gifts
2225 need to be present for Art. 7 to be used.

2226 The IRB is a young federation and is excited about the Reformed faith. They place a very high value on
2227 their confessions, the Three Forms of Unity, and see these as very important to know and to live by as
2228 churches. They consider themselves very young and look to the CanRC as a much older and wiser
2229 federation blessed with the confessions that came out of the reformation for many generations already.
2230 For that reason, the relationship is important from both sides. They look to the CanRC for guidance, and
2231 we can look to the IRB to be reminded of our rich heritage, to value it, and to hold on to it so that the
2232 CanRC may remain a faithful federation.

2233 The IRB takes its responsibility for evangelism seriously. The biggest obstacles to doing everything they
2234 would like to do in this area are a lack of finances and people able to do the work. Most of the
2235 congregations have a hard time paying their expenses and some cannot afford to pay for a minister of the
2236 Word. In many places there is a shortage of suitable men to serve in the offices of elder and deacon for
2237 the local church, not to mention assisting in outreach efforts. Despite these difficulties, the federation has
2238 spread to the south of Brazil. From being concentrated in the Northeast, there are now churches and
2239 church plants in the South: in São Paulo area, Rio de Janeiro, and Colombo area.

2240 As far as can be determined, the IRB demonstrates that they remain faithful churches. They abide by
2241 the Word of God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to Reformed confessions and church order.

2242 The IRB has EF with only one federation: the CanRC. They are also a member of the ICRC and were able
2243 to send a delegate to the conference held in 2022. They may not be able to do this every time because of
2244 financial and time constraints.

2245 The IRB has three specific concerns with which we as CanRC can continue to assist. These have not
2246 changed since the report to GS 2022.

- 2247 1. The training of men for the ministry of the Word and the training of men for the offices of elders
2248 and deacons are mostly beyond the ability of the IRB at this time. They are too small to have the
2249 men and the resources able to do this. They are assisted in this work by the sending churches of
2250 Aldergrove and Hamilton, largely through the work of the John Calvin Institute (IJC).
- 2251 2. Financially, the IRB is a very poor federation. The churches desire assistance in supporting
2252 ministers of the Word, in paying for buildings to worship in, in looking after a seminary, in
2253 providing ministers of the Word with funds to buy books, and in their outreach efforts.

2254 3. Because the IRB is a young federation with many new believers there continues to be a lot for
2255 these believers to learn. This is being worked on by the sending churches and the mission workers
2256 by way of regular teaching in various formats.

2257 Given the needs of the IRB, it is important to make every effort to maintain direct contact with them
2258 and to encourage these churches and their leaders.

2259 It is noted with gratitude that there is good communication between the IRB and the CanRC and that
2260 the CanRC can do much work in Brazil through the sending churches.

2261 The sending churches of Aldergrove and Hamilton are to be encouraged in their support of the
2262 churches in Brazil, especially in the training of ministers of the Word.

2263 **Recommendations**

2264 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 2265 1 To express gratitude for the continued desire of the IRB to grow in knowledge and faithfulness;
- 2266 2 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) category A¹⁷ with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB)
2267 under the adopted rules;
- 2268 3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2269 3.1 To use every opportunity to have contact with the IRB and to provide encouragement to
2270 this federation of churches;
 - 2271 3.2 To visit the IRB at least twice before the next general synod of the CanRC;
 - 2272 3.3 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Aldergrove CanRC and the Hamilton-
2273 Cornerstone CanRC given their mission work in Brazil;
 - 2274 3.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the IRB to the churches 6 months prior
2275 the convening of the next general synod.

2276 **Grounds**

- 2277 1 Re 2: The IRB continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given
2278 frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and IRB
2279 is mutually beneficial.
- 2280 2 Re 3.1 & 3.2: The IRB is a very young federation with only one sister church, the CanRC. Our
2281 encouragement to them is sought and very much appreciated.
- 2282 3 Re 3.3: The sending churches of Aldergrove and Hamilton have a lot of insight into the strengths
2283 and weaknesses of the IRB, as well as having missionaries and mission aid workers on the ground.
2284

¹⁷ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

2285

REPORT 15-17: INTRODUCTION TO THE INDONESIA REPORTS

2286 **Orientation**

2287 The following serves as an introduction regarding CER activities for all three Indonesian churches with
2288 whom we have contact, and a summary of the three reports.

2289 ***The island nation Indonesia and the churches with whom we have a relationship***

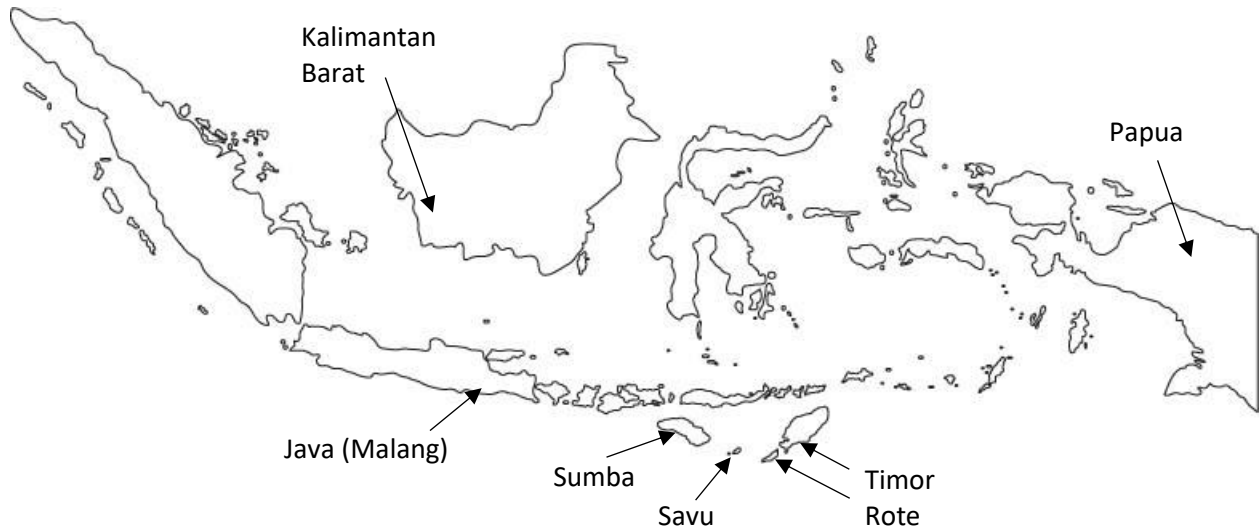
2290 The total population of Indonesia consists of about 284
2291 million inhabitants. Smaller islands have their own
2292 ethnicity and culture, larger islands and cities (like Kupang,
2293 population approaching 500,000) have many ethnicities
2294 and cultures.

2295 The **GGRI** are in the provinces of Nusa Tenggara Timur
2296 (NTT, namely the islands of Sumba, Savu, and Timor),
2297 Kalimantan Barat (KalBar), Papua, and, as of recently, Java.
2298 The **GGRCI**¹⁸ are in NTT (Savu, Timor, Rote, and in Java).
2299 The **GGRI-Timor** are in Timor.



2300 *Indonesia and Canada compared for size.*

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Notes:

Sumba, Savu, Rote, and Timor are all in the province Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT)

Traveling from Sumba to Timor is about a day on a ferry or an hour by plane. Savu is generally only reached by ferry. Road infrastructure is minimal: on a sealed road one could average 40km per hour. Many roads are unsealed and in the wet season often impassable.

¹⁸ In decisions of Synod until 2022, these churches have been referred to as “GGRC.” However, the more complete designation is GGRCI (Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia).

2314 ***Summary of Reports 15, 16, and 17 on ecumenical relations in Indonesia***

2315 Since visits to Indonesia often involve all three churches with whom we have contact, we begin with a
2316 general overview.

2317 Rev. Pol and Rev. Versteeg attended the GGRCI Synod held from August 29-31, 2022, in Kupang, Timor,
2318 and also engaged in several other activities geared toward getting to know the brothers in those churches
2319 better and to offer advice and encouragement where appropriate.

2320 A meeting with Deputies of the GGRI-Timor also took place, but was not fruitful, regarding promoting
2321 relations between them and the GGRCI. One of the Deputies of the GGRI indicated that there have been
2322 no recent efforts on the part of the GGRI-Timor to seek a relationship with the GGRI on a national level.

2323 Rev. Pol and Rev. Henderik Versteeg then travelled to Bengkayang, Kalimantan Barat, to attend the
2324 Third National Synod of the GGRI which took place from September 5-7, 2022. The churches represented
2325 at their respective synods continue to uphold and promote the Reformed faith in Indonesia, a country
2326 that is predominantly Muslim. The proceedings of the National Synod of the GGRI were conducted in an
2327 orderly way in good brotherly harmony. The National Synod of the GGRI could not yet make a final
2328 decision concerning the relationship with the Dutch churches, since the matter had not yet been dealt
2329 with at the Regional Synods of Kalimantan Barat and Papua. A final decision has therefore been deferred
2330 to the next National Synod.

2331 The decision made at the First National Synod of the GGRI that women are not to be ordained to
2332 ecclesiastical offices in the Reformed Churches was reaffirmed. Synod adopted an updated, streamlined
2333 version of the Church Order, that essentially continues to parallel the one in use among the Canadian
2334 Reformed Churches. Advice was given concerning various practical matters where the delegates from the
2335 three provinces shared their challenges and sought collective wisdom from all those attending the
2336 assembly as delegates and fraternal delegates.

2337 Your committee recommends that the existing relationships of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GGRI
2338 and the GGRCI be continued and that visits to the broadest ecclesiastical assemblies take place. Further,
2339 that the mandate with respect to the GGRI-Timor be continued with some modification.

2340

REPORT 15: REFORMED CHURCHES IN INDONESIA (GGRI)

2341

2342 **Introduction**

2343 The CanRC entered into EF with the Reformed Churches in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT)
 2344 in Indonesia by a decision of GS 2010 (art. 108). These churches subsequently federated together with the
 2345 Reformed Churches in the provinces of Kalimantan Barat (KalBar) and Papua (P), that resulted from
 2346 mission work undertaken by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) and the CanRC.
 2347 These three church groups decided to form a national federation at their first General Synod in Sentani,
 2348 Papua, in January 2012. After further investigation, GS 2019 (art. 121) decided to establish EF with the
 2349 entire GGRI. Like the CanRC, the GGRI is a member of the ICRC.

2350 Readers of this report are encouraged to reference the Introduction to the Indonesian relationships,
 2351 as found between Reports 14 and 15.

2352 **Summary**

2353 There has been good contact with the GGRI since 2022. The CER is recommending continuing
 2354 ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI.

2355 **Brief History**

2356 The GGRI-NTT resulted from mission work undertaken by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
 2357 beginning on the island of Sumba in the late 1800s. Its history parallels that of the Dutch churches, in that
 2358 the Liberation of 1944 led to the formation of a separate group that established a relationship with the
 2359 GKv. The schism in the late 1960s led to the formation of what we now know as the GGRI-NTT, while those
 2360 that aligned themselves with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken were called the Gereja Bebas (“Free
 2361 Churches”).

2362 The Reformed Churches in Kalimantan Barat are the outcome of missionary work by the GKv beginning
 2363 in 1948, whereas the churches in Papua resulted from mission work of the GKv beginning in 1956, work
 2364 in which the CanRC later also participated through the Toronto-Bethel CanRC. Since the late 1970s, these
 2365 churches interacted with the GGRI-NTT at national conferences held once every four years. The GGRI-NTT
 2366 was already functioning as an independent federation of churches before those in KalBar and Papua.
 2367 When the churches in the latter two regions formed federations of their own, the time became ripe in
 2368 January 2012 for these federations to unite, creating a national federation called the GGRI. They all follow
 2369 the same Reformed confessions and Church Order.

2370 **Brief Description**

2371 Source of church data: <https://bbk.gkv.nl/landen/azie/indonesie/> and ICRC 2017 Proceedings and
 2372 input from a deputy of the GGRI.

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Indonesia, in the provinces West Kalimantan (Kalimantan Barat = KalBar), East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur = NTT), and Papua</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Mission by the GKN (pre-WW2) and GKv in KalBar and Sumba (NTT), and by the GKN (pre-WW2), GKv, and CanRC in Papua. The three GGRI groups had been meeting at conferences every four years since 1978. They became a single federation of churches in 2012.</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i>
Polity	<i>Church Order of Dort (adapted to Indonesian context)</i>

Number of churches & church plants	<i>KalBar: 24 churches, 16 mission posts NTT: 20 churches, 55 mission posts Papua: 13 churches are self-governing, 67 are preparing for institution, and there are 39 mission posts.</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>ICRC 2022 lists 32,892 members. Other data suggests: KalBar: ~5000; NTT: ~8000; Papua: ~13,100</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>KalBar: 3 NTT: 4 Papua: 6</i>	<i>Varies Annually</i>
	<i>Regional Synod</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Every 3 years</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Every 4 years</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>STT on Sumba Island (NTT) and STT in the province of KalBar.</i>		
Website	<i>None</i>		

2373 **History of the relationship**

2374 The CanRC decided not to have any contact with Indonesian churches in 1954 (GS 1954 art. 54) and
 2375 1962 (GS 1962 art. 128, 146), mainly because of language barriers and difficulties understanding their
 2376 struggles. The CanRC and GGRI-NTT became reacquainted through the ICRC, as both churches had
 2377 representatives at the Constituent Assembly in 1982. The GGRI are referenced in GS 1998 in the context
 2378 of the ICRC and FRCA, GS 2004 (art. 100), and GS 2007 (art. 151).

2379 In a supplementary report to GS 2004, the question of a relationship with the GGRI-NTT was raised
 2380 again, primarily because the GGRI-NTT already had EF with the FRCA and the GKv, and several Indonesians
 2381 were or had studied at CRTS. Further, the GGRI-NTT was also in contact with the Calvinist Reformed
 2382 Churches in Indonesia (GGRCI).

2383 EF between the CanRC and the GGRI-NTT commenced with a decision by GS 2010 (art. 108). The
 2384 relationship of EF was continued by decisions as follows: GS 2013 art. 123, GS 2016 art. 115, and GS 2019
 2385 art. 121. Since entering into EF, delegates from the CanRC have visited the GGRI-NTT regularly. Lack of
 2386 funds has meant the GGRI-NTT have not been to our synods.

2387 The GGRI-NTT joined with the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua to form a new federation in January,
 2388 2012. Because the CanRC did not know enough about the GGRI-KalBar and GGRI-P¹⁹, and concerns were
 2389 expressed, GS 2013 (art. 126) and GS 2016 (art. 115) mandated the CRCA to investigate whether EF should
 2390 be extended to the GGRI as a whole. GS 2019 (art. 121) decided to approve of this, establishing EF with
 2391 the national federation of the GGRI. This was continued by GS 2022 (art. 125). One minister in the GGRI-
 2392 NTT, Rev. Pila Njuka, graduated from CRTS after prior training at the seminary of the GGRI-NTT on the
 2393 island of Sumba. He now teaches at that same seminary.

2394 **Decisions of GS 2022**

2395 GS 2022 (art. 125) decided:

- 2396 3.1 *To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI);*
- 2397 3.2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
 - 2398 3.2.1 *To try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next*
 - 2399 *national synod of the GGRI;*
 - 2400 3.2.2 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia*

¹⁹ Not to be confused with the GGRP, a group that broke away from the GGRI-Papua, because they want GGRI-P to focus on Papuan freedom from Indonesia. They are a small church group that harasses the GGRI-P in various ways.

- 2401 *(FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and*
2402 *supporting the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;*
2403 3.2.3 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work*
2404 *in Timor;*
2405 3.2.4 *As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical*
2406 *harmony and unity between faithful reformed churches in Indonesia;*
2407 3.2.5 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
2408 *synod.*

2409 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

2410 As mentioned in the Introduction to the Indonesia reports, Rev. Dr. Pol and Rev. Versteeg attended
2411 the Third National Synod of the GGRI. The presence of the delegates proved to be insightful and fruitful.
2412 The churches represented at their respective synods continue to uphold and promote the Reformed faith
2413 in Indonesia.

2414 During the ICRC 2022, a month later, Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple met with Rev. Pila Njuka.

2415 Rev. Pol has also been able to maintain regular long-distance contact with GGRI leaders since the 2022
2416 Synod.

2417 ***Observations and Considerations***

2418 In addition to the points referenced in the Introduction to the Indonesia reports, various practical
2419 matters were also addressed, such as how to help the GGRI-P deal with difficulties in their interaction with
2420 the government, whether office bearers can have official garments, and the baptism of children in
2421 situations where marriages have not been conducted under the auspices of the church. Synod also
2422 decided that a minister should resign from being a minister of the Word if he becomes involved in a
2423 political party.

2424 Since the GGRI seminaries in Sumba and Kalimantan Barat do not have government-approved
2425 accreditation, they cannot issue a B.Th. degree to their graduates. Because of new government
2426 regulations, such graduates will therefore no longer be able to pursue further theological studies at an
2427 M.Th. level or later to obtain a Doctorate. This can be expected to pose future problems for ensuring that
2428 those seminaries will be provided with qualified teaching staff in the future, which will eventually also
2429 further limit possibilities for obtaining accreditation. The GGRI are currently exploring options to deal with
2430 this issue, including cooperation with the CRTS in Hamilton. The matter has also been discussed at the
2431 recent ICRC, when CanRC delegates met with the GGRI delegate.

2432 Since the GGRI-NTT is officially registered with the government, the GGRCI have asked to shelter under
2433 their “umbrella” for legal protection. This was approved by Synod.

2434 The GGRI-NTT was asked to explore the possibility of having a relationship established between the
2435 GGRI and the GGRI-T.

2436 Contact between the Reformed Churches of Indonesia in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-
2437 NTT) and the Gereja Bebas (Free Church) on the island of Sumba in that same province is increasing. The
2438 Gereja Bebas is an offshoot of mission work conducted by the GKv decades ago.

2439 Given the existing contacts between the GGRI-NTT and the URCNA, the National Synod decided to offer
2440 the URCNA a sister church relationship.

2441 Synod declined to sponsor the Evangelical Reformed Churches in India for membership in the ICRC
2442 since the GGRI have no relationship with them and do not know them well enough.

2443 The GGRI churches in Papua (GGRI-P) are responsible for convening the Fourth National Synod of the
2444 GGRI; it is scheduled to take place in September 2025.

2445 ***Challenges and assistance***

2446 ***The GGRI-NTT*** have a history of facing financial challenges, but the Free Reformed Churches of

2447 Australia (FRCA) have also provided them with help. The Rockingham and Baldivis FRCA give support to
2448 about three or four congregations for evangelists and ministers. They also support the building of manses
2449 and church buildings on the mission field. There is also the support of the seminary in Sumba. The FRCA
2450 synod has given the green light to build new campus buildings in three stages, meeting all government
2451 accreditation requirements.

2452 The seminary in Sumba has 16 students. Six of them are from Papua, and ten from the NTT province,
2453 including two from the GGRI. Five more are going through an internship among the churches. Seven men
2454 were ordained to the ministry in the GGRI-NTT in 2023. One of them has become an instructor at the
2455 seminary in Sumba.

2456 **The GGRI-KalBar** are facing financial challenges in regard to their seminary, as well as various local
2457 church programs, including Christian education for their children. Many ministers are retired.
2458 Congregations are reluctant to call men who are available, because of the financial responsibility this
2459 involves and their inability to carry the load. The seminary in KalBar has 21 students, but only two of them
2460 are currently studying to become ministers. Many will become either evangelists or (male or female)
2461 teachers. The churches are also being challenged by a resurging influence of heathen cultural customs.
2462 They request prayer so that provocation by unbelievers won't undermine the churches and that they may
2463 remain faithful to Christ.

2464 **The GGRI-P** see it as progress that the Dutch churches have ended financial support for evangelists and
2465 others working at mission posts, for ecclesiastical assemblies, courses, church buildings, etc., but are also
2466 facing consequent financial challenges, in particular for the Reformed school in Merauke, as well as in
2467 providing transportation for their ministers to travel to outlying non-instituted churches for administering
2468 the sacraments, and for conducting church visitations and attending minor ecclesiastical assemblies.
2469 There is government help for various church activities, but not for churches in outlying areas.

2470 We note with thankfulness that the Toronto-Bethel CanRC sent Rev. Henderik Versteeg to Papua as a
2471 missionary years ago. Since 1995, it has continued to support periodic short-term trips to Papua, mostly
2472 for spiritual support (including giving courses), and from time to time, with financial help. He also has
2473 contact through the internet with a number of leaders there.²⁰

2474 The Mt Nasura FRCA is giving aid to a church in the interior of Papua. This is a pilot project. It's been
2475 difficult to organize with the necessary checks and balances.

2476 The Papuans are now sending their young men to the GGRI seminaries in Sumba and Kalimantan Barat.
2477 However, there are still individuals who wish to be ministers and whom the churches wish to call as their
2478 minister, but who have not received training at one of the GGRI seminaries. Synod advised having these
2479 men undergo further Reformed training before being examined to become ministers of the Word. The
2480 FRCA has sponsored three single individuals to go to Sumba for further training.

2481 **Interaction between the regions of the GGRI.** The churches within the GGRI inform each other about
2482 decisions made in their respective Regional Synods. The GGRI-P also established a WhatsApp group called
2483 "GGRI Ministers" for ministers and elders of the GGRI. Their goals are to intensify interaction, address
2484 challenges and theological matters, and get to know each other better.

2485 When the GGRI-P encountered difficulties with the government, a delegation came from the GGRI-NTT
2486 and from KalBar to help in their discussions with the government, specifically with the Department of
2487 Religion. Another example of good relationships between the regions is that the developing church of
2488 Bayanggop, one of Manggelum's church plants, is being served by a Sumbanese graduate from the
2489 seminary of the GGRI-NTT, and he is doing very well there.

2490 The GGRI-P enjoy ecclesiastical fellowship among each other and with the CanRC, URCNA, and the

²⁰ In more recent years, Rev. Versteeg has also been at work outside of Indonesia, at the Reformed Churches Bible College in Papua New Guinea.

2491 FRCA. They plan to connect with similar Reformed Churches abroad, while following the Reformed Church
2492 Order. They have an informal relationship with the Papuan Reformed Congregations (Gereja Jemaat
2493 Reformasi di Papua / GJRP) that have resulted from mission work undertaken by the Reformed
2494 Congregations in the Netherlands (NRC). If the GGRI-NTT and the GGRI-KalBar raise no objection, they
2495 hope that the GJRP may be received as sister churches of the GGRI.

2496 Another church self-identifies as Reformed, but their inclusion of women in office prevents any
2497 ecclesiastical relationship with them. Nevertheless, there are discussions regarding potential
2498 collaborations on general matters, such as education and financial management.

2499 There are numerous reasons for the CanRC to continue to maintain a meaningful relationship with the
2500 GGRI. The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia, and the
2501 church in Toronto continues to offer intermittent spiritual and financial support to the churches in Papua.
2502 Across Canada, many CanRC members are involved with work among impoverished children and families
2503 in Timor and Sumba; the organizations Word & Deed and Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF)
2504 have played key roles in this. The GKv (now Dutch Reformed Churches (NeGK)) are withdrawing from
2505 Indonesia as a mission field, and the GGRI are becoming increasingly concerned that the GKv / NeGK are
2506 failing to be faithful churches. As the GGRI depend upon funding from elsewhere, they look to “daughters”
2507 of the GKv, namely the FRCA and CanRC, for help. The GGRI very much appreciate the input received from
2508 the CanRC through their fraternal delegates.

2509 As far as can be determined, the GGRI show they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of
2510 God as the only rule for faith and life and adhere to Reformed confessions and church order. Considering
2511 the Indonesian cultural context, sending delegates to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at their major
2512 assemblies is essential for maintaining a well-functioning ecclesiastical relationship. Given that the FRCA
2513 is closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is prudent that the CER share information with these churches
2514 and work in close conjunction with them as well as with the URCNA. By working together with the FRCA
2515 and URCNA, CanRC will be able to support the GGRI and foster unity among Reformed churches in
2516 Indonesia. Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the GGRCI,
2517 it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with Smithville.

2518 **Recommendations**

2519 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 2520 1 To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) category A²¹ with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia
2521 (GGRI);
- 2522 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2523 2.1 To send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next national
2524 synod of the GGRI;
 - 2525 2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
2526 and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting
2527 the churches of the GGRI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
 - 2528 2.3 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and
2529 unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
 - 2530 2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC;
 - 2531 2.5 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRI to the churches 6 months prior
2532 the convening of the next general synod.

2533 **Grounds:**

- 2534 1 Re 1: The GGRI continues to display the marks of a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ. Given

²¹ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

- 2535 frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship between the CanRC and
2536 GGRI is mutually beneficial.
- 2537 2 Re 2.1: Sending delegates to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at their major assemblies is
2538 essential for maintaining a well-functioning ecclesiastical relationship in this cultural context.
- 2539 3 Re 2.2: Given that the FRCA are very involved in Indonesia, it is prudent that the CER share
2540 information with these churches and work in close conjunction with them as well as with the
2541 URCNA.
- 2542 4 Re 2.3: By working together with the FRCA and URCNA, CanRC will be able to support the GGRI
2543 and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia.
- 2544 5 Re 2.4: Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the
2545 GGRCI, it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with Smithville.
- 2546

2547

REPORT 16: THE CALVINIST REFORMED CHURCHES IN INDONESIA (GGRCI)

2548 **Introduction**

2549 A relationship of EF was established with the GGRCI at GS 2019 (art. 120). Like the CanRC, the GGRCI
2550 is a member of the ICRC.

2551 Readers of this report are encouraged to reference the Introduction to the Indonesian relationships,
2552 as found between Reports 14 and 15.

2553 **Summary**

2554 There has been good contact with the GGRCI since 2022. The CER is recommending continuing
2555 ecclesiastical fellowship with the GGRI.

2556 **Brief History**

2557 The GGRCI originate from the Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT), which in turn originated from
2558 mission work of the Hervormde Kerk (the “Dutch” Reformed Church) in 1950. Since they did not have a
2559 theological seminary of their own, Rev. E. Fangidae, one of the church leaders, connected with Reformed
2560 Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) missionary Rev. J. Klamer at the end of the 1980s, and
2561 decided to send students to the seminary of the GGRI-NTT on the island of Sumba. As a result, in the years
2562 that followed, changes took place in that federation. Their name changed from the singular form to the
2563 plural: GGMM (Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir / Christian Pilgrim Churches), a change which showed the
2564 Reformed understanding of what it means to be a federation of churches. After that, the name was
2565 changed to become GGRM (Reformed Pilgrim Churches).

2566 Charismatic influences that were initially present among those churches dissipated under the
2567 influence of Reformed preaching. In 1991, they adopted the Reformed confessions and Church Order.
2568 Two years later, they became sister churches of the GGRI-NTT. Rev. H. Knigge (formerly a missionary sent
2569 out by the CanRC in Toronto) worked with those churches on behalf of the GKv from about 1993-1998,
2570 focussing special attention on those who had returned to Timor after graduating from the seminary in
2571 Sumba.

2572 In 1995 there was a split, where a group that embraced liberal and evangelical influences left. There
2573 were further struggles among the GGRM during subsequent years, some involving doctrine and others
2574 because of personal issues between leaders.

2575 In 1999, the GGRC (Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis = Reformed Calvinist Churches) led by Rev.
2576 Yonson Dethan, a graduate from the Canadian Reformed Theological College, emerged from another split.
2577 The other group, led by Rev. E. Fangidae, retained the previous name (GGRM). Efforts at reconciliation
2578 mediated by delegates from the CanRC on May 24, 2011, led to a temporary resolution. However, things
2579 fell apart again when the Galilea Church, led by Rev. Fangidae until his passing on September 14, 2012, no
2580 longer upheld the agreement that there would be no women in office.

2581 The GGRC is now known as the GGRCI.

2582 **Brief Description**

2583 Source of updated church data: report from a deputy for the GGRCI in 2024.

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Indonesia: islands of Timor, Savu, Rote, and Java</i>
Origin(s)	<i>These churches originally left the GMIT (“Dutch” Reformed Church—NHK mission church), and became the GMM, then GGMM, then GGRM. After a conflict among these churches, a majority eventually became known as the GGRCI.</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i>

Polity	<i>Church Order of Dort</i>		
Number of churches	16		
Membership numbers	1439		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/council</i>	<i>9 ministers, 3 interns, 43 elders and deacons</i>	<i>Weekly meetings</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	2	<i>2x per year if possible, but lately usually annually, because of financial constraints.</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	1	<i>Every 3 years</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Two students who have studied at the STT Yestoya (Java) are still under the mentorship of Rev. Yonson Dethan. Two other students were studying at STAKRI, in Kupang (Timor), but have since transferred to the STT of the GGRI-NTT in Sumba.</i>		
Website	<i>None</i>		

2584 ***History of the Relationship***

2585 CanRC connections with the GGRCI—at that time known as the GGRM or Reformed Pilgrim Churches—
 2586 began during the 1990s. In early 2001, the GGRM requested a “contact relationship” with the CanRC. GS
 2587 2001 (art. 54) mandated the Committee to reach out. However, there continued to be unresolved
 2588 questions about these churches (GS 2004 art. 100, GS 2013 art. 124, GS 2013 art. 124, and GS 2016 art.
 2589 116). EF was finally established in by GS 2019 (art. 120).

2590 Various ministers of the GGRCI were students of Rev. Dr. Pol when he taught at the theological
 2591 seminary of the GGRI-NTT in Sumba. One of those is the Rev. Yonson Dethan, who received his M.Div.
 2592 degree at CRTS and returned to serve in Indonesia.

2593 The GGRCI are a member of the ICRC. They have had EF with the GGRI-NTT since 1993, and with the
 2594 URCNA since 2016. They are also very thankful for EF with the CanRC and for support received from them.

2595 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

2596 GS 2022 (art. 126) decided:

- 2597 3.1 *To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia*
 2598 *(GGRCI);*
- 2599 3.2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
 - 2600 3.2.1 *To try to send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next*
 2601 *national synod of the GGRCI;*
 - 2602 3.2.2 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia*
 2603 *(FRCA) and United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and*
 2604 *supporting the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and*
 2605 *polity;*
 - 2606 3.2.3 *To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC given their mission work*
 2607 *in Timor;*
 - 2608 3.2.4 *As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical*
 2609 *harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;*
 - 2610 3.2.5 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
 2611 *synod.*

2612 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

2613 Rev. Pol and Rev. Henderik Versteeg represented the Canadian Reformed Churches at General Synods
2614 of the GGRCI from August 29-31, 2024. Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple also met with Rev. Yonson Dethan
2615 during ICRC 2022.

2616 Rev. Pol has also been able to maintain regular long-distance contact with GGRCI leaders since the
2617 2022 Synod.

2618 ***Observations and Considerations***

2619 The proceedings of the GGRCI Synod were took place in an orderly way in good brotherly harmony.
2620 Delegates from the URCNA and the FRCA were also in attendance.

2621 New government regulations are pushing the Reformed churches toward closer cooperation. Decisions
2622 made by the General Synods of the GGRCI and the GGRI reflect this. The GGRCI and the GGRI churches
2623 have decided to intensify contacts with each other. This includes more pulpit exchanges and having
2624 students from the GGRI do internships in GGRCI congregations.

2625 The GGRCI have also sought and received official permission from the GGRI to be under the “umbrella”
2626 of the GGRI in their dealings with the government, since the GGRI is registered with the government.
2627 Practically, this means that they can approach the government for a request for financial aid for building
2628 a church. Being under the “umbrella” of the GGRI is also useful when they wish to have marriages
2629 registered with the government.

2630 The GGRCI do not have their own seminary. Their Synod decided to promote studying for the ministry
2631 at either the GGRI seminary on Sumba or STAKRI in Kupang. Two students later studied at STAKRI, but
2632 dissatisfaction with the lack of regular instruction led them to transfer to the seminary in Sumba, where
2633 they are currently studying.

2634 Regarding the GGRI-Timor and the frustration of the GGRCI about the formation of this independent
2635 federation of Reformed Churches next to them, various fraternal delegates encouraged them to be
2636 prayerfully patient and wait for the Lord.

2637 Synod terminated the relationship with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv)
2638 because of their unfaithfulness to the Word of God. The brothers at Synod were thankful for the
2639 supportive presence of delegates from the CanRC, the URCNA, and the FRCA.

2640 After Synod, the CanRC, FRCA, and URCNA delegates met with the GGRCI Deputies. The Deputies
2641 responded to various questions, describing challenges and trials that the GGRCI are facing and asked for
2642 prayer support. Church life is going well, but there is a shortage of ministers. The Revs. Yonson Dethan
2643 and Yawan Bunda are giving three men special training next to instruction they have received at
2644 seminaries other than STAKRI or the seminary of the GGRI in Sumba.

2645 During the months and years since Synod, continued attention has been given to address concerns
2646 related to theological education. Deputies of the GGRCI invited the brothers from the GGRI-NTT to attend
2647 a seminar to discuss how to work together. One topic was how to help the STT in Sumba to get accredited;
2648 they are not registered with the government, or with the Department of Religion, or with BAN-PT, the
2649 national accrediting agency for post-secondary education. It is more challenging than previously to get
2650 accredited as a Theological Seminary. The GGRCI brothers are eager for increased collaboration with the
2651 GGRI on theological education. By combining talents, it should be possible to work towards having an
2652 accredited Theological Seminary.

2653 There are numerous reasons for the CanRC to continue to maintain a meaningful relationship with the
2654 GGRCI. The Toronto-Bethel CanRC and the Smithville CanRC have (had) mission fields in Indonesia. Across
2655 Canada, many CanRC members are involved with work among impoverished children and families in Timor
2656 and Sumba; the organizations Word & Deed and Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF) have
2657 played key roles in this.

2658 Now that the GGRCI have terminated the relationship with the GKv, they continue to appreciate input

2659 and help in Reformed doctrine and practice from the CanRC and FRCA. The GGRCI have EF with the GGRI,
2660 the CanRC, and the URCNA, and contact with the FRCA. The recent visit of members of the CER to GS-
2661 GGRCI 2022 demonstrates the importance of continuing EF and of being available for offering input,
2662 encouragement, and support where needed.

2663 Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
2664 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and
2665 confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice. As far as can be determined, the
2666 GGRCI show they remain faithful churches. They abide by the Word of God as the only rule for faith and
2667 life and adhere to Reformed confessions and church order. Considering the Indonesian cultural context,
2668 sending delegates to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at their major assemblies is essential for
2669 maintaining a well functioning ecclesiastical relationship. Given that the FRCA are closer to Indonesia than
2670 the CanRC, it is prudent that the CER share information with these churches and work in close conjunction
2671 with them, as well as with the URCNA. By working together with the FRCA and URCNA, CanRC will be able
2672 to support the GGRCI and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia. Given the mission work of
2673 Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the GGRCI, it is important for the CER to share
2674 information concerning its findings with Smithville.

2675 **Recommendations**

2676 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 2677 1. To continue ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) category A²² with the Reformed Calvinist Churches in
2678 Indonesia (GGRCI);
- 2679 2. To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2680 2.1 To send a delegation of brothers to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at the next synod of the
2681 GGRCI;
 - 2682 2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
2683 and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) in encouraging and supporting
2684 the churches of the GGRCI in their efforts to grow in Reformed doctrine and polity;
 - 2685 2.3 As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions to promote ecclesiastical harmony and
2686 unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia;
 - 2687 2.4 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Smithville CanRC;
 - 2688 2.5 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRCI to the churches 6 months prior
2689 the convening of the next general synod.

2690 **Grounds:**

- 2691 1 Re 1: As far as can be determined, the GGRCI continue to display the marks of a true and faithful
2692 church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship
2693 between the CanRC and GGRI is mutually beneficial.
- 2694 2 Re: 2.1: Sending delegates to Indonesia to represent the CanRC at their major assemblies is
2695 essential for maintaining a well-functioning ecclesiastical relationship in this cultural context.
- 2696 3 Re 2.2: Given that the FRCA are closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is prudent that the CER
2697 share information with these churches and work in close conjunction with them, as well as with
2698 the URCNA.
- 2699 4 Re 2.3: By working together with the FRCA and URCNA, CanRC will be able to support the GGRCI
2700 and foster unity among Reformed churches in Indonesia.
- 2701 5 Re 2.4: Given the mission work of Smithville in Indonesia, which impacts both the GGRI and the
2702 GGRCI, it is important for the CER to share information concerning its findings with Smithville.

2703 ²² If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be
dropped.

2704

REPORT 17: REFORMED CHURCHES IN INDONESIA – TIMOR (GGRI-T)

2705 **Introduction**

2706 The GGRI-Timor (GGRI-T) came to the attention of GS Edmonton 2019 (art. 147) through a request
 2707 from the Smithville CanRC that Synod mandate the Committee (CRCA) to investigate the GGRI-T, a newly
 2708 formed federation on the island of Timor in Indonesia, “with a view to establishing a sister church
 2709 relationship with them.” Synod instructed the CRCA “to provide assistance to the GGRI-T in its effort to
 2710 join the GGRI; and “In conjunction with Smithville to offer any other assistance within the normal ambit
 2711 of CRCA work that the GGRI-T would need.”

2712 Readers of this report are encouraged to reference the Introduction to the Indonesian relationships,
 2713 as found between Reports 14 and 15.

2714 **Summary of the Report**

2715 Contact with the GGRI-T has been less intense than we had hoped. The CER recommends that contact
 2716 be continued as it is now.

2717 **Brief History**

2718 In 2003, the Smithville CanRC opened a mission field in Timor, sending Rev. Edwer Dethan as
 2719 missionary. He was formerly a member of the GGRCI and also a graduate of the seminary of the GGRI-NTT
 2720 before going on to receive his M.Div. at CRTS. The GGRCI were happy to support Rev. E. Dethan in his
 2721 mission work. Under his leadership, a Theological Seminary and Teachers’ College (STAKRI) was
 2722 established in Kupang on Timor Island. That city is where the GGRCI currently have several churches and
 2723 STAKRI is within a few miles of where the GGRCI operate a K-12 school (Children of Light).

2724 Despite Smithville’s encouragement and hope that the mission churches would have joined themselves
 2725 to the GGRCI (see Report 16), this did not occur. Instead, in the fall of 2016, the nine churches born out of
 2726 Smithville’s mission work federated as the GGRI-Timor at a Synod held in Bila, Soe, on the island of Timor.

2727 Despite their disappointment about the formation of a new federation now known as the GGRI-Timor,
 2728 the attitude of the GGRCI toward these churches continues to be positive. The GGRCI have tried to reach
 2729 out to the GGRI-Timor, but the GGRI-Timor have not engaged with this as hoped for. Though there has
 2730 been some talk that the GGRI-Timor is seeking to join the GGRI (see Report 15), this has not yet taken
 2731 place.

2732 **Brief Description**

2733 Date of church data: 2016 (attempts to update have been unsuccessful).

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Timor, Indonesia</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Mission work by Rev. E. Dethan, missionary of the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Polity	<i>Church Order of Dort (adapted to Indonesian context)</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>9 and 4 mission posts</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>1,400</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory / Council</i>		
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Annually</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Every 3 years</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>STAKRI (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Reformed Indonesia), in Kupang, Indonesia</i>		
Website	<i>None</i>		

2734 **History of the Relationship**

2735 The CanRC have been involved with the GGRI-T since its inception through the mission work of the
2736 Smithville CanRC. GS 2019 (art. 147) decided to instruct the Committee to provide assistance to the GGRI-T
2737 in its effort to join the GGRI.

2738 The GGRI-Timor have thus far been connected to the CanRC via the mission work of the Smithville
2739 CanRC and their connections with the GGRI-NTT and GGRCI. Besides some financial help from Smithville,
2740 financial aid from the CanRC has also been channeled through Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund
2741 (CRWRF) to the New Hope Foundation in Timor.

2742 **Decisions of GS 2022**

2743 GS 2022 (art. 127) decided:

2744 3.1 *To instruct the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

2745 3.1.1 *In conjunction with the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church to provide assistance within*
2746 *the normal ambit of CER work that would be of benefit to the Reformed Churches in*
2747 *Indonesia Timor (GGRI-Timor);*

2748 3.1.2 *As opportunity arises, to be available for discussions with a view to promoting ecclesiastical*
2749 *harmony and unity between faithful reformed churches in Indonesia;*

2750 3.1.3 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
2751 *synod.*

2752 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

2753 As the CER engaged in its regular activities and relationships in Indonesia, efforts were made to reach
2754 out also to leaders of the GGRI-T. Unfortunately, there has been only minimal engagement. We were
2755 thankful for a face-to-face meeting in September, 2022. Additional effort via email has been made to
2756 engage, but we have not heard back.

2757 The CER also is grateful for having been able to periodically connect with Smithville Mission Board
2758 during the past few years.

2759 **Observations and Considerations**

2760 When the GGRI-T was formed, The advisory committee to GS-GGRI-T 2016 noted in reference to the
2761 schism that had taken place within the GGRM/GGRCI “that we as a federation should learn more about it
2762 and make a decision as to how to go about it”, and also that “we as federation can decide together as to
2763 how to have relationship with the Reformed churches in Indonesia and abroad” Their “external deputies”
2764 were also given the following mandate:

2765 a. *Wherever possible to have contact with the Reformed churches in Indonesia.*

2766 b. *Contacts with the church - the church which based on Reformed confession and church order. The*
2767 *purpose of the contact is to work together as much as we can without damaging the unity of GGRIT.*

2768 c. *The deputies can visit other Reformed churches in Indonesia if GGRIT are invited to go.*

2769 d. *In the effort to work together – the external Deputies should investigate whether the contact*
2770 *Church may be seen as a sister church. They may come with the proposal by looking at the church*
2771 *order - their confession and whether their life was according to what was said.*

2772 e. *Report the results of these relationships at the next synod.*

2773 The Acts of GS-GGRI-Timor 2016 gave reason to conclude that seeking a restoration of brotherly
2774 harmony and cooperation between the GGRI-Timor and the GGRCI will be impossible, unless a meeting
2775 with open discussion toward that goal can be organized between deputies of both church federations. As
2776 a result of the decision of GS 2019 (art. 147) your committee (CRCA and then CER) made itself available
2777 to offer whatever help is possible toward achieving that goal, if outside help is needed. So far there has
2778 been no positive response in regard to this from the GGRI-T.

2779 On September 1, 2022, the CanRC, FRCA, and URCNA delegates met with the GGRI-Timor deputies.
2780 There were positive things to note: church life of the GGRI-T is progressing well and they are financially
2781 healthy. There is only foreign help for STAKRI (their institution for theological training) and for Elpida, their
2782 local Reformed high school. They have informal relationships with the GGRI-NTT and have attended a
2783 regional synod of the GGRI-KalBar as observers. There was also the disappointing reality that the GGRI-T
2784 deputies seemed to be unwilling to enter into meaningful discussions with the GGRCI.

2785 The fraternal delegates to the GGRCI Synod advised the brothers at that assembly to adopt a prayerful,
2786 brotherly, waiting attitude, in the hope of a positive change on the part of the GGRI-T toward them. It is
2787 advisable for us also to pray that the GGRI-T may adopt a constructive approach concerning the issues
2788 that they perceive as obstacles to interacting with the GGRCI. Until all parties are willing to engage in
2789 peaceful, open communication with the goal of brotherly unity and cooperation according to the Word of
2790 God, no positive progress can be expected.

2791 The CER is of the opinion that the mandate with respect to the GGRI-Timor can be continued with some
2792 modification. It is important to continue to show willingness to interact with deputies of the GGRI-T.

2793 As the GGRI-T have arisen as a result of mission work undertaken by the Smithville CanRC and still
2794 maintain contact with this church, it makes sense for the CER to keep lines of communication with the
2795 Mission Board of the Smithville church open concerning the GGRI-T.

2796 **Recommendations**

2797 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 2798 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Contact²³ with the Reformed Churches in Timor, Indonesia (GGRI-T)
2799 according to the adopted rules;
- 2800 2 To instruct the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 2801 2.1 To maintain open lines of communication with the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church to
2802 be aware of opportunities within the normal ambit of CER work to benefit the GGRI-T;
 - 2803 2.2 To work in consultation and cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
2804 and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) as we interact with the GGRI-
2805 T;
 - 2806 2.3 To continue to communicate to the GGRI-T a willingness to be available for discussions with
2807 a view to promoting ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in
2808 Indonesia;
 - 2809 2.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the GGRI-T to the churches 6 months prior
2810 the convening of the next general synod.

2811 **Grounds:**

- 2812 1 Re 1 and 2.1: The GGRI-T have arisen as a result of mission work undertaken by the Smithville
2813 CanRC and still maintain contact with this church.
- 2814 2 Re 1.2: It is important to continue to show willingness to assist the GGRI-T in promoting
2815 ecclesiastical harmony and unity between faithful Reformed churches in Indonesia according to
2816 the Word of God.
- 2817 3 Re 1.3: Given that the FRCA are closer to Indonesia than the CanRC, it is prudent that the CER
2818 share information with these churches and work in close conjunction with them as well as with
2819 the URCNA (the latter because of their close connection to the Calvinist Reformed Churches in
2820 Indonesia (GGRCI)).

2821

²³ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the word “Ecclesiastical” should be dropped, and the word “Contact” be spelled with a lower-case ‘c’.

2822

REPORT 18: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KOREA (KOSIN)

2823 **Introduction**

2824 The CanRC entered into EF with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) by a decision of GS 1992
2825 (art. 111). Like the CanRC, the KPCK is a member of the ICRC.

2826 **Summary of the Report**

2827 The KPCK are one of the largest biblically faithful Presbyterian federations in South Korea. Historically
2828 they have also had close ties with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Iberated) (GKv); this has
2829 changed due to the unbiblical direction the GKv have chosen in approving women in office. The KPCK is
2830 seeking more meaningful interaction with confessional Reformed federations globally and has spent more
2831 time investing in their sister-church relationships. In recent years, the relationship between the CanRC
2832 and KPCK has intensified due to Korean immigration to Canada and Korean speaking ministers studying at
2833 CRTS and/or being ordained in the CanRC.

2834 Your committee is recommending we continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the KPCK.

2835 **Brief History**

2836 The KPCK finds its roots in the Korean Presbyterian Church (KPC) formed in 1912 because of remarkably
2837 fruitful Protestant mission work that began in 1884. The Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK)
2838 separated in 1952 from the as of yet undivided KPC. The primary issue was theological liberalism and
2839 Japanese Shinto shrine observance (approved during the second World War under Japanese oppression).
2840 In 1946, after Japan’s defeat, several pastors founded the Korea Theological Seminary (acronym “Kosin”)
2841 to train pastors in reformation of the church. This seminary went unrecognized in the KPC, and after many
2842 unfruitful attempts to work within the denomination, a new denomination was formed in 1952.

2843 **Brief Description**

2844 Source of church data: 2024 General Assembly Data

Location	<i>South Korea</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 1952, separating from the Presbyterian Church of Korea</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Church Polity	<i>Based on Westminster Presbyterianism</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>2,123</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>378,376</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Session</i>		<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Presbytery</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Korea Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	http://www.kosin.org/		

2845 **History of the relationship**

2846 For many years (from 1968 onwards), the CanRC were aware of the KPCK and maintained some level
2847 of contact but due to language and communication difficulties was unable to establish EF. See GS 1971
2848 art. 47.6, GS 1974 art. 140 F.2b, GS 1977 art. 108, GS 1980 art. 153, GS 1983 art. 105, GS 1986 art. 150,
2849 and GS 1989 art. 103.

2850 The relationship changed with the arrival of Dr. N.H. Gootjes to the CRTS from South Korea. Being
2851 familiar with the Korean language and ecclesiastical context, he was able to facilitate a better
2852 understanding of the KPCK by the CanRC and so EF was established by GS 1992 (art. 111). GS 1998 (art.

2853 101 II), GS 1998 (art. 120 V.A) and GS 2001 (art. 36) decided to continue EF. Given difficulties in
2854 maintaining contact, GS 2007 (art. 86) decided to reach out to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
2855 (FRCA) and the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) to coordinate visits to the KPCK
2856 General Assembly so that they are visited every year. GS 2010 (art. 105), GS 2013, (art. 155), and GS 2016
2857 (art. 81) decided the same. GS 2019 (art. 103) decided to continue EF but noted that working
2858 collaboratively with the GKv would no longer be possible.

2859 Prior to and during the pandemic years there was very little meaningful contact with the KPCK, except
2860 for the occasional visit. However, in recent years, there is a renewed vigour in the relationship largely due
2861 to Korean-speaking pastors entering our federation. In addition, there is a vocal minority in the KPCK that
2862 would like to see the KPCK focus on their confessional Reformed identity. The CER currently alternates
2863 visiting the KPCK GA every three years with the OPC and the FRCA, with our most recent visit in 2023.

2864 **Decisions of GS 2022**

2865 GS 2022 (art. 144) decided:

- 2866 3.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK)*
2867 *under the adopted rules;*
- 2868 3.2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
- 2869 3.2.1 *To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with*
2870 *the KPCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCK's General Assembly;*
- 2871 3.2.2 *To meet with their delegates at the next International Conference of Reformed Churches*
2872 *(ICRC);*
- 2873 3.2.3 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
2874 *synod.*

2875 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

- 2876 - May 2023: the CER arranged alternating visits to the KPCK Assembly with the FRCA (2022), CanRC
2877 (2023), and OPC (2024). It was agreed that the report of visit would be shared, and collaboration
2878 encouraged.
- 2879 - June 2023: received from the FRCA their report on their visit to the 2023 General Assembly
- 2880 - September 2023: Rev. Bruintjes and Rev. Jagt attended the KPCK General Assembly, preached in the
2881 churches, and shared pastoral insights on the way the CanRC works to transmit faith to the next
2882 generation. They were assisted by Rev. Kwangyoung Park, who was ordained in the KPCK, was called
2883 by the Toronto-Bethel CanRC, and currently serves there as Missions Pastor.
- 2884 - February 2024: shared the CER report to the KPCK General Assembly 2023 with the committees of the
2885 FRCA and the OPC.
- 2886 - Unfortunately, no bi-lateral was able to be scheduled at ICRC 2022, but our delegates had many
2887 informal contacts with their delegates especially as it related to planning for ICRC 2026 (to be hosted
2888 by the KPCK in Seoul, South Korea).
- 2889 - Rev. HaeShin Yoo, senior member of their inter-church committee, stayed in Hamilton, ON during his
2890 sabbatical and availed himself of CRTS library and facilities.
- 2891 - July 2024: Video greetings were recorded to be shared at the 2024 General Assembly.
- 2892 - September 2024: OPC was scheduled to attend the General Assembly. No report received yet.

2893 **Observations & Considerations**

- 2894 - The proposal at GS 2022 to move our relationship to Category 2 (under potential new rules) was met
2895 with confusion by our Korean brothers and sisters. They promptly arranged a significant delegation to
2896 attend GS 2022, thereby demonstrating the value they place on our relationship.
- 2897 - The relationship between the KPCK and the CanRC has intensified over the last several years due to:

- 2898 - The passing of Dr. Nicolaas Gootjes on August 20, 2023. He served as missionary professor at the
2899 Kosin Theological Seminary for nine years. He was fondly remembered, and his heritage greatly
2900 appreciated. A commemorative theology lecture for Dr. Gootjes was scheduled to be held at
2901 Kosin seminary on October 29, 2024. One of the lectures was titled, “How the Kosin church will
2902 inherit and develop the life and theology of Dr. Gootjes.”
- 2903 - A vocal minority in the KPCK churches who are concerned about the trajectory of the churches
2904 and are calling for a renewed focus on their confessional identity. They seek encouragement from
2905 such faithful sister-churches (esp. CanRC, FRCA, OPC, and GKSA). Their efforts are supported at
2906 the General Assembly level.
- 2907 - Many Korean Presbyterian church members emigrating to Canada. This results in a growing
2908 presence of Korean Christians in our communities. It would be good to familiarize ourselves with
2909 the ecclesiastical landscape in Korea as it shifts to North America.
- 2910 - The growing number of Korean-speaking ministers ordained in the CanRC, including one KPCK
2911 pastor who recently transferred his credentials to the CanRC (Rev. Kwangyoung Park, Bethel-
2912 Toronto)
- 2913 - Age holds a significant place in Korean society and within church contexts, and great respect is afforded
2914 to those who are older. As a result, younger pastors may have limited opportunities to serve in roles
2915 of responsibility and authority. At GS 2022, the KPCK prohibited retiring ministers from passing on the
2916 pastorate to their sons.
- 2917 - Observations from our 2023 visit include: While the denomination remains strongly orthodox in
2918 confession, the mega-church movement has somewhat impacted their ecclesiology. Mega-churches
2919 do exist and seem to have a strong influence over the direction of the federation. In the last years, the
2920 KPCK is facing serious challenges with smaller seminary classes, and a dramatic decline in membership
2921 related to an exodus of the next generation. In response, the denomination seems to be encouraging
2922 a renewed focus on their roots. Their inter-church committee increasingly realizes the potential
2923 blessing held in sister church relationships.
- 2924 - The calling of Rev. Kwangyoung Park to serve as Missions pastor by the Toronto-Bethel CanRC is the
2925 first time that a KPCK trained and ordained pastor has joined our federation. The smoothness of this
2926 transfer under EF rules (colloquium for sister-church pastors) was eye-opening to some in the KPCK.
- 2927 - At the 2024 General Assembly, the KPCK adopted new rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. These rules
2928 mean that the CanRC is now treated the same as their daughter Kosin churches abroad (e.g. KPCA-K).
2929 This is a significant and meaningful change for the KPCK.
- 2930 - Many Koreans continue to immigrate to Canada. Historically, many KPCK members were unaware of
2931 our existence or the ecclesiastical fellowship with their home church (the KPCK). This is changing, as
2932 Rev. Jerome Lee, in the past a member of the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC, and Rev. Kwangyoung Park,
2933 currently serving in the Toronto-Bethel CanRC, publish articles in the KOSIN press, and has resulted in
2934 various Korean families seeking membership in local Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 2935 - The KPCK struggle with keeping their youth. They are interested in Christian education and are willing
2936 to learn from others.
- 2937 - The KPCK will be the hosting church for ICRC 2026.
- 2938 - Their growing interaction with the OPC and FRCA, along with the CanRC, can serve as a source for
2939 mutual blessing and evidence of Christ’s world-wide church gathering work.
- 2940 - Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
2941 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture
2942 and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.

2943 ***Recommendations***

2944 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 2945 1.1 To express thankfulness for the new vigour in our relationship;
2946 1.2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A²⁴ with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in
2947 Korea (KPCK) according to the adopted rules;
2948 1.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
2949 1.3.1 To continue to work cooperatively with sister churches in exercising our relationship with
2950 the KPCK in meaningful ways and to take turns visiting the KPCK's General Assembly;
2951 1.3.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the KPCK to the churches 6 months
2952 prior the convening of the next general synod.

2953 **Grounds:**

- 2954 1 Re 1.1: The KPCK has shown increased interest in the relationship, and we have been blessed by
2955 Korean-speaking pastors and church members in our midst.
2956 2 Re 1.2: We have a long-standing relationship with the KPCK, they remain faithful to the Word of
2957 God, and there is a new vigour in our relationship which can be mutually beneficial
2958 3 Re 1.3.1: The growing interaction of the KPCK with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and
2959 Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), along with the CanRC, is useful in exercising our
2960 relationship in a cooperative manner.

2961

²⁴ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words "category A" should be dropped.

2962

REPORT 19: REFORMED CHURCHES [THE NETHERLANDS] (GK)

2963 **Introduction**

2964 The federation of Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK) was formed on October 5, 2024 through
 2965 the merger of The Reformed Churches (Restored) (DGK) and Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN).

2966 The CanRC have been in contact with the DGK since a decision of GS 2004 (art. 44). The CanRC have
 2967 been in contact with the GKN since a decision of GS 2013 (art. 190). These contacts arose out of contact
 2968 with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (GKv). Like the CanRC, the GKN is a member
 2969 of the ICRC.

2970 **Summary of the Report**

2971 During the period 2022-2024 the DGK and GKN grew closer to each other. In late 2023 the GKN
 2972 declared itself to be “in state of union” with the DGK, and in early 2024 the DGK declared itself to be “in
 2973 state of union” with the GKN. Following this declaration, the DGK and GKN went about resolving any
 2974 differences that were considered to require resolution prior to merging. The DGK severed its ties with the
 2975 LRCA in June 2024. On October 5 the respective synods of the DGK and GKN “separately and together”
 2976 decided formally to merge. The thus formed federation is known as the Reformed Churches (GK), dropping
 2977 the country name to ensure an acronym that is distinct. The first regular synod of the GK will be, the Lord
 2978 willing, in May 2026.

2979 There are no longer any impediments to establishing full ecclesiastical fellowship with the GK. Your
 2980 committee is recommending that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be established with the GK. We are expecting
 2981 a delegation of one or two brothers from the GK to attend GS-CanRC 2025.

2982 **Brief History**

2983 In 1568 the Reformed Churches formed a tentative bond of churches that became the *Nederlandsche*
 2984 *Hervormde Kerk* (NHK). Schisms in 1834 (Secession) and 1886 (Doleantie) led to the formation of two
 2985 bonds of churches that merged in 1892 to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*. In 1944 doctrinal
 2986 and church political issues led to a church schism which saw the formation of what would become known
 2987 as the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)* (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands
 2988 (liberated) - GKv). A schism took place in the GKv in the late 1960s and early 1970s (formation of the
 2989 *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken - NGK*), again in 2003 and following (formation of *De Gereformeerde*
 2990 *Kerken (hersteld)*; The Reformed Churches (restored) – DGK) and again in 2009 and following (formation
 2991 of the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland*; Reformed Churches The Netherlands – GKN).

2992 In 2023 the GKv and NGK merged to form the *Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken – NeGK*²⁵. In late
 2993 2024 the DGK and GKN merged to form the Reformed Churches (GK).

2994 **Brief Description**

2995 Source of church data: Synod-GK 2024

Location	<i>The Netherlands</i>
Origin(s)	<i>The Secession of 1834, the Doleantie of 1886, the Union of 1892, the Liberation of 1944, departure from the GKv in 2003 (DGK) and 2009 (GKN), formation of GK through merger of DGK and GKN in 2024.</i>

²⁵ As this report refers to both the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* and the *Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken*, to distinguish the two, the acronyms NGK and NeGK are used. Note that in the names, “Nederlands” is an adverb modifying “Gereformeerde” while “Nederlandse” is an adjective modifying “kerken”. As the NGK is no more, the acronym commonly used for what this report refers to as the NeGK is actually NGK as well.

Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Polity	<i>Church Order of Dort</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>23 established churches, 9 church plants</i>		
Membership numbers	~3000		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory / Council</i>	22	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	3	<i>Every 3 months</i>
	<i>Synod</i>	1	<i>Every 3 years</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>In house + seminaries (TU Apeldoorn, RTS Heidelberg)</i>		
Website	<i>TBD (www.dgkh.nl ; www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl)</i>		

History of the relationship

The relationship CanRC-GK is in essence a continuation of the relationships CanRC-DGK and CanRC-GKN and, as such, in many ways a continuation of the relationship CanRC-GKv.

GKv: The CanRC were, for the most part, born from GKv members immigrating to Canada. The relationship was close, as during the first few decades the CanRC were served by ministers from the GKv. The relationship became strained during the early 2000s as the GKv became more accepting of a new hermeneutic. GS 2019 terminated the relationship with the GKv.

Overview of decisions re GKv: GS 1954 (art. 44): the CanRC and GKv establish ecclesiastical fellowship (then known as “correspondence”). GS 1954 – GS 1992: the relationship was hearty and close. A constant point of discussion was rules for ecclesiastical fellowship. During the church schism of the late 1960s, early 1970s (the “buitenverband zaak”) the CanRC maintained EF with the GKv. The CanRC and GKv were both founding members of the ICRC in the early 1980s. GS 1995 (art. 19) expressed concern about certain decisions taken by the GKv. Concern continued to be expressed at GS 1998 (art. 4), GS 2001 (art. 80), GS 2004 (art. 44), GS 2007 (art. 133), and GS 2010 (art. 86). In 2010 a special committee for contact with Reformed churches in The Netherlands (GKv, DGK, GKN) was established. GS 2013 (art. 148) saw the number of concerns grow. GS 2016 (104) was so concerned it suspended the execution of EF rules 4 (table fellowship) and 5 (pulpit fellowship). GS 2019 (art. 41) decided, with sadness to discontinue the relationship of EF with the GKv. This was communicated by letter to every individual GKv and conveyed to the GKv as a federation in person at GS-GKv 2020.

DGK: GS 2004 mandated the CRCA to seek clarity about the legitimacy of a recent schism in the GKv; this was the schism that led to the formation of the DGK. GS 2007 established a separate committee for relations in The Netherlands, mandating it to study and monitor the DGK with a view to a possible sister church relationship. A sister church relationship between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA) was deemed an impediment to a closer relationship between the CanRC and DGK as the LRCA considers the CanRC a false church.

Overview of decisions re DGK: GS 2004 (art. 44): mandated the CRCA to seek clarity about the legitimacy of the recent schism in the GKv. GS 2007 (art. 143, 167): judged the separation for the DGK from the GKv to be unlawful. GS 2010 (art. 106, 107) deemed the judgment of GS 2007 to have been too hasty. GS 2010 (art. 155): created a special subcommittee (CRCA-SRN) of four members for relations with churches in The Netherlands and mandated the CRCA-SRN to study and monitor the DGK with a view to possible EF. GS 2013 (art. 190): considered that EF between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford meant EF between the CanRC and DGK was impossible, but contact was maintained. GS 2016 (art. 117) and GS 2019 (art. 124) decided as GS 2013 had.

GKN: Between GS 2010 and GS 2013 the CRCA-SRN became aware of the formation of the GKN out of the GKv. GS 2013 approved the contact the CRCA-SRN had made with the GKN. GS 2019 received a request

3033 from the GKN for a sister church relationship. GS 2019 and GS 2022 decided not yet to enter into a sister
3034 church relationship with a view to the developing GKN-DGK relationship. This relationship complicated
3035 matters as the CanRC could not enter into a relationship with the DGK, and experience had indicated it
3036 would be unwise to enter into a relationship with the GKN while not entering into a relationship with the
3037 DGK.

3038 Overview of decisions re GKN: GS 2013 (art. 190) decided that the CRCA-SRN should monitor
3039 developments in the GKN. GS 2016 (art. 118) and GS 2019 (art. 125) decided the same.

3040 **GK:** the CER sent Rev. Janssen as delegate to The Netherlands in October 2024 when the DGK and GKN
3041 merged to form the GK.

3042 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

3043 GS Guelph 2022 took the following decisions with respect to the DGK and GKN:

3044 **DGK: GS 2022 art. 148**

- 3045 3.1 *To maintain contact with The Reformed Churches (DGK);*
3046 3.2 *To express gratitude for how the DGK is dealing with the LRCA.*
3047 3.3 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
3048 3.3.1 *To continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:*
3049 3.3.1.1 *The relationship between the DGK and the Reformed Churches The Netherlands*
3050 *(GKN);*
3051 3.3.1.2 *The relationship between the DGK and the LRCA;*
3052 3.3.2 *To be available for dialogue with the DGK;*
3053 3.3.3 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
3054 *synod.*

3055 **GKN: GS 2022 art. 125**

- 3056 3.1 *To maintain contact with the Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN);*
3057 3.2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
3058 3.2.1 *To continue to monitor developments within this federation, paying special attention to:*
3059 3.2.1.1 *The relationship between the GKN and The Reformed Churches (DGK);*
3060 3.2.2 *To be available for dialogue with the GKN;*
3061 3.2.3 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
3062 *synod.*

3063 ***Execution of these mandates in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

3064 There was regular communication with both the DGK and GKN. In-person interaction has been
3065 primarily with the GKN, as the GKN was present at the ICRC 2022 while the DGK was not, and as the GKN
3066 invited the CanRC to its synod in 2023 while the DGK did not invite the CanRC to its synod in 2024.²⁶

3067 During the 2022 ICRC, CanRC delegates Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple met with the GKN delegate, Elder
3068 J. Vreugdenhil. The GKN applied for membership in the ICRC. Given a CanRC standing decision that we can
3069 only sponsor sister churches seeking to join an ecumenical organization (GS 2004 art. 52 cons. 4.6) the
3070 CER, with heavy heart, declined the GKN request to sponsor them. In the end the GKN were sponsored by
3071 the CGKN and FRCNA and were heartily welcomed as members of the ICRC.

3072 Upon invitation from the GKN, the CER delegated Rev. Janssen to attend Synod-GKN 2023. On
3073 December 1, Rev. Janssen attended a meeting of deputies foreign churches of the GKN and DGK with
3074 foreign delegates to Synod-GKN 2023 (being: OPC, FRCA, and CanRC). He then attended (and ended up

²⁶ The reason for this was that both the GKN and DGK were unsure about the propriety of extending invitations to non-sister churches. Eventually the convening church of the GKN synod decided it was appropriate.

3075 chairing) a meeting of the same foreign delegates with concerned parties in the NeGK being several
3076 independent GKv's and the Taskforce Reflection active within the GKV / NeGK among the concerned;
3077 representatives from both GKN and DGK were also present. On December 2 & 3, Rev. Janssen attended
3078 Synod-GKN 2024.

3079 Upon invitation from the DGK and GKN, the CER delegated Rev. Janssen to attend the events marking
3080 the merger of the DGK and the GKN: a prayer service on Friday evening, October 4, 2024, and concurrent
3081 extraordinary synods of the DGK and the GKN on the following Saturday. At the time of writing this report,
3082 the concurrent extraordinary synods were still meeting.

3083 **Observations & Considerations**

3084 The GK are somewhat diverse, especially in liturgical practice (e.g. which selection of hymns can be
3085 used during worship) and other minor points of church practice (e.g. women voting, blessing elder). At
3086 the time of writing this report, the GK still had to take decisions regarding ecumenical relations. It is likely
3087 that the requests for EF made by the GKN to the CanRC, FRCA, and FRCSA will remain, and that the (only)
3088 EF relationship which already exists with the Independent Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany
3089 (SERK) will continue.

3090 Prior to the merger the DGK decided by a majority vote to discontinue its relationship with the LRCA.
3091 Thus the GK does not have a sister church relationship with the LRCA.

3092 CanRC general synods have continually dealt with the DGK and the GKN as more or less continuations
3093 of the GKv. GS-CanRC 2022 basically noted two impediments to entering into sister church relations with
3094 the DGK and the GKN:

- 3095 1. The DGK relationship with the LRCA
- 3096 2. The continued separation of the DGK and the GKN

3097 We thank the LORD that the DGK and the GKN were convinced that harmony and unity does not
3098 require homogeneity and they were determined to unite their federations. The DGK also dealt with what
3099 impeded a relationship between them and us, the CanRC, (and with the FRCA and FRCSA), namely, the
3100 DGK-LRCA relationship. We consider both impediments to have been removed.

3101 Further, we have observed how the DGK have been patient and thorough in doing justice to their
3102 former sister church, the LRCA, and to those who expressed concerns about DGK decisions (e.g. re the
3103 DGK-LRCA relationship). The GKN have been patient and thorough in allowing the DGK to do what it felt
3104 needed doing prior to the DGK and GKN merging. Your committee has not observed anything concerning
3105 with respect to the GK.

3106 **Recommendations**

3107 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3108 1. To express thankfulness to the Lord for the merger of The Reformed Churches (DGK) and the
3109 Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN) into the Reformed Churches [The Netherlands] (GK);
- 3110 2. To establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) Category A²⁷ with GK under the adopted rules;
- 3111 3. To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 3112 3.1 To convey this decision to the GK as soon as possible;
 - 3113 3.2 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
3114 synod.

3115 **Grounds:**

- 3116 1. Re 2: With the discontinuation of the sister church relationship between the DGK and the
3117 Liberated Reformed Church in Abbotsford (LRCA), and the subsequent merger of the DGK and

²⁷ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words "category A" should be dropped.

3118 the GKN to form the GK, all impediments previous CanRC synods have identified to ecclesiastical
3119 fellowship no longer exist.
3120 2 Re 3.1: Establishing ecclesiastical fellowship has immediate consequences (e.g. table and pulpit
3121 fellowship); the GK should be aware of its existence as soon as possible.
3122

REPORT 20: REFORMED CHURCHES IN NEW ZEALAND (RCNZ)

3123

3124 **Introduction**

3125 The CanRC entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand
3126 (RCNZ) by a decision of GS 2007 (art. 66). Like the CanRC, the RCNZ is a member of the ICRC.

3127 **Summary of the Report**

3128 The RCNZ continues as a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This sister-church relationship
3129 has been mutually beneficial. The CER recommends that EF with the RCNZ be continued.

3130 **Brief History**

3131 During the 1940s immigrants from The Netherlands, coming from various Reformed church
3132 backgrounds, settled in New Zealand. In 1953 three immigrant churches united to form the RCNZ. In the
3133 course of time the RCNZ were served by ministers drawn from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).
3134 The RCNZ has had a long-standing relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in Australia (CRCAus)
3135 and more recently with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA).

3136 **Brief Description**

3137 Source of church data: ICRC 2022, RCNZ documents

Location	<i>New Zealand (both islands)</i>		
Origin	<i>New Zealanders and post-World War 2 European immigrants from various Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian federations.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity Westminster Confession</i>		
Polity	<i>Dort polity with some Westminster terminology</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>21 churches and 3 church plants</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>3,354 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>3</i>	
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>The RCNZ presently makes use of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Melbourne Australia, and Mid America Reformed Theological Seminary, and Greenville Theological Seminary. More recently 2 CRTS graduates were ordained in the RCNZ.</i>		
Website	www.rcnz.org.nz		

3138 **History of the relationship**

3139 The RCNZ sent an invitation to the CanRC to enter into relations shortly before GS-CanRC 2004. GS
3140 2004 (art. 100) decided to seek more information. GS 2007 (art. 66) decided to enter into EF with the
3141 RCNZ, though expressing concern about the relationship RCNZ-CRCAus. GS 2010 (art. 154) continued the
3142 EF relationship, noting the same concern. GS 2013 (art. 192) continued EF and noted the relationship
3143 RCNZ-CRCAus had changed, but was not sure exactly how. GS 2016 (art. 17) and GS 2019 (art. 136)
3144 continued EF.

3145 The CanRC has enjoyed fruitful cooperation with the RCNZ in the work of mission in Papua New Guinea.
3146 Some CanRC ministers have served for periods in vacant RCNZ churches, and, by the time of GS 2025, DV,
3147 two CRTS graduates, one originally CanRC and one originally FRCA, will serve in the ministry in the RCNZ.
3148 The CanRC has encouraged the ecclesiastical relationship between the RCNZ and our other sister church
3149 in the region, the FRCA, and monitored the changes in the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCAus.

3150 **Decisions of GS 2022**

3151 GS 2022 (art. 146) decided:

3152 *3.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in New*
3153 *Zealand (RCNZ) under the adopted rules;*

3154 *3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

3155 *3.2.1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the RCNZ in the mission in Papua*
3156 *New Guinea;*

3157 *3.2.2 To send a delegation to the next RCNZ Synod;*

3158 *3.2.3 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general*
3159 *synod;*

3160 *3.3 To take note that the different structures of the RCNZ and the CanRC for the material support of*
3161 *emeritus ministers complicates the transfer of ministers between the CanRC and RCNZ, as it also*
3162 *does between the CanRC and the FRCSA. The material support for emeritus ministers is beyond*
3163 *the jurisdiction of a general synod and thus beyond the scope of the CER.*

3164 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

3165 - October 2022: our delegates to ICRC 2022 met with the RCNZ delegates to ICRC 2022.

3166 - January 2024: A letter from the RCNZ invited a delegation from the CanRC to attend GS RCNZ 2024 in
3167 Christchurch. Rev. Jan de Gelder and Br. Schouten were delegated. Br. Schouten had to cancel at the
3168 last minute due to illness in the family.

3169 Rev. De Gelder attended the RCNZ Synod from Sept 7-12, 2024, and addressed GS RCNZ on behalf of
3170 the CanRC on September 11, 2024.

3171 **Observations & Considerations**

3172 - GS-RCNZ 2024 was the shortest synod in the history of the RCNZ. The prayer service and the
3173 appointment of the executive took place on Saturday, September 7, 2024. The work of Synod began
3174 on Monday, Sept 9, 2024, and was completed before noon on Thursday, September 12, 2024.

3175 - The RCNZ maintains two levels of relationships: sister church relationship and ecumenical fellowship.
3176 Synod-RCNZ 2024 decided to continue its sister church relationship with the CanRC and to send a
3177 delegate to GS 2025. They also maintain sister church relationships with the FRCA, OPC, URCNA, PCEA,
3178 and PRCA, the last two being very small Presbyterian churches in East Australia. Ecumenical Fellowship
3179 is maintained with the CRCAus. GS-RCNZ 2024 decided to change the sister church relationship with
3180 the GKSA from a sister church relationship to one of ecumenical fellowship, because of the women in
3181 office issue in the GKSA. This Synod also decided to continue the RCNZ membership in the ICRC and to
3182 send up to three delegates to the 2026 ICRC.

3183 - There were no appeals or controversial matters on the agenda of the RCNZ Synod, and votes were
3184 almost all the time unanimous. This shows a good level of unity and mutual trust among the churches
3185 and office-bearers.

3186 - The RCNZ do not have a federational seminary. However, in close cooperation with the CRCAus, the
3187 RCNZ have supported the non-denominational Reformed Theological Seminary in Melbourne
3188 Australia. Some students from the RCNZ also attend Mid America Reformed Seminary. Rev. Matthias
3189 Schat, a CRTS graduate, serves the Bishopdale RCNZ as co-pastor. Kevin Star, another CRTS graduate,
3190 has accepted a call to the Northshore (Auckland) RCNZ. These developments may help to put CRTS “on
3191 the radar” of students for the ministry in the RCNZ.

3192 - The mission activities of the RCNZ are coordinated by an Overseas Mission Board, which reports to
3193 Synod. It is noted that there is good unity with the Southern River FRCA and the Toronto-Bethel CanRC
3194 in the mission work in Papua New Guinea.

3195 - Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or

3196 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture
3197 and confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice.

3198 **Recommendations**

3199 We recommend that synod decide:

- 3200 1 To express appreciation for the ongoing cooperation with the Reformed Churches in New
3201 Zealand (RCNZ) in the mission in Papua New Guinea;
- 3202 2 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A²⁸ with the RCNZ according to the adopted
3203 rules;
- 3204 3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 3205 3.1 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the RCNZ to the churches 6 months
3206 prior the convening of the next general synod.

3207 **Grounds:**

- 3208 1 Re 2: As far as can be determined, the RCNZ continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
3209 church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship
3210 between the CanRC and the RCNZ is mutually beneficial.

3211

²⁸ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

3212

REPORT 21: FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

3213 **Introduction**

3214 The CanRC entered into EF with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) by a decision of GS 1992 (art. 128).
 3215 Like the CanRC, the FCS is a member of the ICRC.

3216 **Summary of the Report**

3217 Our relationship with the FCS is comfortable but distant; there seems to be minimal natural interaction.
 3218 Nonetheless, because of the common bond of faith which is evident, it is good to maintain a relationship.
 3219 Thankfully, we were able to attend the 2023 General Assembly. Additionally, we have perused their 2022
 3220 and 2024 General Assembly documents (Acts and Reports) as found on the Church web site. We continue
 3221 to have the impression of a church which is vibrant and committed to their witness of Christ in a
 3222 secularized world. However, we also acknowledge that distances as well as differences in history and
 3223 church polity make the realization of a closer or more intense relationship unlikely.

3224 The CER is recommending that a relationship with FCS be maintained and further that it be mandated
 3225 to continue the relationship according to the adopted rules with the FCS between now and our next synod.

3226 **Brief History**

3227 The Kirk (Church) of Scotland chose for the Reformed faith during the great Reformation. It became
 3228 the established church in Scotland following the Act of Toleration, 1688. The Free Church was established
 3229 in 1843, when many ministers resigned from the Church of Scotland. This became known as “the
 3230 Disruption,” and was the culmination of many years of disagreement over how much influence the State
 3231 could have over the Church. In 1900, most members of the FCS joined another church – the United Free
 3232 Church of Scotland; those remaining behind were deemed to be the continuation of the FCS.

3233 In 2000, 22 ministers who had been suspended from the FCS, together with a number of others,
 3234 adopted a “Declaration of Reconstitution of the historic Free Church of Scotland” which led to the
 3235 formation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The broad background to the separation were
 3236 differences in liturgical convictions (FCC maintains exclusive psalmody and no instruments in worship
 3237 whereas the FCS no longer holds those positions) as well as differences in the application of certain
 3238 principles of church government. It is noted with sadness that attempts at reconciliation between the FCS
 3239 and FCC were not fruitful.

3240 **Brief Description**

3241 Source of church data: General Assembly reports

Location	<i>Mainly Scotland, but also a few in England, two in PEI, and one in Michigan.</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Disruption of 1843, separation from the Church of Scotland</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>126 churches (2024)</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>Approximately 11,700 members (2024)</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>Not confirmed</i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Not confirmed</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Edinburgh Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	https://freechurch.org		

3242

3243

3244 ***History of the relationship***

3245 The CanRC relationship with the FCS came into being primarily through contact with them via the
3246 establishment of the ICRC in the early 1980s. The first full conference was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in
3247 1985. Further acquaintance was made with the FCS during this time in Scotland. GS 1986 (art. 178) decided
3248 to contact the FCS re the possibility of EF. This mandate was continued by GS 1989 (art. 116.V). GS 1992
3249 (art. 128) offered to enter into EF with the FCS and this was accepted by the FCS at their GA in 1993. EF
3250 was continued as per decisions of GS 1995 (art. 101) and GS 1998 (art. 120).

3251 Following the FCS-FCC split, GS 2001 (art. 34) decided to continue EF with the FCS and monitor the FCC.
3252 Then GS 2004 (art. 43) decided to continue EF with both the FCS and FCC. GS 2007 (art. 80) continued EF
3253 with the FCS and judged that GS 2004 had erred with respect to continuing EF with the FCC. GS 2010 (art.
3254 81) continued EF with the FCS and rescinded the decision of GS 2007, thus continuing EF with the FCC.
3255 Subsequent synods continued EF with both the FCS and FCC: GS 2013 art. 161&162, GS 2016 art. 45&46,
3256 GS 2019 art. 18&21.

3257 By 2016, the mandate from GS regarding the FCS no longer included the charge to the Committee to
3258 encourage reconciliation with the FCC, as no request was received to assist with this (as per GS 2013
3259 mandate).

3260 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

3261 GS 2022 (art. 134) decided:

- 3262 3.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland
3263 (FCS) under the adopted rules.
- 3264 3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER).
- 3265 3.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of
3266 the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at
3267 assemblies of sister-churches)
- 3268 3.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.
- 3269 3.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general
3270 synod.

3271 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

3272 In the fall of 2022, there was an opportunity for a bilateral meeting at the ICRC involving delegates of
3273 our committee (Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple) and a delegate from the FCS. There was acknowledgement
3274 that there has been minimal communication from the FCS to our committee; the FCS delegate was not
3275 aware of our ecclesiastical relationship. Though the meeting was cordial, our delegates had the impression
3276 that the FCS has its attention focused on matters within the country of Scotland; little attention is paid to
3277 a relationship with the CanRC.

3278 In the spring of 2023, thankfully, we were able to send a delegation to Scotland to attend their General
3279 Assembly (GA); Br. Bouwman spent his time in Edinburgh at the FCS GA and Br. De Boer spent most of his
3280 time in Glasgow at the FCC GA. We discovered that financial costs associated with traveling to and
3281 accommodations in Scotland are substantial.

3282 We did not receive an invitation to the 2024 GA; the FCS does not invite all churches with whom they
3283 have ecclesiastical relationships to each GA. Nevertheless, we perused the 2024 Reports and Acts and see
3284 that the FCS maintains its desire to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ.

3285 ***Observations & Considerations***

3286 During the 2023 GA, many references were made to the mission of the FCS: “A healthy gospel church
3287 for every community in Scotland.” It became abundantly evident that the FCS is very focused and intent
3288 on sharing the gospel throughout Scotland. The mission of the denomination had been previously

3289 determined, was visually prominent at all times, and is being consistently promoted by denominational
3290 headquarters in many ways. It is understood that an intentionally missional church needs to be prepared
3291 to have flexibility as it spreads.

3292 Relationships with other churches outside the country was a relatively minor topic during the GA, and
3293 the impression was given that the topic is not a top priority for the denomination. For example, they have
3294 not made any adjustment to their relationship with the GKv in the Netherlands; they have not taken the
3295 time to study developments there. Their committee acknowledged that it would be appropriate to take
3296 another look at their various relations and probably recategorize some churches.

3297 There was considerable discussion about the need for the denomination to be more intentional with
3298 regards to the instruction of the youth. Almost all children go to state schools; home schooling is not part
3299 of Scottish culture and “private” schools are considered something only for the elite. It seems to be
3300 difficult to take concrete action in this regard, since most churches are small and isolated from each other;
3301 setting up schools in that context would take a herculean commitment.

3302 The denomination was also in the midst of a discussion of the Establishment Principle, in connection
3303 with Article 23 of their Westminster Confession. The matter was deferred to the next GA; at the 2024 GA
3304 a report was presented and approved.

3305 GA Commissioners (= delegates at a general assembly) were informally asked about the value of
3306 maintaining the current tradition of us visiting their GA’s, normally every three years. They are not likely
3307 to reciprocate, since their GA happens every May. The Commissioners alluded to the reality that it is
3308 challenging for them to maintain a meaningful relationship with us. They are not looking to Reformed
3309 churches in North America for meaningful engagement; they are very much focused on Scotland. If they
3310 take cues from anyone in North America, it would be from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA); the
3311 PCA is sympathetic with their national missional focus and provides some financial assistance for it.
3312 Nonetheless, maintaining contact in settings where we meet each other – for example at assemblies of
3313 other federations or at the ICRC – would be helpful and appreciated.

3314 Scotland is rapidly becoming an aggressively secularized society, and that presents challenges to the
3315 Christian church’s faithful witness. The FCS is thankful for the rich ecclesiastical heritage they have been
3316 given and at the same time desire to have a strong missional presence throughout their nation. It will be
3317 good for us to continue in relationship with them as they navigate their way forward in such a challenging
3318 context.

3319 Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
3320 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and
3321 confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice. As we move forward in our
3322 relationship with the FCS, it will be appropriate to carefully observe how the FCS continues to honor its
3323 historical legacy by remaining faithful to their confessions and church order. With increased globalization
3324 it is good to have interactions with them and to learn from their struggles in a similar secularized context.

3325 **Recommendations**

3326 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3327 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category B²⁹ with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
3328 according to the adopted rules;
- 3329 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 3330 2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of
3331 the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at
3332 assemblies of sister-churches);

²⁹ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category B” should be dropped.

3333 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FCS to the churches 6 months prior
3334 the convening of the next general synod.

3335 **Grounds:**

- 3336 1 Re 1: As far as can be determined, the FCS continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
3337 church of Jesus Christ. However, the distances are great, financial costs are substantial, and there
3338 has been limited contact and interaction since a relationship was established; it is appropriate to
3339 continue the relationship with the FCS as EF category B.³⁰
- 3340 2 Re 2.1: With increased globalization, it is good to have interactions with the FCS to learn from
3341 their struggles in a similar secularized context. Continued contact can be experienced in bilateral
3342 exchanges in settings other than FCS General Assemblies.

3343

³⁰ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the line “; it is appropriate to continue the relationship with the FCS as EF category B” should be dropped.

3344

REPORT 22: FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (CONTINUING)

3345 **Introduction**

3346 The CanRC entered into EF with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) by a decision of GS 1992 (art. 128).
 3347 In 2000, the FCC broke away from the FCS. GS 2004 continued EF with the FCC, GS 2007 discontinued EF
 3348 with the FCC, GS 2013 reinstated EF with the FCC. Like the CanRC, the FCC is a member of the ICRC.

3349 **Summary of the Report**

3350 Our relationship with the FCC is comfortable but distant; there seems to be minimal natural interaction
 3351 with them and we do not share some of their liturgical convictions. Nonetheless, because of the common
 3352 bond of faith which is evident, it is good to maintain a relationship with them. Thankfully, we were able
 3353 to attend the 2023 General Assembly. Additionally, we have perused their 2022 and 2024 General
 3354 Assembly documents (Acts and Reports) as found on the Church web site. We see a church which is very
 3355 diligent in maintaining its desire to be faithful to God’s Word. However, we also acknowledge that
 3356 distances as well as differences in history and church polity make the realization of a closer or more
 3357 intense relationship unlikely.

3358 The CER is recommending that a relationship with the FCC be maintained and further that it be
 3359 mandated to continue the relationship in accordance with the adopted rules with FCC between now and
 3360 the next Synod.

3361 **Brief History**

3362 The Kirk (Church) of Scotland chose for the Reformed faith during the great Reformation. It became
 3363 the established church in Scotland following the Act of Toleration, 1688. The Free Church was established
 3364 in 1843, when many ministers resigned from the Church of Scotland. This became known as “the
 3365 Disruption,” and was the culmination of many years of disagreement over how much influence the State
 3366 could have over the Church. In 1900, most members of the FCS joined another church – the United Free
 3367 Church of Scotland; those remaining behind were deemed to be the continuation of the FCS. In 2000, the
 3368 Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) separated from the FCS, in part over the issue of exclusive psalmody.
 3369 It is noted with sadness that attempts at reconciliation between the FCS and FCC were not fruitful.

3370 **Brief Description**

3371 Source of church data: ICRC 2022

Location	<i>Mainly Scotland, also Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico.</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Separation from the FCS in 2000</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>42 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>1500 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>		
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Not confirmed</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Done by ministers appointed for this task</i>		
Website	www.freechurchcontinuing.org		

3372 **History of the relationship**

3373 See the FCS report for the relationship prior to 2000.
 3374 Following the FCS-FCC split, GS 2001 (art. 34) decided to continue EF with the FCS and monitor the FCC.
 3375 Then GS 2004 (art. 43) decided to continue EF with both the FCS and FCC. GS 2007 (art. 80) continued EF

3376 with the FCS and judged that GS 2004 had erred with respect to continuing EF with the FCC. GS 2010 (art.
3377 81) continued EF with the FCS and rescinded the decision of GS 2007, thus continuing EF with the FCC.
3378 Subsequent synods continued EF with both the FCS and FCC: GS 2013 art. 161&162, GS 2016 art. 45&46,
3379 GS 2019 art. 18&21.

3380 By 2016, the mandate from GS regarding the FCS no longer included the charge to the Committee to
3381 encourage reconciliation with the FCC, as no request was received to assist with this (as per GS 2013
3382 mandate).

3383 **Decisions of GS 2022**

3384 GS 2022 (art. 135) decided:

3385 *3.1 To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Free Church of Scotland*
3386 *(Continuing) (FCC) under the adopted rules.*

3387 *3.2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER).*

3388 *3.2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of*
3389 *the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at*
3390 *assemblies of sister-churches)*

3391 *3.2.2 To send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.*

3392 *3.2.3 To submit its report to the churches 6 months prior to the convening of the next general*
3393 *synod.*

3394 **Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024**

3395 In the fall of 2022, there was an opportunity for a bilateral meeting at the ICRC involving delegates of
3396 our committee (Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple) and a delegate from the FCC. There was acknowledgement
3397 that there has been minimal communication from the FCC to our committee; the FCC delegate was not
3398 aware of our ecclesiastical relationship. Though the meeting was cordial, our delegates understood that
3399 perhaps there was more alignment between FCC and Free Reformed Churches and Heritage Reformed
3400 Churches than with us. The reality is that on the FCC side little attention is paid to a relationship with the
3401 CanRC.

3402 In the spring of 2023, thankfully, we were able to send a delegation to Scotland to attend their General
3403 Assembly; Br. Bouwman spent his time in Edinburgh at the FCS GA and Br. De Boer spent most of his time
3404 in Glasgow at the FCC GA. We discovered that financial costs associated with traveling to and
3405 accommodations in Scotland are substantial.

3406 We received an invitation to the 2024 GA and responded with a letter of greeting. We perused the
3407 2024 Reports; at the time of writing this report the 2024 Acts have not yet been made available. We see
3408 that the FCC maintains its desire to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ

3409 **Observations & Considerations**

3410 During the 2023 GA a significant topic was the location of the Assembly. Many commissioners
3411 considered it to be very important to have subsequent assemblies return to the nation's capital; they
3412 assert that their denomination is the true continuation of the historic Scottish church.

3413 Relationships with other churches was a substantial topic during the GA. They have been quite aware
3414 of developments in the Netherlands and continue to take an active interest in maintaining that awareness.
3415 It should be noted, however, that the Dutch federation that they seem to connect most closely with is the
3416 Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN); the FCC was concerned that some local churches
3417 had appointed women to the office of elders and deacons in spite of a declaration by the most recent
3418 Synod that it was not scriptural to do so.

3419 In a report on youth and education serious concern was expressed for the youth and the need for
3420 Christian education in an ever increasingly secular world. The struggle for FCC is similar to FCS with many

3421 VERY small congregations. (The one largest congregation might have 100 members.) A report on the
3422 training of ministers did not garner much discussion, as there are only two students, which is a big concern
3423 in the denomination; they experience a shortage of ministers. The training is done mostly via the internet,
3424 with the lecturers all being active ministers.

3425 Holding on to the denomination’s exclusive Psalm-singing character continues to be of highest
3426 importance. “As a denomination it is imperative that we continue to use the 1650 edition of the Scottish
3427 Psalter. Nothing before or since has come nearer in English to expressing the mind of the Holy Spirit in the
3428 metrical form which is required to make participation in praise accessible to the ordinary person....”

3429 Since we do not share the FCC’s understandings of exclusive psalmody, FCC commissioners informally
3430 indicated it is not likely that our relationship can be expected to intensify. They wondered whether
3431 continuing the triennial visitation protocol was a stewardly use of our financial resources. Nonetheless,
3432 they are very appreciative of the role that CanRC has played at the ICRC and look forward to dialoguing
3433 with us again in future ICRC meetings.

3434 Scotland is rapidly becoming an aggressively secularized society, and that presents challenges to the
3435 Christian church’s faithful witness. The FCC is thankful for the rich ecclesiastical heritage they have been
3436 given and has a strong desire to pass that very heritage on to the next generation. It will be good for us to
3437 continue in relationship with them as they navigate their way forward in such a challenging context.

3438 Discussions have taken place, and will continue at opportune times, on differing church polity or
3439 practices. The important determination is to remain a faithful church within the confines of Scripture and
3440 confessions allowing for a unity in the faith with a diversity of practice. As we move forward in our
3441 relationship with the FCC, it will be appropriate to carefully observe how the FCC continues to honor its
3442 historical legacy by remaining faithful to their confessions and church order. With increased globalization
3443 it is good to have interactions with them and to learn from their struggles in a similar secularized context.

3444 **Recommendations**

3445 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3446 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category B³¹ with the Free Church of Scotland
3447 (Continuing) (FCC) according to the adopted rules
- 3448 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 3449 2.1 To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of
3450 the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), and mutual presence at
3451 assemblies of sister-churches)
 - 3452 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FCC to the churches 6 months prior
3453 the convening of the next general synod.

3454 **Grounds:**

- 3455 1 Re 1: As far as can be determined, the FCC continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
3456 church of Jesus Christ. However, the distances are great, financial costs are substantial, and there
3457 has been limited contact and interaction since a relationship was established; it is appropriate to
3458 continue the relationship with the FCS as EF category B.³²
- 3459 2 Re 2.1: With increased globalization, it is good to have interactions with the FCC to learn from
3460 their struggles in a similar secularized context. Continued contact can be experienced in bilateral
3461 exchanges in settings other than FCC General Assemblies.

3462

³¹ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category B” should be dropped.

³² If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the line “; it is appropriate to continue the relationship with the FCS as EF category B” should be dropped.

3463

REPORT 23: FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (FRCSA)

3464 **Introduction**

3465 The CanRC began regular correspondence with the FRCSA already in the first years of our federation’s
 3466 existence; at our first synod in 1954, held in Homewood, the decision was made to establish meaningful
 3467 communication with the FRCSA (GS 1954 art. 54). Our relationship with the FRCSA is thus one of our
 3468 longest ones. Like the CanRC, the FRCSA is a member of the ICRC.

3469 **Summary of the Report**

3470 The relationship with the FRCSA has been a meaningful one. Language barriers are minimal. There is
 3471 deep appreciation for our interest in and support of their churches. Various topics under discussion on
 3472 their table are also topics of interest to us. The CRCA is recommending that EF with the FRCSA continue
 3473 along the same trajectory as we have experienced for the past several synods.

3474 Readers should be aware that South Africa has experienced significant political and social unrest, as
 3475 well as internal economic problems, during the past few decades. Recent elections leading to a coalition
 3476 government has brought new optimism to the citizens.

3477 **Brief History**

3478 The first Free Reformed Church of South Africa was instituted in the 1950s by Dutch immigrants from
 3479 the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (liberated) (GKv). They have been active in local mission and
 3480 now have four churches instituted because of mission work, and four churches with roots in Dutch
 3481 immigrations.

3482 **Brief Description**

3483 Source of church data: 2024 General Synod

Location	<i>South Africa</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>The FRCSA has a similar migration story as both the CanRC and FRCA. The FRCSA churches are very engaged in mission and relief work, particularly amongst neighboring black / disadvantaged communities.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds & Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Polity	<i>Dort</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>8 instituted churches, several preaching points / church plants, and an eMission documentation centre. The church federation is quite diverse in culture, with 4 immigrant churches and presently 4 indigenous mission churches.</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>~1500</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Biannually</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially, with an “indaba” (informative meeting of churches and deputies) halfway between synods</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>CRTS, in-house. See detail in subsection on CRTS.</i>		
Website	http://www.vqk.org.za/		

3484 ***History of the relationship***

3485 Our common ecclesiastical and ancestral heritages, combined with comparable emigration
3486 experiences, have resulted in a sense of close kinship with our South African brothers and sisters. As in
3487 our federation, the first church institution in the FRCSA occurred in 1950. A review of the acts of our
3488 synods of just the last 15 years reveals an ongoing warm relationship.

3489 GS 1954 (art. 54) decided to establish EF with the FRCSA. EF has been continued ever since. More
3490 recent synods have decided to support the FRCSA especially where theological training is concerned: GS
3491 2004 art. 33, GS 2007 art. 124, GS 2010 art. 82, GS 2016 art. 47, GS 2019 art. 108.

3492 Broadly speaking, as the English language has become more familiar in South Africa and as the
3493 “distance” between the FRCSA and the GKv/NeGK has increased, our South African brothers and sisters
3494 are increasingly seeking to intensify their communications and connections between the FRCA and the
3495 CanRC federations. Since 2019, students from FRCSA have studied at CRTS to receive their MDiv.

3496 ***Decisions of GS 2022***

3497 GS 2022 (art. 147) decided:

3498 3.1 *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) with the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa*
3499 *(FRCSA) under the adopted rules;*

3500 3.2 *To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*

3501 3.2.1 *To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;*

3502 3.2.2 *To continue involvement in discussions regarding financial requests from the FRCSA and*
3503 *provide coordination assistance where possible;*

3504 3.2.3 *To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next synod.*

3505 ***Execution of this mandate in the period summer 2022 to fall 2024***

- 3506 - August 2022: Received a request from the Mission Deputies of the Free Reformed Church, South Africa
3507 to assist in finding new partners for the funding of mission. We clarified that as churches we remain
3508 unable to provide direct funding for foreign mission work under FRCSA supervision, and that our
3509 financial support will be focused on supporting students for theological education attending CRTS.
3510 - April 2024: At the request of the FRCSA, a Zoom meeting was arranged for an informal discussion on
3511 various matters of interest to the two federations. This meeting was helpful for strengthening the
3512 relationships.
3513 - May 2024: Received feedback from the FRCSA Deputies for Churches Abroad (DRCA) on the CER draft
3514 report to Synod on changing the structure and rules for ecclesiastical relationships.
3515 - September 2024: Rev. Bruintjes and Rev. Temple attended the FRCSA Synod (Synod Mamelodi) in
3516 Pretoria, South Africa.
3517 - While independent of the work of the CER, various contacts continue to occur between CRTS and
3518 FRCSA (see CRTS report).

3519 ***Observations & Considerations***

- 3520 - The context for ministry and mission in South Africa remains complex. The history of Apartheid
3521 continues to influence how people view the church. There are large socio-economic disparities both
3522 within the country and the churches. Diverse languages in both country and church federation create
3523 natural barriers for deep relationships. These challenges impact the discussions around liturgy,
3524 mission, theological education, needy students, and needy churches.
3525 - While the FRCSA is a relatively small federation, they have a disproportionately large number of
3526 theological students. This is a remarkable change from only a decade ago, and a great blessing to be
3527 responsibly stewarded.
3528 - The FRCSA has officially ended their relationship with the GKv (now NeGK). At Synod Mamelodi 2024,

3529 the FRCSA decided to extend ecclesiastical fellowship to the newly formed GK (from GKN/DGK) at their
3530 first meeting of Synod in 2026.

- 3531 - The churches are active in local missions in various languages and socio-economic situations. Local
3532 churches often carry a significant line-item on their own budget for this mission. Additionally, the
3533 federation receives support from the Dutch Organization, South Africa Mission/Verre Naasten (ZAM),
3534 and the FRCA.
- 3535 - There are various formal arrangements between our churches and their federation. This includes most
3536 notably the training of their theological students at CRTS and arranged support through the Foreign
3537 Student Bursary Fund (FSBF), the work of Rev. Ryan Kampen (Dunnville East) at the Reformation Study
3538 Centre, and the support of the Timothy Project by Lincoln Canadian Reformed Church.
- 3539 - The support for the FRCSA students at CRTS via the FSBF is working out well and our churches have
3540 responded well to requests for funding.
- 3541 - There remains a need for financial support. Between theological education, local mission, needy
3542 churches, and needy students the financial situation is tenuous.

3543 **Recommendations**

3544 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3545 1 To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) category A³³ with the Free Reformed Churches in South
3546 Africa (FRCSA) according to the adopted rules;
- 3547 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
- 3548 2.1 To continue involvement in discussions involving financial requests from the FRCSA and
3549 provide coordination assistance where possible;
- 3550 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the FRCSA to the churches 6 months
3551 prior the convening of the next general synod.

3552 **Grounds:**

- 3553 1 Re 1: As far as can be determined, the FRCSA continues to display the marks of a true and faithful
3554 church of Jesus Christ. Given frequent interaction and a shared recent history, a close relationship
3555 between the CanRC and FRCSA is mutually beneficial.
- 3556 2 Re 2.1: Due to reduced funding for mission from The Netherlands, coupled with the increasing
3557 financial needs of theological education and the many mission opportunities, support, where
3558 feasible, is warranted.

3559

³³ If the recommendations of the Study Report of the CER are not adopted, the words “category A” should be dropped.

3560
3561

REPORT 24: NORTH AMERICAN REFORMED AND PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL (NAPARC)

Introduction

3562 The CanRC are a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) as per
3563 a decision of GS 2007 (art. 140).
3564

Summary of the Report

3565 The CER sent representatives to NAPARC in 2022 and 2023. These continue to be good opportunities
3566 to grow and further our ecclesiastical relations, and be of mutual support to each other.
3567

3568 Your committee is recommending that the CanRC continue its membership in NAPARC.

Brief Description

3569 NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) is a fellowship of thirteen member
3570 churches based on subscription and adherence to the Bible as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity
3571 and the Westminster Confessional Standards. Its purpose is to facilitate discussion on common issues, to
3572 study matters of shared concern, to exercise the promotion of the Reformed faith, and to promote
3573 collaboration, where feasible, in works of mission, relief, etc. All decisions of NAPARC are advisory and do
3574 not impinge on the autonomy of member churches.
3575

3576 Each September NAPARC sponsors an annual mission consultation conference, often at the OPC
3577 administration offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Over the last years our Canadian Reformed Missions
3578 Association (CRMA) has ensured there is CanRC presence at this conference. Rev. Ian Wildeboer spoke at
3579 this in 2022.

3580 For further information (on constitution and bylaws, meetings, supporting materials, etc.) see the
3581 website: www.naparc.org.

NAPARC Member Churches:

- 3582 1. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
- 3583 2. The Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
- 3584 3. The Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ)
- 3585 4. The Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)
- 3586 5. The Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)
- 3587 6. The Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)
- 3588 7. The Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA-K)
- 3589 8. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
- 3590 9. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
- 3591 10. The Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC)
- 3592 11. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
- 3593 12. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
- 3594 13. The United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)
- 3595

The CanRC and NAPARC

3596 GS 2001 (art. 74) mandated the Committee to send observers to NAPARC. This mandate was continued
3597 by GS 2004 (art. 30). At GS 2007 (art. 140) we decided to become a member of NAPARC. Membership has
3598 continued since: GS 2010 art. 52, GS 2013 art. 77, GS 2016 art. 89, and GS 2019 art. 105. The matter of
3599 Membership Transfer and the Golden Rule Comity Agreement received attention at general synods in
3600 2010, 2013, and 2016.
3601

3602 **Decisions of GS 2022**

3603 GS 2022 (art. 159) decided the following:

3604 3.1 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

3605 3.1.1 To represent the CanRC at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
3606 (NAPARC) and to continue active involvement in it;

3607 3.1.2 To submit its report to the churches six months prior to the convening of the next general
3608 synod;

3609 3.1.3 To consider including relevant information about ecumenical conferences in the report to
3610 general synod.

3611 **Execution of this mandate**

3612 The committee participated in the annual meetings held each November in 2022 (hosted by the PCA
3613 in Atlanta, Georgia) and November 2023 (hosted by the PresRC in Exeter, Rhode Island). These last from
3614 Tuesday morning to Thursday noon. The main agenda items for each meeting include reports from the
3615 member churches, followed by discussion and prayer. In 2022 we sent a 4-person team from the
3616 committee (Br. Bouwman, Rev. Jagt, Rev. Temple, Rev. Vandeveld). In 2023 we delegated 5 brothers, of
3617 whom one became ill, and so it was 4 brothers (Br. Gortemaker, Br. Schouten, Rev. Temple, Rev.
3618 Vandeveld).

3619 In 2022, we met, as is our custom, with 8 member churches in bilateral meetings (RCUS, URCNA, ERQ,
3620 HRC, FRCNA, OPC, RPCNA, and ARP) as well as informally with brothers from one of the Korean churches
3621 (KAPC). On the Wednesday evening we enjoyed a discussion on ministerial burnout by Rev. John Medlock
3622 (See: [Pastoral Wellbeing – PCA Pastors Reflect on the Tensions of Ministry](#)). In our plenary sessions we
3623 also discussed gender and sexual issues as well as the questions about the age limit for the administration
3624 of the sacrament of baptism.

3625 In 2023, we met with the same 8 member churches as in 2022. There was a lecture on Wednesday
3626 evening on the subject of “John Murray: He yet Speaketh.”

3627 Currently there are no churches applying for membership in NAPARC. Two churches have remained as
3628 guests for many years: The Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).
3629 These churches provide a report on life in their churches on the floor of NAPARC.

3630 **Observations/Considerations**

3631 - The CER continues to see the benefit of being involved in NAPARC, both to derive insights from and to
3632 contribute to the Reformed witness it offers on the North American scene.

3633 - The meetings of NAPARC are an efficient and economical way to encourage and grow the bonds with
3634 member churches with whom we have EF.

3635 - Member churches often delegate the same brothers to NAPARC. This allows for greater familiarity and
3636 meaningful personal relationships.

3637 - A report is written for each bi-lateral meeting at NAPARC. This is shared with the CER as a whole and is
3638 helpful for drawing up the various reports to Synod on our church relations.

3639 - The CER is willing to assist the local churches in regard to NAPARC issues.

3640 **Recommendations**

3641 The CER recommends that synod decide:

3642 1 To continue membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC);

3643 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):

3644 2.1 To continue to represent the CanRC at NAPARC and to continue its active involvement in
3645 it.

3646 2.2 To submit its report on its activities with respect to NAPARC to the churches 6 months prior
3647 to the convening of the next General Synod.

3648 **Ground:**

3649 1 Re 1: With thankfulness to the Lord, NAPARC continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony
3650 and unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches within Canada and the USA.
3651

3652 ***NAPARC Press Releases***

3653 **NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL 2022**

3654 **Press Release**

3655 **November 17, AD 2022**

3656 The 47th annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)
3657 convened on Tuesday afternoon, November 8, 2022. It was hosted by the Presbyterian Church in America
3658 at the Sonesta Airport North Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. The outgoing Chairman, Dr. Bryan Chapell, led the
3659 opening devotions.

3660 All 13 Member Churches of NAPARC were represented. The Member Churches include the Associate
3661 Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the Reformed Church
3662 of Quebec (Église réformée du Québec) (ERQ), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA),
3663 the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the
3664 Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the
3665 Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC), the Reformed Church
3666 in the United States (RCUS), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the United
3667 Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Representatives of the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC)
3668 and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) attended as invited observers.

3669 The basis of NAPARC's fellowship is "*Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over*
3670 *all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full*
3671 *commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its*
3672 *teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the*
3673 *Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.*"³⁴

3674 One of the first orders of business was the election of new officers. Elected as Chairman was Rev.
3675 Michael Ives of the PresRC. Elected as Vice-chairman was Dr. J. P. Mosley of the RCUS. Rev. Ralph Pontier
3676 was elected to a fifth term as Secretary, and Rev. Todd De Rooy was elected to a fourth term as Treasurer.
3677 The chairmanship and vice-chairmanship rotate annually among the 13-Member Churches following an
3678 alphabetical listing. The Vice-chairman this year is slated to serve as Chairman next year, and his
3679 denomination is asked to host the following year.

3680 The bulk of the work at NAPARC is to hear from the Member Churches about what the Lord is doing in
3681 their midst, and to pray for one another after each report. Reports were heard of both spiritual blessings
3682 and the struggles of ministry. Many of the blessings concerned progress in the work of missions. Some of
3683 the struggles included shrinking rural churches, a decline in men seeking to enter the ministry, and a
3684 shortage of men willing to enter world missions. Ministerial fatigue and burnout were also of grave
3685 concern.

3686 A devotional service was held on Tuesday evening with Dr. Bryan Chapell leading in prayer for the
3687 churches and with Rev. Luke Brodine leading the singing of several hymns. PCA pastor, Rev. Dr. Jimmy
3688 Agan spoke on "Thorns of Grace" describing how God uses thorns in the lives of his servants to keep them
3689 humble and make them strong.

3690 After Member Churches gave reports and prayed for one another, three topics of discussion were
3691 taken up. They included ministerial burnout or ministerial wellbeing, responding to gender issues, and the

³⁴ NAPARC Constitution, II. Basis

3692 maximum age for infant baptism.

3693 The discussion on ministerial burnout included a 20-minute presentation by Rev. John Medlock, of
3694 Geneva Benefits Group (the retirement and benefits agency of the PCA). Rev. Medlock spearheaded a
3695 study of 900 PCA pastors about ministerial wellbeing. He has published on the subject and the fruit of his
3696 findings can be found at the Geneva Benefits Group [website](#) including a free downloadable pdf book,
3697 *Pastoral Wellbeing – PCA Pastors Reflect on the Tensions of Ministry*.

3698 The second subject focused on resources dealing with gender issues. An index of reports by NAPARC
3699 Member Churches about human sexuality, with hyperlinks, is available upon request from the NAPARC
3700 [Secretary](#).

3701 The third topic of discussion was a brief survey of Member Churches regarding any age limit for the
3702 administration of infant baptism. One Member Church has a rule that infant baptism must be
3703 administered before the age of two years, and they wondered if any other Member Church has a similar
3704 stipulation. None have. Some stated that in instances of household baptisms of adult converts, children
3705 up to ages 10-12 might receive baptism without the children themselves making a profession of faith,
3706 although wisdom is required in every situation to determine whether the children have reached years of
3707 discernment and might be capable of a credible profession of faith.

3708 On Wednesday evening, we enjoyed another delicious dinner. The meal and after dinner program were
3709 sponsored by the Geneva Benefits Group. Rev. Dr. R. Carlton Wynne, an adjunct professor of systematic
3710 theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, spoke on “Human Design from a
3711 Theological Perspective.”

3712 The NAPARC schedule runs from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday noon and provides time slots for bi-
3713 lateral meetings between the inter-church or ecumenical committees of the Member Churches. These
3714 smaller meetings have proven fruitful for Member Churches to grow closer together and manifest more
3715 fully their oneness in Christ.

3716 In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, NAPARC sponsors consultations where
3717 representatives of Member Churches gather to discuss cooperation in a specific area of ministry. For more
3718 than thirty years, there have been annual world mission consultations in September of each year. This
3719 year representatives from ten NAPARC Member Church world missions agencies (ARPC, CanRC, FRCNA,
3720 HRC, KAPC, OPC, PCA, PresRC, RPCNA, and URCNA) met together for their annual consultation at the OPC’s
3721 administration offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Joining with them were representatives from three
3722 ICRC Member Church world missions agencies (who are not members of NAPARC—CRCI, FRCSA, and SRC)
3723 and four NAPARC Member Church diaconal ministries agencies/ministries (FRCSA, HRC, OPC, and URCNA).
3724 Also participating were representatives from the BPC world missions agency.

3725 Presentations were made and discussions followed on four topics at the missions consultation:

- 3726 • Planning for going into and transitioning out of a mission work, in conjunction with training godly
3727 leaders in global mission (the Rev. Ian Wildeboer, CanRC);
- 3728 • Ministry to refugees in war-torn regions: Eastern Europe (Ukraine) and North Africa (South Sudan,
3729 Sudan, and Ethiopia) (Mr. David Nakhla, OPC)—which included a special presentation by the Rev.
3730 Jonathan Eide, MTW’s country director for Ukraine and Russia (PCA);
- 3731 • Dependency issues on the mission field (the Rev. Peter Boon, FRCSA); and
- 3732 • Pastor care of missionaries and their families (the Rev. David Thomae, PCA).

3733 The next such NAPARC Joint Consultation is scheduled for September 19-21, 2023, with Mr. Bube as
3734 the chairman for the world mission agencies, and Mr. David P. Nakhla as the chairman for the diaconal
3735 mission agencies.

3736 The Council enjoyed the gracious and generous hospitality of the Presbyterian Church in America and
3737 experienced warm and joyous fellowship with fellow delegates, observers, and other guests.

3738 The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for November 14-16, 2023, to be hosted in Warwick,
3739 Rhode Island, by the Presbyterian Reformed Church.

3740 Rev. Ralph A. Pontier
3741 NAPARC Secretary
3742 secretary@naparc.org
3743 641-230-3880
3744

3745 **NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL 2023**

3746 **Press Release**

3747 **November 27, AD 2023**

3748 The 48th annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)
3749 convened on Tuesday afternoon, November 14, 2023. It was hosted by the Presbyterian Reformed Church
3750 at the Beacon Church in Exeter, Rhode Island. The outgoing Chairman, Rev. Michael Ives, led the opening
3751 devotions.

3752 All 13 Member Churches of NAPARC were represented. The Member Churches include the Associate
3753 Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the Reformed Church
3754 of Quebec (Église réformée du Québec) (ERQ), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA),
3755 the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the
3756 Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin) (KPCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the
3757 Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC), the Reformed Church
3758 in the United States (RCUS), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the United
3759 Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Representatives of the Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC)
3760 and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) attended as invited observers.

3761 The basis of NAPARC's fellowship is "*Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over*
3762 *all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full*
3763 *commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its*
3764 *teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the*
3765 *Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.*"³⁵

3766 One of the first orders of business was the election of new officers. Elected as Chairman was Rev. Dr.
3767 J. P. Mosley of the RCUS. Elected as Vice-chairman was Rev. Bruce Parnell of the RPCNA. Rev. Ralph Pontier
3768 was elected to a sixth term as Secretary, and Mr. Danny McDaniel of the PCA was elected to a first term
3769 as Treasurer. Appreciation was expressed for the retiring Treasurer, Rev. Todd De Rooy who had served
3770 four terms. The chairmanship and vice-chairmanship rotate annually among the 13-Member Churches
3771 following an alphabetical listing. The Vice-chairman this year is slated to serve as Chairman next year, and
3772 his denomination is asked to host the following year.

3773 The bulk of the time at NAPARC is to hear from the Member Churches about what the Lord is doing in
3774 their midst, and to pray for one another after each report. Reports were heard of both spiritual blessings
3775 and the struggles of ministry.

3776 After Member Churches gave reports and prayed for one another, four topics of discussion were taken
3777 up. They included how we can encourage compliance with the NAPARC Comity agreement, how we can
3778 encourage organic union, how to retain young people in our churches and recruit new ministers, and a
3779 proposal regarding the formation of an independent Investigations Counsel to serve NAPARC member
3780 churches, providing objective counsel to Member Churches regarding instances of sexual abuse and
3781 related scandalous crimes.

3782 A devotional service was held on Tuesday evening with Rev. Michael Ives leading in prayer for the
3783 churches. On Wednesday evening, Rev. Tim Worrell addressed the delegates and guests on the subject of
3784 "John Murray: He Yet Speaketh" reviewing the writings of John Murray on five subjects,: public worship,

³⁵ NAPARC Constitution, II. Basis

3785 private worship, evangelism and missions, Christian education, and ecumenicity. Rev. Ives and Rev.
3786 Worrell are ministers in the host denomination which John Murray helped found.

3787 The NAPARC schedule runs from Tuesday afternoon to Thursday noon and provides time slots for bi-
3788 lateral meetings between the inter-church or ecumenical committees of the Member Churches. These
3789 smaller meetings have proven fruitful for Member Churches to grow closer together and manifest more
3790 fully their oneness in Christ. This year, the plenary sessions concluded on Wednesday afternoon, but some
3791 bi-lateral meetings continued on into Thursday morning.

3792 In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, NAPARC sponsors consultations where
3793 representatives of Member Churches gather to discuss cooperation in a specific area of ministry. For more
3794 than thirty years, there have been annual world mission consultations in September of each year. This
3795 past September representatives from eight NAPARC Member Church world mission agencies (WMA) were
3796 present. They were from the ARPC, HRC, KAPC, OPC, PCA, PresRC, RPCNA, and URCNA. They met together
3797 for the annual consultation at the OPC's administration offices in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Joining with
3798 them were representatives from three NAPARC Member Church diaconal ministries/agencies (DMA).
3799 They were from the HRC, OPC, and URCNA. Items for discussion included:

- 3800 • Recruiting missionaries in the post-pandemic era;
- 3801 • Pastoral care of missionaries and their families;
- 3802 • Opportunities for mutual cooperation and encouragement.

3803 In the meeting of WMA representatives, note was taken of the recurring need for more missionaries.
3804 All agreed to draft a letter to the presidents of seminaries, that are endorsed or used by their respective
3805 churches/federations, to encourage further those seminaries in their endeavors to help prepare men for
3806 the gospel ministry and to consider increasing the emphasis reflected in their curriculum and institutional
3807 culture on the subjects of missions and evangelism. The letter was to be sent by the WMA representatives,
3808 writing in their individual capacities as representatives of their respective church/federation WMA, and
3809 not as an official communication from NAPARC itself.

3810 The next NAPARC Joint WMA/DMA Consultation is scheduled for October 15-17, 2024, with Mr. Mark
3811 T. Bube as the chairman and Rev. Timothy J. Worrell as secretary.

3812 The Council enjoyed the gracious and generous hospitality of the Presbyterian Reformed Church and
3813 experienced warm and joyous fellowship with fellow delegates, observers, and other guests.

3814 The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for November 12-14, 2024, to be hosted at the Northland
3815 Reformed Church (RCUS) in Kansas City, Missouri.

3816 Rev. Ralph A. Pontier
3817 NAPARC Secretary
3818 secretary@naparc.org
3819 641-230-3880

3820

3821 **REPORT 25: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)**

3822 **Introduction**

3823 The CanRC are a charter member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) as per
3824 a decision of GS 1983 (art. 121).

3825 **Summary of the Report**

3826 The ICRC met in October 2022 in Windhoek, Namibia. Present at this ICRC on behalf o the CanRC were
3827 Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple, and, as ICRC officials, Rev. Dr. J. Visscher and Mr. K. Lodder. Rev. Dr. G.
3828 Visscher had also been delegated, since he was to speak at the ICRC, but was prevented from attending
3829 due to a health concern.

3830 Upon a motion made by the CanRC and seconded by the OPC, the ICRC decided to terminate the
3831 membership of the GKv. The ICRC received 5 churches into membership, including the Reformed Churches
3832 The Netherlands (GKN). Rev. Dr. James Visscher retired as Corresponding Secretary and Rev. Dr. Karlo
3833 Janssen was appointed his successor. The next ICRC is to be, the Lord willing, in Korea in October 2026.

3834 Your committee is recommending that the CanRC continue its membership in the ICRC.

3835 **Brief History**

3836 During the late 1970s the FRCA floated the idea of creating an international synod, consisting of the
3837 family of Reformed (liberated) churches (i.e. GKv, CanRC, FRCA, FRCSA, and GGRI). In response, the GKv
3838 in 1979 decided to begin with a conference to which all its sister churches would be invited. This would
3839 create a global platform for discussion for orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian churches who did not feel
3840 at home in the WCC (World Council of Churches), WARC (World Alliance of Reformed Churches), RES/REC
3841 (Reformed Ecumenical Synod/Council), or ICCC (International Council of Christian Churches).³⁶ A
3842 conference was held in 1982 in The Netherlands at which the ICRC was formed. The first formal conference
3843 was held in Scotland in 1985.

3844 The purposes of the ICRC are:

- 3845 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ;
- 3846 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches;
- 3847 3. to facilitate and promote cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions,
3848 theological education, and ministries of mercy;
- 3849 4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches;
- 3850 5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

3851 Since 1985 the ICRC has met once every four years. During the late 1990s, the ICRC saw a growth spurt
3852 in church membership as churches left the REC because it refused to expel a member church for liberal
3853 doctrine.

3854 The ICRC 2017 determined that the next ICRC should be in 2021 in India. Because of political concerns,
3855 it was deemed wise not to have the ICRC take place in India. Because of the global pandemic, the ICRC
3856 could not meet in 2021 but was postponed for a year. The ICRC met in 2022 in Windhoek, Namibia.

3857 **Brief Description**

3858 Source of information: documents submitted to ICRC 2022

Location	<i>Global</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Constituent Assembly in 1982, attended by CanRC, EPCI, FCS, FRCA, FRCSA, KPCK, GGRI-NTT, RPCT, GKv.</i>

³⁶ WARC and REC merged to form the WCRC (World Communion of Reformed Churches). Similar in confessional identity to the ICRC is the WRF (World Reformed Fellowship), it came into existence after the ICRC.

Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds, Three Forms of Unity, Westminster Standards and any documents agreeing with these (e.g. Gallic Confession, Second Helvetic Confession)</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>38 member-churches in 6 continents</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>784,905 (total of membership of all member-churches)</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency (Note: these “assemblies” are conferences)	<i>Regional</i>	<i>3+2³⁷</i>	<i>Varies between annual to once every 4 years.</i>
	<i>International</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Once every 4 years</i>
Website	www.icrconline.com		

3859 For an overview of the member churches, see the ICRC 2022 Press Release at the end of this report.

3860 Between ICRCs the Conference operates through 6 committees and a coordinator:

3861 Missions Committee	Coordinating Committee
3862 Theological Education Committee	Regional Conferences Coordinator
3863 Diaconal Committee	Publishing Committee

3864 Currently serving on the executive of the ICRC are: Rev. Dr. D. Breed (Chair – RCSA), Rev. Dr. A. Bae
3865 (Vice – KPCK), Rev. Dr. K. Janssen (Corr. Secretary – CanRC), and Mr. M Bube (Coordinator – OPC)

3866 **History of CanRC membership**

3867 As charter members, the CanRC have been members of the ICRC
3868 since 1983. The CanRC have always played an active role in ICRC governance and committees. The
3869 corresponding secretary and treasurer have always been CanRC (ARC) members. Currently there are
3870 CanRC members on 5 of the 6 ICRC committees.

3871 GS 1980 (art. 153) decided to participate in the creation of the ICRC. GS 1983 (art. 121) decided to
3872 become a member of the ICRC. The following synod decisions all concern (explicitly or by implication)
3873 continued membership in the ICRC: GS 1986, art. 175; GS 1989, art. 128; GS 1992, art. 94; GS 1995, art.
3874 101.IV; GS 1998, art. 52; GS 2001, art. 53; GS 2004, art. 52; GS 2007, art. 132; GS 2010, art. 156; GS 2013,
3875 art. 167; GS 2013, art. 167, GS 2016 (art. 121). GS 2019 overlooked taking a decision on the ICRC.

3876 We note that GS 2013 considered “Having four members of the CRCA attend the ICRC was beneficial
3877 in the past and this practice should be maintained.” (art. 167, cons. 3.2)

3878 The following decisions all concern the CanRC recommending and voting for new members to the ICRC:
3879 GS 1998, art. 52; GS 2004, art. 52; GS 2007, art. 27.

3880 **Mandate of GS 2022**

3881 GS Guelph 2022 took the following decisions regarding the ICRC:

3882 *3.1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the ICRC;*

3883 *3.2 Regarding membership of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) (GKv) in the*
3884 *ICRC:*

3885 *3.2.1 To propose to the tenth ICRC to be held, the Lord willing, in Windhoek, Namibia during*
3886 *October 2022, that the membership of the GKv be terminated, as its decision on women in*
3887 *office no longer qualifies it for membership in the ICRC;*

3888 *3.2.2 To express agreement with a similar proposal decided to by the 87th (2021) General*
3889 *Assembly (GA) of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC);*

3890 *3.2.3 To convey this proposal by means of a letter from General Synod 2022 via the second clerk*

³⁷ The African, European, and Asia-Pacific Conferences are full ICRC regional conferences. In the Americas there are organizations that pre-existed the ICRC: NAPARC and CLIR (CLIR is WRF related).

- 3891 *to the ICRC as soon as possible;*
3892 *3.3 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):*
3893 *3.3.1 To ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;*
3894 *3.3.2 To attend the next ICRC with a delegation of two voting members and two advisory*
3895 *members.*

3896 **Execution of this mandate**

3897 The CER delegated Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple as voting delegates and Rev. Dr. G. Visscher as
3898 advisory delegate to the ICRC 2022. CanRC (ARC) members also present at the ICRC were Rev. Dr. J.
3899 Visscher and Mr. K. Lodder, as corresponding secretary and treasurer respectively. As Rev. G. Visscher was
3900 hospitalized the day before departure, the official delegation became Rev. Janssen and Rev. Temple, with
3901 Rev. J. Visscher serving as advisor when needed.

3902 The Proceedings and Press Release have been published online and can be found here:
3903 <https://www.icrconline.com/general>. The Press Release is also attached to this report.

3904 The facilities were excellent, the fellowship was great, and the day schedule, which more or less
3905 paralleled that of the ICRC 2017, served the agenda well. All business could be adequately accomplished.
3906 The CanRC delegates were busy: Rev. Temple served (again) on the Advisory Committee for the next ICRC
3907 and Rev. Janssen served the ICRC 2022 as Recording Secretary; Rev. Janssen also led a worship service on
3908 the Sunday. Towards the end of the ICRC, Rev. Janssen was appointed Corresponding Secretary of the
3909 ICRC to succeed Rev. J. Visscher.

3910 In line with the decision of GS-CanRC 2022, the CanRC moved that the membership of the Reformed
3911 Churches (liberated) (GKv) be terminated. This motion was seconded by the OPC. As primary mover of the
3912 motion, the CanRC was first to speak to the motion. The matter was decided with one member church
3913 abstaining and all other member churches voting in favour of termination.

3914 Five churches sought admission as members to the ICRC. The CanRC voted in favour of all five
3915 admissions (all admissions took place unanimously).

3916 Three papers were presented at this ICRC, two on the topic of seminary education and one on the
3917 authority (self-sufficiency) of Scripture. The first two papers stimulated much discussion, allowing
3918 delegates from around the world to share their experiences and needs. The third paper proved
3919 controversial, as it advocated the hermeneutic that has seen the GKv accept women in office. While the
3920 discussion that followed this paper was brotherly and orderly, all who spoke expressed disagreement with
3921 its direction.

3922 During the ICRC discussions were held with delegates from the ARPC, EPCEW, SRC, OPC, RPCCEE, RCNZ,
3923 IRCK, GGRI, FCS, FCC, CRCAus, GGRCI, and GKN (see Main Report and Church Reports for further details.)

3924 The next ICRC will take place, the Lord willing, in Korea in October 2026.

3925 Between ICRCs member churches and beyond receive notifications regarding the publication of a new
3926 edition of *Lux Mundi*. The CER has forwarded these notifications on to all the Canadian and American
3927 Reformed Churches. We understand that in many churches these notifications are then forwarded on via
3928 Church Social to the local church membership.

3929 **Observations & Considerations**

3930 In its constitution, the ICRC lists 5 points as its purpose (quoted previously). The ICRC continue to serve
3931 these well. The unity of faith that Member Churches have in Christ was expressed and promoted through
3932 the welcoming of 5 new member churches, the termination of the membership of the GKv, discussions
3933 following papers presented at the ICRC 2022, and through its magazine *Lux Mundi*. Fullest ecclesiastical
3934 fellowship among Member Churches was encouraged through providing a venue and time for in-person
3935 meetings. Cooperation among the Member Churches in areas such as missions, theological education,
3936 and ministries of mercy continues to be facilitated and promoted through three committees created for

3937 that purpose. Common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches were studied through
3938 papers presented at the ICRC 2022 and at Regional Conferences, and through the publication of *Lux*
3939 *Mundi*. Thus, the ICRC continued to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

3940 The ICRC 2022 no longer had the image of the “old boys club” that other ICRCs have had. The Chairman,
3941 himself recently retired, commented on how the ICRC was going to a new generation and how he felt
3942 encouraged by this.

3943 The ICRC 2022 was confessionally faithful. This was evidenced in the discussion on terminating the
3944 membership of the GKv as well as responses to the paper by Dr. Van den Belt, which advocated ideas that,
3945 in the words of a FRCNA delegate, would lead to doctrinal relativism.

3946 Like the ICRC 2017, this ICRC portrayed a truly cross-cultural international character in speeches,
3947 composition of committees, how delegates were seated during plenary sessions, and during meals.

3948 Where regional activities in North America are concerned, because of the existence of NAPARC, ICRC
3949 activities distinct from NAPARC tend to take place in conjunction with NAPARC.

3950 The CanRC have always played a big role in the ICRC and are positioned to continue to do so in the
3951 future. The Corresponding Secretary and the Treasurer have always been CanRC members and still are.
3952 The convener of the Publications Committee (website and magazine) is CanRC (the website subcommittee
3953 is actually entirely composed of CanRC members). The secretary of the Missions Committee is CanRC. The
3954 secretary of the Theological Education Committee is CanRC.

3955 The contribution of the CanRC to the global Reformed and Presbyterian community seems much
3956 appreciated, implying that the CanRC should continue to step up to this plate with the talents and
3957 manpower the Lord has entrusted us. We have a lot to give and, as we give, we learn a lot, and so are
3958 enabled to give even more. The ICRC has also been instrumental in helping build close personal ties with
3959 those in other churches serving on interchurch committees and coordinating activities among member
3960 churches.

3961 **Recommendations**

3962 The CER recommends that synod decide:

- 3963 1 To continue the membership of the CanRC in the International Conference of Reformed Churches
3964 (ICRC);
- 3965 2 To mandate the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER):
 - 3966 2.1 To ensure appropriate CanRC participation in ICRC activities;
 - 3967 2.2 To attend the next ICRC with a delegation of two voting members and two advisory
3968 members.
 - 3969 2.3 To meet bi-laterally with as many delegations as possible from churches with whom the
3970 CanRC have ecumenical relations, prioritizing those who are not members of NAPARC;
 - 3971 2.4 To submit its report on its activities with respect to the ICRC to the churches 6 months prior
3972 to the convening of the next general synod.

3973 **Grounds:**

- 3974 1 Re 1: With thankfulness to the Lord, the ICRC continues to be a useful forum to promote harmony
3975 and unity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches worldwide.
- 3976 2 Re 2.2: “Having four members of the CRCA attend the ICRC was beneficial in the past and this
3977 practice should be maintained.” (GS 2013 art. 167 cons. 3.2)
- 3978 3 Re 2.3: it may not be possible, timewise, to meet with all churches with whom we have
3979 ecumenical relations. Since bi-laterals occur at every NAPARC, which takes place annually,
3980 prioritizing bi-laterals with non-NAPARC members at the ICRC, which takes place once every four
3981 years, is stewardly use of opportunity.

3982

3983

3984 **ICRC 2022 Press Release**

3985 The 10th quadrennial meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) took place
3986 from October 13 through October 18, 2022, at the Windhoek Country Club Resort in Windhoek, Namibia,
3987 hosted by the Reformed Churches in South Africa. This meeting was originally to take place in October
3988 2021, but had been postponed due to global travel restrictions on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3989 **Basis**

3990 The basis of the ICRC is “the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the Three
3991 Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster
3992 Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).” The purpose of the
3993 ICRC is:

- 3994 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ;
- 3995 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches;
- 3996 3. to facilitate and promote cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions,
3997 theological education, and ministries of mercy;
- 3998 4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches;
- 3999 5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

4000 **Membership**

4001 At its start the ICRC was composed of the following 34 Member Churches.

- 4002 1. African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPCC (Kenya))
- 4003 2. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC (USA & Canada))
- 4004 3. Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (CRCI (Indonesia))
- 4005 4. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
- 4006 5. Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRCN)
- 4007 6. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)
- 4008 7. Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)
- 4009 8. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI)
- 4010 9. Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
- 4011 10. Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCS-C)
- 4012 11. Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA)
- 4013 12. Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)
- 4014 13. Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA)
- 4015 14. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC (USA & Canada))
- 4016 15. Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK)
- 4017 16. Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK)
- 4018 17. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC (USA & Canada))
- 4019 18. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)
- 4020 19. Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU)
- 4021 20. Presbyterian Free Church of India (PFCI)
- 4022 21. Reformed Church in the US (RCUS)
- 4023 22. Reformed Churches in Brazil (RCB)
- 4024 23. Reformed Churches in Indonesia (RCI (Indonesia))
- 4025 24. Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)
- 4026 25. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (RCN(I))
- 4027 26. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)
- 4028 27. Reformed Churches of Spain (RCS)
- 4029 28. Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI (India))
- 4030 29. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI (Ireland))
- 4031 30. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

- 4032 31. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)
4033 32. Sudanese Reformed Church (SRC)
4034 33. United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC)
4035 34. United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

4036 For diverse reasons, the FCSA, PCEA, and RCS were not able to be present in person at this conference.
4037 Several delegates of churches in attendance were also unable to attend last minute, many for health
4038 reasons.

4039 **New Members**

4040 Applying for membership, and thus also represented at the Conference, were:

- 4041 1. Anugraha Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bangalore, India (ARPCBI)
4042 2. Evangelical Reformed Church in India (ERCI (India))
4043 3. Reformed Churches The Netherlands (RCN)
4044 4. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Africa (RPCA (Uganda))
4045 5. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE (Hungary, Ukraine,
4046 Romania))

4047 Admission for membership requires compliance of the church with the conditions described in the
4048 ICRC Constitution and being sponsored by two member churches of the ICRC. All churches met these
4049 requirements.

4050 **Membership Termination**

4051 At the ICRC 2017 the membership of the RCN(I) was suspended as its practice with respect to office
4052 bearers was no longer in agreement with the Basis of the ICRC. Upon direction of their broadest
4053 assemblies, the CanRC put forward a motion, which the OPC seconded, that the membership of the RCN(I)
4054 in the ICRC be terminated as the RCN(I) continued to be at odds with the Basis. Almost all member
4055 churches in good standing present at the ICRC 2022 voted in favour of the motion, one church abstained
4056 and no churches voted against the motion. The decision was taken with a heavy heart, as the RCN(I) has
4057 been instrumental in the formation and running of the ICRC since its beginnings in 1982.

4058 With the termination of one Member Church and the admission of five Member Churches, the total
4059 number of Member Churches now is 38.

4060 **Appointments**

4061 Appointed to the executive of the ICRC for the duration of ICRC 2022 were:

- 4062 As Chairman, Rev. Dr. Douw Breed of the RCSA, the hosting church of ICRC 2022.
4063 As Vice-Chairman, Dr. Aaron Bae of the KPCK, the designated hosting church for ICRC 2026.
4064 As Corresponding Secretary, Rev. Dr. James Visscher of the CanRC.
4065 As Recording Secretary, Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen of the CanRC (filling in for Rev. Dr. Peter Naylor of the
4066 EPCEW, who resigned from his position for health reasons in 2020)
4067 As Treasurer, Mr. Kyle Lodder of the CanRC.
4068 As Coordinator of Committees, Elder Mark Bube of the OPC.

4069 For the period following the ICRC 2022, Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen was appointed Corresponding Secretary
4070 and Rev. Dr. Albert Coetsee of the RCSA was appointed Recording Secretary.

4071 **Devotions**

4072 A prayer service was held on the evening of October 12. Local pastor, Rev. Henning Venter, welcomed
4073 delegates and described the Reformed Churches in Namibia. Local pastor, Rev. Dr. Paul de Bruyn,
4074 preached on Ephesians 4:7-16, proclaiming how the mission of all, and thus also of church leadership, is
4075 to serve each other, how we are challenged by childishness in fulfilling this mission, and how in Christ we
4076 grow to maturity, so as to speak the truth in love.

4077 On the morning of October 13, the outgoing Chairman, Rev. Dr. Dick Moes of the URCNA, led the
4078 opening devotions. His message focused on Genesis 2:1-3, pointing out that our goal is the eternal
4079 Sabbath where heaven and earth meet, and thus our focus on earth should be to reflect God to one

4080 another, made possible in Christ.

4081 Each day was begun with devotions led by a minister serving with the hosting church, the RCSA.
4082 Throughout each day God’s praise was sung with songs chosen from the Anglo-Genevan Psalter and the
4083 Trinity Psalter-Hymnal.

4084 **Papers and Panels**

4085 A core activity of the ICRC is the presentation of several papers centred around a theme. These papers
4086 are presented in the evening, followed by a panel discussion on the paper on the morning of the next
4087 Conference Day.

4088 The theme for the ICRC 2022 was Theological Education. The following papers were presented:

4089 “Seminaries: A Centre for Theological Education, Ministry Training or Spiritual Development” by Rev.
4090 Dr. Mohan Chacko, professor at Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehradun, India.

4091 “Models or Alternate Strategies for Ministry Training” by Rev. Dr. Douw Breed, emeritus minister of
4092 the RCS of Waterkloofrand in Pretoria and extra-ordinary researcher of the North-West
4093 University in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

4094 “The Authority of the Scriptures in Diverse Situations and Ethical Contexts” by Rev. Dr. Henk van den
4095 Belt, professor of Theology at the Free University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

4096 Panelists discussions fielding questions from the floor served well to assist the member churches in
4097 equipping the saints for the ministry of mercy, for building up the body of Christ.

4098 **Reports**

4099 The ICRC 2022 received the following reports with gratitude:

4100 The Corresponding Secretary and the Treasurer;

4101 The Theological Education Committee; the Diaconal Committee; the Missions Committee;

4102 The Publications Committee responsible for the ICRC website and the publication of the quarterly
4103 *Lux Mundi*.

4104 Following each report, opportunity for discussion was given. Some detailed attention was given to the
4105 functionality of *Lux Mundi*. The Diaconal Committee was given a more manageable mandate.

4106 **Encouragement**

4107 Time was set aside each afternoon of the conference to allow delegations from churches to meet
4108 bilaterally or multilaterally. Thus churches could encourage one another, strengthen their ties with one
4109 another, and become acquainted with each other.

4110 **Hosting**

4111 The ICRC enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the Windhoek Country Club Resort and the two RCSA
4112 congregations in Windhoek. The Conference experienced warm and joyous fellowship with fellow
4113 delegates, observers, and other guests.

4114 **Proceedings and Next ICRC**

4115 The Proceedings of the ICRC 2022, reports to the ICRC 2022, and papers presented to the ICRC 2022
4116 will be published as soon as possible on the ICRC website: www.icrconline.com.

4117 The next meeting of the ICRC is scheduled for mid October 2026, to be hosted by the Kosin Presbyterian
4118 Church in Korea.

4119

4120 Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen

4121 ICRC 2022 Recording Secretary

4122

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS AND NOMENCLATURE

Since 2016 the following principles have been followed in the Acts of General Synods:

1. The abbreviation for a subcommittee is the abbreviation of the main committee dash abbreviation of the subcommittee. (E.g. CRCA-SRN, CCU-SCO).
2. Names of churches are shortened to “the PLACE NAME CanRC”. If a church is referred to by further qualifiers, a dash is added to the place name and then the qualifier is added. (E.g. the Aldergrove CanRC, the Neerlandia-(North) CanRC, the Glanbrook-Trinity CanRC, the Tintern-Spring Creek CanRC).
3. Other church federations are referred to by their name in English. The abbreviation used is the one used in the language of origin. (E.g. The Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), The Reformed Churches The Netherlands (GKN).
4. References to acts of general synods are according to the following formula: GS YEAR art. ### mat./obs./cons./rec. ## or, for 2022 and later, GS YEAR art. ### mat./dec./gr. ##. If there is potential for confusing synods, the denominational acronym is added to GS (e.g. GS-GKN 2023 = the general synod of the Reformed Churches The Netherlands held in 2023; GS-CanRC 2019 = the general synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches held in 2019).

Because various abbreviations have been used over the years, the following list has the most common English and language of origin abbreviations, with notes where church federations have changed names in the course of time.

The following list attempts to cover the abbreviations used in the Acts of GS 2013 through GS 2022 and in the CER Reports to GS 2025.

Language of origin	English	Name in full
ARC	ARC	American Reformed Church (part of the federation of CanRC)
ARPC	ARPC	Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
ARTS	ARTS	Association of Reformed Theological Schools
ATS	ATS	Association of Theological Schools
BBK	RCA	<i>Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse Kerken</i> (Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of a Dutch church federation)
BC	BC	Belgic Confession
BoG	BoG	Board of Governors (of CRTS)
BPC	BPC	Bible Presbyterian Church
CA	CA	Classis Alberta
CanRC	CanRC	Canadian Reformed Church(es)
CanRCs	CanRCs	Multiple Canadian Reformed Churches
CBT	CBT	Committee on Bible Translations (for the CanRC)
CBTNIV	CBTNIV	Committee on Bible Translation for the New International Version (of the Bible)
CCCNA	CCCNA	Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (of the CanRC)
CCO	CCO	Classis Central Ontario
CCU	CCU	Committee for Church Unity

Committee on Ecumenical Relations – Reports to General Synod 2025

Language of origin	English	Name in full
CCU-C	<i>CCU-C</i>	Committee for Church Unity - Coordinators
CCU-SCO	<i>CCU-SCO</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Church Order
CCU-STE	<i>CCU-STE</i>	Committee for Church Unity – Subcommittee for Theological Education
CEIR	<i>CEIR</i>	Committee on Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations (of the OPC)
CECCA	<i>CECCA</i>	Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (of the URCNA)
CERCU	<i>CERCU</i>	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (of the URCNA)
CGKN	<i>CRCN</i>	<i>Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)
CICR	<i>CICR</i>	Committee on Inter-Church Relations (of the ERQ)
CM	<i>CM</i>	Classis Manitoba
CNSF	<i>CNSF</i>	Committee for Needy Students’ Fund
CN	<i>CN</i>	Classis Niagara
CO	<i>CO</i>	Church Order
COW	<i>COW</i>	Classis Ontario West
CPE	<i>CPE</i>	Classis Pacific East
CPW	<i>CPW</i>	Classis Pacific West
CPTPF	<i>CPTPF</i>	Committee for Pastoral Training Program Funding
CRCA	<i>CRCA</i>	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (of the CanRC)
CRCA-SRN	<i>CRCA-SRN</i>	Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad – Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands
CRCAus	<i>CRCAus</i>	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CRCNA	<i>CRCNA</i>	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRTS	<i>CRTS</i>	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
CWeb	<i>CWeb</i>	Committee for the Official Website (of the CanRC)
EF	<i>EF</i>	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
EPCI	<i>EPCI</i>	Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland
EPCEW	<i>EPCEW</i>	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales
ERQ	<i>RCQ</i>	<i>Église Réformée du Québec</i> (Reformed Church of Quebec)
ESV	<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version (of the Bible)
FCC	<i>FCC</i>	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FCS	<i>FCS</i>	Free Church of Scotland
FERC	<i>FERC</i>	First Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
FRCA	<i>FRCA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCNA	<i>FRCNA</i>	Free Reformed Churches of North America
FRCSA	<i>FRCSA</i>	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (English is now the preferred language; previously also known as VGKSA)

Language of origin	English	Name in full
GGRCI GGRC	<i>CRCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvini di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia)
GGRI	<i>RCI</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia)
GGRI-KalBar	<i>RCI-KalBar</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Kalimantan Barat</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Kalimantan Barat)
GGRI-NTT	<i>RCI-NTT</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Nusa Tenggara Timur</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur)
GGRI-P	<i>RCI-Papua</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Papua</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the Province of Papua)
GGRI-T	<i>RCI-Timor</i>	<i>Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia – Timor</i> (Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Timor)
GK	<i>RC</i>	Reformed Churches [The Netherlands]
GKH DGK	<i>RCR</i> <i>TRC</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken – Hersteld</i> (Reformed Churches – Restored) – renamed <i>De Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (The Reformed Churches)
GKNvv GKN	<i>RCNtf</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (voorlopig verband)</i> – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (temporary federation) Renamed: “ <i>Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland</i> ”
GKSA	<i>RCSA</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika</i> (Reformed Churches in South Africa aka “Dopper Kerken”)
GKv	<i>RCN(I)</i>	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt</i> (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated)
HC	<i>HC</i>	Heidelberg Catechism
HRC HRCNA	<i>HRC</i> <i>HRCNA</i>	Heritage Reformed Congregations (= Heritage Reformed Churches in North America)
ICRC	<i>ICRC</i>	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IJC	<i>JCI</i>	John Calvin Institute (of the IRB)
IPB	<i>PCB</i>	<i>Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil</i> (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
IRB	<i>RCB</i>	<i>Igrejas Reformadas do Brazil</i> (Reformed Churches in Brazil)
IRC	<i>IRC</i>	Inter-church Relations Committee (of the RPCNA)
IRCK	<i>IRCK</i>	Independent Reformed Church in Korea
KJV	<i>KJV</i>	King James Version (of the Bible)
KPCA-K	<i>KPCA-K</i>	Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)
KPCK	<i>KPCK</i>	Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (Previously cited as PCK (Kosin))
LRCA	<i>LRCA</i>	Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford
NAPARC	<i>NAPARC</i>	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
NASB	<i>NASB</i>	New American Standard Bible

Language of origin	English	Name in full
NeGK ³⁸	<i>DRC</i>	Dutch Reformed Churches ³⁹
NGK	<i>NRC</i>	<i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> (Netherlands Reformed Churches)
NIV/NIV84	<i>NIV/NIV84</i>	New International Version – 1984 Edition (of the Bible)
NIV2011	<i>NIV2011</i>	New International Version – 2011 Edition (of the Bible)
NKJV	<i>NKJV</i>	New King James Version (of the Bible)
NRSV	<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version (of the Bible)
OPC	<i>OPC</i>	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	<i>PCA</i>	Presbyterian Church in America
PCEA	<i>PCEA</i>	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCUSA	<i>PCUSA</i>	Presbyterian Church (United States of America)
PHC	<i>PHC</i>	Psalter-Hymnal Committee (of the URCNA)
PJCO	<i>PJCO</i>	Proposed Joint Church Order (for a merged CanRC & URCNA)
PNG	<i>PNG</i>	Papua New Guinea
PRC	<i>PRC</i>	Protestant Reformed Churches (in North America)
PRCA	<i>PRCA</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
PresRC	<i>PresRC</i>	Presbyterian Reformed Church (in North America)
PRTS	<i>PRTS</i>	Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, MI)
PTP	<i>PTP</i>	Pastoral Training Program (of CRTS)
RCK	<i>RCK</i>	Reformed Churches in Korea
RCNZ	<i>RCNZ</i>	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCUS	<i>RCUS</i>	Reformed Church in the United States
RPCC	<i>RPCC</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada
RPCNA	<i>RPCNA</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
RPCCEE	<i>RPCCEE</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe
RPCT	<i>RPCT</i>	Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
RSE	<i>RSE</i>	Regional Synod East (of the CanRC)
RSW	<i>RSW</i>	Regional Synod West (of the CanRC)
SCBP	<i>SCBP</i>	Standing Committee for the Publication of the <i>Book of Praise</i>
SERK	<i>IERC</i>	Independent Evangelical Reformed Churches [Germany]
SIP	<i>SIP</i>	Statement of Institutional Purpose (of the CRTS)
SRC	<i>SRC</i>	Sudanese Reformed Churches

³⁸ As this report refers to both the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* and the *Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken*, to distinguish the two, the acronyms NGK and NeGK are used. Note that in the names, “Nederlands” is an adverb modifying “Gereformeerde” while “Nederlandse” is an adjective modifying “kerken”. As the NGK is no more, the acronym commonly used for what this report refers to as the NeGK is actually NGK as well.

³⁹ This is the English name the NeGK themselves prefer.

Language of origin	<i>English</i>	Name in full
SRN	<i>SRN</i>	Subcommittee for Relations with churches in The Netherlands (subcommittee of the CRCA)
TPH	<i>TPH</i>	<i>Trinity Psalter-Hymnal</i> (of the URCNA and OPC)
TUK	<i>TUK</i>	<i>Theologische Universiteit Kampen</i> (Theological University in Kampen (of the RCN))
URCNA	<i>URCNA</i>	United Reformed Churches in North America