ACTS

General Synod

Neerlandia, Alberta
2001

of the

Canadian Reformed Churches

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List of Abbreviations found in the Acts of Synod Neerlandia

CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CCCA	Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas
CCERQ	Committee for Contact with L'Église réformée du Québec
CCOPC	Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
CCRCUS	Committee for Contact with the Reformed Church in the United States
CEIR	Committee on Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations (of the OPC)
CO	Church Order
CPEU	Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
CRCA	Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Churches in North America
ERQ	L'Église réformée du Québec
FCS	Free Church of Scotland
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCNA	Free Reformed Churches of North America
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
GGRM	Pilgrim Reformed Churches in East Nusa Tengarra, Indonesia
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
IPCM	Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico
IRB	Igreja Reformadas do Brasil
OCRC	Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCK	Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin)
RCUS	Reformed Church in the United States
URCNA	United Reformed Churches in North America

SYNOD DELEGATES

Brothers at Synod.—Top Row (l to r): Mr. G.J. Nordeman, Rev.A.J. Pol, Mr.W. Gortemaker, Rev.J. DeGelder, Mr. B. Poort, Mr. P. DeBoer, Rev.J. Huijgen; Middle Row: Mr. P. Oosterhoff, Rev.W.B. Slomp, Mr.W.VanAssen, Mr. E. Kampen, Rev. J.VanVliet, Mr. J. Jonker; Front Row: Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta, Rev. R.Aasman, Rev. Cl. Stam, Rev. G.H.Visscher, Rev. E. Kampen.

ACTS

General Synod Neerlandia
2001
of the
Canadian Reformed Churches
May 1-14, 2001

****

Morning Session – Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Article 1

Opening
On behalf of the convening church, Rev. W.B. Slomp called the meeting to order. He asked those present to sing Psalm 112:1,2. After he read from 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2, he led in prayer. This was followed by some fitting remarks (see appendices). He then requested those present to sing Psalm 112:3,4.

Article 2

Examination of the Credentials
Two elders from the Church at Neerlandia examined the credentials. With the exception of br. J. Jonker, who was alternate for br. L. Jagt, all *primi* delegates were present. Rev. Cl. Stam was scheduled to arrive later in the day. The following were in attendance:
From Regional Synod East:
Ministers: J. de Gelder; Cl. Stam; G.Ph. van Popta; J.P. VanVliet.
Elders: J. Jonker; G.J. Nordeman; P. Oosterhoff; B. Poort.
From Regional Synod West:
Ministers: R. Aasman; J. Huijgen; Eric Kampen; A.J. Pol.
Elders: P. DeBoer; W. Gortemaker; Ebbel Kampen; W. VanAssen.

Article 3

Election of Officers and Constitution of Synod
The following officers were elected to serve Synod for its duration:
Chairman: Rev. Cl. Stam
Vice-Chairman: Rev. R. Aasman
First Clerk: Rev. E. Kampen
Second Clerk: Rev. G. Ph. van Popta

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. W.B. Slomp declared Synod constituted. The elected officers were invited to take their places. In the absence of the chairman, the vice-chairman, Rev. R. Aasman, took the chair. He thanked the convening church for the work done in preparation for Synod. It was decided to take a break in order to give the moderamen an opportunity to make some arrangements for the proceedings of Synod.

Afternoon Session - Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Article 4

General housekeeping matters

Synod reconvened to decide on a number of housekeeping matters. Since Rev. Cl. Stam had arrived, he assumed the chair. Synod decided the following:

1. *Presence on the Internet*: Synod decided to publish the Acts of Synod on the church website on the Internet as they become available, after they have been adopted.
2. *Privileges of the floor:* Synod appointed Rev. W.B. Slomp as advisor to Synod. Synod was informed that Synod could expect visits from Rev. G.I. Williamson from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), Rev. G. Syms and Elder D. Stelpstra from the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), Rev. R. Stienstra from the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and Rev. L. Bilkes from the Free Reformed Churches (FRCNA). All representatives of churches who visit will be given the privilege of the floor.
3. Letters of greetings were read from the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Free Church of Scotland. Their greetings and best wishes were gratefully taken note of. The deputies of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland have promised to send a letter of greeting while Synod is in progress.
4. *Time Schedule and Procedures:* Synod **adopted** the following time schedule:

   Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.
   2:00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.
   7:00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.
5. *Exceptions*: Monday sessions will begin at 9:30 a.m.; Saturdays will be optional; upon request from the Foundation for Superannunation, Synod will not convene on Saturday, May 5, 2001.
6. Synod shall begin and close each day with prayer and thanksgiving in plenary sessions.
7. The press release will not be published until after Synod has been closed.
8. Advisory Committees shall provide each delegate with a copy of their report, plus a copy for the archives, before it is dealt with in plenary sessions.
9. Copies of documents are available only to members of Synod and fraternal delegates.
10. For all procedures, the "Guidelines" as adopted by the General Synod of Cloverdale 1983, Acts, Article 45 (and as amended by following Synods) will apply.
11. *Travel expenses*: Expenses are to be submitted to br. P. Dejong. Delegates are to be reimbursed for travel costs at twenty-five cents per km. This amount is not to exceed the cost of flying.

Article 5

Committees of Synod

The following committees were appointed:

Committee 1: Rev. J. Huijgen (convener); Rev. G. Ph. van Popta; E. Kampen; J. Jonker.
Agenda items: CCCA; Theological College; Mexico; Miscellaneous.

Committee 2: Rev. E. Kampen; Rev. A.J. Pol (convener); P. DeBoer; P. Oosterhoff.
Agenda items: OPC; Delegation to Synod; Finances.

Committee 3: Rev. R. Aasman; Rev. J. de Gelder (convener); W. Gortemaker; W. Van Assen.
Agenda Items: CRCA; *Book of Praise*; Church Order; Heidelberg Catechism; Subscription Form; Bible Translation; Hofford Appeal.

Committee 4: Rev. Cl. Stam; Rev. J. VanVliet (convener); G.J. Nordeman; B. Poort.
Agenda Items: CPEU; Women's Voting; Van de Burgt Appeal; Website.

Article 6

Late Submissions

The regulations state, "All material for Synod should be received by the convening church (in twenty-two copies) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for later arrival are reasonable" (Appendix II *Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995*, p.103; cf. Article 110 and 111 of the same).

With regard to the following submissions, Synod **adopted** the following proposal from the moderamen:

1. Appeal of br. T. Kingma re: decision Synod Fergus Articles 130, 120 and 52. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
2. Br. T. Kingma:
    a. Corrections to earlier appeal. Proposal: Not admitted; Ground. Submitted late.
    b. New appeals re: RCUS, URCNA and ERQ. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
3. Mr. T. Hoogsteen and Mr. C. Van Andel: Appeal re: General Synod Fergus 1998 decision. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
4. Cornerstone Church at Hamilton: Overture re: *Book of Praise*. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
5. Standing Committee for *Book of Praise*: Taken note of and will be included as an appendix to the Acts. Ground: Submitted late but certain matters require attention for the Standing Committee to be able to continue to function.
6. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer: Comments on Report of Standing Committee for *Book of Praise*. To be passed on to the Standing Committee for perusal.
7. Church at Ottawa: Comments on CRCA report. Proposal. Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
8. Church at Attercliffe: Comments on CRCA report. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
9. Church at Attercliffe: Comments on CPEU report (esp. URCNA). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
10. Church at Attercliffe: Comments on CCCA report (esp. ERQ). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
11. Church at Attercliffe: Comments on CCCA report (esp. OPC). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground. Submitted late.
12. Church at Attercliffe: Comments on CCCA report (esp. RCUS). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
13. Church at Flamborough: Comments on CRCA (esp. GKN). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.

14. Church at Chatham: Comments on CPEU report (esp. UCRNA). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
15. Church at Chatham: Overture re: Women's Voting. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
16. Church at Grand Valley: Comments on CRCA report (esp. GKN). Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted late.
17. Submission from Br. J. Tillema re: Women's Voting. Proposal: Not admitted. Ground: Insufficient copies.

Article 7

Agenda
The following Agenda was **adopted**

1. Opening on behalf of the convening church
2. Examination of the credentials
3. Election of moderamen
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Information from the convening church
6. Adoption of the Agenda
7. Setting of Time Schedule
8. Incoming Mail
- 8.1. Synod Procedures
  - 8.1.1. Financial
    - 8.1.1.1. Church at Carman: Report as Church for the General Fund.
    - 8.1.1.2. Church at Guelph: re: audit of the finances of Synod 1998 in Fergus
- 8.2. Relations with Other Churches.
  - 8.2.1. Report of Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas
    - 8.2.1.1. General
      - 8.2.1.1.1. Church at Burlington - Ebenezer– CCCA re: ERQ, OPC, RCUS.
      - 8.2.1.1.2. Church at London – Mandate of CCCA.
      - 8.2.1.1.3. Church at Coaldale – Comments on various aspects of the report.
      - 8.2.1.1.4. Church at Lincoln – Comments on various aspects of the report.
      - 8.2.1.1.5. Church at Orangeville – clarification regarding committee mandate and geographical responsibilities.
      - 8.2.1.1.6. Church at Willoughby Heights – doctrine of creation in our contacts with other church federations.
      - 8.2.1.1.7. Church at Aldergrove – comments on the work of all the committees.
    - 8.2.1.2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church
      - 8.2.1.2.1. Church at London – expresses disagreement with recommendations 2 and 3 in the Report of the CCOPC.
      - 8.2.1.2.2. Church at Elora – overture agreement with Hamilton.

8.2.1.2.3. Redeemer Church at Winnipeg – CCOPC to stay within their mandate.
8.2.1.2.4. Church at Houston – not to make pronouncements about the office bearers in the OPC.
8.2.1.2.5. Church at Grand Valley.
8.2.1.2.6. Br. J. Werkman - Acts of Synod Fergus 1998 - to rescind Article 130.
8.2.1.2.7. Church at Barrhead – Acts of Synod Fergus 1998 – article 136 – as to the appeal of the Mid-Atlantic Presbytery of the OPC re: Rev. Hofford.
8.2.1.2.8. Church at Hamilton – Synod Fergus 1998 did not deal properly with the report of the CCOPC.
8.2.1.2.9. Br. D. Teitsma – agreement with Synod Fergus 1998 – Article 136.
8.2.1.2.10. Church at Langley – appeal Synod Fergus – Articles 130 and 136.
8.2.1.2.11. Br. W. deHaan –appeal re: Synod Fergus.
8.2.1.2.12. Church at Coaldale – appeal decision Synod Fergus Article 130.
8.2.1.2.13. Church at Surrey-Maranatha– appeal decision Synod Fergus Article 130.
8.2.1.2.14. Church at Winnipeg-Grace – appeal decision Synod Fergus Article 130.
8.2.1.2.15. Church at Coaldale – Appeal decision Synod Fergus Article 136.
8.2.1.2.16. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer, see 8.2.1.1.1.

8.2.1.3. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

8.2.1.3.1. Church at Cloverdale – "renewed" mandate with respect to the RCUS.
8.2.1.3.2. Church at London – RCUS and ERQ – to include the matter of Sunday observance in the mandates of the committee.
8.2.1.3.3. Church at London – give the RCUS time to do what they have promised.
8.2.1.3.4. Church at London – CRCA – mandate of the committee concerning the RCUS.
8.2.1.3.5. Church at Langley – agreement with committee recommendations.
8.2.1.3.6. Church at Owen Sound – concerns with committee recommendations.
8.2.1.3.7. Church at Houston – attendance Lord's supper.
8.2.1.3.8. Church at Barrhead – Acts of Synod Fergus - Article 51 – concerning the relationship with the RCUS.
8.2.1.3.9. Church at London – appeal – Art. 51, Synod Fergus 1998; Consideration D – finds the recommendation premature.
8.2.1.3.10. Church at Lynden – Synod Fergus Article 51 – IVB, p 43.
8.2.1.3.11. br. B. Wielenga – Synod Fergus Article 51 – IVE, p 43.

8.2.1.3.12. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer, see 8.2.1.1.1.
8.2.1.4. L'Église réformée du Québec (ERQ)
8.2.1.4.1. See 8.2.1.3.2 (London).
8.2.1.4.2. See Church at Burlington-Ebenezer (8.2.1.1.1.)
8.2.1.5. Independent Church of Mexico
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8.2.2. Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
8.2.2.1. General
8.2.2.1.1. Church at Aldergrove – pursuant to ecclesiastical unity.
8.2.2.2. United Reformed Churches
8.2.2.2.1. Church at London – Concerns or questions with the suggested strategy for union with the URCNA.
8.2.2.2.2. Church at Burlington – Waterdown – concur with the findings that we are at a stage of being able to develop a closer contact at phase 2.
8.2.2.2.3. Church at Willoughby Heights – agreement with course set out for unity.
8.2.2.2.4. Church at Winnipeg-Grace – agreement with course set out for unity.
8.2.2.2.5. Church at Coaldale – endorse recommendation of report.
8.2.2.2.6. Church at Lincoln – moving to phase 2.
8.2.2.2.7. Church at Houston – contact with URCNA.
8.2.2.2.8. Br. D. Teitsma – Statements of Agreement.
8.2.2.2.9. Church at Orangeville – concerns about URC raised by OCRC were not really addressed.
8.2.2.3. Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches
8.2.2.4. Free Reformed Churches
8.2.3. Report on the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRCA)
8.2.3.1. General
8.2.3.1.1. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer – commenting on various church relations.
8.2.3.2. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
8.2.3.3. The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
8.2.3.3.1. Church at Lincoln – concerns with recommendations 3.6 and 5.6 (also applies to GKN).
8.2.3.3.2. Church at London – Appeal – Art. 119, IV.C, Synod Fergus 1998.
8.2.3.4. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)
8.2.3.5. Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)
8.2.3.5.1. Church at London – reaction to several items dealt with in the report of the committee.
8.2.3.5.2. Church of Owen Sound – concerns arising out of the report of the CRCA.
8.2.3.5.3. Church at Elora – concerns with regards to direction.

8.2.3.5.4. Church at Willoughby Heights – instruct CRCA to communicate disappointment that rule 3 is not adhered to by the GKN.

8.2.3.5.5. Church at Brampton – to exhort GKN and restore them to the right path.

8.2.3.5.6. Church at Fergus – raise points with GKN.

8.2.3.5.7. Church at Orangeville – address GKN on all points raised.

8.2.3.5.8. Church at Lincoln see 8.2.3.3.1.

8.2.3.6. Presbyterian Church of Korea

8.2.3.6.1. Church at Burlington–Ebenezer – mandate of the CRCA (Page 19, Art 120 V, a).

8.2.3.6.2. Church at Willoughby Heights – that synod include contact with Korean Presbyterian Church in North America in the new mandate for the CCCA.

8.2.3.6.3. Church at Willoughby Heights – lack of communication from PCK.

8.2.3.7. International Council of Reformed Churches

8.2.3.7.1. Church at Barrhead – Acts of Synod Fergus Article 52 – to mandate the CRCA to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC of those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations.

8.3. *Book of Praise*

8.3.1. General

8.3.1.1. Regional Synod East – Mandate for the Standing Committee on the *Book of Praise* – the task of evaluating hymns submitted by the churches for inclusion in the *Book of Praise*.

8.3.1.2. Church at Abbotsford – *Book of Praise*.

8.3.1.3. Br. D. Teitsma – to make available to the churches an English version of the Report on the Psalter by Deputies to Synod Homewood-Carman, 1958, entitled *"Op weg naar een Engelse Reformatorishe Psalmbundel"*

8.3.1.4. Church at London – Not to accede to the request to broaden the mandate of the Standing Committee.

8.3.1.5. Br. D. Teitsma – In response to the overture of the Church at Abbotsford.

8.3.1.6. Br. D. Teitsma – see above.

8.3.1.7. Church at Langley – suggestions and concerns regarding the *Book of Praise*.

8.3.1.8. Church at London – agreement with the sister churches in Australia re: Deacons.

8.3.1.9. Regional Synod West re: Form for Ordination (answer: I do).

8.3.2. Church Order

8.3.2.1. Regional Synod East – to change CO Article 4B2.

8.3.2.2. Church at Ottawa – ambiguity of the above – insert the word "carefully".

8.3.2.3. Regional Synod West – each regional Synod shall delegate six ministers and six elders.

8.3.3. Heidelberg Catechism

8.3.3.1. Regional Synod West – to make changes to a number of questions to bring them in harmony with the original German and other translations used by Reformed Churches.

8.3.4. Appeals

8.3.4.1. Church at Owen Sound – appeal – Art. 140, Item IV, c, Synod Fergus 1998; not to implement the decision "to prepare the prose section of the *Book of Praise* with NIV Bible references."

8.4. Subscription Form

8.4.1.1. Regional Synod East – To establish a committee to propose standardized subscription forms for the minor and major assemblies, as well as for the professors of theology.

8.4.1.2. Regional Synod West – to adopt a standardized subscription form.

8.5. Theological College

8.5.1. Reports

8.5.1.1. Regional Synod East – Nominations for Governors of the Theological College.

8.5.1.2. Regional Synod West – Nominations for Governors of the Theological College.

8.5.1.3. Report of Board of Governors.

8.5.1.4. Recommendation new professor.

8.5.2. Submissions from the Churches

8.5.2.1. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer – comments on the Report of the Board of Governors.

8.5.2.2. Church at Winnipeg-Grace – visits by professor.

8.5.2.3. Redeemer Church at Winnipeg – various points about work of Theological College.

8.6. Women's Voting

8.6.1. Overtures

8.6.1.1. Regional Synod East – to appoint a committee regarding allowing all communicant members to vote.

8.6.1.2. Church at London – to deny the request of Regional Synod to appoint a committee to revisit the matter of women's voting rights.

8.6.1.3. Church at Elora – that Synod Neerlandia declare the recommendation of Regional Synod East inadmissible based on Art. 33 C. O.

8.6.1.4. Church at Langley – appoint a committee to study the matter.

8.6.1.5. Br. N. VanWeerden – concern for nature of discussion presented.

8.6.1.6. Church at Lincoln – Synod should not accede to request to appoint a new committee.

8.6.1.7. Church at Orangeville – matters should not be proposed again unless new grounds substantiate them.

8.7. Bible Translations

8.7.1. Report of Committee on Bible Translation.

8.7.2. Church at Owen Sound – decided to use the New King James Version.
8.7.3. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer – not to dissolve this committee.
8.8. Website
8.8.1. Report
8.8.2. Appendix: Suggested names
8.9. Other Appeals
8.9.1. Br. S. and sr. C. Hofford *et al*– appealing decision of Regional Synod East of November 10-12, 1999 – Article 25.
8.9.2. Br. and sr. B. Van de Burgt – appealing Regional Synod West decision regarding appeal on the wine element of Lord's supper.
8.10. Miscellaneous
8.10.1. Letters received by the Church at Burlington–Ebenezer (Contact church for the Canadian Reformed Churches).
8.10.2. M. Noort of Berkel en Rodenrijs, expressing concern on decisions made by the Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – Leusden 1999.
8.10.3. Request by Hekman Library/Calvin College, Grand Rapids, re: purchase of Synodical Reports from the Canadian/American Reformed Churches dating back to 1950.
8.10.4. Request by the Christian Info Society for information on our federation of churches, ministries and organizations across Canada to be placed on a web site.
8.10.5. Church at Burlington Waterdown re: Archives.

9. Appointments
10. Censure ad Art. 44 C. O.
11. Publication of the Acts
12. Financial Matters
13. Preparation next General Synod
14. Adoption of the Acts
15. Approval of Press Release
16. Closing

Evening Session – Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Article 8

Appointment of New Professor
Synod met in closed session to discuss the appointment of a new professor for the Theological College. Committee 1 presented its report. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material
Letter of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, dated April 2, 2001.

2. Observations
2.1. There will be a vacancy in the New Testament department effective the end of the academic year 2000-2001.
2.2. The board of Governors proposes Drs. Gerhard H. Visscher of

Waterdown, Ontario to be appointed as professor of New Testament to fill this vacancy.

2.3. Drs. Gerhard H. Visscher is in the process of completing his doctoral studies at McMaster University in Hamilton.

3. Considerations

From the information supplied by the Board of Governors, General Synod considers that Drs. Gerhard H. Visscher is well qualified for this position.

4. Recommendations

4.1. General Synod direct the Board of Governors to appoint Drs. Gerhard H. Visscher as Professor New Testament as of June 1, 2001.

4.2. General Synod encourage the Board of Governors to facilitate arrangements, if so needed, for Drs. Gerhard H. Visscher to complete his studies.

Synod also decided to contact Rev. G.H. Visscher to inform him of this appointment and to invite him to visit the Synod.

Closed session was terminated.

Article 9

Adjournment

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta led in the closing devotion. He read Ephesians 3:1-13 and gave a brief meditation. After Hymn 46 was sung, he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

*****

Morning Session – Wednesday, May 2, 2001

Article 10

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 1:1-11. After he presented a brief meditation he requested Hymn 22 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call showed all were present.
3. The Acts of May 1, 2001 (Articles 1-9) were **adopted**.
4. Synod broke for committee work.

Evening Session – Wednesday, May 2, 2001

Article 11

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. He requested that Psalm 25:2,5 be sung. Roll call showed all were present.

Article 12

L'Église réformée du Québec (ERQ)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the ERQ. After two rounds of discussion on the proposal, it was taken back for further consideration.

Article 13

Address Churches

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the Address Churches. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   Report from the Address Church, the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer.
2. **Observations**
   2.1. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer reports on its correspondence as Address Church.
   2.2. The Church at Grand Rapids, our Address Church in the USA, has not submitted a report.
3. **Considerations**
   3.1. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer has fulfilled its mandate as Address Church.
   3.2. It is not necessary to have two Address Churches.
4. **Recommendations**
   4.1. To thank the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer for the work done as Address Church.
   4.2. To reappoint the Ebenezer Church as Address Church.
   4.3. To instruct the Address Church to report to the next General Synod.

Article 14

Letter from M. Noort

Committee 1 presented its proposal on a letter from br. M. Noort, a member of one of the sister churches in The Netherlands. This proposal was taken back for further consideration.

Article 15

Request from Hekman Library

Committee 1 presented its proposal concerning the request from the Hekman Library to obtain copies of past synodical reports. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   1.1. Letter of the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer.
   1.2. Letter of the Hekman Library.

2. Admissibility

These letters are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The Hekman Library of Calvin College requests to purchase the "synodical reports" of "our organization" for their library collection.

3.2. The Church at Burlington informed the Hekman Library that our Acts historically have been filed for internal use and reference only, but that Synod Fergus 1998 has Acts available for public viewing on the Internet.

3.3. The Church at Burlington indicated that Synod 2001 would have to decide about publication of previous Acts for the Internet.

4. Considerations

4.1. The request from the Hekman Library is reasonable considering that the Acts of Fergus 1998 have been published for the general public on the Internet.

4.2. Synod has not decided to publish past Acts on the Internet.

4.3. Copies of Acts of past Synods can be obtained privately.

5. Recommendation

5.1. Synod direct the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer to assist the Hekman Library as best as it can, and as it deems advisable.

Article 16

Adjournment

Rev. E. Kampen led in the closing devotion. He read 2 John and gave a brief meditation. After Hymn 20 was sung, he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Thursday, May 3, 2001

Article 17

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 1:12-18. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Hymn 28 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call showed all were present.
3. The Acts of May 2, 2001 (Articles 10-16) were **adopted**.
4. Synod broke for committee work.

Evening Session – Thursday, May 3, 2001

Article 18

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. He requested Psalm 84:3,4 to be sung. Roll call showed all were present. He welcomed Rev. G.H. Visscher.

Article 19

L'Église réformée du Québec (ERQ)

Committee 1 presented its revised proposal on the ERQ. Discussion had to be suspended due to the late hour.

Article 20

Adjournment

Br. W. VanAssen led in the closing devotion. He read 1 Corinthians 2:11-16 and gave a brief meditation. After Hymn 37:1,2 was sung he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

*****

Morning Session – Friday, May 4, 2001

Article 21

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Psalm. 84:1,2 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call showed all were present.
3. The Acts of May 3, 2001 (Articles 17-20) were **adopted**.
4. Synod broke for committee work.

Article 22

L'Église réformée du Québec (ERQ)

Synod reconvened to continue the discussion on the ERQ. Committee 1 presented the following proposal:

1. Material

1.1. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer – CCCA re: ERQ, OPC, RCUS.
1.2. Church at London – Addition to mandate of CCERQ.
1.3. Church at Coaldale – Comments on various aspects of the report.

2. Admissibility

The letters from the churches are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Synod thankfully observes that the CCERQ has fulfilled the mandate given to it by Synod Fergus 1998 (See the Report in the Appendices).
3.2. The CCERQ recommends the following:
3.2.1. To note with gratitude that the ERQ strives to be faithful to the Word of God and to bring the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.

3.2.2. In order to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with a view to ecclesiastical fellowship, Synod reappoint the committee for contact with the following mandate:

3.2.2.1. To continue discussions in particular regarding the matter of confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table.

3.2.2.2. To discontinue discussion on the matter of federative unity and differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

3.2.2.3. To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially when needed.

3.2.2.4. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made on matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission.

3.2.2.5. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend synods of the ERQ.

3.2.2.6. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

3.3. Reactions of the Churches to the Committee report.

3.3.1. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer is pleased with the report and concurs with the committee's recommendation.

3.3.2. The Church at Coaldale endorses the report.

3.3.3. The Church at London requests that Synod include the matter of Sunday observance in the mandate of the CCERQ. It recommends that Synod decide the following: "Although the matter of Sunday observance cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship, discussion and encouragement on this point be continued with the ERQ to the end that they might come to the historic practice in Reformed churches of holding two worship services on the Lord's Day."

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report Synod thankfully concludes that the ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and brings the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.

4.2. The report of the CCERQ indicates that we can learn from the practices of the ERQ (e.g. missionary activity of the church, extensive fellowship and teaching on Sundays).

4.3. Synod acknowledges that the ERQ in certain issues has established principles but varying practices in applying these principles. This does not constitute scriptural unfaithfulness. The ERQ is open to further discussion regarding various principles and practices. This process must be encouraged.

4.4. The Report of the CCERQ indicates that the following matters have been clarified and do not need further discussion before establishing ecclesiastical fellowship, but they may come up for discussion within ecclesiastical fellowship:

4.4.1. The nature and status of deacons and deaconesses;

4.4.2. Liturgical forms;

4.4.3. Order of worship;

4.4.4. Lord's Day observance;

4.4.5. The differences in our respective rules for ecclesiastical fellowship;

4.4.6. The question whether federative unity is desirable.

4.5. Specific areas that should be priorities in the discussion of differences are: supervision of the pulpit, confessional membership and the fencing of the Lord's table. It should be noted that Synod 1986 received the report "Evaluation of Divergences" (Acts, Art.126, p.55) which relates to differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. The concluding paragraph of the "Evaluation" states, "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and continual discussion of divergences may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Acts 1986, p. 151). Once ecclesiastical fellowship is established the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards must be discussed in line with the acceptance of this report. Throughout the "Evaluation" the comment is made that the various issues discussed are treated differently in the respective confessions, but cannot be considered impediments to further unity. Although the ERQ is small and limited in manpower the differences referred to in the "Evaluation" should be discussed in the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship.

4.6. The suggestion that the ERQ ought to adopt the historic practice of the Reformed churches of holding two worship services on the Lord's Day is not valid since it is clear that the ERQ maintains the Lord's Day as a special day. Although there is only one worship service, there are also hours of further interaction, including much conversation and instruction as well as a meal together. The report indicates that the Biblical principles of worship, teaching and fellowship are alive and well in the ERQ.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the CCERQ for the work done and presented.

5.2. To note with gratitude that the ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and brings the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.

5.3. To thankfully note that progress has been made in advancing the development of the relationship.

5.4. To reappoint the CCERQ to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with the goal of establishing ecclesiastical fellowship (to be determined by Synod 2004) by fulfilling the following mandate:

5.4.1. To discuss the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards as found in the "Evaluation of Divergences" received by Synod 1986. Considering the limited resources of the ERQ priority should be placed on discussion and clarification of pulpit supervision, fencing of the Lord's table, and confessional accountability;

5.4.2. To work towards formalizing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship under the adopted rules;

5.4.3. To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially, when needed;

5.4.4. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made on matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission;
5.4.5. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend synods of the ERQ;
5.4.6. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod;
5.5. To serve the Church at London with this decision as a response.

An amendment was made to drop the references to the Report on the "Evaluation of Divergences" in 4.5 and 5.4.1. This was seconded.

An amendment was made to delete 4.5 "in line with the acceptance of this report," and to delete 5.4.1 "as found in the "Evaluation of Divergences" received by Synod 1986." This was seconded.

The motion to drop the references to the Report on the Evaluation of Divergences was defeated. The second amendment was **adopted**.

The amended proposal was **adopted** as follows:

1. Materials
1.1. Church at Burlington-Ebenezer – CCCA re: ERQ, OPC, RCUS.
1.2. Church at London – Addition to mandate of CCERQ.
1.3. Church at Coaldale – Comments on various aspects of the report.

2. Admissibility
The letters from the churches are declared admissible.

3. Observations
3.1. Synod thankfully observes that the CCERQ has fulfilled the mandate given to it by Synod Fergus 1998 (see the Report in the Appendices).
3.2. The CCERQ recommends the following:
3.2.1. To note with gratitude that the ERQ strives to be faithful to the Word of God and to bring the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.
3.2.2. In order to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with a view to ecclesiastical fellowship, Synod reappoint the committee for contact with the following mandate:
3.2.2.1. To continue discussions in particular regarding the matter of confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table.
3.2.2.2. To discontinue discussion on the matter of federative unity and differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
3.2.2.3. To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially when needed.
3.2.2.4. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made on matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission.
3.2.2.5. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend synods of the ERQ.
3.2.2.6. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

3.3. Reactions of the Churches to the Committee report.

3.3.1. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer is pleased with the report and concurs with the committee's recommendation.

3.3.2. The Church at Coaldale endorses the report.

3.3.3. The Church at London requests that Synod include the matter of Sunday observance in the mandate of the CCERQ. It recommends that Synod decide the following: "Although the matter of Sunday observance cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship, discussion and encouragement on this point be continued with the ERQ to the end that they might come to the historic practice in Reformed Churches of holding two worship services on the Lord's Day."

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report Synod thankfully concludes that the ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and brings the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.

4.2. The report of the CCERQ indicates that we can learn from the practices of the ERQ (e.g. missionary activity of the church, extensive fellowship and teaching on Sundays).

4.3. Synod acknowledges that the ERQ in certain issues has established principles but varying practices in applying these principles. This does not constitute Scriptural unfaithfulness. The ERQ is open to further discussion regarding various principles and practices. This process must be encouraged.

4.4. The Report of the CCERQ indicates that the following matters have been clarified and do not need further discussion before establishing ecclesiastical fellowship, but they may come up for discussion within ecclesiastical fellowship:

4.4.1. The nature and status of deacons and deaconesses;

4.4.2. Liturgical forms;

4.4.3. Order of worship;

4.4.4. Lord's Day observance;

4.4.5. The differences in our respective rules for ecclesiastical fellowship;

4.4.6. The question whether federative unity is desirable.

4.5. Specific areas that should be priorities in the discussion of differences are: supervision of the pulpit, confessional membership and the fencing of the Lord's table. It should be noted that Synod 1986 received the report "Evaluation of Divergences" (Acts, Art. 126, p. 55) which relates to differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. The concluding paragraph of the "Evaluation" states, "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and continual discussion of divergences may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"(Acts 1986, p. 151). Once ecclesiastical fellowship is established the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards must be discussed. Throughout the "Evaluation" the comment is made that the various issues discussed are treated differently in the respective confessions, but cannot be considered impediments to further unity.

Although the ERQ is small and limited in manpower the differences referred to in the "Evaluation" should be discussed in the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship.

4.6. The suggestion that the ERQ ought to adopt the historic practice of the Reformed churches of holding two worship services on the Lord's Day is not valid since it is clear that the ERQ maintains the Lord's Day as a special day. Although there is only one worship service, there are also hours of further interaction, including much conversation and instruction as well as a meal together. The report indicates that the Biblical principles of worship, teaching and fellowship are alive and well in the ERQ.

5. Recommendations

5.1. To thank the CCERQ for the work done and presented.

5.2. To note with gratitude that the ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and brings the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.

5.3. To thankfully note that progress has been made in advancing the development of the relationship.

5.4. To reappoint the CCERQ to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with the goal of establishing ecclesiastical fellowship (to be determined by Synod 2004) by fulfilling the following mandate:

5.4.1. To discuss the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. Considering the limited resources of the ERQ priority should be placed on discussion and clarification of pulpit supervision, fencing of the Lord's table, confessional accountability;

5.4.2. To work towards formalizing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship under the adopted rules;

5.4.3. To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially, when needed;

5.4.4. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made on matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission;

5.4.5. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend synods of the ERQ;

5.4.6. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod;

5.5. To serve the Church at London with this decision as a response.

Synod broke for lunch and committee work.

Evening Session - Friday, May 4, 2001

Article 23

Reopening

The vice-chairman reopened the meeting. He requested Psalm 87 to be sung. Roll call showed Rev. Cl. Stam was absent.

Article 24

Letter br. M. Noort

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the letter from br. M. Noort. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   Letter of br. M. Noort, Berkel en Rodenrijs, The Netherlands.
2. **Admissibility**
   Synod declares this letter inadmissible.
   2.1. General Synod cannot deal with personal submissions from members of sister churches abroad (article 30 of the Church Order).
   2.2. The Guidelines for Synod (1,C) state that … " All material submitted to Synod … which quotes any foreign language source must provide… a full English translation."

Article 25

Christian Info Society

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the request from the Christian Info Society. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   Letter of the Christian Info Society, forwarded to Synod by the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer. This is a request by the Christian Info Society for information on our Federation of churches, ministries and organizations across Canada to be placed on a website
2. **Admissibility**
   Declared admissible
3. **Observation**
   The Christian Info Society requests information (addresses, etc.) about our Churches.
4. **Consideration**
   Ebenezer Church could have supplied the Christian Info Society with our official website address (www.canrc.org).
5. **Recommendation**
   Synod direct Ebenezer Church to supply the Christian Info Society with our official website address (www.canrc.org).

Article 26

Welcome new professor: Rev. G.H. Visscher

The Reverend Cl. Stam arrived and took over the chair. He reflected on the importance for all the churches in the federation of a minister being called to become a professor at the Theological College. He expressed gratitude that Synod could come to this appointment and congratulated Rev. G.H. Visscher on the appointment. After the singing of Ps. 72:10 the chairman asked Rev. G.H. Visscher

to address the assembly. In his address, Rev. G.H. Visscher acknowledged the trust placed in him. He reflected on the long course of studies since his days in Houston, BC, and expressed appreciation for the support of the churches he served during the course of his studies. He spoke of his present study at McMaster University at Hamilton. He testified that, as it had been a joy to serve the churches in various congregations, he now looked forward to serving in the capacity of professor. With this he made known his acceptance of his appointment. The chairman led in prayer of thanksgiving for this acceptance as well as for the work done by Rev. J. Geertsema and for the blessing of and upon the Theological College in general. This was followed by a short break in which there was opportunity to congratulate Rev. G.H. Visscher and wish him the Lord's blessing. (The written text of his address can be found in the appendices.)

Article 27

Theological College

Committee 1 presented its report on the Theological College. The following was **adopted**.

1. Material

1.1. Regional Synod East – Nominations for Governors of the Theological College.

1.2. Regional Synod West – Nominations for Governors of the Theological College.

1.3. Submissions from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer, Winnipeg-Grace, and Winnipeg-Redeemer.

1.4. Letter from the Board of Governors.

2. Admissibility

The materials received are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Synod thankfully observes that all is well at the Theological College, as per Report (please see Appendices).

3.2. Synod observes that Prof. J. Geertsema will be retiring from active duties at the end of the academic year 2000-2001.

3.3. Synod observes that Prof. Dr. J. Faber has served as member of the Senate during his retirement.

3.4. The Board of Governors recommends:

3.4.1. To receive this report and all its appendices.

3.4.2. To acknowledge the expiration of the term of office of the brs. J. Visscher, H.J. Sloots, P.G. Feenstra, W. DenHollander and D.G.J. Agema as Governors with grateful acknowledgement of their labours, and pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of By-Law 1 (as amended).

3.4.3. To appoint, elect or reappoint six active ministers to hold office until the next General Synod and to appoint at least three substitutes from each Regional Synod area;

3.4.4. To reappoint the brs. M. Kampen and J. VanderWoude as Governors for a term from the date of their reappointment until

the first General Synod held after the date of their reappointment;

3.4.5. To reappoint the brs. W. Oostdijk and W. Smouter as Governors for a term from the date of their reappointment until the second General Synod held after the date of their reappointment;

3.4.6. To appoint br. G.J. Nordeman from Burlington as Governor for a term from the date of his appointment until the third General Synod held after the date of his appointment (with as alternate br. L. Jagt from Burlington).

3.4.7. To appoint Prof. Dr. C. VanDam as Principal for the period of September 2002 to September 2005, and to designate Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005 to 2008, the Lord willing. The transfer of principalship will take place the day after the Convocation in 2002.

3.4.8. To approve all the decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 until the day of this report.

3.4.9. To express thankfulness for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

3.4.10. To mandate the Board to present to Synod 2004 proposals regarding the Pastoral Training Program and the financial remuneration

3.4.11. To consider the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditors for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to appoint br. H. Salomons as Auditor till next General Synod, and to thank sr. A. Spithoff for her many years of faithful service.

3.4.12. To appoint sr. Margaret VanderVelde to the synodical committee for the official website.

3.5. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer urges Synod to request the Board of Governors of the Theological College to be more detailed and specific in future reports. As evidence of a lack of detail and specificity, they mention several examples.

3.6. The Church at Winnipeg-Grace requests Synod to decide that the three territories of Manitoba (with Denver), Alberta and British Columbia should be visited annually.

3.7. The Church at Winnipeg-Redeemer recommends a different use of time allocated in the diaconiology department so that the teaching of the practical components of the work of ministry is integral to the Theological College. It also recommends the hiring of a fifth professor.

3.8. Regional Synod East has nominated the following ministers for appointment: B.J. Berends, G. Nederveen, Cl. Stam, (alternates: G.Ph. van Popta, P. Aasman, J. VanWoudenberg, in that order).

3.9. Regional Synod West has nominated the following ministers for appointment: R. Aasman, J. Moesker, R.A. Schouten (alternates: W.B. Slomp, E.J. Tiggelaar, E. Kampen, in that order).

3.10. The Board of Governors submits the resumes of br. G.J. Nordeman and L. Jagt.

4. Considerations

4.1. On the basis of the report received Synod considers that the professors are making a positive contribution to the churches, not only through the college, but also through their other activities.

4.2. Synod notes with gratitude to the Lord that Prof. J. Geertsema has faithfully fulfilled all the duties of his office and served both the Theological College and the Churches in his capacity as Professor of New Testament, with humility and commitment, since 1986.

4.3. Synod notes with gratitude to the Lord that Dr. J. Faber has faithfully laboured as a member of the Senate during the time of his retirement.

4.4. On the basis of the report received Synod considers that the affairs of the Theological College are well managed.

4.5. In accordance with section 3.04 (a) of By-Law Number 1 (as amended by By-Law Number 3), the General Synod shall appoint or reappoint six active ministers to the Board of Governors.

4.6. In accordance with By-Law Number 1, section 3.04 (b), the General Synod shall appoint or reappoint five brothers who are not ministers.

4.7. General Synod requests the Board of Governors to be as detailed and specific in their reports as possible and practical (see letter of the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer).

4.8. The suggestion of the Church at Winnipeg-Grace is valuable. The practical execution is to be determined by the Board of Governors.

4.9. Synod appreciates the suggestion to make different use of the time allocated in the diaconiology department to allow for more teaching of the practical components of the work of ministry and the suggestion to appoint a fifth professor. The Board of Governors should therefore consider the submission of Redeemer Church in Winnipeg.

4.10. The recommendations for appointment in the various vacancies are good recommendations.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To receive this report and all its appendices and thank the Board for their work.

5.2. To acknowledge the expiration of the term of office of the brs. J. Visscher, H.J. Sloots, P.G.Feenstra, W. DenHollander and D.G.J. Agema as Governors with grateful acknowledgement of their labours, and pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of By-Law 1 (as amended).

5.3. To appoint Prof. Dr. C. VanDam as Principal for the period of September 2002 to September 2005, and to designate Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005 to 2008, the Lord willing. The transfer of principalship will take place the day after the Convocation in 2002.

5.4. To approve all the decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 until the day of this report.

5.5. To express thankfulness for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

5.6. To mandate the Board to present to Synod 2004 proposals regarding the Pastoral Training Program and the financial remuneration.

5.7. To consider the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditors for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to appoint br. H. Salomons as Auditor till next General Synod, and to thank sr. A. Spithoff for her many years of faithful service.

5.8. To appoint sr. Margaret VanderVelde to the synodical committee for the official website.

5.9. To express gratitude to our heavenly Father for what He has given the Churches in the person and work of Prof. J. Geertsema.

5.10. To express gratitude to Prof. J. Geertsema for his diligent and faithful work.

5.11. To express gratitude to Dr. J. Faber for his diligent and faithful work.

5.12. To forward the suggestions and questions of the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer, the Church at Winnipeg-Grace, and the Church at Winnipeg-Redeemer, to the Board of Governors for its consideration.

Rev. R. Aasman abstained from voting since he serves as member of the Board of Governors.

Article 28

Archives

Committee 1 presented its report on the Archives. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   Letter from the Church at Burlington-Waterdown re: Inspection of the General Archives.
2. **Admissibility**
   Declared admissible.
3. **Observation**
   The Church at Burlington-Waterdown informs Synod that the Archives of General Synod Fergus 1998 were inspected and found to be in good order.
4. **Recommendation**
   Synod decide to thank the Church at Burlington-Waterdown for examining the Archives and reporting to Synod.

Article 29

Adjournment

Br. P. DeBoer led in the closing devotion. He read Psalm 84 and gave a brief meditation. After Hymn 38 was sung he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Monday, May 7, 2001

Article 30

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

5. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 2:12-16. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Psalm 1 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
6. Roll call showed all were present. A special welcome was extended to Rev. G. Syms, delegate from the Reformed Church in the United States.
7. The Acts of May 4, 2001 (Articles 21-29) were **adopted**.

Article 31

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Committee 2 presented a proposal regarding the OPC in order to receive feedback before finalizing their report. A minority report was also submitted. After discussion, the Synod broke for committee work.

Evening Session – Monday, May 7, 2001

Article 32

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. He requested Hymn 40:1,2 to be sung. Roll call showed all were present. A special welcome was extended to Rev. G.I. Williamson, delegate from the OPC, and Rev. R. Stienstra delegate from the URCNA. A welcome was also extended to Rev. W. Pols who was present as an observer from the URCNA. A letter of greeting was read from the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. The second clerk will send a response.

Article 33

CRCA: Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Committee presented its proposal on the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA).
2. **Observations**
   2.1. The report of the CRCA re: the FRCA, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.
   2.2. The CRCA recommends that Synod decide to:
      2.2.1. Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with FRCA under the adopted rules.
      2.2.2. Express appreciation to the FRCA for their continued support of the Theological College.

3. Considerations

3.1. From the report of the CRCA, we may gratefully conclude that the FRCA are faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions, and the Church Order.

3.2. The FRCA are to be thanked for their generous support given to the Theological College in Hamilton.

3.3. It is clear that the FRCA had to deal with difficult matters at Synod Launceston 1998 in connection with concerns arising from the teachings of Rev. F.J. van Hulst. With sadness it is noted that this controversy led to a split in the Church at Launceston, Tasmania, and the deposition of Rev. F.J. van Hulst.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules.

4.2. To express appreciation to the FRCA for their continued support of the Theological College.

4.3. To express gratitude that the FRCA remained faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions in the face of their recent struggles.

Article 34

CRCA: Free Church of Scotland

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the Free Church of Scotland.

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Free Church of Scotland (FCS).

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer, Lincoln and London.

2. Admissibility

The letters of the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer, Lincoln and London are declared admissible because they deal with the CRCA report, which was sent out to the churches.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA re the FCS, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that synod decide to:

3.2.1. Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter.

3.2.2. Remind the FCS of the rules for fellowship which include, among other things, that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships.

3.3. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer makes the following comment on the CRCA report, "Why should we wait until the ICRC makes a

decision about the FCS? Surely it is not our intention simply to follow ICRC direction, or is it?"

3.4. The Church at Lincoln refers to the report of the CRCA regarding the FCS that recommends, "Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter." The Church at Lincoln expresses the desire that, "we should continue to encourage healing and reconciliation as mandated by Synod Fergus 1998." The Church at Lincoln makes the recommendation, "that we treat both sides equally until the reasons for secession are clear or it becomes apparent that one or both are deviating from the truth. Our concern is that the present wording of recommendation 3.6.1 might leave the impression, perhaps inadvertently, that we are favouring the Majority church."

3.5. The Church at London notes that Synod Fergus had the following statement in a consideration about the FCS, "The CRCA could, however, be instructed to seek further clarification on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relationship to the church" (Acts 119, IV,C). London requests Synod Neerlandia to include this as a part of the CRCA's mandate. London states further, "This request, at least the part dealing with confessional membership, would bring this mandate in line with the one that the CRCA had received for the PCK."

4. Considerations

4.1. It is to be appreciated that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate by sending a letter to the FCS expressing, "prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches for the FCS as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation." Since the sending of this letter, a division took place within the FCS.

4.2. It is appreciated that the CRCA tried to make a thorough investigation into the reasons for the division within the FCS, which occurred on January 20, 2000. It is regrettable that as yet there is no clarity on all the issues involved which would allow the CRCA to make a clear judgment. It would be good still to gain more information.

4.3. The fact that the FCS established fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Churches of North America without consulting our churches is not in keeping with rule 3 for ecclesiastical fellowship, which states that, "The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties." The FCS should be reminded of this rule.

4.4. **The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer**

The CRCA points out in 3.5.2, "it is not possible to fully evaluate the actions of those who seceded." The committee makes clear that more information is needed to be able to make a clear evaluation of what is all involved in the division within the FCS. The committee

anticipates that when the FCS (Continuing) presents itself to the ICRC as the legitimate continuation of the FCS and asks for its judgment, this would be an opportunity for gleaning information to come to a responsible conclusion. The committee expresses "the hope" that this will lead either to reconciliation or greater clarity. Thus the committee is not simply waiting for the ICRC to make a judgment, nor is it binding itself to follow the direction of the ICRC. Indeed, in its recommendation the committee states that it is the task of the committee to "continue … to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter." Thus the committee remains responsible for both monitoring and assessing the situation.

4.5. **The Church at Lincoln**

4.5.1. We learn from the CRCA report that in accordance with the mandate given by Synod Fergus, a letter was sent by the committee to the FCS expressing, "prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches for the FCS as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation." This encouragement for healing and reconciliation referred to a situation before the Free Church experienced a split. Thus the committee fulfilled its mandate in regards to giving prayerful support. Of course, the committee could be mandated again to inform both FCS churches that they have our prayerful support with a view to reconciliation.

4.5.2. The Church at Lincoln's concern "that we treat both sides equally" is also the concern of the CRCA. The committee, in writing about the division within the Free Church, affirms in 3.4.3, "Our task is therefore to determine if the Free Church deviated from its church polity in dealing with this matter." Then it adds, "In all fairness to those who claim to be the Free Church (Continuing) this requires us to evaluate their 'Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland.'" The committee is trying to be fair and open as it examines both sides of the controversy. This impartial approach by the committee is demonstrated further as it expresses concerns about actions on both sides. We read, for instance, in 3.4.6, "Even though the action of secession cannot be justified based on the information available, one is left to wonder if everything possible was done to remove the root cause, namely, the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod." However, within this context of looking at the issues from both sides in an equitable manner, the committee still comes to the consideration in 3.5.2, "While there are questions about the discipline process leading to a secession, there is no evidence at this point to conclude that we should discontinue our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church (Majority). Further, while there may be concern about the appropriateness of the act of secession, at this time it is not possible to fully evaluate the actions of those who seceded." So the point is that there is no reason to discontinue ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church (Majority), while keeping an open

door to those who seceded. The CRCA is clearly taking the fairest and most reasonable approach to this sad situation: no reason to cease fellowship with the existing contact, while remaining open and fair to those who seceded, and waiting for further clarity on the entire situation.

4.5.3. The Church at Lincoln asks that "we treat both sides equally." Under the circumstances that the FCS (Continuing) has seceded without a clear-cut justification for doing so, it would not be proper to show equality by continuing ecclesiastical fellowship with both. The CRCA has attempted to show equality in the best possible way under the circumstances.

4.6. **The Church at London**

4.6.1. The Church at London is correct that based on the consideration of Synod Fergus (Acts 119, IV,C), it is possible to mandate the CRCA with respect to the FCS: "to seek further clarification on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relationship to the church."

4.6.2. The Church at London's ground for including this in the mandate is to bring the CRCA's mandate regarding the FCS in line with its mandate for the PCK. However, there is a difference in the decisions of Synod Fergus regarding these two churches. Synod Fergus was dealing with appeals of the Church at Grand Rapids, which asked to rescind the decisions to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCS and the PCK. In both cases, Grand Rapids brought forth concerns about the supervision of the Lord's supper and confessional membership. In the case of the PCK, Synod Fergus referred to a decision of Synod Abbotsford 1995 that, "Synod is not able to evaluate the situation with the information available to us" (Abbotsford Article 106,V,A,2; Fergus Article 108,III,B,2). It appears that this lack of information did lead to the new mandate to investigate the matters of supervising the Lord's supper and confessional membership in the PCK. However, in the case of the FCS, Synod Fergus demonstrates that we do know more about the practices in the FCS and what is known is positive: "The Church at Grand Rapids … fails to observe that in the FCS the practices surrounding the admission to the Lord's table are implied to be alike for members and guests" (Article 119,IV.B). It would appear that this is the reason that the CRCA was not mandated to investigate further a matter such as supervision of the Lord's table, as in the case of the PCK. London does not prove that this still should be done in the case of the FCS.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide :

5.1. To give the CRCA the following mandate:

5.1.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter;

5.1.2. To remind the FCS of the rules for Fellowship which include, among other things, that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships;

5.1.3. To inform both the FCS (Majority) and the FCS (Continuing) that they have our prayerful support with the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation;

5.1.4. To communicate to the churches the need for prayerful support for the situation of the Church in Scotland.

5.2. To respond to the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer with Considerations 4.4 mentioned above.

5.3. To respond to the Church at Lincoln with Considerations 4.5.1, 4.5.2, and 4.5.3 mentioned above as well as recommendation 5.1.3.

5.4. To respond to the Church at London with Considerations 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 mentioned above and thus to deny their request.

The following amendment was proposed and seconded:

- Add to Considerations: 4.6.3 "At the same time, numerous Synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship but need to be discussed within the bounds of it. A listing of such differences can be found in the Acts of Synod New Westminster, 1971, Appendix, pp 64 – 71; and Synod Burlington, 1986, pp 142-151. "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and the continual discussion of divergencies may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Acts 1986, p. 151).
- Add to the Recommendations: "To continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in Consideration 4.6.3."

The amendment was **adopted**.

The amended proposal was **adopted** as follows:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Free Church of Scotland (FCS).

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer, Lincoln and London.

2. Admissibility

2.1. The letters of the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer, Lincoln and London are declared admissible because they deal with the CRCA report, which was sent out to the churches.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA re the FCS, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that synod decide to:

3.2.1. Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter.

3.2.2. Remind the FCS of the rules for fellowship which include, among other things, that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships.

3.3. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer makes the following comment on the CRCA report, "Why should we wait until the ICRC makes a decision about the FCS? Surely it is not our intention simply to follow ICRC direction, or is it?"

3.4. The Church at Lincoln refers to the report of the CRCA regarding the FCS that recommends, "Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter." The Church at Lincoln expresses the desire that, "we should continue to encourage healing and reconciliation as mandated by Synod Fergus 1998." The Church at Lincoln makes the recommendation, "that we treat both sides equally until the reasons for secession are clear or it becomes apparent that one or both are deviating from the truth. Our concern is that the present wording of recommendation 3.6.1 might leave the impression, perhaps inadvertently, that we are favouring the Majority church."

3.5. The Church at London notes that Synod Fergus had the following statement in a consideration about the FCS, "The CRCA could, however, be instructed to seek further clarification on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relationship to the church" (Acts 119, IV,C). London requests Synod Neerlandia to include this as a part of the CRCA's mandate. London states further, "This request, at least the part dealing with confessional membership, would bring this mandate in line with the one that the CRCA had received for the PCK."

4. Considerations

4.1. It is to be appreciated that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate by sending a letter to the FCS expressing, "prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches for the FCS as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation." Since the sending of this letter, a division took place within the FCS.

4.2. It is appreciated that the CRCA tried to make a thorough investigation into the reasons for the division within the FCS, which occurred on January 20, 2000. It is regrettable that as yet there is no clarity on all the issues involved which would allow the CRCA to make a clear judgment. It would be good still to gain more information.

4.3. The fact that the FCS established fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Churches of North America without consulting our

churches is not in keeping with rule 3 for ecclesiastical fellowship, which states that, "The churches shall consult each other when entering into relations with third parties." The FCS should be reminded of this rule.

4.4. **The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer**

The CRCA points out in 3.5.2, "it is not possible to fully evaluate the actions of those who seceded." The committee makes clear that more information is needed to be able to make a clear evaluation of what is all involved in the division within the FCS. The committee anticipates that when the FCS (Continuing) presents itself to the ICRC as the legitimate continuation of the FCS and asks for its judgment, this would be an opportunity for gleaning information to come to a responsible conclusion. The committee expresses "the hope" that this will lead either to reconciliation or greater clarity. Thus the committee is not simply waiting for the ICRC to make a judgment, nor is it binding itself to follow the direction of the ICRC. Indeed, in its recommendation the committee states that it is the task of the committee to "continue … to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter." Thus the committee remains responsible for both monitoring and assessing the situation.

4.5. **The Church at Lincoln**

4.5.1. We learn from the CRCA report that in accordance with the mandate given by Synod Fergus, a letter was sent by the committee to the FCS expressing, "prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches for the FCS as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation." This encouragement for healing and reconciliation referred to a situation before the Free Church experienced a split. Thus the committee fulfilled its mandate in regards to giving prayerful support. Of course, the committee could be mandated again to inform both FCS churches that they have our prayerful support with a view to reconciliation.

4.5.2. The Church at Lincoln's concern "that we treat both sides equally" is also the concern of the CRCA. The committee, in writing about the division within the Free Church, affirms in 3.4.3, "Our task is therefore to determine if the Free Church deviated from its church polity in dealing with this matter." Then it adds, "In all fairness to those who claim to be the Free Church (Continuing) this requires us to evaluate their 'Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland.'" The committee is trying to be fair and open as it examines both sides of the controversy. This impartial approach by the committee is demonstrated further as it expresses concerns about actions on both sides. We read, for instance, in 3.4.6, "Even though the action of secession cannot be justified based on the information available, one is left to wonder if everything possible was done to remove the root cause, namely, the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod." However, within this context of looking at the issues from both sides in an equitable

manner, the committee still comes to the consideration in 3.5.2, "While there are questions about the discipline process leading to a secession, there is no evidence at this point to conclude that we should discontinue our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church (Majority). Further, while there may be concern about the appropriateness of the act of secession, at this time it is not possible to fully evaluate the actions of those who seceded." So the point is that there is no reason to discontinue ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church (Majority), while keeping an open door to those who seceded. The CRCA is clearly taking the fairest and most reasonable approach to this sad situation: no reason to cease fellowship with the existing contact, while remaining open and fair to those who seceded, and waiting for further clarity on the entire situation.

4.5.3. The Church at Lincoln asks that "we treat both sides equally." Under the circumstances that the FCS (Continuing) has seceded without a clear-cut justification for doing so, it would not be proper to show equality by continuing ecclesiastical fellowship with both. The CRCA has attempted to show equality in the best possible way under the circumstances.

4.6. **The Church at London**

4.6.1. The Church at London is correct that based on the consideration of Synod Fergus (Acts 119, IV,C), it is possible to mandate the CRCA with respect to the FCS "to seek further clarification on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relationship to the church."

4.6.2. The Church at London's ground for including this in the mandate is to bring the CRCA's mandate regarding the FCS in line with its mandate for the PCK. However, there is a difference in the decisions of Synod Fergus regarding these two churches. Synod Fergus was dealing with appeals of the Church at Grand Rapids, which asked to rescind the decisions to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCS and the PCK. In both cases, Grand Rapids brought forth concerns about the supervision of the Lord's supper and confessional membership. In the case of the PCK, Synod Fergus referred to a decision of Synod Abbotsford 1995 that, "Synod is not able to evaluate the situation with the information available to us" (Abbotsford Article 106,V,A,2; Fergus Article 108,III,B,2). It appears that this lack of information did lead to the new mandate to investigate the matters of supervising the Lord's supper and confessional membership in the PCK. However, in the case of the FCS, Synod Fergus demonstrates that we do know more about the practices in the FCS and what is known is positive, "The Church at Grand Rapids … fails to observe that in the FCS the practices surrounding the admission to the Lord's table are implied to be alike for members and guests" (Article 119,IV.B). It would appear that this is the reason that the CRCA was not mandated to investigate further a matter such as supervision of the Lord's table,

as in the case of the PCK. London does not prove that this still should be done in the case of the FCS.

4.6.3. At the same time, numerous Synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship but need to be discussed within the bounds of it. A listing of such differences can be found in the Acts of Synod New Westminster, 1971, Appendix, pp 64 – 71; and Synod Burlington, 1986, pp 142-151. "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and the continual discussion of divergencies may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Acts 1986, p. 151).

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To give the CRCA the following mandate:

5.1.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter;

5.1.2. To remind the FCS of the rules for Fellowship which include, among other things, that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships;

5.1.3. To inform both the FCS (Majority) and the FCS (Continuing) that they have our prayerful support with the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation;

5.1.4. To communicate to the churches the need for prayerful support for the situation of the Church in Scotland;

5.1.5. To continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in Consideration 4.6.3.

5.2. To respond to the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer with Considerations 4.4 mentioned above.

5.3. To respond to the Church at Lincoln with Considerations 4.5.1, 4.5.2, and 4.5.3 mentioned above as well as recommendation 5.1.3.

5.4. To respond to the Church at London with Considerations 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 mentioned above and thus to deny their request.

Article 35

CRCA: Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the FRCSA. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) regarding the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA).

2. Observations

2.1. The report of the CRCA re the FRCSA, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.

2.2. The CRCA recommends that synod decide to:

2.2.1. Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with FRCSA under the adopted rules.

3. Considerations

3.1. From the report of the CRCA, we may gratefully conclude that the FRCSA are faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions, and the Church Order.

3.2. The FRCSA have started their own theological training as of January 1998, and they are to be commended with this milestone.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with FRCSA under the adopted rules.

4.2. To request the CRCA to convey our commendations to the FRCSA in regards to what is mentioned under 3.

Article 36

CRCA: Presbyterian Church in Korea

Committee 3 presented its proposal with respect to the PCK.

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK).

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights.

2. Admissibility

The letters from Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights are declared admissible because they deal with the report of the CRCA, which was sent out to the churches.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA re the PCK, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that synod decide to:

3.2.1. Conclude that the matter of exchange of professors had been sufficiently dealt with but this point was inadvertently overlooked in the report to Synod 1998.

3.2.2. Mandate the committee to continue to pursue the questions concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership.

3.2.3. Continue ecclesiastical fellowship with PCK under the adopted rules.

3.3. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer submitted two letters to Synod. In its first letter of September 10, 2000, Ebenezer points out that the mandate to the CRCA did not include a decision by the same Synod, "To include in the mandate of the CRCA a further investigation of

the practices regarding the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership in the PCK and report to the next Synod." Ebenezer requests Synod Neerlandia to include this instruction in the mandate of the CRCA if the committee has not already taken note of this intention of Synod Fergus. In its second letter, the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer recommends that Synod instruct the CRCA to discontinue contact with the PCK if no meaningful correspondence can be established over the next three years.

3.4. The Church at Willoughby Heights recommends that Synod mandate the CRCA to inform the PCK, that should there be no improvement in communications, cessation of the relationship would have to be considered.

4. Considerations

4.1. The CRCA points out that Synod Fergus considered that there was no evidence in the committee report that the mandate to investigate the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan was fulfilled. The committee shows from its minutes that the matter was discussed. It also noted that, for instance, Prof. Dr. J. Faber visited Korea in August/September, 1998. Thus it appears that the committee had dealt with and investigated the matter of professor exchange as mandated by Synod Abbotsford 1995.

4.2. The Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights are correct in stating that there is no meaningful communication with the PCK and no response to our enquiries. Our committee also regrets this lack of communication and response. This has also prevented our committee from learning about the PCK's practice with respect to fencing the Lord's supper and the matter of confessional membership. However the committee evaluates this regrettable situation with an important consideration, as we see in 6.4.2 of the CRCA Report, "From the information provided it is hard for us to determine exactly what is transpiring in Korea. With a view to cultural and language differences perhaps this is all we can expect. However, with a view to the churches having an awareness of the Lord's work in that part of the world filled with its false religions, it is important to maintain the relationship." With this in mind, our churches should not be too quick in discontinuing contact. At the same time, in line with the recommendation of Willoughby Heights, it would be good to let the PCK know that a lack of communication is preventing a meaningful relationship.

4.3. It is known from the secretary of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) that four PCK delegates will be attending the ICRC in Philadelphia in June 2001. Two members of the CRCA committee are also delegated to this ICRC meeting. This would seem an opportune time to discuss communication issues with the PCK and open the channels for discussing further the matters of fencing the Lord's supper and confessional membership.

4.4. Regarding the request of the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer about the mandate of the CRCA to make a further investigation of the practices regarding fencing the Lord's supper and confessional

membership, it is noted that the committee understood the intention of Synod Fergus and included this as part of their mandate.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. That the matter of the exchange of professors has been dealt with sufficiently.

5.2. To provide the CRCA with the following mandate:

5.2.1. To seek contact with the PCK delegates who are attending the ICRC in Philadelphia with a view to opening the lines of communication;

5.2.2. To discuss the questions concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership.

5.3. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with PCK under the adopted rules.

5.4. Not to follow at this time the recommendations of the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights regarding discontinuing or considering a discontinuation of contact with the PCK, but to communicate to the PCK that a lack of communication is preventing a meaningful relationship.

The following amendment was proposed and seconded:

- Add to Considerations: "At the same time numerous Synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship but need to be discussed within the bounds of it. A listing of such differences can be found in the Acts of Synod New Westminster, 1971, Appendix, pp 64 – 71; and Synod Burlington, 1986, pp 142-151. "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and continual discussion of divergencies may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Acts 1986, p. 151).
- Add to the Recommendations: "To await and, where feasible, make use of opportunities to discuss the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in Consideration 4.5."

The amendment was **adopted**.

The amended proposal was **adopted** as follows:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK).

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights.

2. Admissibility

The letters from Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights are declared admissible because they deal with the report of the CRCA, which was sent out to the churches.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA re the PCK, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that synod decide to:

3.2.1. Conclude that the matter of exchange of professors had been sufficiently dealt with but this point was inadvertently overlooked in the report to Synod 1998.

3.2.2. Mandate the committee to continue to pursue the questions concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership.

3.2.3. Continue ecclesiastical fellowship with PCK under the adopted rules.

3.3. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer submitted two letters to Synod. In its first letter of September 10, 2000, Ebenezer points out that the mandate to the CRCA did not include a decision by the same Synod, "To include in the mandate of the CRCA a further investigation of the practices regarding the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership in the PCK and report to the next Synod." Ebenezer requests Synod Neerlandia to include this instruction in the mandate of the CRCA if the committee has not already taken note of this intention of Synod Fergus. In its second letter, the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer recommends that Synod instruct the CRCA to discontinue contact with the PCK if no meaningful correspondence can be established over the next three years.

3.4. The Church at Willoughby Heights recommends that Synod mandate the CRCA to inform the PCK, that should there be no improvement in communications, cessation of the relationship would have to be considered.

4. Considerations

4.1. The CRCA points out that Synod Fergus considered that there was no evidence in the committee report that the mandate to investigate the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan was fulfilled. The committee shows from its minutes that the matter was discussed. It also noted that, for instance, Prof. Dr. J. Faber visited Korea in August/September, 1998. Thus it appears that the committee had dealt with and investigated the matter of professor exchange as mandated by Synod Abbotsford 1995.

4.2. The Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights are correct in stating that there is no meaningful communication with the PCK and no response to our enquiries. Our committee also regrets this lack of communication and response. This has also prevented our committee from learning about the PCK's practice with respect to fencing the Lord's supper and the matter of confessional membership. However the committee evaluates this regrettable situation with an important consideration, as we see in 6.4.2 of the CRCA Report, "From the information provided it is hard for us to determine exactly what is transpiring in Korea. With a view to cultural and language differences perhaps this is all we can expect. However, with a view to the churches having an awareness of the

Lord's work in that part of the world filled with its false religions, it is important to maintain the relationship." With this in mind, our churches should not be too quick in discontinuing contact. At the same time, in line with the recommendation of Willoughby Heights, it would be good to let the PCK know that a lack of communication is preventing a meaningful relationship.

4.3. It is known from the secretary of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) that four PCK delegates will be attending the ICRC in Philadelphia in June 2001. Two members of the CRCA committee are also delegated to this ICRC meeting. This would seem an opportune time to discuss communication issues with the PCK and open the channels for discussing further the matters of fencing the Lord's supper and confessional membership.

4.4. Regarding the request of the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer about the mandate of the CRCA to make a further investigation of the practices regarding fencing the Lord's supper and confessional membership, it is noted that the committee understood the intention of Synod Fergus and included this as part of their mandate.

4.5. At the same time numerous Synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship but need to be discussed within the bounds of it. A listing of such differences can be found in the Acts of Synod New Westminster, 1971, Appendix, pp 64 – 71; and Synod Burlington, 1986, pp 142-151. "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and continual discussion of divergencies may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Acts 1986, p. 151).

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. That the matter of the exchange of professors has been dealt with sufficiently.

5.2. To provide the CRCA with the following mandate:

5.2.1. To seek contact with the PCK delegates who are attending the ICRC in Philadelphia with a view to opening the lines of communication;

5.2.2. To discuss the questions concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper and confessional membership;

5.2.3. To await and, where feasible, make use of opportunities to discuss the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in Consideration 4.5.

5.3. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with PCK under the adopted rules.

5.4. Not to follow at this time the recommendations of the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Willoughby Heights regarding discontinuing or considering a discontinuation of contact with the PCK, but to communicate to the PCK that a lack of communication is preventing a meaningful relationship.

Article 37

Mexico: Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico (IPCM**)**
Committee 1 presented its proposal on the Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico (IPCM). Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   Regional Synod East November 10-12 1999: Overture to investigate the Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico (IPCM) (plus supporting documents).
2. **Admissibility**
   The overture is properly before Synod since it was presented to the minor assemblies first, in accordance with CO Article 30.
3. **Observations**
   3.1. Regional Synod East decided to propose to General Synod to further investigate the federation of IPCM as requested by Classis Ontario North and the Church at Toronto.
   3.2. The Church at Toronto has maintained contact with the IPCM since the fall of 1996.
   3.3. Dr. C. VanDam has made several visits to the Churches of the IPCM and held guest lectures at the Juan Calvino Seminary.
   3.4. The IPCM has attended the ICRC as a visiting church.
4. **Considerations**
   4.1. The material submitted contains sufficient information to justify investigation of the IPCM.
   4.2. In light of the decision of General Synod 1998 to give priority, in our contact, to churches located in the Americas (Acts of General Synod 1998 art. 72, III,B, p.64), it is pertinent to pursue this investigation further.
5. **Recommendations**
   Synod decide:
   5.1. To express thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, for allowing us to find and interact with the churches of the IPCM unknown to us before.
   5.2. To instruct the CCCA to further investigate the IPCM.
   5.3. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

Article 38

Bible Translation

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the Committee on Bible Translations. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   1.1. Report from Committee on Bible Translation.
   1.2. Letters from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer and Owen Sound.

2. Admissibility

The letters from the two churches are declared admissible because they interact with the report of the Committee on Bible Translation, which was sent out to the churches.

3. Observations

3.1. The Committee on Bible Translation reports that they have had some correspondence with the NIV's Committee on Bible Translation.

3.2. In this correspondence, they made some recommendations concerning matters submitted by the previous committee relating to 2 Sam. 5:13; Isaiah 9:20 [19]; Zech. 12:7; 12:12. Our committee was informed that the NIV Committee for Bible Translation would deal with three of these four concerns "over the next two – three years." Thus this part of their mandate has been accomplished. The Committee has received no new comments from churches/members that need to be evaluated and/or passed on to the NIV Translation Center and thus does not see a need for this part of the mandate to be renewed.

3.3. The Committee's mandate included the task to "monitor developments in the NIV as the text is revised." The Committee reports that shortly after Synod 1995 an inclusive language edition appeared in England without warning. Our Committee feels that this shows that it is impossible to monitor developments and thus does not see a need for this part of the mandate to be renewed.

3.4. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer disagrees with the Committee's recommendation not to appoint a new Committee on Bible Translation. Ebenezer Church stresses the need to monitor developments in the text of the NIV and to provide a contact address for churches should they have concerns in the future.

3.5. The Church at Owen Sound informs Synod that it is using the NKJV. It disagrees with the committee's recommendation not to appoint a new Committee on Bible Translation. They believe that a committee should continue to monitor and investigate matters concerning the NIV.

4. Considerations

4.1. For the past number of years the synodical Committee on Bible Translation has served the churches with helpful reports.

4.2. Bible translation is a most significant aspect of the life of the churches. Therefore it would be beneficial for the churches to be aware of general developments in the field of Bible translation.

4.3. The committee should continue to monitor developments in case significant changes appear in the text of the NIV so that it can report to the churches and the next Synod with recommendations.

4.4. Concerns may arise concerning the text of the NIV. The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer and the Church at Owen Sound are correct that churches should have a committee where they can address those concerns.

4.5. The committee has access to the NIV Translation Committee and Translation Center. Our concerns in the past have been respected

and taken seriously by the NIV Translation Committee and Center.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the Committee for their work.

5.2. To appoint a Committee on Bible Translation with the following mandate:

5.2.1. To receive comments from churches and/or members about passages in the NIV in need of improvements;

5.2.2. To scrutinize these comments, and pass on valid concerns to the NIV Translation Center;

5.2.3. To monitor developments in case significant changes appear in the text of the NIV;

5.2.4. To monitor developments in the field of Bible translation;

5.2.5. To serve the next General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

Article 39

Adjournment

Rev. J. de Gelder led in the closing devotion. He read Gen 4:17-26 and Rev. 21:22-27 and gave a brief meditation. After Ps. 63:2,3 was sung he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Article 40

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 2:17-26. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Psalm 116:1,4,9 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call showed all were present.
3. The Acts of May 7, 2001 (Articles 30-39) were **adopted**.
4. Synod broke for committee work.

Afternoon Session – Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Article 41

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. Psalm 19:4,6 was sung. All were present. He extended a welcome to Rev. L.W. Bilkes, delegate from the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA). It was noted that this was the first time a representative from the FRCNA visited a Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Article 42

Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Committee 2 presented its revised proposal. After discussion the report was taken back for further consideration.

Article 43

Free Reformed Churches: Rev. L.W. Bilkes

Rev. L. Bilkes addressed the Synod on behalf of the FRCNA. He expressed joy at being in the midst of brothers in the faith. He reflected on why in the days of the Reformation there could be unity, which does not seem possible today. He spoke of some of the stereotypes and differences, which can only be overcome by discussion. He also encouraged local contacts as well as interaction as office bearers. It was pointed out that the unity for which our Lord prayed also teaches us our obligation to work for it. He wished the Synod the Lord's blessing.

On behalf of Synod, Rev. W.B. Slomp responded. He reflected on the benefits that the contacts have had for the Canadian Reformed Churches. He also acknowledged that while much work still needs to be done, our hope and goal should remain federative unity. Thankfulness was expressed for the official contact initiated by the FRCNA Synod of 2000. He also concluded with reference to the prayer of our Lord for the unity of the Church.

Evening Session – Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Article 44

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. He requested Hymn 35:1,2 to be sung. Roll call showed all were present.

Article 45

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Synod **adopted** the following proposal unanimously:

1. Material

1.1. The Report from the CCOPC portion in the Report of CCCA to General Synod Neerlandia 2001.

1.2. The "Reaction of the CCCA to the CCOPC report" in the Report of CCCA to General Synod Neerlandia 2001.

1.3. Letters from the Churches at Burlington-Ebenezer, London, Elora, Winnipeg-Redeemer, Houston, Barrhead, Hamilton, Lincoln, Langley, Coaldale (2), Surrey-Maranatha, and Winnipeg-Grace.

1.4. Letters from Br. J. Werkman, Br. D. Teitsma, Br. W. deHaan.

2. Admissibility

2.1. Br. D. Teitsma interacts with the Report of the CCOPC. Reports are sent to the churches for interaction and not individuals. Individuals must address their consistories. His submission is thus inadmissible.

2.2. Br. J. Werkman appeals to Synod to rescind article 130 of Synod Fergus. Br. W. DeHaan interacts with the decisions and Considerations of Synod Fergus regarding the matter of unity with the OPC. Individuals who wish to interact with decisions of a Synod should begin by addressing their consistories (articles 30 & 31). These submissions are thus inadmissible.

2.3. The Maranatha Church at Surrey: the two submissions are considered inadmissible, as they were late.

2.4. The letters from the other churches are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The CCOPC recommends that Synod decide:

3.1.1 To reject unambiguously a general disqualification of office bearers in the OPC as "false shepherds," as in conflict with the fact that our churches have acknowledged the OPC as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3.1.1. To undo the changes made by General Synod Fergus 1998 in the "Proposed Agreement" with the OPC on the issues of the fencing of the Lord's table and confessional membership, and to return to the original document, presented by the CCOPC to Synod Fergus, as sufficiently reflecting the Reformed Confessions.

3.1.2. To use this agreement as a basis for establishing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC.

3.1.3. To acknowledge that the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship, as formulated by the OPC are compatible with our own rules for this relationship, as formulated by General Synod Lincoln 1992 (Acts, Art.50).

3.1.4. To continue the contact with the OPC by the CCOPC as subcommittee of the CCCA, with the mandate to continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity, including the proper fencing of the Lord's table, and confessional membership.

3.2. The CCCA reacts to the report of the CCOPC and recommends that Synod decide:

3.2.1. To reject unambiguously a general disqualification of office bearers in the OPC as "false shepherds."

3.2.2. To instruct the CCOPC to as yet fulfill Article 130 Recommendations F,G,H, I, J of Synod Fergus 1998.

3.2.3. To acknowledge that the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship, as formulated by the OPC are compatible with our own rules for this relationship, as formulated by General Synod Lincoln 1992 (Acts, Art.50).

3.3. The **Church at Burlington-Ebenezer** expresses agreement with the CCOPC.

3.4. The **Church at Lincoln** agrees with the majority opinion of the CCCA.

3.5. The **Church at London** expresses agreement with the three reasons of the CCCA for not agreeing with the CCOPC.

- They suggest that Recommendation 1 of the CCCA be deleted. They request that the recommendation of Synod Fergus be followed suggesting that the Presbytery and Rev. B.R. Hofford seek reconciliation. They contend that the statement of Rev. B.R. Hofford was a personal statement made in a specific context and has never been adopted by the churches. They emphasize, "The Canadian Reformed Churches should not, indeed can not, reject a statement they have never made."
- They further request Synod to delete recommendation 3 of the CCCA report or indicate that the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship as formulated by the OPC are compatible on some points with our own rules for ecclesiastical fellowship but not with "Occasional pulpit fellowship, …intercommunion, including ready reception of each other's members at the Lord's supper…"

3.6. The **Church at Winnipeg-Redeemer** recommends:

- That Synod stresses to the CCOPC to stay within their mandate, and remind the committee that going outside of their mandate and appealing Synod Fergus' decision is lording the opinions of the committee over the churches.
- They ask Synod to instruct the CCOPC to as yet fulfill Article 130 Recommendations F, G, H, I, J, of Synod Fergus 1998.

3.7. The **Church at Grand Valley** overtures Synod to engage the ICRC, either to encourage unity between the OPC, PCK and the CanRC if Synod establishes ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC, or to seek advisory judgement from them if Synod does not establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC.

3.8. **The Church at Hamilton** points out that Synod Fergus 1998 did not thank the CCOPC for its work. Hamilton asks:

3.8.1. Synod 2001 to declare that Synod 1998 did not properly deal with the report of the CCOPC by amending the Proposed Agreement. Amendments should first have been given to the Committee for internal discussion and response. Now the Canadian Reformed Churches have publicly bound themselves to a formulation not mutually accepted by both churches. Instead of promoting discussion, this decision effectively terminates it.

3.8.2. Synod 2001 to declare that Synod 1998 did not acknowledge the progress made by the CCOPC and the CEIR in arriving at the Proposed Agreement. Thus, there is little left for the Committee to discuss with the CEIR. The matter is now in the hands of the General Assembly and has gone beyond the level of committee discussions. It is not clear how the CCOPC can make Recommendations to the next General Synod.

3.8.3. Synod 2001 to declare when Synod declares a church to be a true church and does not rescind that decision, there is an obligation according to our confession to live together as sister churches (Article 28, Belgic Confession).

3.9. The **Church at Elora** expresses agreement with the overture from Hamilton.

3.10. The **Church at Winnipeg-Grace** expresses agreement with the report of the CCOPC as well as the submission from the Cornerstone Church at Hamilton. Furthermore they note that the reaction of the CCCA was not signed and that they believe that the CCCA did not have a mandate to respond to or deal with the CCOPC report and that therefore it should be declared inadmissible. They contend that the CanRC's have done the OPC a great injustice by not establishing ecclesiastical fellowship after declaring them a true church in 1977. They note that if Synod cannot establish ecclesiastical fellowship it should admonish the GKN for doing so.

3.11. The **Church at Coaldale** appeals to Synod:

3.11.1. To judge that Synod 1998 was wrong when it included the following in the first part of the "proposed agreement" (and insisted that the OPC agree that) "This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient, and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required."

3.11.2. To judge that Synod 1998 was wrong when it included "as" in the second part of the "proposed agreement."

3.11.3. To acknowledge, that over the years, we have at times used double standards with respect to the OPC and other churches with which we now have ecclesiastical fellowship.

3.11.4. To extend an invitation to the OPC to enter a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship using the 1998 "proposed agreement" in its original form as sufficiently reflecting the Reformed confessions.

3.12. The **Church at Langley**'s submission regarding the OPC is the same as 1, 2 & 4 of Coaldale.

3.13. Submissions regarding Article 136 of General Synod Fergus.

3.13.1. The **Church at Langley** submission includes a recommendation that Synod 2001 decide that Synod 1998 erred in failing to judge that Rev. B.R. Hofford was wrong in declaring the ministers and elders of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to be "false shepherds".

3.13.2. The **Church at Houston** recommends that Synod not make any pronouncement about the office bearers in the OPC since they are of the opinion that this would conflict with article 30 of the Church Order. At the same time they also recommend that Synod pursue other means so that the office bearers of the OPC are assured that they are not considered 'false shepherds'.

3.13.3. The **Church at Barrhead** appeals to Synod to:

3.13.3.1. Judge that the Canadian Reformed Churches were inconsistent in accepting Rev. B.R. Hofford into the federation of churches without requiring that he first withdraw the declaration of "false shepherds" as it relates to the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC (PMA of the OPC), while at the same Synod Coaldale 1977 (and each

subsequent Synod) declared the OPC a true church (and by extension, lead by true shepherds).

3.13.3.2. Judge that the recommendation of Synod Fergus 1998 for Rev. B.R. Hofford and the PMA of the OPC to seek reconciliation was incomplete without recognizing in that recommendation the fact that the CanRC's has/have also erected a road block to reconciliation by the very act of accepting Rev. B.R. Hofford into the federation without first requiring of him to withdraw his declaration, which very act in fact condoned the label that Rev. B.R. Hofford placed on the Presbytery.

3.13.3.3. Judge that it is necessary for Rev. B.R. Hofford to withdraw the above declaration before any meaningful dialogue can take place between Rev. B.R. Hofford and the Presbytery.

3.13.3.4. Relay our regret to the PMA of the OPC, on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Church federation, that this matter was not dealt with correctly and in a timely manner.

3.13.4. The Church at Coaldale appeals to Synod to make the following judgement:

3.13.4.1. That Synod 1998 should have made a "simple finding of error" in the solemn declaration of Rev. B.R Hofford that the ministers and elders of the PMA of the OPC were "false shepherds."

3.13.4.2. That Synod inform the PMA of the OPC and the OPC Committee for Ecumenicity and Inter-church relations of this decision.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod takes note of the letter from the CCOPC to the CEIR dated February 11, 2000. Synod agrees with the sentiments expressed in the letter of the CCOPC to the CEIR, dated February 11, 2000, with respect to the "false shepherds" issue. This addresses concerns raised by the Churches at Langley, Coaldale and London.

4.2. In connection with the comments by Houston, Synod considers that the matter of "false shepherds" has been raised by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic and declared admissible by past assemblies (CO Articles 30 & 31).

4.3. The Church at Barrhead adds new elements to the issues dealt with in Art. 136 of Synod Fergus. In response to the concerns of the Church at Barrhead, representatives of the OPC have made it clear "that there is no need to address again the person, the statements, and the status of Rev. B.R. Hofford" (CCCA Report, page 18).

4.4. In connection with the suggestion of Barrhead it should be agreed that it is regrettable "that this matter [i.e. the 'false shepherds' issue] was not dealt with correctly and in a timely manner." Further, as suggested by the Churches at Barrhead and Coaldale, it would be in keeping with the ongoing discussions to send a letter expressing our regret to the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic and to the CEIR.

4.5. With respect to the concern of the Redeemer Church at Winnipeg it is true that the CCOPC went beyond its mandate when it

interacted with the unexpected response of the OPC to the decision of Synod Fergus regarding the "false shepherds" label. This does not apply, however, to the CCOPC's request to return to the original proposed agreement. A committee has the right to interact with its mandate but does not have the right to exceed it.

4.6. Synod Fergus had the right to alter the Proposed Agreement, but as pointed out by the Churches at Hamilton, Langley and Coaldale, it would have been advisable to send the revisions to the CCOPC.

4.7. Wrong terminology has crept in where the proposed amended agreement of Synod Fergus 1998 is referred to as the *basis* for ecclesiastical fellowship (Acts Synod Fergus, 1998, p. 157, Recommendation f). Ecclesiastical fellowship is based on the mutual recognition of each other as faithful churches of our Lord who submit themselves to the Word of God.

4.8. Under the heading *Background of many of the appeals*, Synod 1998 considered, "It should be understood that there is no doubt that the divergencies need to be discussed on an ongoing basis. But it should then also be realized that they *can be* discussed within a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship" (Acts Synod 1998, Art.130, Considerations B.4.c., p.153).

4.9. Numerous Synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship but need to be discussed within the bounds of it. A listing of such differences can be found in the Acts of Synod New Westminster, 1971, Appendix, pp 64 – 71; and Synod Burlington, 1986, pp 142-151. "Permanent contact in the unity of true faith and continual discussion of divergencies may express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until we all attain to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Acts Synod Burlington 1986, Conclusion of the "Evaluation of Divergencies", p. 151).

4.10. Synod 1995 considered (Acts, Art.106, p. 71, V, Considerations B.3), "The practices with respect to the admission of guests at the Lord's table, confessional membership, and contact with the CRC have not been proven to undermine the OPC's confessional integrity as a true Church. It cannot be denied that these practices give reason for concern, but they are not proven to be a matter of the Westminster Standards. Rather, these are more a matter of the OPC living up to its standards. That the problem does not lie in the Westminster Standards as such is confirmed by the fact that the FCS, maintaining the same standards as the OPC, has different practices with regard to confessional membership and the fencing of the Lord's table. Therefore, there is reason to continue to discuss these practices, but they cannot in the end be made a condition for ecclesiastical fellowship."

4.11. Regarding the fencing of the Lord's table, Synod Fergus failed to recognize sufficiently the progress made by the CCOPC and the CEIR. We should remember that the OPC agrees with the principle

that "the celebration of the Lord's supper is to be supervised." The proposed agreement states, "this supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's supper" (Acts Synod Fergus 1998, p. 129). There is therefore agreement on the principle, while admittedly there is a difference in practice. Our concern is that both of the keys of the kingdom be exercised in connection with all participants at the Lord's table, members as well as guests. According to our respective confessions, the implication of the principle is that supervision of the Lord's table involves more than a verbal warning for unrepentant sinners to abstain from the table (see Westminster Confession, Chapter 29, section 8; Larger Catechism q & a 173; and Heidelberg Catechism, q & a 82).

4.12. Regarding confessional membership it should be noted that in the OPC those who make public profession of faith are required to respond positively to the question, "Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church, and in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline" (OPC Form for Public Profession of Faith, question 4). This is remarkably similar to the original wording of the second question addressed to the parents in the Form for the Baptism of Infants and the original wording of the first question in the Form for Public Profession of Faith, which were used in the Canadian Reformed Churches. This original formulation is still used by our sister churches in The Netherlands, the GKN. The promise made by those who wish to make public profession of faith in the OPC indicates a willingness to be bound by doctrinal instruction and admonition. Therefore there is a connection with the confessional standards of the OPC. After all, it cannot be denied that the OPC is a confessional church. The office bearers of the OPC have a responsibility in dealing with the members of the Church to uphold the doctrine of the Church, and the members, according to this fourth vow, are accountable to that authority. Throughout the past decades the OPC has continued to uphold the doctrines of Scripture, which we find in the Westminster Standards, the official testimony of their faith. With this in mind, we are able to go back to the original formulation of agreement presented by the CCOPC to Synod 1998.

4.13. Acknowledging each other as true churches implies unity of faith (see Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 21 & 22). This does not necessarily imply complete agreement on every point of doctrine or practice. The existing differences do warrant continued discussion to grow in the unity of faith (Eph. 4:3-6, 13). Both the CanRC and the OPC reject the legitimacy of the pluriformity of the church (see *Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church* @ www.opc.org/relations/unity.html).

4.14. The Church at Hamilton is correct when it says, "When Synod declares a church to be a true church and does not rescind that decision, there is an obligation according to our confession to live

together as sister churches (Article 28, Belgic Confession)".

4.15. It is appropriate for us to apologise to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for the inconsistent manner in which we have dealt with them in comparison with other Presbyterian churches.

4.16. In light of the fact that several of our Synods have explained that the various divergences cannot be obstacles to ecclesiastical fellowship, and considering the long standing recognition of the OPC as true church, it is appropriate to come to ecclesiastical fellowship, making use of the agreement as proposed by the CCOPC to Synod Fergus 1998.

4.17. The rules for ecclesiastical fellowship as adopted by the CanRC are not essentially different from those adopted by the OPC. The Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship do not presuppose complete unanimity on all points of confession and church polity.

4.18. The concern of the Grace Church at Winnipeg, whether the CCCA had the right to interact with the CCOPC Report, is a matter of the interpretation of the mandate of the CCCA.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the Committee for Contact with the OPC for its work.

5.2. To reject unambiguously a general disqualification of office bearers in the OPC as "false shepherds." Such a disqualification conflicts with the fact that our churches have acknowledged the OPC as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5.3. To express regret by way of letter to the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic and to the CEIR that the matter of "false shepherds" was not dealt with correctly and in a timely manner.

5.4. To apologise to the OPC for inconsistencies and lack of clarity in some of our dealings with them throughout the many years of our discussions.

5.5. To establish ecclesiastical fellowship under the adopted rules upon their acceptance of the proposed agreement, as formulated by the CCOPC and CEIR and presented to Synod Fergus 1998.

5.6. To continue the contact with the OPC by the CCOPC as subcommittee of the CCCA, with the mandate to continue the discussions on the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in the Considerations and to work toward further unity.

5.7. To instruct the CCOPC to communicate this decision to the CEIR and delegate one or two of its members to the General Assembly in Grand Rapids in May/June 2001.

5.8. To send the above decision to the churches which submitted letters to Synod concerning these matters.

The chairman offered prayer of thanksgiving for this historic moment.

Article 46

Letter of greeting from Free Church of Scotland

The chairman read a letter of greeting from the Free Church of Scotland, wishing the Lord's blessing. In the letter thankfulness was expressed for prayers offered for them in their situation. It was requested that prayer continue to be offered for them.

Article 47

Address Rev. G.I. Williamson.

Rev. G.I. Williamson addressed the assembly. Rev. J. de Gelder gave a response. Their addresses are found in the appendices. Communal praise to God was offered by the singing of Hymn 59.

Article 48

Appeals from br. and sr. B. Van de Burgt.

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the appeals from br. and sr. B. Van de Burgt. The committee took it back for further consideration.

Article 49

Website

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the Website. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   1.1. Report from the Committee for Official Website.
   1.2. Appendix to this report.
2. **Observations**
   From the report of this committee, Synod takes note of the following:
   2.1. Synod Fergus 1998 concurred with the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* to make available the *Book of Praise* in an electronic format and to develop and maintain a formal presence on the Internet. For that purpose Synod appointed a committee with the following mandate:
      2.1.1. "a. to serve the churches by creating and maintaining an official web page which would contain official and semi-official materials that reflect the life of the churches, are of benefit to the membership, and of assistance to her witness in this world;
      2.1.2. b. to report to the next General Synod regarding the activities and noticeable benefits of this web page."
   2.2. The committee would have been able to be more productive if there had been more members in the committee with advanced technical ability. Therefore, they ask Synod to appoint a committee consisting of two members who are ministers, one member associated with the Theological College, and four members with advanced technical abilities (two from Eastern Canada and two from Western Canada).

2.3. As to the future content of the website the committee has given consideration to include content such as articles from various church magazines, lectures and speeches, press releases of the broader assemblies, past Acts of Synod, sermons, and links to official websites of Canadian Reformed organizations.

2.4. The committee had difficulty obtaining the complete and correct text of the *Book of Praise* in electronic format, and therefore they were hindered in completing this part of their mandate.

2.5. The current arrangement with the Internet Service Provider does not adequately meet the needs of the website. The committee suggests, "The best solution at this time appears to be that the committee purchase suitable hardware that will meet our needs." Purchasing this hardware will increase the costs associated with the website.

2.6. The committee recommends that General Synod give the committee the following mandate:

"1. To maintain the existing website, including:
   a. its associated technical functions,
   b. its existing content, revising this content whenever necessary.
2. To complete the online publication of the entire *Book of Praise*, using the text most recently adopted and revised by General Synod.
3. To incorporate any new official and semi-official material that would reflect the life of the churches, be of benefit to the membership, and of assistance to the witness of the churches in this world. Consideration should especially be given to the inclusion of sermons, speeches and articles, as well as the Acts/Press Releases of ecclesiastical assemblies.
4. To report to the next General Synod regarding the activities and noticeable benefits of this website."

3. Considerations

3.1. Since Synod Fergus 1998 did not mandate this committee to send its report to the churches, this report should be included as an appendix to the Acts. In the future this committee should send its report to the churches just as other committees are required to do.

3.2. The committee was able to set up and maintain an official website for the Canadian Reformed Churches; however, it was not able to complete its mandate due to the following reasons:

a) insufficient members with advanced technical ability as well as inadequate hardware to meet the needs;

b) difficulty in obtaining the complete and correct text of the *Book of Praise* in electronic format.

3.3. The mandate given by Synod Fergus 1998 (e.g. "official and semi-official materials") is rather broad and undefined. The type of content on the official website should remain at the discretion of the churches.

3.4. Synod emphasizes that the website must first reflect the official doctrinal and liturgical documents of our churches as found in the

Book of Praise. The committee should give priority to making the complete and correct text of the *Book of Praise* available online.

3.5. The committee should provide an account of the finances involved with its activities.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1 To thank the committee for the work it has done with respect to the official website.

4.2 To publish the report of this committee as an appendix to the Acts.

4.3 To agree to expand the committee as requested.

4.4 To give this committee the following mandate:

4.4.1 To maintain the website, including its associated technical functions and its existing content, revising this content whenever necessary;

4.4.2 To purchase suitable hardware that will meet the needs of the website;

4.4.3 To complete the online publication of the entire *Book of Praise*, using the text most recently adopted and revised by General Synod;

4.4.4 To explore what type of content should be added to the website and to make a recommendation to the next Synod;

4.4.5 To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod;

4.4.6 To include a financial statement and proposed budget in this report.

Article 50

Adjournment

Br. W. Gortemaker led the closing devotion. He read Proverbs 16:1-9 and gave a brief meditation. After Psalm 146:1,2,3 was sung he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Wednesday, May 9, 2001

Article 51

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Hymn 41:1,2 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call showed all were present. A special welcome was extended to br. D. Stelpstra, the second delegate from the RCUS.
3. The Acts of May 8, 2001 (Articles 40-50) were **adopted**.
4. Synod broke for committee work.

Afternoon Session – Wednesday, May 9, 2001

Article 52

Reopening
The chairman reopened the meeting. Psalm 31:1,9 was sung. Roll call showed all were present.

Article 53

CRCA: International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)
Committee 3 presented its proposal on the ICRC. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   1.1. Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).
   1.2. Letter from the Church at Barrhead re Synod Fergus article 52.
2. **Admissibility**
   The letter from the Church at Barrhead is declared admissible because it is an appeal against a decision of Synod Fergus.
3. **Observations**
   3.1. The report of the CRCA re the ICRC, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.
   3.2. The concern raised by Synod Fergus re: article 52,IV, D was forwarded to the secretary of the ICRC, "The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting."
   3.3. The CRCA recommends that synod decide to:
      3.3.1. Either reconsider and withdraw the proposed change to the Constitution or give clarification of what is meant so those delegated can defend this proposal.
      3.3.2. Continue the membership of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC.
   3.4. Barrhead appeals the decision of Synod Fergus, "to mandate the CRCA to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations."
4. **Considerations**
   4.1. While the concern raised by Synod Fergus was forwarded to the ICRC, it was not clear to the CRCA what the real difficulties of Fergus were. This is understandable in light of the explanatory notes on the constitution change by the ICRC 1997. Synod Fergus referred to these notes. On page 78 of the Proceedings of the ICRC 1997 we read the following:

      > We have reformulated the Basis so as to refer now to 'Reformed Faith.' As churches, ICRC members stand together on the basis of a shared commitment to this biblical understanding of our

Faith. If it be asked, "Where is this Faith you share summarized?" the answer is stated clearly: 'In the documents listed in the Basis.' This does not require any applicant church to subscribe to all of the six documents, or even to any of them, thus leaving open the possibility of admission of churches who subscribe other Reformed Confessions than those listed. Such churches and their confessions would have to be in agreement with the Reformed Faith as summarized in the six documents.

4.2. Synod Fergus expresses the concern that, "The concept of 'the Reformed Faith' could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away from the need for confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting" (Acts 52,IV, D). The above quoted notes of the ICRC proceedings make clear that it is impossible to reduce the "Reformed Faith" to the lowest common denominator and so open the ICRC to churches whose confessions are found wanting. We see that, for instance, in the last line, "Such churches and their confessions would have to be in agreement with the Reformed Faith as summarized in the six documents." A church whose confessions are found wanting cannot be said to be in agreement with the Reformed Faith as summarized in the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort, Westminister Confession, Larger and Shorter Catechism (see the *Basis* of the ICRC in article 2 of its Constitution).

4.3. Barrhead appeals a decision of Synod Fergus, which came as a response to an overture from the Church at Yarrow. Barrhead interacts with the reasoning of Yarrow's overture, particularly the words: they "believe that our membership in the ICRC can usurp the authority of our ecclesiastical bodies, thereby challenging the integrity of our church federation." Synod Fergus did not pick up on the reasoning of Yarrow, but simply referred to the recommendation of Synod Abbotsford in Acts 101,IV, B, 3, "that the CRCA should not have supported the request of the FRCNA and the RCUS. The letters of support state more than our Synods have decided with regard to these churches." Thus the recommendation of Fergus does not show that it follows the reasoning of Yarrow; it refers to a decision that goes back to Synod Abbotsford. The point is simply that the CRCA should not be recommending a church for membership within the ICRC until we have ecclesiastical fellowship with a church. Therefore Barrhead's appeal, which interacts with the reasoning of Yarrow, does not deal with the actual decision of Synod Fergus.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To withdraw the proposed change to the Constitution of the ICRC by Synod Fergus, and mandate the CRCA to make this known to the ICRC.

5.2. To deny the appeal of the Church at Barrhead.

5.3. To continue the membership of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC.

Article 54

CRCA: Pilgrim Reformed Churches in East Nusa Tengarra, Indonesia. Committee 3 presented its proposal on the Pilgrim Reformed Churches in East Nusa Tengarra, Indonesia. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Appendix to the Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Pilgrim Reformed Churches in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia (GGRM).

2. Observations

2.1. The CRCA informs Synod in an appendix dated March 9, 2001 about a request from the GGRM to have a "contact relationship" with the CanRC.

2.2. The GGRM have recognized the CanRC as true churches; they are the fruit of Dutch missionary efforts; they have adopted the Reformed Confessions and Church Order; they have ecclesiastical contacts with the GKN and FRCA; some of their young men have studied or are studying at our Theological College; these churches have membership in the ICRC.

2.3. The CRCA points out that, although this is a recent request of the GGRM, it would only be brotherly to give direction at this time, rather than wait for the next Synod.

2.4. The CRCA points out that we have definite links with the GGRM through our two sister churches and through Rev. A.J. Pol who has had contact with these churches. Moreover there is the contact with the Theological College.

2.5. Thus the CRCA recommends that Synod mandate the CRCA to:

2.5.1. Gather more information about the GGRM;

2.5.2. Inform the GGRM of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship and ask if they can live in a relationship with those rules;

2.5.3. Discuss with representatives of the GGRM how they envision a relationship between two federations so far apart geographically can be meaningful;

2.5.4. Come with recommendations to the next Synod.

3. Considerations

3.1. The CRCA is correct that although the request from the GGRM came in late, nevertheless, considering the contacts these churches have with two of our sister churches, the fact that they have adopted the Reformed Confessions and Church Order, and the other points mentioned in the Observations above, it would be good to deal with their request at this point in time rather than wait until the next Synod.

3.2. The CRCA's own recommended mandate would raise the discussion with representatives of the GGRM as to how, "they envision a relationship between two federations so far apart geographically can be meaningful." With this in mind, it would be good that even though we would make progress in our discussions with the GGRM, and perhaps even enter into ecclesiastical fellowship at a certain point, the contact with the GGRM should rest primarily in the hands of the

FRCA who are geographically much closer. This would also be in line with decisions of previous Synods. For instance, at Synod Fergus, in article 72, the CRCA's own proposed mandate reads, "Whenever the CRCA receives a new request from a church located in Africa, Asia or Europe to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the CanRC, it shall direct that church to take up contact with one of the sister churches in that part of the world." In Consideration B, Synod agrees with this line of thinking. At the same time, Synod added in Consideration C, "Restructuring the work of the CRCA should not detract from our ecumenical calling. Therefore Synod upholds the consideration of Synod Lincoln 1992, Article 128 III D, namely that 'a regional approach to contact with other churches does not exclude the worldwide calling, and cannot avoid worldwide contacts, although by reason of proximity, resources and other practical factors, priority should be given to the ecumenical calling in the church's home environment.'"

4. Recommendations

Synod decide to present the CRCA with the following mandate in connection with the GGRM:

4.1. To gather more information about the GGRM.

4.2. To consult with the GKN and the FRCA regarding the GGRM.

4.3. To inform the GGRM of our Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship and ask if they can live in a relationship with those rules.

4.4. To discuss with representatives of the GGRM how they envision a relationship between two federations so far apart geographically can be meaningful, also reminding them that the FRCA should have the primary contact with the GGRM.

4.5. To come with recommendations to the next Synod.

Article 55

CRCA: Brazil

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the Igreja Reformadas do Brasil (IRB). The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. The report of the CRCA regarding the Reformed Churches in Brazil – Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (IRB).

1.2. Letter from the Church at Burlington-Ebenezer.

2. Observations

2.1. The report of the CRCA re the IRB, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations. The IRB has requested a sister church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

2.2. Ebenezer asks the question whether the CRCA should make a recommendation to enter into a relationship with Brazil, or whether the recommendation should have come from our churches.

2.3. It is noted in the CRCA report, under Organizational Matters, that clarification is needed on the point whether the CRCA or the CCCA should maintain contact with the church federation in Brazil.

3. Considerations

3.1. The IRB was scheduled to be constituted on July 5, 2000. This institution has taken place.

3.2. The IRB organized themselves as a federation based on the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and the Ecumenical Creeds. Their Church Order is patterned after the Dort model and shows the influences of the Church Order as adopted by our churches.

3.3. These churches are in part a fruit of the missionary work of our churches and stand on the same basis as the CanRC.

3.4. They have requested a sister-church relationship.

3.5. Since the IRB constitution is in part the fruit of the missionary work of the CanRC, and thus comes forth from our churches, the recommendation to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship can come from the CRCA. Moreover the CRCA has been instructed to "investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship" (Acts Synod Fergus 1998, Article 132, III, D, 1).

3.6. The CCCA has been mandated by Synod Fergus 1998 to maintain contacts within North America and South America. It is appropriate that the CCCA maintains contact with the IRB.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To offer a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship to the IRB.

4.2. To answer Ebenezer with consideration 3.5.

4.3. To mandate the CCCA to maintain contact with the IRB under the adopted rules for ecclesiastical fellowship.

Article 56

CRCA: Other matters; Organizational and Related Matters

Committee 3 presented its proposal on other matters in the CRCA report. The following was **adopted**.

1. Material

The report of the CRCA.

2. Observations

2.1. Re: Lanka Reformed Church.

Synod Fergus mandated the CRCA to consult with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) to take up contact with the Lanka Reformed Church. The committee recommended that the FRCA have the contact with this church since they are geographically closer.

2.2. Re: Free Reformed Church in Kenya.

Via the Theological College, a letter was forwarded from the Free Reformed Church in Kenya. This letter requested a fraternal relationship. A letter was sent to them requesting more information. So far there has been no response.

2.3. Re: Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A letter from the Lubumbashi Protestant Theological College was received for information.

2.4. As can be seen from the CRCA report included in the appendices, the committee issued declarations of good standing for our ministers travelling abroad. The Acts of Fergus were sent to those with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship. Invitations to attend Synod Neerlandia were sent to the same churches.

2.5. The financial statement and budget of the CRCA were submitted to Synod.

2.6. Organizational and Related Matters

2.6.1. The CRCA observes that the CRCA along with the CCCA were both mandated by Fergus, "to investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship" and "to respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches" (Article 132 III D, 1,2). The CRCA points out that since the CCCA is not a truly Standing Committee, but is in fact three *ad hoc* committees working on current contacts, there is no one to deal with requests for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship from churches in the Americas. The CRCA asks for refinement and clarification of the duties of the respective committees.

2.6.2. The CRCA points out a mix-up in previous Acts, as to its official name. The CRCA also suggests that it may be beneficial to have a member of its committee present at Synod.

2.6.3. The CRCA requests to increase its members from four to six to assist in the workload. The committee also points out that three of the four members will have their terms expire this year. This is not good for continuity.

2.7. The CRCA recommends that Synod 2001:

2.7.1. Either refine the structure of the CCCA to enable them to deal with requests for ecclesiastical fellowship from churches in the Americas or to clarify that the CCCA consist of three ad hoc committees and **all** new requests for contact be handled by the CRCA.

2.7.2. Consistently refer to the CRCA as the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad."

2.7.3. Contact the convener of the committee or ask one member to be present for part of the discussion at Synod to clear up the questions.

2.7.4. Increase the number of members on the committee from four to six.

2.7.5. Work out a staggered retirement schedule for future appointments.

2.7.6. Extend the term of the present convener of the committee by three years to give greater continuity.

3. Considerations

3.1. The suggestion of the CRCA to let the FRCA take up contact with the Lanka Reformed Church for geographical reasons is in line with the Synod Fergus, Article 72 III B.

3.2. Nothing more can be done at this time with respect to the Free

Reformed Church in Kenya and the Lubumbashi Protestant Theological College.

3.3. It is appreciated that the CRCA issued declarations of good standing to ministers travelling abroad, and that Acts and invitations were sent to churches with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

3.4. It is evident that the CRCA operated well within its budget. Moreover, the new budget is identical to the previous budget. It appears to be in good order.

3.5. It is noted that at Synod Fergus, the following decision was made in connection with the restructuring of the two committees, the CRCA and the CCCA: "Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas. This Committee will take over the mandate of the CRCA in as far as it relates to the Americas by establishing and maintaining relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship with churches located in North and South America." From this it is quite clear that it should be the CCCA that deals with requests for fellowship with churches in the Americas. It is also noted that the present Synod is also dealing with the structure and operation of the CCCA. The concerns of the CRCA should be kept in mind with the mandate for the CCCA.

3.6. Since the convenor of the CRCA is present at Synod, it is unnecessary to request anyone from the CRCA to be present at Synod. This consideration does not imply that at future Synods, it is a foregone conclusion that a member of the CRCA will be invited to Synod. Such a decision should be considered by every Synod, or a whole new procedure regarding the representation of committees at Synods would have to be established.

3.7. The request to increase the membership of the committee from four to six is reasonable, particularly since the committee speaks of its workload. Also, the matter of continuity and not having three of the four members of the committee complete their terms at the same time, is worthy of consideration when appointing members to the committee. A staggered retirement schedule for future appointments and extending the convenor's term by three years is reasonable.

3.8. Keeping the name of the committee consistent is reasonable.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To refine the structure of the CCCA to deal with requests for ecclesiastical fellowship from churches in the Americas.

4.2. To consistently refer to the CRCA as the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad."

4.3. Not to ask a committee member to be present at Synod.

4.4. To increase the number of members on the committee from four to six.

4.5. To work out a staggered retirement schedule for future appointments.

4.6. To extend the term of the present convener of the committee by three years to give greater continuity.

4.7. To thank the committee for carrying out its duties in a diligent and effective manner.

4.8. To mandate the CRCA to:

4.8.1. Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship outside the Americas;

4.8.2. Respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches outside the Americas;

4.8.3. To serve Synod 2004 with a report with suitable Recommendations, to be sent to the churches six months prior to the next General Synod.

4.9. To adopt the following budget for the CRCA:

ICRC fees	$ 3,500
Meeting ICRC 2001	$ 1,000
Travel	$ 2,500
Miscellaneous	$ 3,000
Total	**$10,000**

Article 57

Subscription Form

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the request for a standardized Subscription Form. The report was taken back for further consideration. Synod broke for supper.

Evening Session – Wednesday, May 9, 2001

Article 58

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. Psalm 135:1,2 was sung. Roll call showed all were present.

Article 59

Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the RCUS.

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for Contact with the Churches in the Americas Pages 24-31.

1.2. Letters from the Churches at: Burlington-Ebenezer, Coaldale, Cloverdale, London (re: Sunday observance), London (Celebration Lord's supper to shut-ins), London (Doctrine of the church), Langley, Owen Sound, and Houston.

2. Admissibility

The letters from the churches are declared admissible since they interact with the report submitted.

3. Observations

3.1. Synod observes that the subcommittee for contact with the RCUS has fulfilled the mandate given to it by Synod Fergus 1998 (See Report CCCA in the appendices).

3.2. The CCCA recommends:

In light of its research and contacts the committee believes that it has fulfilled its mandate and has determined:

A. That the matter of the Lord's supper celebration has been resolved, since members and guests alike are admitted in accordance with Lord's Day 30.

B. That the matter of Sunday observance has been sufficiently discussed and cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship.

C. That the doctrine of the church has been adequately discussed, and though there may be differing views in the RCUS, the statements of the Catechism and the Belgic Confession alone are binding.

D. That the concept of erasure has been satisfactorily clarified.

E. That the CRCNA has been suspended from NAPARC with agreement of the RCUS, and the RCUS's membership in this body should not hinder our relationship with the RCUS at this time.

Therefore we acknowledge with thankfulness that the RCUS stands on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity as a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We recommend that the Canadian Reformed Churches enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church in the United States under the adopted rules.

3.3. Reactions from the churches.

3.3.1. The **Church at Burlington-Ebenezer** expresses concern re: Recommendation B. It desires to see the matter of Sunday observance addressed; it opines however, that the matter should not be an impediment to ecclesiastical fellowship but included in further discussion.

3.3.2. The **Church at Coaldale** endorses the report and expresses thankfulness that the committee could, in good faith and in a short time span, resolve the matters that were considered barriers to ecclesiastical fellowship.

3.3.3. The **Church at Cloverdale** concludes:

1. We believe, on the basis of the testimony and argument put forward herein, that the Reformed Church in the United States ought to be recognized as true churches of Jesus Christ. Our examination of the evidence reveals the "*pure preaching of the gospel", "the pure administration of the sacraments",* and the exercise of *"church discipline for correcting and punishing sins"* (Belgic Confession, Article 29).
2. We believe, on the basis of the testimony and argument put forward herein, that the Canadian Reformed Churches should offer full <u>ecclesiastical fellowship</u> to the Reformed Church in the United States (*Acts, General Synod Fergus, 1998 p. 249)*.

3. On October 20, 1997, correspondence was received from the 251st Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States. This letter invited the Canadian Reformed Churches to enter into fraternal relationship [ecclesiastical fellowship] with the RCUS. We believe that Synod 2001 should accept this invitation without reservation.

3.3.4. The **Church at London** considers that "just as infant baptism is deduced from what God reveals concerning the Covenant, so two worship services is deduced from what God reveals about the fourth commandment, the need for our faith to be strengthened and the means by which that is done." The Church at London also considers that a negative example might be set for our own members.

The Church at London requests that Synod include the matter of Sunday observance in the mandate of the CCRCUS. It recommends that Synod decide the following, "Although the matter of Sunday observance cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship, discussion and encouragement on this point be continued with the RCUS to the end that they might come to the historic practice in Reformed churches of holding two worship services on the Lord's Day."

3.3.5. The **Church at London** requests that the CCRCUS discuss with the brothers of the RCUS article 190 of the Constitution of the RCUS which states, "The Lord's supper shall be administered to the sick and the infirm communicants, who are not able to come to the house of God and who express a desire to receive the sacrament."

3.3.6. The **Church at London** requests that Synod give the RCUS time to do what they promised re: familiarizing themselves with the "plain language of the Belgic Confession" re: the doctrine of the church.

3.3.7. The **Church at Langley** wholeheartedly agrees with the recommendations of the CCRCUS and states, "let us be courageous and seize the opportunity to show Christian unity where the Lord has so clearly opened a door."

3.3.8. The **Church at Owen Sound** expresses thankfulness for the faithfulness that can be witnessed in the RCUS, but considers it premature to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship since there is the concern that the issues of admission of guests to the Lord's supper as well as Sunday observance need further discussion.

3.3.9. The **Church at Houston** considers it premature to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship since there is the concern that the issue of admission of guests to the Lord's supper needs further discussion.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod thankfully considers that the CCCA has fulfilled the mandate given by Synod Fergus 1998. Synod agrees that the RCUS is to be acknowledged as a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ warranting the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.

4.2. Evidence indicates that the Lord's Day is observed according to the norms of Scripture in that there is worship, classes for regular

biblical and confessional instruction for all ages, and Bible studies held in the churches during afternoon or evening (page 28 of the report of the CCRCUS). Ongoing discussion about different practices will be mutually beneficial. The reasoning, which says that two worship services may be deduced from Scripture, as is infant baptism, is faulty. The introduction of a second formal worship service is considered desirable, but having one formal worship service does not preclude the RCUS churches from keeping the Lord's Day holy. The report indicates that the Biblical principles of worship, teaching and fellowship are alive and well in the RCUS. It should be noted that the RCUS maintains a high view of the Sunday (Cf. HC Q&A 103, 115; RCUS Constitution IV, section 2, article 180; RCUS Constitution III, section 1, article 113).

4.3. The recommendation of the Church at Cloverdale to offer "full ecclesiastical fellowship" as a response to the request of the RCUS, dated October 20, 1997, to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship, is justified since this Church observes that the marks of the true church, as per Belgic Confession Article 29, are truly present in the RCUS. The Church at Langley agrees with this.

4.4. The issue of administration of the Lord's supper to shut-ins is not a matter of disobedience to the Lord, but a point for further discussion, since Belgic Confession Article 35 says, "Finally, we receive this holy sacrament in *the congregation* of the people of God ... as we *together* commemorate the death of Christ…"

4.5. Although there may be inconsistencies between the "Five Principles" (see position paper "Biblical Principles of Church Unity" [cf. p.49f. report CCRCUS]) and the confessional statements about the church, it must be remembered that the confessions in the RCUS are binding, while the "Biblical Principles of Church Unity" is only a position paper. Synod agrees that the RCUS would do well to bring its speaking about the church more in harmony with the language of the Three Forms of Unity; however, this inconsistency between the Position Paper and the Confessions should not be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship but a topic for further discussion.

4.6. Although the practice of the admission of guests to the Lord's supper table in the RCUS is not identical to our practice, the Report indicates that the table is faithfully fenced. The procedure of examining guests seeking admission to the table in the RCUS clearly shows that the RCUS does not have an open but a fenced table. The elders exercise the keys of the kingdom in a way consistent with the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To acknowledge with thankfulness to the Lord that the contacts with the RCUS have progressed in such a favourable way.

5.2. To thank the CCRCUS for its work done and the report presented.

5.3. That the matter of the Lord's supper celebration has been resolved, since members and guests alike are admitted in accordance with Lord's Day 30.

5.4. That the way Sunday observance is practiced in the RCUS has been discussed and cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship.
5.5. That the doctrine of the church has been adequately discussed, and though there may be differing views in the RCUS, the statements of the Three Forms of Unity alone are binding.
5.6. That the concept of erasure has been satisfactorily clarified.
5.7. Since the CRCNA has been suspended from NAPARC with agreement of the RCUS, the RCUS' membership in this body should not hinder our relationship with the RCUS at this time.
5.8. To acknowledge with thankfulness that the RCUS stands on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity as a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5.9. That the Canadian Reformed Churches enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church in the United States under the adopted rules, in response to the request of the RCUS.
5.10. To continue the contact with the RCUS by the CCCA with a mandate to continue the discussion on the issues noted in the Considerations 4.2; 4.4; 4.5.
5.11. To instruct the CCCA to communicate this decision and its implications to the RCUS.

An amendment was made and seconded to add to the end of 4.2: "Moreover, further discussion about matters such as shopping and going out for meals on Sunday would also be beneficial."

The amendment was defeated. The proposal as presented was unanimously **adopted**.

The chairman noted that this was an historic moment and expressed gratitude that ecclesiastical fellowship could be established. The chairman requested that Hymn 36:2,5 be sung. Prayer of thanksgiving was offered. The delegate from the RCUS, Rev. G. Syms was asked to address Synod. Br. W. Gortemaker spoke in response. The written texts used for their addresses are found in the appendices.

Article 60

Adjournment

Rev. J. Huijgen led the closing devotions. He read Jude 17-25 and gave a brief meditation. After Psalm 63:1,2,3 was sung he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Thursday, May 10, 2001

Article 61

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 3:9-14. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Hymn 42:1,2,8 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.

2. Roll call showed all were present.
3. A letter was read from the Deputies of the sister churches in The Netherlands. They expressed regret for not being able to be present in person. They extended greetings and wished Synod the Lord's blessing.
4. The Acts of May 9, 2001 (Articles 51-60) were **adopted**.
5. A general round of discussion was held on the issue of the participation of women in voting for office bearers to assist the advisory committee in coming to a final report.
6. Synod broke for committee work.

Afternoon Session – Thursday, May 10, 2001

Article 62

Reopening

The vice chairman reopened the meeting. After Psalm 100:1,2 was sung roll call was held. Rev. Cl. Stam was absent. A special welcome was extended to the students of the Covenant Canadian Reformed School. The chairman arrived and was given the chair.

Article 63

Committee for Promotion Ecclesiastical Unity: United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the matter of contact with the URCNA for further feedback. The committee took it back for revision.

Article 64

Report on the General Fund

Committee 2 presented its report on the General Fund maintained by the Church at Carman-East. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   Report Church at Carman-East re: General Fund.
2. **Observations**
   2.1. The Church at Carman-East submits a financial report of the General Fund for the period from January 21, 1998 – February 14, 2001. The income was $28,369.75. The disbursements were $24,506.84. The balance as of February 14, 2001 was $3,862.91. For further details, see the Report in the appendices.
   2.2. The books were audited by two office bearers of the Church at Carman-East and found to be in good order.
3. **Considerations**
   The Church at Carman-East has faithfully fulfilled its mandate.
4. **Recommendations**
   Synod decide:
   4.1. To thank the Church at Carman-East and the treasurer, br. G. Vandersluis, for keeping the books.

4.2. To discharge the Church at Carman-East of duties completed during the period from January 21, 1998, to February 14, 2001.
4.3. To reappoint the Church at Carman-East to administer the General Fund.
4.4. To authorize the Church at Carman-East to collect funds from the churches as required.

Article 65

Finances Synod Fergus

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the Finances of Synod Fergus. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Statement of income and expenses from the Financial Committee of General Synod 1998.
1.2. Audit Report from the Emmanuel Church at Guelph concerning the finances of Synod 1998.

2. Observations

2.1. General Synod 1998 appointed the Church at Guelph to audit the books of the finances of General Synod 1998.
2.2. The financial statement disclosed that the total cost of Synod was $28,795.45. For further details, including a comparison of three preceding General Synods, see Appendices.
2.3. The Church at Guelph has audited the books of the finances of General Synod 1998, and reports that they were found to be in good order.
2.4. The Church at Guelph indicates, "Since the bank did not return the cancelled cheques, all that could be done was compare the invoices and expense reports with the debits in the passbook. Therefore, it could not be established to whom the cheques had been made payable." The Church at Guelph therefore offers two recommendations:
2.4.1. That the convening church instruct the treasurer of Synod to pay only those invoices and expense reports which have been authorized for payment by an executive of Synod in order to improve accountability.
2.4.2. To instruct the treasurer of Synod to have the cancelled cheques returned if it is possible. In the event that the cancelled cheques are not returned to the treasurer, that the recipient of the money state on the expense report that payment has been received and in which manner.

3. Considerations

3.1. We appreciate the effort to improve the clarity of the financial reports and provide a comparison of expenses incurred by previous Synods.
3.2. It is appropriate to have a proper record of those receiving payment of expenses.

3.3. The recommendation that a member of the executive of Synod approve all invoices and expenses for payments seems to be extreme. Nevertheless the Finance Committee should ensure that there is financial accountability.

3.4. Synod agrees that cancelled cheques should be returned whenever possible. The recipient of expense funds should indicate receipt and method of payment on their report.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To express appreciation for the work done by the Finance Committee of General Synod 1998 and by the auditing church.

4.2. To discharge the Finance Committee of General Synod 1998 on the basis of the auditors' report of the Church at Guelph.

4.3. To appoint a Finance Committee that will pay the expenses incurred by General Synod 2001, using funds submitted by the treasurer of each Regional Synod. This committee will forward any balance of funds to the convening church of next General Synod. They will also submit a financial statement to the next General Synod, audited by the Church at Barrhead.

4.4. To appoint as Finance Committee of General Synod 2001: the brothers P. Dejong and B. Wierenga.

4.5. To instruct the Finance Committee that cancelled cheques should be returned whenever possible. The recipient of expense funds should indicate receipt and method of payment on their report.

4.6. To appoint the Church at Barrhead to audit the books of the Finance Committee for General Synod 2001 and report to the next General Synod.

As it was the end of the school day, the chairman led the closing devotion for the students from the Covenant Canadian Reformed School who had witnessed the proceedings. He requested that Psalm 122:1 be sung. After singing he led in thanksgiving. He spoke words of appreciation to the students for having come to witness the working of Synod. Synod then broke for committee work.

Evening Session – Thursday May 10, 2001

Article 66

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. Hymn 9 was sung. Roll call showed all were present. A special welcome was extended to Rev. W. DeJong, minister of the United Reformed Church at Grande Prairie, who was present as observer along with Rev. R. Stienstra.

Article 67

United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) (*See Article 73 for REVISED, FINAL Decision*)**

Committee 4 reintroduced its revised report on the URCNA.

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity regarding the United Reformed Churches.

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Aldergrove, London, Burlington-Waterdown, Willoughby Heights, Winnipeg-Grace, Coaldale, Lincoln, Houston, and Orangeville.

1.3. Letter from br. D. Teitsma

2. Admissibility

The letters from the various churches are declared admissible. The letter from br. D. Teitsma interacts with the Report of the CPEU. Reports are sent to the churches for interaction and not to individual members. Individual members must first address their consistories. Therefore, this letter is declared inadmissible (CO Article 30).

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CPEU re the URC, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as observations.

3.2. The CPEU recommends:

"1. That synod thank the URCNA for accepting the CanRC into Phase 1 of their guidelines for ecumenical relations, and express gratitude that with this acceptance via appointed committees much contact could be experienced with the URCNA.

2. That deputies be instructed to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity. This will include the following elements:

1. That the Statement of Agreement with its accompanying time frame be adopted by Synod 2001, and that, with the recognition of the URCNA as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, we move to Phase 2 of the negotiations on the Statement of Strategy (Appendix 12) all with the understanding that both federations are committed to reach the final phase of these discussions in 2004.
2. That special committees be appointed in accordance with the recommendations in the Agreement regarding the church order and theological education, for the purpose of meeting with the URCNA counterparts in the period 2001-2004."

3.3. The **Church at London** comments on various areas of the report. First, concerning joint activities under Phase 2 they state, "we should not act as one, until we are together 'in one house.'" Second, they are concerned that a visitor should not be admitted to the Lord's table unless the elders of the visitor's home congregation attest both to the doctrine and conduct of this person. Third, they support having a federational school to train men for the ministry, rather than having both federational and non-federational schools. Fourth, concerning procedure, London suggests that a draft plan of union be sent back and forth between the CanRC and URC synods until it is acceptable to both.

3.4. The **Church at Burlington-Waterdown** concurs "with the finding that we are at a stage of being able to develop closer contact at phase two."

3.5. The **Church at Willoughby Heights** concurs with the recommendations of the committee. They also state, "although fully supportive of efforts to come to unity with the FRCNA and the OCRC, we believe talks with the FRCNA and the OCRC should not be pursued too vigorously as you can only seriously pursue unity with one federation at a time."

3.6. The **Church at Winnipeg-Grace** concurs with the recommendation of the committee saying, "the churches should continue in establishing unity with courage and with caution."

3.7. The **Church at Coaldale** hopes that the recommendations of the committee will be accepted by Synod, otherwise they "fear that this will cause a major set back in our newly initiated dialogue and unity discussions with Trinity URC of Lethbridge."

3.8. The **Church at Lincoln** agrees with moving forward to Phase 2. However, they believe that the target date for federative unity by 2004 is unrealistic. They recommend, "that the goal to complete phase 2 of the steps toward federative unity be extended beyond Synod 2004."

3.9. The **Church at Houston** requests synod to judge that, "1. The statement of agreement on the Sacraments of Baptism and Lord's supper not be accepted as it stands. 2. The statement of agreement should read, 'In the attestation the signatories state that they are communicant members not under discipline of a faithful *Reformed* church which fully confesses the doctrines of Scripture *as summarized in the Reformed confessions*.'"

3.10. The **Church at Orangeville** "regrets that the concerns about the United Reformed Churches (URC) raised by the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC)... were not really addressed by the Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod gratefully takes note of the "Statements of Agreement" (Appendix 9 in the Report) and the "Strategy to Church Unity" (Appendix 12 in the Report) as evidence that significant progress has been made towards federative unity in our contact with the URC. These documents should serve as a general directive to the churches for use within their local discussions with United Reformed Churches.

4.2. From all the information contained in the report, Synod agrees with the findings of the committee that sufficient progress has been made that "with the recognition of the URCNA as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, we move to Phase 2 of the negotiations on the Statement of Strategy." The letters from the churches also indicate a desire to step forward in our relationship with the URCNA.

4.3. Some wrong terminology has crept into the CPEU report when it states on pg. 6, "*On the basis of* the Statements of Agreement which are the results of our discussions regarding the marks of the true church ad Art. 29 B.C., we recommend that Synod recognize the URCNA as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ..."(emphasis added). We do not recognize each other on the basis of the

Statements of Agreement. Rather, we recognize each other on the basis of Scripture and confessions.

4.4. Although it is good and necessary to have a definite time frame in which to strive for federative unity, it is not clear at this time that we will be able to reach federative unity by the target date of 2004. The report recommends appointing various committees (re theological education, song book and church order). It would be beneficial to allow these committees to begin their work. The Lord willing, at Synod 2004 the progress must be reviewed and the matter of the time frame should be readdressed.

4.5. It is very important that both the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches are firmly committed to federative unity. To this end, local congregations should implement Phase 2 while the congregations resolve to strive for federative unity and to encourage their respective federations towards that goal.

4.6. For the sake of clarity among the local churches it is important to know that Phase 2 involves the following:

4.6.1. The churches shall accept each other's attestations, admitting such members to the Lord's table;

4.6.2. The churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rules of the respective churches;

4.6.3. The churches shall invite and receive each other's ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies as much as regulations permit (Appendix 3 of Report);

4.6.4. Certain forms of cooperation can be explored and implemented, for example, "men's clubs, women's service agencies, Bible studies, speeches or addresses by each other's ministers, cooperation in evangelism." "Meetings of combined consistories (or meetings of consistory committees) should be held regularly to isolate the specific differences that need further attention" (Appendix 12 of Report).

4.7. The implementation of Phase 2 is a local matter, and can vary from place to place, also bearing in mind how much discussion has taken place already between the local Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches.

4.8. In order to work further towards federative unity it will be necessary to appoint committees on the church order and theological education. Synod considers that the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* could deal with the matter of the songbook. These committees will work closely with committees appointed by the URC Synod. These committees should report at regular intervals to the CPEU, which, in turn, will produce a single, comprehensive report, jointly with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URC.

4.9. Moving forward to Phase 2 and activating these committees can only take place if the URC decide at Synod Escondido 2001 to commit themselves to working towards federative unity with the CanRC.

4.10. Should this happen, it will be a major event in the life of our churches. It will also require much work and much wisdom in order to arrive at

the goal of federative unity. We can only do this under the Lord's blessing. Therefore, as churches we should express our gratitude to the Lord and ask Him for His further blessing upon our labours.

4.11. Re: letter from the **Church at London**

In their first and fourth concern the Church at London is essentially proposing a different strategy for church unity, namely, waiting until a "plan of union" is accepted by both churches before pulpit exchange and table fellowship would be possible. The strategy given by the CPEU is based on a common understanding that recognition of one another as true churches (Art. 29 BC) requires an exercising of fellowship (Art. 28) to come to federative unity in due time.

Both the CanRC and URC agree that the table of the Lord must be properly supervised, and they do exercise this supervision. The proposed church order committee will have to come with a recommendation as to how admission to the Lord's table would take place in the new federation. This covers London's second concern.

In their third concern London expresses the desirability of having a federational school for the training of theological students. Synod agrees with this concern and notes that it is already being addressed in the Statements of Agreement.

4.12. Re: letter from **Church at Houston**

The background to Houston's request is that in their local discussions with the URC, there has been disagreement over the interpretation of the Statement of Agreement on the Lord's supper. At present, there are some differences between the URC church order and the CanRC church order on this matter, but this does not prevent local table fellowship in Phase 2. The proposed church order committee will have to come with a recommendation as to how admission to the Lord's table would take place in the new federation.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To acknowledge, with gratitude to the Lord, that the contact with the URC has progressed in such a favourable way.

5.2. To thank the committee for the work done.

5.3. To recognize the United Reformed Churches as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ (Art. 29 BC) and move to Phase 2, as described in consideration 4.6, on the path towards federative unity.

5.4. To encourage local congregations to begin implementing Phase 2 and ask for the Lord's blessing upon this in congregational prayer.

5.5. To appoint a committee re: theological education and a committee re: church order, and to direct the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* to deal with the matter of the songbook.

A motion was made and seconded to amend 4.1 as follows: Change "These documents should serve as a general directive to the churches for use within their local discussions with the…" to, "This agreement should serve as a working document in their discussions with the …".

This amendment was **defeated**.

An amendment was made and seconded to change 4.6. Delete 4.6.1-3 and read as follows: "Phase 2 includes the elements which apply in relations of ecclesiastical fellowship. However, it also includes certain forms of cooperation. For example, …" and then continue with 4.6.4.

The amendment was **defeated**.

Synod **adopted** the report submitted by committee 4

The chairman noted the significance of this moment. We have entered into a new phase in our relationship with the URCNA as the implicit recognition of them as true churches of our Lord was now made official. The chairman offered prayer of thankfulness to the Lord for this occasion and asked for the Lord's blessing that the desired unity in one federation might become a reality. After all those present sang Hymn 60:1,2 Rev. R. Stienstra addressed Synod. Rev. R. Stienstra made some personal remarks expressing his joy and thankfulness and then read remarks previously prepared for this occasion. The full text of this address can be found in the appendices. Rev. R. Aasman responded on behalf of Synod. The written text of this address can also be found in the appendices.

Article 68

Adjournment

Br. J. Jonker led the closing devotion. He read 1 John 2:28-3:3 and gave a brief meditation. After Hymn 54 was sung he led in prayer. Synod was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Friday, May 11, 2001

Article 69

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 3:15-22. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Psalm 49:2,3 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call showed all were present.
3. Committee 4 introduced a motion to revisit the matter of the URCNA. This was unanimously **adopted**.
4. The Acts of May 10, 2001 (Articles 61-68) were **adopted**.

Article 70

Appeals br. and sr. B. Van de Burgt

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the appeals from br. and sr. B. Van de Burgt. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeals from br. and sr. B. Van de Burgt.

2. Admissibility

Synod declares these appeals admissible in accordance with CO Article 31.

3. Observations

3.1. The appellants asked Regional Synod Dec. 5, 2000 to judge various matters concerning Scripture and confession with respect to wine at the Lord's supper. They had previously appealed to Classis Pacific East of March 30-31, 2000 concerning various statements that the Chilliwack consistory made regarding this matter.

3.2. The appellants make three appeals. In the first place they ask Synod to judge:

- 1. That Regional Synod West – Dec. 5, 2000 erred in denying our first request for judgement.
- 2. Christ instituted wine (not unfermentable grape juice) as the drink of His supper.
- 3. To use grape juice is inconsistent with what we confess, and thus is contradictory. (Our subscription form speaks of office bearers that promote contradictory things in relation to the confessions.)

The appellants also state, "Article 35 of the Belgic Confession is the heart of our appeal."

3.3. In the second place they ask Synod to judge that:

- 1. Regional Synod West – Dec. 5, 2000 erred in denying our request 'the use of wine (not grape juice) is prescribed since the Lord commands "Do this in remembrance of Me" and because we confess, as a mark of the true church, in Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession "It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments <u>as Christ has instituted them</u>," in relation to Art. 35's B.C. statement "… Christ instituted… wine as a sacrament of His blood.'" since:
  - a) it is only through exegesis that the truth of God's Word is revealed.
  - b) All our confessions and forms speak about the drink of the Lord's supper as wine.
- 2. Regional Synod West – Dec. 5, 2000 is not justified in considering 'It is impossible to declare that fermented wine is the prescribed drink of the Lord's supper' since:
  - a) no reasons were given to qualify this statement.
  - b) our exegesis was not refuted.

3.4. In the third place they ask Synod to judge that Regional Synod West December 5, 2000 erred in declaring their appeal re individual cups inadmissible. Regional Synod had considered that "since the available material does not provide us with further details concerning interaction between brother and sister Van de Burgt and the consistory of Chilliwack, it is impossible to decide whether they should appeal to a classis concerning the decision of their consistory or to Regional Synod concerning the decision of classis." They also ask General Synod to judge the matters that they had asked Regional Synod to judge.

3.5. Br. Van de Burgt indicates that he is an elder in the consistory of Chilliwack and that he has addressed this point with his consistory (Appeal 3, point 5).

4. Considerations

Re: Appeals 1&2

4.1. The first and second appeal deal with the same matter, namely, the use of wine at the Lord's supper.

4.2. Regional Synod rightly considered that it was not its task to judge the validity of various exegetical statements made by an appellant, but to deal with matters where the appellant has shown that the minor assemblies have wronged him.

4.3. It is agreed by the appellants, the consistory, Classis and Regional Synod that wine is the common drink used at the Lord's supper. This is evident from the following documents:

4.3.1. The consistory announcement in the bulletin of Feb 28, 1999.

4.3.2. The decision of Classis Pacific East March 30-31, 1999, in which it is acknowledged that Article 35 does use the word "wine."

4.3.3. The decision of Regional Synod East Dec. 5, 2000, which stated, "it is generally accepted that the Lord Jesus Christ used fermented wine at the institution of the Lord's supper."

4.4. Making grape juice available instead of wine is an exception and not the norm. The appellants agree that special arrangements can be made as a solution to an individual problem (see the letter of the appellants to the consistory dated March 1, 1999).

4.5. With respect to the Lord's supper the confessions clearly and consistently speak about "wine." In Article 35 BC we confess "Christ has instituted earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body and *wine* as a sacrament of His blood." Lord's Day 29 also speaks of "bread and *wine*". Also within the Reformed tradition, the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's supper speaks about wine (cf. "…one *wine* is pressed out of many grapes" and "when He will drink the *wine* new with us in the kingdom of His Father").

Re: Appeal 3

4.6. In their appeal to General Synod br. and sr. Van de Burgt give more information than they did to Regional Synod, namely, that the brother is an elder and he has addressed his consistory on this matter.

4.7. The appellants were correct that they have the right to appeal the decision of a minor assembly to a major ecclesiastical assembly.

4.8. General Synod cannot judge the matters that br. and sr. Van de Burgt asked Regional Synod to judge because "a major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly…" (CO Article 30).

5. Recommendations

Synod decide that:

5.1. Regional Synod was correct in not judging the validity of various exegetical statements.

5.2. Regional Synod was incorrect in not interacting more closely with the clear and consistent language of our confessions, which indicate that the *norm* is to use wine at the Lord's supper.

5.3. Based on the information that Regional Synod had at that time, it did not err when it declared the appeal re: individual cups of br. and sr. Van de Burgt inadmissible.

Rev. E. Kampen abstained from voting.

Article 71

Appeal from br. and sr. S. Hofford, *et al*.
In closed session, Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. S. Hofford, *et al*. The following was **adopted**.

1. **Admissibility**
   The appeal from brother and sister Steve and Christine Hofford *et al* is declared admissible because it is an appeal against a decision of Regional Synod East of November 10-12, 1999.
2. **Observations**
   2.1. The appellants believe Regional Synod East of November 10-12, 1999, wronged them when it upheld the decision by a Classis Ontario South to give approbation to the request of Grand Rapids to release Rev. B.R. Hofford according to CO Article 11.
   2.2. The appellants are of the opinion that if the allegations are true, then the use of CO Article 71 was the only way to deal with Rev. B.R. Hofford.
   2.3. The appellants believe that the broader assemblies took upon themselves the discretionary power to decide whether or not the allegations in the letter of Consistory dated March 2, 1999 were going to be taken seriously. The appellants point out that instead of dealing with all the allegations, the two broader assemblies considered the root causes of the difficulties.
   2.4. The appellants state as their primary concern that "whether or not the consistory itself was seeking to pursue discipline via Article 71, Classis was obligated to refuse approbation of Article 11 because the allegations and allusions of sin were present in the case."
   2.5. The appellants refer to a statement by Regional Synod that "… this does not mean that every allegation and allusion is correct." The appellants express amazement about this, saying, "Not only does Regional Synod legitimize the use of allegations and allusions, they in effect say that *incorrect* allegations and allusions can form a basis for Article 11; they may not be true, but they are useful."
   2.6. The appellants state that Regional Synod is condoning an unscriptural approach to sin, for sin must be dealt with by means of church discipline to produce repentance and forgiveness (and, in the case of a minister, perhaps the use of CO Article 71), or excommunication." Thus, the appellants state that it is important to know, "whether or not the allusions and allegations were correct so that proper measures could then follow." Further they state that what Regional Synod has done is an abuse of Article 11.
   2.7. The appellants state that, "By upholding Classis' approbation of Article 11, Regional Synod has created a number of contradictory and distressing circumstances, such as: a) a minister stands publicly accused of sin while yet remaining eligible for call, b) congregation members are asked to submit to a consistory which they believe indulges in slanderous allegations, c) unresolved substantive issues

remain that continue to fester in the local congregation and in the federation at large (as some members leave to attend other sister churches)."

2.8. The appellants request Synod to find that, "Regional Synod erred in upholding the decision of Classis to approbate Article 11 in the Grand Rapids/Hofford case. They also request, "that Synod recommend that the consistory at Grand Rapids either publicly retract the letter of March 2, 1999 in which the allegations and accusations of sin are made; or, if the Grand Rapids consistory insists on maintaining the accuracy and legitimacy of those allegations and accusations, that they deal properly with them in accordance with the requirements of the Church Order."

3. Considerations

3.1. One of the objections of the appellants is that the broader assemblies did not verify the accuracy of the accusations and allusions found in Grand Rapids' letter of March 2. It should be noted that Classis Ontario South of May 26-27, 1999 said in its first consideration, "The church visitors concluded, 'the consistory might be pointing at some things said and done by the minister that could be identified as sinful, yet this is not a case that calls for church discipline. At the root is the inability of the minister and the consistory to work together for the building up of the congregation because of the widely different approach on a number of points that has left the Church at Grand Rapids with insoluble difficulties'" (Church Visitation Report of April 21, 1999). This is not a matter of ignoring the "accusations and allegations" of the consistory. Both the church visitors and Classis considered these accusations and allegations and drew their conclusions. Considerations 1a, 1b, and 1c of Classis demonstrate that there was an examination of the basic problems in Grand Rapids. It was on the basis of these Considerations that the church visitors and Classis came to the conclusion, which was to recognize the inability of the minister and the consistory to work together for building up the congregation. It should also be noted that the appellants in their appeal to Regional Synod did not raise the point that Classis did not deal with the matter of the accusations and allegations seriously. Thus it is not valid to say that the broader assemblies did not deal with the accusations and allegations seriously.

3.2. The appellants make the point that since "allegations and accusations of sin were present in the case," therefore Article 11 should not have been used. Instead, only CO Article 71 applies. Again, we refer to the first consideration of Classis Ontario South mentioned above in 3.1. The report of the church visitors, with which the Classis is in agreement, points out that some things done by the minister might be identified as sinful, yet are not a cause for church discipline. When one looks at all the material submitted by the appellants, it becomes clear that the things of which Rev. B.R. Hofford was accused arose from a situation and relationship between the minister and

consistory which had ceased to function. In a situation where an act of sin by the minister is the root of the problem, then it becomes clear that CO Article 71 applies. But when certain sinful things are said and done by a minister when a relationship between the minister and his consistory becomes strained, that does not necessarily imply that the course of action switches from CO Article 11 to CO Article 71. Thus, the allegations and accusations by the consistory of Grand Rapids underscore the point that, as Regional Synod says in Consideration 2, "these allusions and allegations were understood to illustrate their inability to work fruitfully with Rev. B.R. Hofford." This clearly leads to Article 11.

3.3. The appellants also refer to a statement by Regional Synod that follows the quotation found at the end of Consideration 2 of Regional Synod, "this does not mean that every allegation and allusion is correct (see response to appeal 5.2.5)." The appellants express shock that *incorrect* allegations and allusions can form a basis for Article 11. Synod notes that within this quotation from Regional Synod which is Article 25, agenda item 5.2.6, there is a reference to another agenda item, 5.2.5. Unfortunately, the appellants did not supply us with a copy of that part of the Acts of Regional Synod. Therefore it is impossible to judge what Regional Synod was referring to here. At the same time, it is quite a jump for the appellants to go from this statement of Regional Synod to "they in effect say that *incorrect* allegations and allusions can form a basis for Article 11." Again the point is this: there was a broken situation in Grand Rapids in which certain allegations and allusions were brought by the consistory against Rev. B.R. Hofford; even if some of these were not correct – for which we have no proof – this all illustrates the inability of Rev. B.R. Hofford and the Grand Rapids consistory to cooperate fruitfully any longer. Hence Article 11 is legitimately in place.

3.4. Based on the above, Synod cannot agree that Regional Synod has created a number of contradictory and distressing circumstances. A distressing situation started with the broken relations between consistory and Rev. B.R. Hofford. Thus consistory properly sought approbation in the use of Article 11, and both Classis and Regional Synod upheld that request.

4. Recommendations

Synod deny the appeal of br. and sr. S. Hofford *et al*.

The following delegates abstained from voting: Rev. A.J. Pol, Rev. Cl. Stam, Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, and Rev. J.P. VanVliet. Synod ended closed session.

Article 72

Subscription Form

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the Subscription Form. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Overture Regional Synod East.

1.2. Overture Regional Synod West.

2. Admissibility

2.1. The two overtures are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Both Regional Synod East and West have presented overtures concerning the adoption of standard subscription forms to be used in the churches.

3.2. Regional Synod East presents an overture:

3.2.1. To establish a committee to propose standardized subscription forms for the major and minor assemblies, as well as for the professors of theology, or to mandate the Standing Committee for the publication of the *Book of Praise* to propose such forms in consultation with the churches for adoption by General Synod.

3.2.2. To publish these forms in the *Book of Praise*.

3.2.2.1. Scriptural grounds

Scripture frequently calls us to hold fast to the pure doctrine of God's Word, and guard it (2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2 Tim 2:2; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1; Heb 10:23).

3.2.2.2. Church political grounds.

Article 26 of the adopted Church Order states that "all ministers of the Word, elders, deacons, and professors of theology" shall subscribe to the Confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches by signing the form(s) adopted for that purpose." This implies that the churches of the federation have agreed to ensure that confessional subscription is in place in accordance with an adopted form. The duty to ensure that this "adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect" (CO Article 46) belongs to the churches as a whole (CO Article 44). This is a matter in common to all the churches (CO Article 30) by virtue of the fact that such a form is required by the Church Order (art. 26). The common confession of the truth of Scripture is foundational to our unity as local churches in the federation. A commonly adopted Form of Subscription will serve this unity of faith.

3.2.2.3. Historical.

The Synod of Dort 1618-19 adopted a standardized Form of Subscription for use in the local churches. The Reformed churches in The Netherlands have continued to use standardized forms for office bearers after the synod of Dort (1618-19).

3.2.2.4. Practical.

It ensures that local Canadian Reformed Churches are uniform in practice with respect to their observance of CO Article 26. It promotes greater awareness and understanding of subscription to the confession of the churches and it gives

greater opportunity for office bearers, students, and candidates to study the subscription form prior to signing. Since other forms used in our churches are standardized, there is good reason that local churches should have a form with the same wording.

3.3. Regional Synod West presents an overture:

3.3.1. To adopt a standardized Form of Subscription, with following grounds.

3.3.1.1. CO Article 26 specifies that all officers "shall subscribe to the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches by signing the form(s) adopted for that purpose." No Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches has ever adopted such a form to ensure consistency among the member churches of the federation.

3.3.1.2. To protect and promote as much as possible the unity among the churches, it is important that there be uniformity in Subscription Form so all are bound by exactly the same promises.

3.3.1.3. In our efforts to come to unity with other Reformed churches, it is important to be able to show that all the churches in the federation live by the same promises.

3.3.1.4. Regional Synod West submitted a proposed form for use in the churches with its submission.

4. Considerations

4.1. The arguments presented in the overtures demonstrate that it is desirable for the churches to use identical forms for subscription.

4.2. Although consistories/councils and classes already have their own adopted forms, the differences that have crept in over the years make it desirable to bring more uniformity in the manner in which the office bearers subscribe to the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CO Article 26).

4.3. Since all the churches in the federation via the Regional Synods have expressed a desire for a standardized subscription forms, this is a matter that they have in common.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To instruct the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to prepare standardized subscription forms to be used by local councils/consistories, classes, and for the professors of theology.

5.2. To report to the churches with these recommendations at least six months prior to the next general synod.

Synod broke for lunch.

Afternoon Session – Friday, May 11, 2001

Article 73

United Reformed Churches in North America

After noticing that all the brothers were present, the chairman gave the floor to Committee 4. This Committee presented a revision of its report on the URCNA (see Article 67). The following amendment was **adopted** unanimously.

4.6. For the sake of clarity it is important to note that Phase 2 involves the following:
- 4.6.1. The churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defence, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity and discipline;
- 4.6.2. The churches shall consult each other when entering into ecumenical relations with other federations;
- 4.6.3. The churches shall accept each other's attestations, admitting such members to the Lord's table;
- 4.6.4. The churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rules of the respective churches;
- 4.6.5. The churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government, or liturgy are adopted;
- 4.6.6. The churches shall invite and receive each other's ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies as much as regulations permit (Appendix 3 of the Report);
- 4.6.7. Certain forms of cooperation can be explored and implemented, for example, "men's clubs, women's service agencies, Bible studies, speeches or addresses by each other's ministers, cooperation in evangelism." "Meetings of combined consistories (or meetings of consistory committees) should be held regularly to isolate the specific differences that need further attention" (Appendix 12 of the Report).

4.7. Since the implementation of Phase 2 is primarily a local matter, it can vary from place to place, also bearing in mind how much discussion has taken place already between the local Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches.

The chairman called for a new vote on the whole proposal. The following proposal was **adopted** unanimously:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity regarding the United Reformed Churches.

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Aldergrove, London, Burlington-Waterdown, Willoughby Heights, Winnipeg (Grace), Coaldale, Lincoln, Houston, and Orangeville.

1.3. Letter from br. D. Teitsma

2. Admissibility

The letters from the various churches are declared admissible. The letter from br. D. Teitsma interacts with the Report of the CPEU. Reports are sent to the churches for interaction and not to individual members. Individual members must first address their consistories. Therefore, this letter is declared inadmissible (CO

Article 30).

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CPEU re the URC, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CPEU recommends:

"1. That synod thank the URCNA for accepting the CanRC into Phase 1 of their guidelines for ecumenical relations, and express gratitude that with this acceptance via appointed committees much contact could be experienced with the URCNA.

2. That deputies be instructed to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity. This will include the following elements:

1. That the Statement of Agreement with its accompanying time frame be adopted by Synod 2001, and that, with the recognition of the URCNA as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, we move to Phase 2 of the negotiations on the Statement of Strategy (Appendix 12) all with the understanding that both federations are committed to reach the final phase of these discussions in 2004.
2. That special committees be appointed in accordance with the recommendations in the Agreement regarding the church order and theological education, for the purpose of meeting with the URCNA counterparts in the period 2001-2004."

3.3. The **Church at London** comments on various areas of the report. First, concerning joint activities under Phase 2 they state, "we should not act as one, until we are together 'in one house.'" Second, they are concerned that a visitor should not be admitted to the Lord's table unless the elders of the visitor's home congregation attest both to the doctrine and conduct of this person. Third, they support having a federational school to train men for the ministry, rather than having both federational and non-federational schools. Fourth, concerning procedure, London suggests that a draft plan of union be sent back and forth between the CanRC and URC synods until it is acceptable to both.

3.4. The **Church at Burlington-Waterdown** concurs "with the finding that we are at a stage of being able to develop closer contact at phase two."

3.5. The **Church at Willoughby Heights** concurs with the recommendations of the committee. They also state, "although fully supportive of efforts to come to unity with the FRCNA and the OCRC, we believe talks with the FRCNA and the OCRC should not be pursued too vigorously as you can only seriously pursue unity with one federation at a time."

3.6. The **Church at Winnipeg-Grace** concurs with the recommendation of the committee saying, "the churches should continue in establishing unity with courage and with caution."

3.7. The **Church at Coaldale** hopes that the recommendations of the committee will be accepted by Synod, otherwise they "fear that this will cause a major set back in our newly initiated dialogue and unity

discussions with Trinity URC of Lethbridge."

3.8. The **Church at Lincoln** agrees with moving forward to Phase 2. However, they believe that the target date for federative unity by 2004 is unrealistic. They recommend, "that the goal to complete phase 2 of the steps toward federative unity be extended beyond Synod 2004."

3.9. The **Church at Houston** requests synod to judge that, "1. The statement of agreement on the Sacraments of Baptism and Lord's supper not be accepted as it stands. 2. The statement of agreement should read, 'In the attestation the signatories state that they are communicant members not under discipline of a faithful *Reformed* church which fully confesses the doctrines of Scripture *as summarized in the Reformed confessions*.'"

3.10. The **Church at Orangeville** "regrets that the concerns about the United Reformed Churches (URC) raised by the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC)... were not really addressed by the Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod gratefully takes note of the "Statements of Agreement" (Appendix 9 in the Report) and the "Strategy to Church Unity" (Appendix 12 in the Report) as evidence that significant progress has been made towards federative unity in our contact with the URC. These documents should serve as a general directive to the churches for use within their local discussions with United Reformed Churches.

4.2. From all the information contained in the report, Synod agrees with the findings of the committee that sufficient progress has been made that "with the recognition of the URCNA as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, we move to Phase 2 of the negotiations on the Statement of Strategy." The letters from the churches also indicate a desire to step forward in our relationship with the URCNA.

4.3. Some wrong terminology has crept into the CPEU report when it states on pg. 6, "*On the basis of* the Statements of Agreement which are the results of our discussions regarding the marks of the true church ad Art. 29 B.C., we recommend that Synod recognize the URCNA as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ..."(emphasis added). We do not recognize each other on the basis of the Statements of Agreement. Rather, we recognize each other on the basis of Scripture and confessions.

4.4. Although it is good and necessary to have a definite time frame in which to strive for federative unity, it is not clear at this time that we will be able to reach federative unity by the target date of 2004. The report recommends appointing various committees (re: theological education, song book and church order.) It would be beneficial to allow these committees to begin their work. The Lord willing, at Synod 2004 the progress must be reviewed and the matter of the time frame should be readdressed.

4.5. It is very important that both the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches are firmly committed to federative unity. To this

end, local congregations should implement Phase 2 while the congregations resolve to strive for federative unity and to encourage their respective federations towards that goal.

4.6. For the sake of clarity it is important to note that Phase 2 involves the following:

4.6.1. The churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defence, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity and discipline;

4.6.2. The churches shall consult each other when entering into ecumenical relations with other federations;

4.6.3. The churches shall accept each other's attestations, admitting such members to the Lord's table;

4.6.4. The churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rules of the respective churches;

4.6.5. The churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government, or liturgy are adopted;

4.6.6. The churches shall invite and receive each other's ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies as much as regulations permit (Appendix 3 of the Report);

4.6.7. Certain forms of cooperation can be explored and implemented, for example, "men's clubs, women's service agencies, Bible studies, speeches or addresses by each other's ministers, cooperation in evangelism." "Meetings of combined consistories (or meetings of consistory committees) should be held regularly to isolate the specific differences that need further attention" (Appendix 12 of the Report).

4.7. Since the implementation of Phase 2 is primarily a local matter, it can vary from place to place, also bearing in mind how much discussion has taken place already between the local Canadian Reformed and United Reformed churches. In order to work further towards federative unity it will be necessary to appoint committees on the church order and theological education. Synod considers that the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* could deal with the matter of the songbook. These committees will work closely with committees appointed by the URC Synod. These committees should report at regular intervals to the CPEU, which, in turn, will produce a single, comprehensive report, jointly with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URC.

4.8. Moving forward to Phase 2 and activating these committees can only take place if the URC decide at Synod Escondido 2001 to commit themselves to working towards federative unity with the CanRC.

4.9. Should this happen, it will be a major event in the life of our churches. It will also require much work and much wisdom in order to arrive at the goal of federative unity. We can only do this under the Lord's blessing. Therefore, as churches we should express our gratitude to the Lord and ask Him for His further blessing upon our labours.

4.10. Re: letter from **Church at London**:

In their first and fourth concern the Church at London is

essentially proposing a different strategy for church unity, namely, waiting until a "plan of union" is accepted by both churches before pulpit exchange and table fellowship would be possible. The strategy given by the CPEU is based on a common understanding that recognition of one another as true churches (Art. 29 BC) requires an exercising of fellowship (Art. 28) to come to federative unity in due time.

Both the CanRC and URC agree that the table of the Lord must be properly supervised, and they do exercise this supervision. The proposed church order committee will have to come with a recommendation as to how admission to the Lord's table would take place in the new federation. This covers London's second concern.

In their third concern London expresses the desirability of having a federational school for the training of theological students. Synod agrees with this concern and notes that it is already being addressed in the Statements of Agreement.

4.11. Re: letter from **Church at Houston**

The background to Houston's request is that in their local discussions with the URC, there has been disagreement over the interpretation of the Statement of Agreement on the Lord's supper. At present, there are some differences between the URC church order and the CanRC church order on this matter, but this does not prevent local table fellowship in Phase 2. The proposed church order committee will have to come with a recommendation as to how admission to the Lord's table would take place in the new federation.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To acknowledge, with gratitude to the Lord, that the contact with the URC has progressed in such a favourable way.

5.2. To thank the committee for the work done.

5.3. To recognize the United Reformed Churches as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ (Art. 29 BC) and move to Phase 2, as described in consideration 4.6, on the path towards federative unity.

5.4. To encourage local congregations to begin implementing Phase 2 and ask for the Lord's blessing upon this in congregational prayer.

5.5. To appoint a committee re: theological education and a committee re: church order, and to direct the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* to deal with the matter of the songbook.

Article 74

CCCA: General Mandate

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the Mandate of the CCCA. The following was **adopted**.

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the

Americas (Pages 22,23 and 32, 33).

1.2. Letters from the churches at London, Coaldale, Orangeville, Aldergrove.

1.3. Willoughby Heights Church re: PCK in North America.

2. Admissibility

2.1. The letters from the churches are admissible since they interact with the Report of the CCCA.

3. Observations

3.1. Observations from the report of the CCCA.

3.1.1. The CCCA feels restricted in its overall work because distance (the committee is spread over Manitoba and Ontario), with its attendant cost and time restraints, limits the CCCA to only one annual meeting.

3.1.2. Since Synod Fergus 1998 mandated the CCCA to establish and maintain relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship with churches located in the Americas (Acts, art. 72), the CCCA questions why the CPEU (responsible for contact with the OCRC, URCNA and the FRCNA) was not placed under the umbrella of the CCCA as a subcommittee.

3.1.3. The CCCA asks what its responsibility is towards the Reformed Churches of Brazil (IRB). Further, it asks which subcommittee of the CCCA would be responsible.

3.1.4. The CCCA asks what it should do if a subcommittee takes a different direction than desired by the whole committee, "Can a report by a subcommittee be overruled by the other members who are not part of that subcommittee?"

3.1.5. Since the ERQ, OPC and RCUS are involved with NAPARC, and since the membership of the CRC has been suspended, the CCCA requests permission of Synod to send an observer to a future meeting of NAPARC to investigate its character and the usefulness of joining this organization.

3.2. Observations from the churches.

3.2.1. The **Church at London** recommends that in view of the appeals the CanRC sent to the CRC in 1963 and 1977, Synod not permit the CCCA to send an observer to investigate NAPARC. The CRC has not been expelled, only suspended.

3.2.2. The **Church at Orangeville** suggests that the CCCA be responsible for contact with all churches in the Americas including the ones with which the CPEU is presently in discussion; therefore, according to Orangeville, the CPEU should be made a subcommittee of the CCCA.

3.2.3. The **Church at Orangeville** suggests that the CCCA bring one report to synod rather than have each subcommittee submit its own report (the possibility for minority reports ought to be left open).

3.2.4. The **Church at Willoughby Heights** has noticed that our sister churches, the PCK, have some 71 congregations in North America and recommends that contact with the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America be included in the CCCA's mandate.

3.2.5. The **Church at Aldergrove** requests synod to separate and distinguish the various mandates and functions of the CRCA, the CCCA and the CPEU. It also asks that all committees that submit reports to the churches verify receipt of the reports.

4. Considerations

4.1. The CCCA should be able to communicate well enough by modern means of communication. As long as the members of the subcommittees live in close proximity, the work should be able to proceed well.

4.2. The difference between the CCCA and the CPEU is that the CCCA works towards regulation for and implementation of ecclesiastical fellowship while the CPEU works towards regulation for and implementation of federative unity. This difference in task description warrants the CPEU remaining a committee independent of the CCCA. The suggestion of the Church at Orangeville in this respect should not be taken over.

4.3. Since the IRB is largely the result of God blessing our mission efforts in Brazil, it is appropriate to enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with this new federation of churches. The CCCA ought to implement this under the adopted rules.

4.4. The CCCA should submit one report. In case a subcommittee has a different opinion it can submit a minority report. The suggestion of the church of Orangeville in this respect is correct.

4.5. To send an observer to NAPARC is warranted because of our growing relationships with the ERQ, OPC and RCUS.

4.6. The Church at London suggests that NAPARC is "not yet" prepared to expel the CRC and that therefore we ought not to send an observer. In fact NAPARC is dealing with the suspension and expulsion of the CRC in a forthright and orderly way. Although the CRCA has followed a policy of non-involvement (Appendix 5 p. 274 Acts Synod Fergus 1998), Synod considers that it would be worthwhile to send observers to NAPARC. Furthermore it ought to be recognized that the CCCA is only asking to send an observer to NAPARC.

4.7. The Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America deserve our attention considering that, according to the Church at Willoughby Heights, they belong to the PCK (Kosin). It is therefore logical that contact with these churches be mandated to the CCCA.

4.8. Synod considers that the CCCA need not verify receipt of their reports since there are other ways for a church to notice whether it has not received committee reports, which other churches have. Synod considers that with the common use of email it would be useful for all committees henceforth to email their report to all the consistories, with a request for confirmation of receipt, along with a notice that a hardcopy will follow.

4.9. Since the CCCA needs to travel, funds need to be placed at its disposal.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the CCCA, as well as its subcommittees, for the work

done and presented.

5.2. To appoint a CCCA of 9 men which will divide all the work relating to churches in the Americas among as many subcommittees as necessary.

5.3. To mandate the CCCA to:

5.3.1. Continue contact with all those churches in the Americas with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship according to the adopted rules, and in accordance with the mandates described in decisions taken by Synod with respect to the churches with which we have ongoing relationships;

5.3.2. Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship in the Americas;

5.3.3. Respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas;

5.3.4. Report on their findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work (in accordance with Consideration 4.8) six months prior to the convening of the next General Synod.

5.4. To allocate $ 8,000.00 for the work of the CCCA.

5.5. To mandate the CCCA to implement and maintain on behalf of the churches a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the churches of the IRB under the adopted rules (see Article 55, Recommendation 4).

5.6. To mandate the CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America as per information submitted by the Church at Willoughby Heights.

5.7. To allow the CCCA to send an observer, at its own discretion, to future meetings of NAPARC to investigate its usefulness and possible membership in this organization.

Article 75

Delegates to General Synod

Committee 2 presented its proposal regarding increasing the number of delegates to General Synods. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   Regional Synod West suggesting each Regional Synod delegate six ministers and six elders.
2. **Admissibility**
   The overture is admissible.
3. **Observations**

3.1. Regional Synod agreed with two overtures it received from Classes in its region which request a change to CO Article 46. The suggested change is to delegate six ministers and six elders to General Synod from each Regional Synod, instead of the present four ministers and four elders.

3.2. The reasons given by the various Classes include:

3.2.1. Classis Alberta/Manitoba recognizes an increase in the number of churches and suggests that an increase in the number of delegates would allow for matters to be dealt with more efficiently

3.2.2. Classis Pacific East also recognizes an increase in the number of churches and suggests that an increase in the number of delegates would give more representation to the churches. They also believe that an increase in delegates would promote the perception that "General Synod would deal with items on its agenda with procedural fairness and due process."

4. Considerations

4.1. Classis Alberta/Manitoba simply states the opinion that an increase in delegates will allow for matters to be dealt with more efficiently. There is no evidence that the workload of General Synods has increased along with the increase in the number of churches.

4.2. The argument that an increase of delegates would give more representation to the churches and that this is necessary due to the increase in churches misses the important point that General Synods are not representative assemblies. Reformed Church polity works with the principle of delegation. Further, an increase of delegates cannot ensure proportionate representation from the various classes and churches since delegates are elected in a free vote.

4.3. The second argument of Classis Pacific East that by increasing delegation "the perception would be promoted" that "General Synod will deal with items on its agenda with procedural fairness and due process" is also lacking. The key word is "perception." Classis Pacific East does not say there is no procedural fairness and due process but is concerned merely with "perception." This is not a good ground to make changes in delegation.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide to deny the overture.

Article 76

Appeal Lynden re: Article 51 IV. B. (p. 43) Acts Synod Fergus

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the appeal of the Church at Lynden re: Article 51 IV. B. (p. 43) Acts Synod Fergus. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. Material

Appeal from the Church at Lynden, Wash. against art. 51. IV.B (p.43) Acts Synod Fergus 1998.

2. Admissibility

This appeal is declared admissible since it interacts with a decision of Synod Fergus 1998.

3. Observations

3.1. The Church at Lynden complains that Synod stated that in "the RCUS the Lord's supper is not fenced in a manner that is compatible with our Reformed understanding of what the Bible requires on this point."

3.2. The Church at Lynden considers that Synod is making "our

Reformed understanding of what the Bible requires" the standard by which the RCUS is to be judged and to which the RCUS is to measure up. "Incompatibility" with "our Reformed understanding of what the Bible requires" is judged to be unacceptable.

3.3. The Church at Lynden requests Synod "to judge that Synod 1998 was not clear as to the normative standard by which a church is to be measured in respect to the fencing of the Lord's table. Synod 1998 may not judge other churches in the matter of fencing the Lord's table apart from the normative standard which we acknowledge."

4. Considerations

4.1. The criteria for judging doctrine and practice may only be Scripture, Confessions and Church Order.

4.2. The impression left by Synod Fergus 1998 is that "our" Reformed understanding of what the Bible requires might be something other than what Scripture and Confessions actually require.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide that Synod Fergus 1998 was not clear as to the normative standard by which a church is to be measured in respect to the fencing of the Lord's table when it introduced the terminology "our Reformed understanding."

Article 77

Appeal: Church at London re: Article 51 of Synod Fergus, 1998.

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the appeal of the Church at London re: Article 51, Synod Fergus 1998. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. Material

Letter of the Church at London.

2. Admissibility

This letter is declared admissible since it interacts with the decisions of Synod Fergus 1998.

3. Observations

The Church at London lodges an appeal against Article 51 of Synod Fergus 1998. In 1998 London considered that the recommendation of the CRCA to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS was premature, for five reasons, as found in art. 51 III, b, 1 a-e p.42. Synod Fergus 1998 considered London's statement "judging the doctrinal integrity of the RCUS" and "calling into question the statement of the CRCA that as we share the same confessions we can conclude that the sacraments are understood scripturally." The Church at London finds that Synod Fergus 1998 contradicted itself, by on the one hand denying London its concerns, while on the other hand mandating the CRCA to address the very points raised by the Church at London, particularly the issue of doctrinal integrity of the RCUS.

4. Considerations

4.1. It appears that Synod Fergus 1998 overstated itself when declaring that the Church at London judged the doctrinal integrity of the RCUS, since the Church at London was not arguing the statement of the CRCA, but whether the doctrinal standards are faithfully upheld

and applied.

4.2. Synod Fergus 1998 stated in Consideration D page 43, "…at the same time honesty demands that we admit to diversity in understanding among our churches as well." This indicates an admission on the part of Synod that London was correct, but Synod did speak about the Canadian Reformed Churches, while the Church at London is concerned with the practices of the RCUS.

4.3. The Church at London is correct in observing that the statement of the CRCA could be misleading since it is too general.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. That the Church at London did not judge the doctrinal integrity of the RCUS, rather, it requested verification of the faithful upholding and application of the Confessions.

5.2. That Synod Fergus 1998 erred in its interpretation of the first argument of the Church at London.

Article 78

Heidelberg Catechism

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the letter from Regional Synod West of December 5, 2000 regarding the Heidelberg Catechism. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from Regional Synod West of December 5, 2000 along with some enclosed information.

2. Admissibility

The letter is declared admissible because a Regional Synod submits it.

3. Observations

3.1. Regional Synod West of December 5, 2000 informs General Synod that it did not grant the request of Classis Pacific West of April 25 to overture General Synod 2001 regarding proposed improvements to the translation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

3.2. Regional Synod West of December 5, 2000 decided nevertheless to forward the information contained in this overture to General Synod for consideration by the *Book of Praise* committee.

4. Considerations

4.1. It is somewhat puzzling why Regional Synod first decided not to grant the request of Classis Pacific West and subsequently to pass on the overture of Classis to General Synod.

4.2. Regional Synod provides no grounds either for not granting the request or for passing on the overture, which had just been denied.

4.3. In spite of these considerations in 4.1 and 4.2, Synod considers that the provided material regarding the possible changes to the Heidelberg Catechism is significant enough for further study. This is obviously the intention of Regional Synod.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to forward this information to the Standing Committee for the

Book of Praise for its consideration.
The chairman bade farewell to Rev. R. Stienstra, the delegate from the URCNA.
Synod then broke for supper.

Evening Session – Friday, May 11, 2001

Article 79

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. Psalm 105:1,3 was sung. Roll call showed all were present.

Article 80

CRCA: Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN)

Committee 3 presented the following report on the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CRCA regarding the relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

1.2. Letters from the churches at London, Owen Sound, Elora, Willoughby Heights, Brampton, Fergus, Orangeville, Burlington-Ebenezer, and Lincoln.

2. Admissibility

` Synod decides to declare the letters mentioned in 1.2 above as admissible since they all deal with the recommendations of the report of the CRCA.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA re: the GKN, which is included as an appendix in the Acts of Synod, serves as observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that Synod decide:

3.2.1. Continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules.

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

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

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

3.3. The Churches at London, Owen Sound, Elora, Brampton, Fergus,

Orangeville, Burlington-Ebenezer, and Lincoln request Synod to include in the list of concerns expressed in 3.2.4 above, the items mentioned as concerns under 5.4 and 5.5 of the report: interpretation of Lord's Day 38, structural changes in the examinations for the ministry, changes to the liturgy, allowing celebration of the Lord's supper by army chaplains to all soldiers present at a worship service, and the enormous amount of contacts with churches all over the world.

3.4. The Churches at London, Brampton and Orangeville urge Synod not just to conclude that the GKN seem to be drifting away from the old Reformed paths, but to issue the serious admonition that they are drifting away from the old Reformed paths as evident in the concerns referred to 3.3 above.

3.5. The Churches at London and Willoughby Heights request Synod to instruct the CRCA to express to the GKN the disappointment of the CanRC that the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship were not adhered to by the GKN when establishing a sister church relationship with the OPC.

3.6. The Churches at London and Brampton emphasize the need to deal more thoroughly with the matter of changes to the Form for Marriage.

3.7. The Church at London requests Synod to mandate the CRCA to send a letter of appeal to the GKN requesting that they rescind their decision allowing communicant women the right to vote in the election of office bearers. London disagrees with the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, given by Synod Ommen (1993), and warns that the decision of Synod Ommen, upheld by Synod Berkel En Rodenrijs (1996) is "the first beginnings of female rule in the church of Christ."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod agrees with the conclusions of CRCA in 5.2.1 and 5.5.1, namely, that the discussion concerning what is called "the blessing elder" should be terminated.

4.2. Although the discussion concerning the rule "to inform the sister churches when entering into relations with third parties" seems to be exhausted (see CRCA Report 5.2.2), there is still reason to question the approach of the GKN in this matter since Synod Leusden 1999 proceeded with corresponding relations with the OPC without proper communications with the CanRC.

4.3. Contrary to what is stated by the Church in London, as well as in 5.12 of the CRCA Report, the GKN did not enter into a sister church relationship with the OPC. According to article 91 of the Acts of Synod Leusden, the GKN accepted "corresponding relations" with the OPC. This is the second of three levels of relations adopted by the OPC. The purpose is to work towards the level of full ecclesiastical fellowship. Synod Leusden has declared that working towards this goal has to be done in consultation with the CanRC. This means at this point in time there is no ground to express disappointment or to issue an admonition for not adhering to the

rules for ecclesiastical fellowship. It will be good, however, to stay in touch with the deputies with the GKN regarding the relationship with the OPC.

4.4. Although the delegate of the CanRC to Synod Leusden mentioned the matter of changes to the Form for Marriage in his speech to Synod, there is no evidence in the CRCA report that the CRCA pursued the instruction of Synod Fergus to discuss the alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage. This is understandable, as the CRCA did not have ready access to the drastically renewed form that was adopted by Synod Leusden until shortly before its report had to be sent to the churches. It is important to study this form and to discuss it with the GKN, which would also serve the churches at London and Brampton who speak about "diminishing the Scriptural teaching" or "weakening the Scriptural language." It can then be seen whether the omission of the words "obey and submit" does indeed mean that the Scriptural teaching about marriage in this form as a whole is flawed.

4.5. In response to several letters from the churches, the CRCA rightly states that it is not its task to investigate and pursue matters on information from the press. The CRCA can only execute the first rule for ecclesiastical fellowship on the basis of official decisions as found in acts and minutes. The churches that have concerns about developments in churches with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship, and want to address those concerns directly to the CRCA (Acts Synod Fergus article 40 V E) should take this into consideration. Should such churches become convinced of a problem and want to address it, they should make their own careful examination and then present their findings to the CRCA.

4.6. The Churches at London, Owen Sound, Elora, Brampton, Fergus, Orangeville, Burlington-Ebenezer, and Lincoln rightly point out that it is not clear why some of the items gleaned from the Acts of Synod Leusden that are mentioned as reason for concern in Section 5.5.3 do not return among the issues listed in Recommendation 5.6.4. which should be presented to the next Synod of the GKN as evidence for the conclusion that the GKN seem to be drifting away from the old Reformed paths.

4.7. Synod appreciates that the CRCA carefully monitors and evaluates the developments in the GKN as they appear in the decisions of the last general synods. This is fully in line with Rule 1 of the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship. It is however to be regretted that the evaluation of the CRCA does not go any further than stating that certain developments are departing from long standing principled traditions, or that they differ from what was traditionally understood, or that they seem to depart from a long and well worn old Reformed path. If there is a need to sound a warning cry in the direction of the GKN because of deviations from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, it is our responsibility as sister churches to provide the necessary evidence from the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions, and to appeal to the GKN

on that basis. Departure from a long, traditional and well-worn path is not necessarily wrong. A thorough study and evaluation of the developments in the GKN in that light would also show that not every change in church life carries the same weight.

4.8. The judgment requested by the Churches at London, Brampton and Orangeville (3.4) can only be made if a thorough study and evaluation of the developments in the GKN would show that they deviate from the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions.

4.9. It would not be correct to mandate the CRCA to send a letter of appeal on behalf of the CanRC to the GKN, requesting that they rescind their decision allowing communicant women the right to vote. The reason for this is that we ourselves have not made a final decision in the matter of women's voting in the church.

4.10. The CRCA report (5.4.7 and 5.5.3.4) gives the impression that Synod Leusden gave a general approval, which would allow Reformed ministers who serve as army chaplains to administer the Lord's supper to all soldiers present at a service regardless of church affiliation. This matter was also dealt with in the submissions from various churches. This impression by the CRCA is, however, not entirely correct. The complete decision in Article 70 of Synod Leusden reads as follows (dynamic equivalent translation): "Synod decides to mandate deputies to instruct the serving army chaplain for exceptional situations in crisis and war zones that he:

a. must be able to proclaim God's Word in its fullness;
b. must be able to give spiritual care to the soldiers entrusted to his care;
c. can celebrate and administer the Lord's supper under the following conditions:
    i. In the service, the character of the Christian congregation must be maintained;
    ii. He invites only those who are also allowed to attend in their own congregation;
    iii. He must point out to them their personal responsibility in doctrine and life."

This instruction is temporary and the deputies for spiritual care in the military are instructed to study this matter further and come with more pertinent proposals to the next Synod.

4.11. Synod understands that Synod Leusden would allow army chaplains to administer the Lord's supper to all soldiers present at a worship service only under an exceptional situation of crisis in a time of war. Further, it appreciates that Synod Leusden provides certain specific conditions as mentioned above, and that this is a temporary instruction that requires more study. It is important that our sister churches maintain Articles 60 and 61 of their Church Order and not ignore the Scriptural teaching about the Lord's supper as summarized in the Reformed Confessions. Article 35 of the Belgic Confession and Lord's Day 28-30 of the Heidelberg Catechism teach us that the Lord's supper is to be celebrated in a worship service of the congregation and that admission to the Lord's supper is to be

supervised by the consistory.

4.12. Synod agrees with the CRCA when it cautions not to put the GKN to greater scrutiny than the other churches in ecclesiastical fellowship but to remain fair when we are faced with the developments or changes in their church life. The fact that there are strong historic ties and that there are many personal contacts between friends and family in Canada and The Netherlands does not imply that church life in both federations must be identical. Without jeopardizing our responsibility as sister churches formulated in the first rule for ecclesiastical fellowship, the CanRC should respect the reality that throughout fifty years of church life, different developments take place.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To continue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules.

5.2. To conclude that the matter of the "blessing elder" has been dealt with sufficiently.

5.3. To instruct the CRCA:

5.3.1. To stay in touch with the deputies of the GKN concerning the relationship with the OPC in light of Rule 3 of ecclesiastical fellowship;

5.3.2. To study the Form for the Solemnization for Marriage of Synod Leusden, to discuss the changes with the deputies of the GKN, and to report to the next Synod whether this new Form does indeed diminish or weaken the Scriptural teaching about marriage;

5.3.3. To make more thorough study of the concerns mentioned in its Report to determine whether the CanRC should approach the sister churches in The Netherlands in accordance with Rule 1 of the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship with the warning that they are deviating from their Reformed basis in the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity;

5.3.4. To express to the GKN the disappointment that the CanRC were not informed that a major change to the Church Order was considered when revisions were prepared in the manner of ecclesiastical examinations;

5.3.5. To pass on consideration 4.11 above to the GKN in light of Synod Leusden's decision regarding the administration of the Lord's supper by army chaplains.

An amendment was made and seconded to replace the last line of 4.9 to read, "The reason for this is that Synod 1983 considered that "there is an obvious lack of consensus in our churches (Synod Cloverdale, Art. 160 C 1; cf. Synod Abbotsford 1995 p. 175)."

This was **defeated**.

The proposal of the committee was **adopted**.

Article 81

Church Order Article 4B2

Committee 3 presented its proposal regarding the suggested change to Article 4B2.

1. Material

1.1. Proposal by Regional Synod East of November 10-12, 1999.

1.2. Letter from the Church at Ottawa.

2. Admissibility

The two items are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Regional Synod East proposes "to change Article 4B2 as follows: 'have served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, and have been <u>well tested for a reasonable period of time and</u> examined by the classis in which they live, with due observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for that purpose: or …'" (the underlined words are the addition).

3.2. The Church at Ottawa believes this addition contains enough ambiguity in it to undermine its intention. Ottawa mentions the following:

3.2.1. There is no specification as to the length of the time period or who determines it.

3.2.2. There is no specification as to what determines being "well tested." The Church of Ottawa believes that the churches would be better served by inserting the word "carefully" into the clause that speaks about classical examinations as in CO Article 7, or make the recommendation that the general ecclesiastical regulations include the possibility of preaching consent for these ministers, as is done with students of theology.

4. Considerations

4.1. The proposal from Regional Synod East seeks additional assurance that ministers coming from outside our federation are suitable for the ministry according to 1 Timothy 5:22, and must first be well tested as in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:10.

4.2. Even though some safeguards are in place (CO Article 4), this does not exclude having some additional safeguards. Experience has shown that extra care is required.

4.3. Practical regulations as to what determines "well tested" and what will be a reasonable period of time are the responsibility of Classis.

4.4. Ottawa speaks about the ambiguity of the addition but does not recommend that Synod deny the proposal of Regional Synod East. The proposed changes by Ottawa cannot be granted since they need to be brought through the ecclesiastical assemblies.

5. Recommendations

To make the change to the Church Order, Article 4B2, as proposed by Regional Synod East and to instruct the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to insert the change into the *Book of Praise*.

A notice of motion was given.

The committee proposal was put to a vote. Synod **adopted** the proposal.

Article 82

Adjournment

Br. E. Kampen led the closing devotions. He read from I Corinthians 4:1-5 and gave a brief meditation. After Psalm 34:1,2,3 was sung he led in prayer. The chairman bade farewell to br. D. Stelpstra, the delegate from the RCUS. The meeting was adjourned.

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Morning Session – Monday, May 14, 2001

Article 83

Opening and Adoption of the Acts

1. Rev. Cl. Stam reopened the meeting. He read from Ecclesiastes 4:1-3. After he gave a brief meditation he requested Psalm 22:10,11 to be sung. Following this he led in prayer.
2. Roll call was held. Br. W. Gortemaker was absent with notice.
3. The Acts of May 11, 2001 (Articles 69-82) were adopted.
4. Synod broke for committee work.

Afternoon Session – Monday, May 14, 2001

Article 84

Reopening

The vice-chairman reopened the meeting. Roll call was held. Br. W. Gortemaker had arrived. Rev. Cl. Stam was absent.

Article 85

Church at Willoughby Heights: Creation issue in ecclesiastical contacts

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the request from the Church at Willoughby Heights to include the matter of the doctrine of creation in the various contacts we have with other church federations. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. **Material**
   Willoughby Heights Church: Overture Regarding the Days of Creation.
2. **Admissibility**
   The overture is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The Church at Willoughby Heights has learned from the ecclesiastical press that some of the churches with which we have contact do not show unanimity on the doctrine of creation. They are concerned that any movement away from the teaching that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them in six days of morning and evening will undermine the teachings of creation, redemption and consummation, and will take away from the greatness and majesty of God and his Word.

3.2. The Church at Willoughby Heights requests Synod to mandate the committees responsible for establishing contacts with other churches to pay attention to the way the doctrine of creation is understood, so that we may be assured that eventual contact or unity will be based on a true unity of faith in the doctrines from creation through redemption to consummation.

4. Considerations

4.1. Willoughby Heights's consideration that any undermining of the doctrine of creation will also undermine the doctrines of redemption and consummation, and will detract from the greatness and majesty of God, is correct. The teaching of Scripture forms a unity.

4.2. In our contacts with other churches, we need to ensure that they are faithful to their confessions with respect to *every* doctrine, including the doctrine of creation.

4.3. Synod has confidence that our various committees ascertain whether or not the churches with which we have contact are and remain faithful to their confessional positions.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to send considerations 4.1,2,3 to the Church at Willoughby Heights as a response to its letter.

Article 86

***Book of Praise* - Ordinations Forms: Change answer to "I do"**

Committee 3 presented its proposal regarding the overture from Regional Synod West to change the answer in the forms for ordination to "I do." Synod **adopted** the following:

1. Material

Letter from Regional Synod West, Dec. 5, 2000.

2. Admissibility

Regional Synod West provides new grounds for dealing with the matter. This letter is therefore admissible (CO Article 33).

3. Observations

3.1. Regional Synod West overtures General Synod 2001 to change the expected answer in the Forms for Ordination to "I do."

3.2. Regional Synod points out that Synod Cloverdale 1983 made revisions to the current Liturgical Forms. Without grounds Synod changed the expected answer "I do" in the Forms for the Ordination

of Elders and Deacons to read, "I do with all my heart."

3.3. Regional Synod notes that "Synod 1989 dealt with an appeal concerning this change brought by a brother who felt it went against his conscience 'to say more than what God teaches in His Word.'" Synod 1989 defended the change by speaking of the solemnity of a vow (Acts 1989, Art. 108, p. 76).

3.4. Regional Synod is of the opinion "that the matter can be proposed again on the new ground that the Forms for Ordination are not in harmony with the other Liturgical Forms which expect a simple 'I do' in response to questions asked. It appears that the Synods which dealt with the matter thought of unity only among the Forms for Ordination and not of unity among all the Liturgical Forms."

3.5. Regional Synod argues that: "The existing divergence is arbitrary, giving the impression that the vows for the offices are in a higher category than vows made in connection with baptism, profession of faith or marriage. Considering that it is the Forms pertaining to the office which have a more ostentatious answer, unwittingly one may rekindle the idea that the vows of the 'clergy' are more weighty than those of the 'laity.'"

3.6. Regional Synod also makes reference to the forms used by the Dutch sister churches, "where the expected answer consistently is 'Ja' (Yes)."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod agrees with Regional Synod West that there should be consistency between the expected answers as found in the various forms that are in use in the churches.

4.2. The present inconsistency can indeed feed the notion that the vows in the Forms for Ordination are weightier than other vows made in the church.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. That the expected answer to the questions posed in the Forms for Ordination should be changed to "I do."

5.2. To mandate the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to incorporate this change in future editions of the *Book of Praise*.

Article 87

Appeals of the Church at Barrhead and Br. B. Wielenga: Article 51 of Synod Fergus 1998

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the appeals from the Church at Barrhead and br. B. Wielenga regarding Article 51 of Synod Fergus 1998. Synod **adopted** the following:

1. Material

1.1. Appeal of the Church at Barrhead.

1.2. Appeal of Br. Bill Wielenga.

2. Admissibility

2.1. The appeal of the Church at Barrhead is declared admissible since this church interacts with a decision of a major assembly.

2.2. The appeal of br. Bill Wielenga is declared inadmissible since the brother has not followed the ecclesiastical way by presenting his objections to the council of his church (CO Articles 30 & 31).

3. Observations

3.1. The Church at Barrhead is concerned that Synod Fergus 1998 (in Article 51, III,b,1,d; V,E; V,D) elevated Canadian Reformed traditions and practices re: Sunday observance to definitive scriptural teaching.

3.2. The Church at Barrhead asks Synod "to clarify for the committee (CCRCUS) which practices of our Lord's Day observances are scriptural imperatives (and therefore to be binding as condition for unity) and which practices are there by way of historically evolved tradition."

3.3. The Church at Barrhead helpfully points out that the Constitution (Church Order) of the RCUS says the following about Sunday observance:

3.3.1. Article 178. The essential parts of public worship are a call to worship, salutation, invocation, singing, prayer, reading of the Word, preaching a sermon, giving the offerings, the benediction, and the doxology. These elements of worship approved or recommended by the Synod shall be used in the regular Lord's Day service.

3.3.2. Article 180. The Lord's Day (Sunday) shall be kept a holy day, devoted to the public worship of the Lord, to reading of the holy Scriptures, to private devotions, and to works of love and mercy.

3.4. The RCUS subscribes to the Heidelberg Catechism, which speaks of Sunday as "a day of rest."

4. Considerations

4.1. In Article 51, IV.E, Synod Fergus 1998 was addressing the activities of individual members in some RCUS congregations. On the basis of that, Synod Fergus 1998 mandated the committee "To discuss the matter of Sunday observance." Here Synod Fergus 1998 deduced that there was a problem with the principle of Sunday observance because of certain practices of individuals.

4.2. Synod Fergus 1998 would have done better to speak in terms of Reformed churches needing to hold to their confessions and church order (re: the Sunday [the Lord's Day is a holy day and a day of rest]) rather than listing in detail such matters as going out for dinner on Sunday and working due to economic pressure.

4.3. Re: the matter of having only one worship service per Lord's Day, Synod refers the Church at Barrhead to Article 59, Observations 3.3.1, 3.3.4 and 3.3.8, Consideration 4.2 and Recommendation 5.4 (of these Acts).

4.4. We must judge other churches by their confessions and church order (i.e., their official positions) and not by the practices of individual members.

4.5. Synod is not called to produce a list of what one is and is not allowed to do on the Sunday; rather, Synod mandates committees to speak to churches with which they have contact about faithfulness to Scripture, Confessions and Church Order.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide that since the CCRCUS knows that it must discuss any and all matters on the basis of Scripture, Confessions and Church Order, it does not need any further instructions.

Article 88

***Book of Praise*: Letter from Church at Langley**

The chairman arrived. The vice-chairman gave over the chair. Committee 3 presented its proposal concerning the letter from the Church of Langley with suggestions and concerns about the *Book of Praise*. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the Church at Langley containing some suggestions and concerns regarding the *Book of Praise*.

2. Observations

The Church at Langley offers suggestions and expresses its concerns under the following headings: a) to modernize carefully the language used in the Psalm section of the *Book of Praise;* b) to revise the Hymn section; c) to expand on the mandate of the Standing Committee; and d) to appoint more qualified members to the Standing Committee.

3. Considerations

3.1. The letter from the Church at Langley contains proposals that should have come on the agenda of Synod in the ecclesiastical way: via Classis and Regional Synod (CO Article 30).

3.2. The Church at Langley could direct various suggestions and concerns to the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* for consideration.

4. Recommendation

Synod declare the letter from the Church at Langley inadmissible.

Article 89

***Book of Praise*: Letters from br. D. Teitsma**

Committee 3 presented its proposal concerning the letters from br. D. Teitsma with suggestions and concerns about the *Book of Praise*. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letters from brother D. Teitsma containing some suggestions and concerns regarding the *Book of Praise*.

2. Observations

2.1. Brother D. Teitsma interacts with matters dealt with by Regional Synod West December 2000, and provides information, suggestions and concerns re: an overture by the Church at Abbotsford presented at that Regional Synod.

2.2. Brother Teitsma also makes a proposal to have the book, "Op Weg Naar Een Englse Reformatorische Psalmbundel" (Report by deputies to Synod Homewood-Carman 1958) translated and made available.

3. Considerations

3.1. The letters from brother D. Teitsma contain suggestions and concerns that should have come on the agenda of Synod in the ecclesiastical way: via Classis and Regional Synod (CO Article 30).

3.2. Brother D. Teitsma could direct various suggestions and concerns to the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* for consideration.

4. Recommendation

Synod declare the letters from brother D. Teitsma inadmissible.

Article 90

***Book of Praise*: Church at London re: Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons**

Committee 3 presented its proposal regarding the letter from the Church at London regarding the Form for Ordination. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the Church at London suggesting changes to the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons.

2. Observations

The Church at London has observed that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided to add a sentence to the charge to the deacons in the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, "Encourage the congregation to do good to all men especially to those of the household of faith" (Acts of Synod Kelmscott 1996, Article 89, Appendix P). The Church at London requests Synod Neerlandia "to instruct the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to incorporate this change in our liturgical forms."

3. Considerations

3.1. This matter should have come on the agenda of Synod in the ecclesiastical way: via Classis and Regional Synod (CO Article 30).

3.2. The Church at London could direct its suggestion to the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* for consideration.

4. Recommendation

Synod declare the letter from the Church at London inadmissible.

Article 91

***Book of Praise*: Church at Owen Sound re: NIV references**.

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the letter of the Church at Owen Sound. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the Church at Owen Sound appealing the decision of Synod Fergus, Article 140,IV,C,1, "to mandate the Committee to prepare the prose section of the *Book of Praise* with NIV references …"

2. Admissibility

The letter from the Church at Owen Sound is admissible since it is an appeal against a decision of the previous Synod.

3. Observations

3.1. Owen Sound requests Synod 2001 not to implement changes in the prose section of the *Book of Praise* with NIV references. The grounds for this request are:

3.1.1. Many churches have not switched to the NIV;

3.1.2. Synod 1995 recommended the NIV for use in the churches, but left it in the freedom of the churches if they felt compelled to use another translation, i.e., the NKJV or the NASB;

3.1.3. Owen Sound informs Synod that it has chosen to use the NKJV rather than the NIV;

3.1.4. The Australian churches that also use the *Book of Praise* use the NKJV rather than the NIV.

4. Considerations

4.1. It should be noted that the RSV is not in use within our churches any longer. It will therefore be beneficial to the churches to make changes in the prose section of the *Book of Praise* that reflect the fact that we have moved away from the RSV to a new translation.

4.2. Since Synod Abbotsford 1995, the large majority of the CanRC have switched to the NIV. This makes it a logical step to adjust the prose section of the *Book of Praise* in accordance with the NIV.

4.3. Synod realizes that this may cause some inconvenience for the churches that have chosen to use the NKJV or the NASB. However, when these churches decided to adopt the use of the NKJV or the NASB, they should have considered the possible consequences with respect to the use of the *Book of Praise*.

4.4. It is to be appreciated that the Australian churches use the *Book of Praise*. We certainly value and welcome any input from them in regards to the *Book of Praise*. However, the *Book of Praise* is published under the responsibility of the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* of the CanRC, and reflects the decisions of our General Synods.

4.5. It is not clear how the fact that there is a variety of Bible Translations in use among our churches could possibly be taken into consideration when changes are being made to our *Book of Praise*.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to deny the appeal of Owen Sound.

Article 92

Committee for Promotions of Ecclesiastical Unity: Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

Committee 4 presented its proposal regarding the Free Reformed Churches in North America. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity with addendum regarding the Free Reformed Churches of North America.

1.2. Letter from the Church at Willoughby Heights.

2. Admissibility

The letter from the Church at Willoughby Heights is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CPEU with addendum re: the FRCNA, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as observations.

3.2. The CPEU recommends:

"3. That synod acknowledge that the CanRC have been received into the stage of 'limited contact' of the FRCNA unity guidelines at the FRCNA synod May, 2000, and thank the FRCNA for this initiative, expressing the hope that it may lead to federative unity.

4. That the Committee continue dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches of North America with a view to promoting federative unity, and identifying whatever obstacles there may be with the FRCNA on this path."

3.3. The FRCNA definition of "limited contact" can be found in Appendix 15 of the CPEU report.

3.4. The Church at Willoughby Heights states, "Although fully supportive of efforts to come to unity with the FRCNA and the OCRC, we believe talks with the FRCNA and the OCRC should not be pursued too vigorously as you can only seriously pursue unity with one federation at a time."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod considers that being received into the stage of "limited contact" with the FRCNA is a significant and positive development.

4.2. Since our churches have been received into the stage of "limited contact," it is appropriate that we receive their delegates at our synods and send copies of our Acts of Synod to them.

4.3. Synod acknowledges the concern of the Church at Willoughby Heights. However, federative unity should be pursued as best as time and opportunities allow.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To acknowledge that the CanRCs have been received into the stage of "limited contact" of the FRCNA unity guidelines at the FRCNA Synod May, 2000, and thank the FRCNA for this initiative.

5.2. To receive their delegates at our synods and send copies of our Acts of Synod to them.

5.3. To continue dialogue with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path.

Article 93

Committee for Promotions of Ecclesiastical Unity: Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches

Committee 4 presented its proposal regarding the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches in North America. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity regarding the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches.

1.2. Letter from the Church at Willoughby Heights.

2. Admissibility

The letter from the Church at Willoughby Heights is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CPEU re: the OCRC, which is included as an appendix in the Acts, serves as observations.

3.2. The CPEU report indicates, "so far no formal discussions have been initiated" with the OCRC.

3.3. The CPEU suggests: "a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the Orthodox Reformed Churches should be mandated by Synod."

3.4. The CPEU recommends:

"5. That the Committee represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity.

6. That local churches with OCR churches in their vicinity be encouraged to initiate local contacts with these churches, out of which eventually more formal federative talks may evolve."

3.5. The Church at Willoughby Heights states, "although fully supportive of efforts to come to unity with the FRCNA and the OCRC, we believe talks with the FRCNA and the OCRC should not be pursued too vigorously as you can only seriously pursue unity with one federation at a time."

4. Considerations

4.1. Since the OCRC have the same basis, namely the Word of God summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, it is important to encourage further discussion with them both on the federative and local level.

4.2. Synod acknowledges the concern of the Church at Willoughby Heights. However, federative unity should be pursued as best as time and opportunities allow.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. That the Committee represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity.

5.2. That those local churches with OCR churches in their vicinity be encouraged to initiate contacts with these churches.

Article 94

Committee for Promotions of Ecclesiastical Unity: Guidelines for Federative Unity

Committee 4 presented its proposal regarding the Guidelines for Federative Unity. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Section E of the CPEU report.

1.2. Letter from the Church at Aldergrove.

2. Admissibility

The letter from the Church at Aldergrove is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. As mandated by Synod Fergus 1998, the CPEU has developed a set of guidelines "to ensure that local discussions are properly dovetailed into discussions at the federative level, and that in all local discussions the obligations we owe to each other as churches of one federation are not forgotten."

3.2. These guidelines are listed in Section E of the CPEU report.

3.3. The Church at Aldergrove feels that there is "a tendency to elevate the federative above the local" in these guidelines. Aldergrove also requests Synod to mandate the CPEU:

1. To clearly rationalize upon the basis of Scripture, Confessions and the agreed upon Church Order its vision for the way ecclesiastical unity should proceed;
2. To explain to the churches:
   - How the current vision serves to promote a unity in the real, daily lives of the members of the church?
   - If ecclesiastical fellowship (i.e. at the Lord's table) and exposure to one another's preaching cannot be had until federative unity is agreed upon, how can the churches whole-heartedly endorse the agreement made by federative committees when the local churches hardly know each other?
   - Are the churches sufficiently protected from hierarchy just as they are clearly protected from independentism with the current vision?

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod gratefully takes note of the guidelines re: federative unity, which the CPEU has developed.

4.2. Although Aldergrove feels there is a tendency to *elevate* the federative above the local, this is clearly not the intention of the CPEU. They explicitly state that these guidelines are designed to "ensure that local discussions are properly *dovetailed* into discussions at the federative level."

4.3. The CPEU should keep in mind the concerns of Aldergrove in their communication to the churches.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To commend these guidelines re: federative unity for use within the churches.

5.2. To pass on Aldergrove's letter to the CPEU for consideration.

Article 95

Committee for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity: Mandate

Committee 4 presented its proposal regarding the mandate of the CPEU. The following was **adopted**:

1. Recommendations

Synod decide:

1.1. To thank the committee for all the work it has done.

1.2. To reappoint the Committee for Promotion with Ecclesiastical Unity with the following mandate:

Re: URCNA

1.2.1. To pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the URCNA with a view towards entering the final phase of federative unity;

1.2.2. To work closely with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA;

1.2.3. To work closely with the ad-hoc committees re church order and theological education, as well as the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, consulting with them concerning the progress made;

1.2.4. To maintain the rules of Phase Two, as much as it concerns the churches in common (see Art. 73, Consideration 4.6);

1.2.5. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the URNCA;

1.2.6. To provide information to the churches at regular intervals;

1.2.7. To serve Synod 2004 with a single, comprehensive report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod. This report should be prepared jointly with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA. This report must also readdress the matter of the definite time frame for federative unity with 2007 as a possible target date;

Re: FRCNA and OCRC

1.2.8. To continue dialogue with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be with the FRCNA on this path;

1.2.9. To represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring the possibilities of federative unity;

1.2.10. To develop a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the OCRC;

1.2.11. To write a formal letter to the OCRC with a view to pursuing more official talks on the federative level;

1.2.12. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the FRCNA and OCRC;

1.2.13. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

1.3. To give the Committee re*: Church Order* the following mandate:

1.3.1. To work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;

1.3.2. To evaluate the differences between the current church orders of the federations in the light of the Scriptural and Confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort;

1.3.3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort.

1.3.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
1.3.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

1.4. To give the Committee re: *Theological Education* the following mandate:
1.4.1. To work closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synod;
1.4.2. To evaluate the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and URCNA;
1.4.3. To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:
1.4.3.1. The new federation should retain at least one federational theological school at which the board of governors, the professors and teaching staff are appointed by synod;
1.4.3.2. Attention should be given as to what to do in the case of an aspiring candidate to the ministry who does not have adequate instruction in significant courses in Reformed Doctrine, in Reformed Church Polity, or in Reformed Church History.
1.4.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
1.4.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

1.5. To give the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* the following mandate:
1.5.1. To work closely with the committee re: songbook appointed by the URCNA Synod;
1.5.2. To produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions, while including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions;
1.5.3. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;
1.5.4. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

Important note: in accordance with Art. 73 Consideration 4.9, the mandates listed in 1.3-1.5 will only be activated if the URCNA decide at Synod Escondido 2001 to commit themselves to working towards federative unity with the CanRC.

Article 96

***Book of Praise*: Letter from the Church at Abbotsford**

Committee 3 presented its proposal concerning the letter of the Church at Abbotsford with Suggestions and Concerns re: the *Book of Praise*. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the Church at Abbotsford requesting Synod to revise the mandate for the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*.

2. Observations

2.1. The Church at Abbotsford requests Synod to revise the mandate of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* as follows (summarized):
Find people in the Reformed community to:

2.1.1. Critique or find alternate melodies for some of the Psalms and Hymns.

2.1.2. To modernize the language.

2.1.3. To determine legal responsibilities and also keep in contact with sister churches regarding the *Book of Praise*.

3. Considerations

3.1. The letter from the Church at Abbotsford contains a request that should have come on the agenda of Synod in the ecclesiastical way: via classis and regional synod (CO Article 30).

3.2. The Church at Abbotsford could direct this request to the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* for consideration.

4. Recommendation

Synod declare that the letter from the Church at Abbotsford is inadmissible.

Article 97

***Book of Praise*: Overture re: Hymns**

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the overture from Regional Synod East of Nov. 8, 2000 regarding the addition of hymns. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Overture of Regional Synod East, November 8, 2000.

1.2. Letter from the Church at London.

2. Admissibility

The overture has come via the minor assemblies and is therefore admissible. The letter from the Church at London is admissible because it deals with this overture.

3. Observations

3.1. Regional Synod East, via Classis Central Ontario, requests General Synod to broaden the mandate of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*.

3.2. The request is to add to the mandate of the Standing Committee the task of evaluating hymns, which are submitted by the churches for inclusion into the *Book of Praise*.

3.3. Submissions from the churches for additional hymns should be supported with reasons for their suitability. The Standing Committee is to evaluate them in accordance with the requirements set out by General Synod Edmonton, 1965.

3.4. The hymns, which are selected, should be sent to the churches prior to subsequent General Synods with the recommendation that such hymns should be included in the Hymn Section of the *Book of Praise*.

3.5. The grounds given by Regional Synod East for granting the request of Classis are:

1. The *Book of Praise* is a matter of the churches in common (CO Article 30).
2. The mandate of the *Book of Praise* Committee is not clear (Article 140, Acts Fergus). It would be beneficial for the churches to know what process to follow in order to propose the addition of suitable hymns to the *Book of Praise*.

3.6. The overture originated with the Church at Toronto. Classis made clear to Regional Synod that it was presenting the overture from Toronto "with all the observations, considerations and recommendations." In this overture the Church at Toronto offered two observations:

1. From the Preface to the *Book of Praise*, that "Although in Reformed liturgy the Psalms have a predominant place, our Churches have not excluded the use of Scriptural hymns. They, too, constitute a thank offering of praise when we sing of the facts of redemption by God in Jesus Christ our Lord."
2. From the Acts of General Synod Smithville, 1980, that "room is to be left open for changes, deletions and additions in future editions" (Art. 122, III, 1, p.88).

3.7. The Church at London requests Synod not to accede to the request of Regional Synod East to broaden the mandate of the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* for the purpose of adding more hymns.

3.8. London refers to the report of the CRCA regarding the GKN, which stated in connection with Synod Leusden's decision to add about 120 hymns for use in the churches, "while there is no principal objection to the use of hymns in the worship service, historically the proliferation of hymns has come at the expense of the singing of Psalms" (5.5.3.6, p15). London warns against creating a double standard where we warn the GKN on this matter while we consider augmenting the hymn section of the *Book of Praise*.

3.9. London points out that it is false dilemma to say more hymns are needed based on NT writings because their content is more fully and directly about the work of Christ. The OT Psalms already testify of Christ, his suffering and subsequent glory.

3.10. London disagrees with the first ground of Regional Synod East. London sees this ground expressing the logic that since the *Book of Praise* is a matter of the churches in common, "therefore Synod should consider the request to mandate the Standing Committee to receive submissions for additional hymns."

4. Considerations

4.1. London is correct that the CRCA report expressed caution with respect to Synod Leusden's decision to add 120 hymns. Synod Neerlandia, however, expressed regret that the CRCA did not give evidence to show that the changes taking place in the GKN are wrong (Neerlandia Article 80, 4.7). Synod decided to mandate the CRCA to make a thorough study of the concerns mentioned in its report (5.5). Therefore, while there are concerns about adding a large number of hymns, it cannot be said without further investigation that the increase of hymns in the GKN comes at the expense of singing Psalms.

4.2. London's contention that it is a false dilemma to seek hymns based on NT writings because the OT Psalms already testify to Christ does not really present a convincing argument for not adding hymns. The Psalms of course speak about Christ. At the same time, the CanRC have already adopted many hymns based on NT passages, and these hymns are valued for reflecting NT revelation. It is possible and desirable to sing the OT Psalms and the hymns based on both OT and NT passages.

4.3. London appears to misread the decision of Regional Synod East. The overture from Regional Synod began with the Church at Toronto and made its way through the proper broader assemblies: church, classis, regional synod and now general synod. We read in the letter of Regional Synod East to General Synod regarding the overture from Classis that, "Regional Synod considers this admissible on the basis of article 30, CO." Then we read that Regional Synod accedes to the request of Classis Central Ontario, with the first ground being that the *Book of Praise* is a matter of the churches in common (CO Article 30). This simply says that the overture is legitimately on the table of a broader assembly and is therefore to be considered. The overture itself still has to stand or fall based on its own merits.

4.4. Synod agrees that submissions from the churches regarding the *Book of Praise* should be sent to the Standing Committee (see the Committee Mandate).

4.5. It is the Standing Committee's task to evaluate and scrutinize the material received (see the new Committee Mandate).

4.6. The evaluation of new hymns should be reported to General Synod and sent to the churches six months prior to the next Synod.

4.7. The above considerations should clear up the confusion about the proper procedure to follow with respect to the addition of suitable hymns to the *Book of Praise*.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To deny the request of the Church at London.

5.2. To give the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* the following mandate:

That this Committee receive submissions and proposals for additional hymns from the churches with the reasons for their suitability, evaluate them in accordance with the requirements set out by General Synod Edmonton, 1965, and submit a selection to the churches prior to subsequent General Synods.

Article 98

Appointments

Synod went into closed session to deal with appointments. The following appointments were made:

1. Board of Governors

1.1. Academic Committee

1.1.1. Eastern Canada: B.J. Berends (2010); G. Nederveen (2010); Cl. Stam (2010) (alternates: G.Ph. Van Popta, P. Aasman, J. VanWoudenberg, in that order).

1.1.2. Western Canada: R. Aasman (2004); J. Moesker (2007); R.A. Schouten (2010); (alternates: W.B. Slomp, E.J. Tiggelaar, E. Kampen, in that order).

1.2. Finance and Property Committee: M. Kampen (2004); J. VanderWoude (2004); W. Oostdijk (2007); W. Smouter (2007); G.J. Nordeman (2010) (alternate: L. Jagt).

2. Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad
J. Huijgen (2010); H.E. Hoogstra (2007); E. Kampen (convener) (2004); H. Leyenhorst (2010); W. Pleiter (2010); C.J. VanderVelde (2010).

3. Committee for Contact with Church in the Americas
J. de Gelder (2004); P. Feenstra (2004)(convener); W.Gortemaker (2004); K. Jonker (2007); L. Knegt (2010); J. Moesker (2004); W. Oostdyk (2004); A. Poppe (2004); G. VanWoudenberg (2004).

4. Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity:

4.1. From Eastern Canada: J. DeJong (2004) (convener); W. den Hollander (2004); F. Westrik (2007).

4.2. From Western Canada: R. Aasman (2004); W.B. Slomp (2007); P. VanWoudenberg (2004).

4.3. Church Order Committee: J. DeJong (convener); G.J. Nordeman; J. VanWoudenberg; A. Witten.

4.4. Theological Education Committee: Cl. Stam; W. Smouter; C. VanDam (convener); J. Visscher.

4.5. Songbook Committee: Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*.

5. Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*: D.G.J. Agema (2010); C. Bosch (2007); N.H. Gootjes (2010); C. Nobels (2010); C. VanHalen-Faber (2004); G.Ph. van Popta (convener) (2010).

6. Committee on Bible Translations: J. Louwerse (2004); J. Ludwig (2007); G. Nederveen (2010) (convener).

7. Churches for Days of Prayer ad. CO Article 54: The Church at Burlington-Waterdown, and the Church at Edmonton-Providence.

8. General Fund: The Church at Carman East.

9. Archive Church: The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer.

10. Archive Inspection: The Church at Burlington-Waterdown.

11. Audit Finances of Synod Neerlandia, 2001: The Church at Barrhead.

12. Address Church: The Church at Burlington-Ebenezer.

13. **Committee for Printing of the Acts:** Clerks of Synod Neerlandia, 2001.

14. **Committee for Official Website**: J. Hoogerdijk (2007); T. Flach (2007); R.E. Pot (2004); A. van den Hoven (2010); M. VanderVelde (convener) (2010).

15. **Convening Church for next Synod:** The Church at Chatham (February 2004).

Synod ended closed session.

Evening Session – Monday, May 14, 2001

Article 99

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting. Psalm 139:1,2 was sung. Roll call showed all were present.

Article 100

***Book of Praise*: Standing Committee**

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**
   Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*.
2. **Observations**
   2.1. Since it was submitted late, Synod decided to take note of the Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* and include it as an Appendix to the Acts.
   2.2. Synod concluded that certain matters in the report would still require the attention of Synod so that the Standing Committee will be able to continue to function.
3. **Considerations**
   3.1. Since the Churches have not been able to see this report before the beginning of Synod, it would be inappropriate for General Synod to deal with the content of the report. This is most unfortunate because in various areas the committee seeks and needs the approval or direction of Synod.
   3.2. Synod judges that the following items from the Report of the Standing Committee need to be addressed.
      3.2.1. The Committee's recommendation that the contract with Premier Printing Ltd. be extended for a five-year period under its original terms, to be reviewed in the year 2006.
      3.2.2. The Committee's request to consider the potential implications of the progressing discussions with the URCNA when formulating the next mandate for the Standing Committee. This matter has been

taken care of in the decision of Synod with regard to the relationship with the URCNA.

3.2.3. The matter of the NIV references in the prose section of the *Book of Praise* as well as the positive input from the Australian sister churches. This was dealt with when Synod decided on the appeal of the church in Owen Sound.

3.3. Many churches and individuals in the churches have ideas and suggestions with regard to the future developments and improvements of the *Book of Praise*. Instead of sending this material to General Synod, it should either be directed to the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* for perusal, or (especially if it involves proposals for major changes) be presented to the churches via Classis and Regional Synod.

3.4. At this time Synod cannot do much more than renew the mandate that was given by Synod Fergus (Acts 140.VIII.C.2) with some minor additions.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide to mandate the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* as follows:

4.1. To function according to the arrangements for publishing and distribution accepted by *General Synod Cloverdale 1983 (Acts 1983, pp 297-299)*, and to extend the contract with Premier Printing Ltd for a five year period under its original terms to be reviewed in the year 2006.

4.2. To maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.

4.3. To foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* among others and to promote the availability of a book of harmonization facilitating the use of the *Book of Praise* in the English-speaking world.

4.4. To serve as the address to which any correspondence regarding the *Book of Praise* can be directed. To evaluate and to scrutinize the content of this correspondence, and to report to the next General Synod as to the validity of the suggestions made.

4.5. To present to the next General Synod a revision of the *Book of Praise* incorporating the mandates mentioned in Art. 140 of the Acts of General Synod Fergus 1998, as well as in Articles 95 (1.5) and 97 of the Acts of this Synod.

4.6. To serve the next Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the convening of Synod.

Br. W. Gortemaker abstained from voting.

Article 101

Women's Voting

Committee 4 presented its report on the matter of women's voting.

1. Material

1.1. Overture of Regional Synod East, Nov. 8, 2000.

1.2. Letters from the Churches at Elora, Lincoln, London, and Orangeville.

1.3. Overture from the Church at Langley.

1.4. Letter from br. N. van Weerden.

2. Admissibility

2.1. The overture of Regional Synod East is declared admissible on the basis of CO Article 30. The letters from various churches that interact with this overture are also declared admissible.

2.2. The letter from br. N. van Weerden makes reference to the matter of women's voting. The Acts of Regional Synod East were sent to the churches and not to individual members. Individual members must first address their consistories. Therefore, this letter is declared inadmissible (CO Article 30).

2.3. The Church at Langley brought its overture to a classis; however, it was defeated. Therefore, this overture is declared inadmissible on the basis of CO Article 30.

3. Observations

3.1. Regional Synod East requests "General Synod to appoint a committee to revisit the matter of women's voting rights and serve the churches with a complete report, taking into account reports and decisions from 1977-1998."

3.2. The grounds for this request are:

1. The matter of women's voting rights has been dealt with as a matter of the churches in common (Synods 1980, 1983, 1986, 1995, 1998);

2. Subsequent developments since 1983, outlined in a letter from Burlington South to Classis Central Ontario of March 10, 2000, especially in our sister churches, necessitate a revisiting of the matter to examine the grounds which have now been presented;

3. The matter of women's voting rights does "live in the churches" since it keeps coming back to ecclesiastical assemblies.

3.3. The Church at London does not consider it necessary to appoint a committee to revisit the matter of women's voting rights. Instead, they have written a letter to General Synod requesting that the CRCA be mandated to appeal to the GKN urging them to rescind their decision allowing communicant women to vote (Agenda Item 8.2.3.5.1). London's letter contains their "Biblical, Confessional and church political argumentation against women voting." They note that many members of their congregation "are greatly concerned about women's voting rights." Moreover, they state, "it is not helpful to point at what is happening in sister churches in order to implement the same practice in the CanRC."

3.4. The Church at Elora writes that they have perused the overture of Regional Synod East and have not found any new grounds that would necessitate revisiting this matter. Thus, they recommend that Synod declare this overture inadmissible on the basis of CO Article 33.

3.5. The Church at Lincoln asks that Synod would "not accede to the request of Regional Synod East 2000 to appoint a committee to revisit the matter of women's voting rights on the basis of Article 33 CO." Lincoln considers that "Article 33 CO is pertinent for Synod 2001 because Synod 1983 specifically decided not to appoint a new committee." Like the Church at Elora, Lincoln has perused the overture and has not found any "substantially new grounds."

3.6. The Church at Orangeville asks Synod to consider carefully the overture with respect to CO Article 33.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod 1983 decided, "not to appoint a new Committee on this matter" (Art. 140 D.3). CO Article 33 applies here for "matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds." The churches of Elora, Lincoln and Orangeville are correct in pointing Synod to this article of the church order. Therefore, Synod evaluates the grounds presented by Regional Synod (see Observation 3.2).

4.2. The first ground that Regional Synod presents is that "the matter of women's voting rights has been dealt with as a matter of the churches in common." This is true. However, this in itself does not constitute a "new ground." It only confirms that this request is at the right address, namely, General Synod.

4.3. The second ground concerns the subsequent developments since 1983 as outlined in a letter from Burlington South to Classis Central Ontario. From this letter we glean two major developments since 1983:

4.3.1. In 1992 our churches established ecclesiastical fellowship with the FCS, which does allow all members to vote.

4.3.2. At Synod Ommen 1993 our sister churches in the Netherlands have "established the conclusion that voting is not an exercise of authority or a matter of headship, but is an important task of all believers, male or female."

4.4. Synod evaluates these developments as follows:

4.4.1. The fact that the FCS allows women to vote does not in itself "<u>necessitate</u> a revisiting of the matter." Sister churches may have different practices than we do on certain matters, but this does not necessarily mean that we must revisit these matters.

4.4.2. Essentially the same applies to our Dutch sister churches. It is true that the decision of Synod Ommen 1993 affects one of the grounds of Synod Cloverdale 1983 (Art. 160 C3). However, it has not been proven that Synod Ommen brings to the fore any new grounds which were not already presented to Synod Smithville 1980 and Synod Cloverdale 1983.

4.5. The third ground which Regional Synod presents is that the matter of women's voting rights does "live in the churches" since it keeps coming back to the ecclesiastical assemblies. After the decision of 1983 and one appeal in 1986, this matter has come up again at Synods 1995 and 1998. Synod 2001 is the first time that a general synod has received a request from a regional synod to appoint a

committee on this matter. However, the overture of Langley was recently defeated at classis (cf. under Admissibility). To say whether or not this matter lives in the churches remains a subjective, debatable matter.

4.6. In sum, there have been subsequent developments since 1983, but it has not been proven that these developments have brought any new grounds to the fore.

4.7. The Church at London has done research regarding the decision in the GKN about who should vote in the selection of office bearers. It is appropriate for them to pass their work and recommendation on to the CRCA in order to assist them in the discussions about this matter. (Cf. Article 80, Consideration 4.5).

5. Recommendation

Synod decide:

5.1. To deny the request of Regional Synod East.

5.2. To respond to the Church at London with consideration 4.7.

Two notices of motion were given. The chairman discussed one motion before declaring it out of order. This ruling was challenged from the floor. Recess was called. After recess the chairman publicly apologized. After further discussion the proposal was put to a vote and **adopted**.

Article 102

Concluding matters

1. **Censure:** Opportunity was given for censure ad. Art. 44. The chairman noted with gratitude that the meeting could take place in good harmony.
2. **Publishing of the Acts:** The first and second clerks were appointed to prepare the Acts for publication. The second clerk was instructed to remind all committees to send as many copies of reports as there are office bearers per church (Regulation for Synod III B). He was also instructed to ask all committees to send four copies to the Theological College.
3. **Financial Matters:** There were no additional matters reported.
4. **Preparation for the next General Synod:** The Church at Chatham was appointed to convene the next Synod in the month of February 2004.

Article 103

Closing

The chairman, Rev. Cl. Stam, spoke words of appreciation for all the work done by the Church at Neerlandia in preparing for Synod. He also expressed appreciation for the hospitality shown by the sisters of the congregation in looking after the meals. He reflected on the decisions taken by this Synod, noting that it would be left for others to judge whether it was for better or for worse. He felt it could be said that we have done our work for the Lord and His churches, according to the

light of insight given to us at this time in our lives. He took special note of the decision with respect to the OPC and hoped that there would be peace in the churches about this. He also mentioned the establishing of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Churches in Brazil. He hoped that in the future people would not consider Synod Neerlandia rash and bold and moving ahead. Synod Neerlandia travelled along the lines our forefathers had drawn out. In reflecting on how so much of the Agenda was devoted to foreign churches he saw this as an expression of the catholicity of the Church. He then asked Rev. R. Aasman to close Synod.

Rev. R. Aasman spoke some words of appreciation for the dynamic and humourous way Rev. Cl. Stam conducted the meetings. He drew attention to the unique way of starting each day with his meditations on the book of Ecclesiastes and the way he expected the members of Synod to take a turn closing the day with a meditation on a portion of Scripture. In this way Synod could do its work in an atmosphere filled with the Word of God. Rev. R. Aasman then read Prov. 20:24-30 and gave a brief meditation on v. 27. He led in closing prayer. After the chairman closed Synod Neerlandia, all those present sang Hymn 63:1,2.

Finis

Appendices

1. Speeches to Synod Neerlandia

1.1 Opening Address of Rev. W.B. Slomp

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

On behalf of the convening Church at Neerlandia, Alberta I want to extend a hearty welcome to you all. You have come to one of the most northern Canadian Reformed churches in Canada. However, contrary to the rumor among some of the delegates, Neerlandia is not located in Nunavut; Neerlandia is actually not even the most northern of the Canadian Reformed Curches. The Churches at Houston and Smithers, British Columbia have that honour. As far as I'm aware, however, Neerlandia is the oldest community in Canada of Reformed settlers of Dutch descent. For this community was established in the very beginning of the 20th century by Reformed men and women who wanted to maintain their Reformed heritage. That in a certain way also makes Neerlandia the oldest church amongst the Canadian Reformed Churches. Although this church was instituted as a Canadian Reformed church after Coaldale and Edmonton in the 1950's, it was the only church that actually liberated itself from the Christian Reformed Church. For the majority of the members at the time of institution consisted of the early settlers in this region.

And so you can see that there has always been a strong desire here to be truly Reformed. That is also what we expect from this synod as you grapple in the coming weeks with the issues that have been put before you by the churches.

But, what does it mean to be Reformed? Well, reformation has to do with the reformation, with the renewal through the Holy Spirit; it has to do with the fact that time and again we must ask ourselves whether or not we are doing God's will or our will. To be Reformed above all means to have a strong desire to be reconciled to God and His people. Such reconciliation is necessary because of our sins, for we are constantly in danger of breaking our relationship with God and each other.

In the passage that we read together Paul also speaks about reconciliation. He said, "God has reconciled us to himself through Christ." That reconciliation came about through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ did two things in order to accomplish that. In the first place He did His Father's will in every respect. Secondly He also took into account the great needs of sinful man. It was His purpose to reconcile the two parties in the covenant. And He could only do that if He represented the interests of both parties of the covenant. In so doing He totally denied Himself. Whatever glory and honour He had with His Father in heaven, He laid aside. He did so for our sake. For He also knew that if He served His Father in that way, and man in that way, that then His Father in heaven would also bless Him and honour Him. For His Father's interests were also His interests.

And now Paul says further in this passage that he has "committed to us the message of reconciliation." In other words, that reconciliation through Christ has to

be proclaimed. That is quite a responsibility. That is quite a responsibility you also have in these coming weeks as you deal with the matters that have been placed before you. You will have to deal with appeals against decisions of minor assemblies. Some people feel that they have been wronged, and they want you to set things right. They are seeking reconciliation. They want their voices to be heard.

Much of material has to deal with our relationships with other churches, with our sister churches in the Netherlands, South Africa, Australia, Korea and Scotland. And you will also have to deal with those churches with which we are seeking closer contact. In our relations with some of these churches there are certain problems. And so reconciliation is needed. Wrongs have to be made right.

And now, you are looked upon to do that. But then let us remember how Christ brought about reconciliation. He did so through obedience in every respect to His Father's will, while at the same time keeping in mind the position and the needs of sinful man. That is also what Paul did. He said, "If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us." In other words as a child of God, he took into account the will of God, and the needs of his fellow believers. He put himself in the position of others so that he could do justice to their needs and their interest. He took into account their history and their background. And he would adjust himself accordingly. He would do so, as long as he did not in this way go against the will of his heavenly Father.

Brothers, that is also how God's love must compel you in these coming weeks. Take into account the will of God, and the position of those who appeal to you. Do not look at these matters from your perspective, but from God's perspective and the perspective of those who are appealing to you. Do justice to their position.

Brother, we wish you the Lord's strength. We in Neerlandia have made many preparations to make your job as easy as possible. We are joyful to have you in our midst and to be allowed to host this synod. May the Lord richly bless you and the decisions that you will be making. May it all be done to the honour and glory of God, and to the furtherance of His kingdom.

1.2 Acceptance Speech of Rev. G. H. Visscher

Members of General Synod:

You will understand that when the phone call came from Neerlandia to Burlington, I was not entirely surprised. It was about nine months ago that a phone call came from Hamilton to Burlington; on the other end of the line was the Principal of the Theological College asking me whether I would be open to allowing my name to stand for this position. A lot of good things take about that long to come to fruition.

In any case, let me convey to you how honoured I am in all of this. No one knows their own weaknesses, shortcomings, inadequacies, better than that person himself. The grace of God is always amazing precisely for that reason. An appointment to such a position of trust is likewise.

It has been my privilege for over twenty-one years now to serve the churches as a Minister of the Word. And within the framework of those years, the New Testament has always been of special interest. It was not too long after entering the ministry that the words of encouragement by the late Professor L. Selles sank in and the desire to heed them began to grow. That meant journeying all the way from Houston, BC to Kampen, The Netherlands for three months with my wife and two children in order to begin a process of study in which I would "sit at the feet" of several professors, especially Professor Dr. Jakob Vanbruggen. It took no fewer than ten years and three trips to Kampen to complete the Doctorandus program on a part-time basis; it spanned the years of ministry in Ottawa and Surrey as well. Today I thank those churches for the understanding and support that they have shown to me in making this possible.

While in Burlington, it took a while to discover that right there at my first *alma mater*, McMaster University, there was an opportunity to study in this very field. The Department of Religious Studies was located one floor lower in the same building in which I had majored in Philosophy some years earlier. Here is a whole network of men and women who are dedicated to the study of biblical subjects, to the study of the historical events in those early centuries, to the world of Judaism in the Greco-Roman context. It is a grad school of the first rank, with Dr. E. Schuller as the resident expert in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Dr. A. Mendelson as an expert in Philo, Dr. S. Westerholm as a recognized expert in Paul and the Gospels, and many others. It took a little convincing and stubbornness on my part to get in the door, for my first mother (McMaster) would not recognize my second (Hamilton) nor my third (Kampen). In any case, the stubbornness paid off. Today I have the privilege of not only being a pastor but also a doctoral student, especially under the instruction of Dr. Stephen Westerholm. Courses and language requirements have been completed; comprehensive examinations and a dissertation remain.

And now you offer me not only an appointment to the chair of New Testament studies but you also have the foresight to accept the recommendations of the Senate so that an opportunity is created for me to complete the Ph.D. programme. What can I say to this?

It has been a joy to serve the church of Burlington West and now the church at Burlington-Waterdown for the last nine years. There is no more beautiful task than to proclaim the glad tidings of life in Christ Jesus. I have long learned that among men there are no significant answers; philosophers only destroy the constructions of those who have gone before them, but there in the Word of God – in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ – are the best and the greatest answers. And so it will be a joy to spend the rest of my life in the service of Jesus Christ, helping young men prepare for years in which they too might proclaim Him as Lord and King. New challenges in the service of Christ lay before me.

Mr. Chairman, it seems your synod will be shorter than most. I would like to expedite matters for you. My wife and I have thought and prayed about it long enough. I have received the approval of the council of my church. Hereby *I wish to inform General Synod 2001 that I accept the position to which you have appointed me.*

May God help me in this!

1.3 Address of Rev. G.I. Williamson

Fathers and Brothers,

Once again it is my privilege to be with you, and to have this opportunity to make a few brief remarks. And I'm going to begin by making a public confession. I had already written my speech with a somewhat heavy heart. I didn't want to say anything unpleasant or unkind, but I felt driven to speak with fervent candor from the heart. Now, I am happy to say that I've rewritten my speech and I did so with a rejuvenated spirit!

You see, I have been one of the relatively few men in the OPC with some twenty years experience working in a church that I see as—in many ways—like your own. I refer to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, where I labored appreciatively with a Session (we did not use the word Consistory in NZ) in which about half of the elders were sons of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. In that context I came sincerely to recognize some of the great strengths of your tradition. Yes, and I have cherished the hope over the past 18 years—since I returned to the OPC from NZ—that the OPC would come to see and value and learn from those strengths as I have, through closer association with you.

It is rather well known, in the OPC, that my own conviction regarding the manner of fencing the Lord's table is closer to your practice than to some of the practices that have existed with us from the time of Machen. It is also a fact, however, that I have seen some rather remarkable improvement in the way in which this fencing is now being implemented in some of our churches. When I compare the OPC as it is today, with the OPC that I first came to know beginning in 1955, I can truly say that there has been movement in the right direction. It has therefore been my hope that further progress would be made within the proposed context of Ecclesiastical Fellowship between our two churches. You will therefore understand why I was deeply saddened when the formulation crafted by our two committees was rejected by your previous Synod, because I believe it would have provided a positive context in which further progress would have been possible.

And, then—adding further to my dismay—have been the problems arising from those who separated from us, and have been received into your ministry. It is our conviction that these separations have taken place without following the due processes required of those who take the vows that office-bearers must take in our Church. We think that this has happened, in part, because we have not enjoyed the blessing of full Ecclesiastical Fellowship. And it has been a source of pain to us without being a blessing to you.

I have tried many times to think this through in such a way as to be able to say something to you, in these circumstances, that might be helpful. It does seem to me that at least part of this difficulty may lie in the difference in what our Confessions say about the Church. When I became a minister of the RCNZ, in 1963, I signed a form of subscription borrowed from the 1934 Psalter-Hymnal of the CRC. It was during my time of service there that the form of subscription was modified, or augmented, to include the Westminster Confession as a fourth form of unity. For

me this was never a problem, because I do not believe they are not in conflict, but rather in harmony with, each other. The Belgic Confession says there are two churches—the true church, and the false church—and it says these are easily distinguished the one from the other. And so they are, in the abstract and in the absolute sense, because the True Church described there does everything right and the False Church does everything wrong. I want to emphasize the fact that I find that doctrine in the Bible—and I believe it wholeheartedly. At the same time, however, I have to say that I have yet to see a single visible manifestation of either of these two churches ***in the absolute sense.*** I do not think the OPC lives up to the standard of perfection demanded by the True Church definition of the Belgic Confession. But I don't think the Canadian Reformed Churches do either. And it is right there that I find myself giving thanks to God for the Westminster Confession, because it reminds me that in the churches ***as we actually find them*** here during our earthly pilgrimage, some are more pure and some are less pure—and none are perfect. And that means that in every concrete instance it is my duty to exercise discriminating judgment—not looking at just one item—but at many; not looking for absolute perfection—but for the marks of the true church in essential integrity. And that will never allow me to make ***my*** Church the standard for all other churches. No, I must honestly try to make a fair and comprehensive judgment. I think you must have thought somewhat along these lines, yourself, when—back in 1977—you declared us to be a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At this point, in my original draft of this speech, I was going to say this: "Our hearts were much warmed by this declaration. But by now I think it is time to ask: did you really mean it? There is no use my being here if I cannot speak the truth. And believe me, Fathers and Brothers, I do so in love. The simple truth is that we have not found it easy to believe that you really did mean it—that you really *did* regard us as a true church of the Lord Jesus. We even reached the place where some of us were saying it might be easier for us to hear you say: 'well, after all is said and done, we really don't think you are a true church—and here is the reason why.' I think that would have been at least as easy to enduring what, to us, was a long drawn out ambiguity."

But now, what can I say? I can say from the bottom of my heart that I find your action today to be a wonderful answer to my own prayers, and to the prayers of many in the OPC. Brothers, we value and highly esteem the Reformed integrity of the Canadian Reformed Churches. It is my hope that our General Assembly—which begins on the 30th of this month—will respond with a hearty willingness to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with you. It may require a year to provide our Sessions with a full account of what has no come to pass, and therefore it may take another year for the entire OPC to respond. But I can assure you that I will speak as eloquently as I can in favor of this response.

Brothers you have 'warmed the cockles of my Scottish heart' with your own fidelty to our common Reformed heritage. Because I know that this is the bottom line: it is our common zeal for this Biblical heritage that leaves us no alternative but to seek to walk together more and more faithfully in the Lord.

Finally, let me just say a word about the ongoing work of our church.

(1) total number of home mission works at present in the OPC = 65
(2) same for new works = 10
(3) total number of vacancies needing ordained pastors = 33 (yes, we are in crisis mode again!)
(4) other information:

- The total membership for 2000 = 25,966
- The total number of ministers for 2000 = 406
- The total number of local churches at the end of 2000 stood at a record 216 (a net increase of twelve churches during the year)

We will be facing some formidable issues at the forthcoming General Assembly to be held in Grand Rapids, beginning on May 30th. There is an overture and there are two appeals concerned with the Framework Hypothesis. There is also an overture calling for a special committee to investigate concerning certain aspects of the work of the Committee on Foreign Missions, and an appeal concerning the same Committee from Rev. Victor Atallah.

May the Lord once again grant us the corporate grace to deal with these issues faithfully on the basis of the inerrant Word of God, and our subordinate standards, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

1.4 Response to Rev. G.I. Williamson by Rev. J. de Gelder

Rev. Williamson, it is my privilege to address you on behalf of our General Synod, and I do so with great joy. In the long history that we have together as Canadian Reformed Churches and Orthodox Presbyterian Church I am a relative newcomer on the scene, while in you we may welcome one of the veterans in the OPC, involved for a long time in the meetings and discussions between our Committee and your CEIR. We praise our God that He gives you, at your age, the energy and health, as well as the love and commitment to serve Him and His Church with your many gifts.

We appreciate your presence among us, so high up in the far north. We appreciate this especially because in your presence and in your words we recognize the desire of the OPC to continue to work towards a situation in which also the final roadblocks for a closer relationship between our churches can be removed.

Over the many years of meetings and discussions you have become familiar with the developments in the relationship between the CANRC and the OPC, which, I am sure, has also helped you in understanding our position on some of the issues that kept coming back.

We are grateful for the words you have spoken tonight, and we acknowledge your greetings on behalf of our sister in the south. Your words have convinced us again, Br. Williamson, how much we have in common; how much there is that we may share in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As I said, we have a long history together. Many times delegates have been sent to Synods and Assemblies; many reports and proposals have been submitted; we have

seen a growing understanding, and once again the matter of our relationship is one the agenda of our General Synod. You have heard our discussion, and this evening you have been able to witness the outcome, and how the proposal became a decision. What a wonderful and moving moment this is!

History has taught us to be very careful with predictions in general, and especially when we talk about our relationship as Canadian Reformed Churches with the OPC. But now we rejoice that we have been able to remove from our side the final roadblocks on our way towards ecclesiastical fellowship. It is our hope and prayer that now your sessions, presbyteries and General Assembly will rejoice with us, and will be willing to accept the brotherhand of fellowship.

Br. Williamson, with deep gratitude our synods have always recognized in the OPC a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A church, which, by the grace of God, continues to uphold in the broad evangelical world in North America the truth of God's Word as confessed in the Reformed Confessions. And with great respect we hear and learn about your zeal to defend and proclaim this truth, the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in your emphasis on home mission works across the country. We are having our first experiences with this kind of home mission projects, and there is so much we can learn from you here.

I have had the privilege to attend some of your General Assemblies and to worship in some of your churches, and what always strikes me is the deep reverence and the strong commitment to the Holy Scriptures, the infallible Word of God. Issues are discussed and dealt with by an open Bible.

Sure, we both have our own history, and there are many things we do in a different manner. There are differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity. There are differences between your Form of Church Government and our Church Order. But when we live together as sister churches in a bond of mutual respect, love and trust we can use every possible opportunity to encourage one another and to build one another up. When there is a genuine love for God and a strong commitment to be true to His Word, as well as the desire to live accordingly, then I believe we will find that there will also be the willingness to listen to one another.

How wonderful, how encouraging to recognize the reality of what we confess in our Belgic Confession, as well as in your Westminster Confession, about the gathering of the Church as the work of our exalted Saviour, all over the world, a work that will go on until the very end of the history of our world. And as God's people, on our way towards the great day of Christ's return we will need each other.

Yes, indeed, we will need each other to encourage one another, but also to warn one another, whenever this is necessary. Think of the privilege to support one another in whatever way we can to remain faithful to the Gospel of Salvation. Is that not what ecclesiastical fellowship is all about?

The challenge before us is clear. The Lord calls our churches and your churches to

be faithful and to remain faithful witnesses in our world. Is it not wonderful that we can travel this road together?

Rev. Williamson, again: thank you for being with us, here in Neerlandia. We enjoy your company, the input of your wisdom and experience, and we ask you to convey our greetings to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

It is our prayer that the Lord may continue to bless your church, and that our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship – provide the approval of your General Assembly – will turn out to be blessing for the CANRC, as well as for the OPC.

May our God be with you.

Thank you.

1.5 Address of Rev. G. Syms (RCUS)

Mr. Chairman, esteemed fathers and brothers,

Mr. Stelpstra and I bring you greetings in the Lord from our churches to yours. It is truly an honour to be in your midst again as observers on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States. Your brotherly kindness to us and your hospitality we will not soon forget, and for which we are grateful to the Lord. It has been good to be here in Neerlandia not only to partake of the fellowship afforded by your Synod, but also to fellowship and worship with the local congregation. The Word of God was faithfully preached by two of your ministers this past Lord's Day. You can understand our joy in being able to receive this ministry of the Word while visiting with you.

We have been engaged in frequent discussions with the subcommittee for contact with the RCUS of the CCCA since Synod Fergus 1998. Our IRC and your subcommittee have met to discuss the questions and concerns which have arisen in your churches. These meetings have been conducted in a brotherly spirit and with candour. We believe that the Lord has blessed these efforts to learn more about each other. You have been straightforward in your investigation of our doctrine and practice. Your subcommittee has attended the meetings of our Synod, and has visited our churches. We have made every effort to reciprocate.

We certainly understand that questions remain about the RCUS, our commitment to the Three Forms of Unity, and our practice. Your churches have raised questions concerning our belief and practice regarding the Lord's Day, the Lord's supper, and on the doctrine of the church. We appreciate the care and seriousness with which you approach these matters. We have addressed these matters forthrightly with your subcommittee, and we have not pretended to perfection in the process. We recognize that while we aspire to faithfulness to the Lord, we still fall far short. On the other hand, we appreciate the fact that you are realistic about us, and that you do not expect us to walk in lockstep at every point of practice or custom.

We are convinced that establishing ecclesiastical fellowship (or fraternal relations) would be the context in which we can further discuss these items of importance.

Given our different historical developments, we have responded to our circumstances somewhat differently, yet we are surprisingly similar in most of what we believe and practice. We may not always express our views in terms that are familiar to you or with the confessional language to which you are accustomed. We are willing to listen to you, and we desire to make progress in these things, but we desire to do so in the unity of a fraternal relationship. We believe that you want to listen to us as well, and to receive our input as fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The basis for a mutual bond is not found in us but outside of us in the Word of God. Holy Scripture, and the confessions of Biblical faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession, together form an objective basis upon which we can relate to one another. This is not to suggest that we should be unconcerned about the subjective application of the truth as we confess it. Quite the contrary is true. Because we have an objective standard in Holy Scripture, and an objective statement of what the Scriptures teach, we can proceed along the road together knowing that we are bound to uphold Scripture and Confession faithfully *in our teaching and practice*. The RCUS and the Canadian Reformed Churches are not possessed of the idea which places Scripture and Confession in a false antithesis. Nor are we agnostic in these matters. We believe the Holy Scriptures and we also believe that we know what they teach. Of this we are not ashamed. We both understand that what we practice *IS* in fact an expression of what we believe.

Perhaps I am "preaching to the choir," as we say. I should think that this is indeed the case. We want what you want, and we both have as our foremost desire the glory and honour of our Covenant God.

Three years ago we reminded Synod Fergus of the invitation to your churches to enter into fraternal relations with the Reformed Church in the United States. While Synod Fergus declined our invitation, the matter was not dismissed or forgotten, but rather pursued with diligence. We have had time to learn about each other. We have been able to engage in extended discussion. In all of our contacts with your churches and committee members we have enjoyed the highest order of Christian fellowship. There has been confidence in interacting with your subcommittee, that everything was done decently and in order, and with sincerity. Brothers Moesker, Gortemaker, Jonker and Poppe, did not hesitate to ask the probing questions. It may be well to reflect to you something of what we have learned about your churches through our contacts and committee work. You are primarily concerned to be true to God's Word. You are unashamedly committed to the Reformed confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession. These confessions are not something behind-the-scenes or out-of-sight in your churches. They are living, working documents in your midst. We are glad that the Canadian Reformed Churches have a standard by which to live in the world, a standard of which you are not ashamed. While so much of what calls itself 'church' today glories in a lack of a standard or at best one of doubtful significance, we have found you to be a breath of fresh air as you confess full allegiance to the Word of God and a strict adherence to the Three Forms of Unity.

We mutually confess that the Lord continues his church gathering work in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel. It is our conviction that he uses his people to this end, and as one of your ministers has written, he does so "through a human voice." While the church must be about the work of proclaiming the Word of God, it is the Lord who gives the increase. We are fully dependent upon the Sovereign God who calls people into covenant with himself as the Great Commission is carried out in the world.

In the same way it is not by chance that we have been speaking together for a number of years. There has been communication by "a human voice" as we have spoken the Word of God to one another. There is a one-ness in the truth to which God calls us. The Reformed Church in the United States would not pursue ecclesiastical fellowship with you if we did not believe that it was necessary or right to do so. We see this is your churches belief as well. Indeed, "How shall two walk together, unless they be agreed?"

We do pray that God will bless your deliberations on this most important decision. I wish to thank the Synod and your esteemed chairman for affording me the opportunity to address you on behalf of the RCUS. We would be remiss if we did not tell you that we love you in the Lord, and that it has been a joy to be in your midst once again. God bless you and prosper your work as your labor together for his kingdom and glory.

1.6 Response to Rev. G. Syms by br. W. Gortemaker.

Rev. George Syms and Elder David Stelpstra, brothers:

It is my pleasure on behalf of General Synod Neerlandia to respond to your address. As a committee member for contact with the Reformed Church in the United States, I have had personal interaction with Rev. Syms and the Interchurch Relations Committee and it brings good memories. In addition, I had the privilege of welcoming Rev. and Mrs. Syms and Elder Lyle Griess and his wife Valerie to my house. Our fellowship on that occasion in matters of church issues as well as recreational activities has cemented a bond that continues today. And now there is even more reason to rejoice in the bond we as churches may have through ecclesiastical fellowship. We thank our covenant God for making this possible, today.

The contact and relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church in the United States started in the late '80s. In 1992 there was a request from the RCUS for sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our discussions with you over the years progressed to the stage where now we may be churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. For some this progress was too slow, for others it was a due process. Of course, both our churches recognize that there are existing differences of historical viewpoints, application, and practices. We have travelled different roads since we parted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the European continent. But we trust that the roads are converging now. And, as we meet and talk, let us go on our way rejoicing together in the marvelous deeds of our covenant God.

I know there is a desire from your side to get to know us better. From our side our membership has followed the developments in our relationship and has appreciated the Reformed witness emanating from your churches. Though small in number, you are strong in commitment. The readoption of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort endeared us to you even more. We stand on the same basis. In our fellowship we can address one another on the infallible Word of God and the confessions. As we forge a stronger bond, may God grant us insight and wisdom to deal with each other in true joy, in abundant patience, and in ardent love.

Brothers, I believe this new relationship opens many avenues to learn from and serve one another. This bond should not be a distant one, but a meaningful endeavour to further the work of the Lord on this continent. I am pleased that both of you can be present here on this historic occasion. You were in attendance at Synod Fergus 1998. Now the relationship hoped for has come to fruition. I am sure it gives you as much joy as it does us.

On behalf of Synod I ask you to bring our greetings to your Synod which will meet next week. As bringer of good tidings, convey our great desire to work together in the service of the Triune God. We pray for His indispensable blessings on your churches.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

1.7 Address of Rev. R. Stienstra (URCNA)

Esteemed brothers,

It is a privilege for me to address the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, here in Neerlandia where I still have many memories of past meetings and events. Together with Rev. De Jong and Rev. Pols, I bring you warm fraternal greetings from the churches of our federation. The United Reformed Churches thank you for inviting us to be present at this significant juncture of the history of our two churches. With great interest our 78 congregations and their consistories follow what will happen during these days of consideration and decision making in Neerlandia. May the Lord of the church give you wisdom and discretion in dealing with proposals and recommendations which may have far-reaching consequences for church unity.

We have seen how the Lord who gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself a church chosen unto everlasting life, has blessed your churches in the past decades, and continues to bless them today. With gratitude we make use of your catechism materials for our covenant youth. Some of your adult Scripture studies are profitably used by our societies. Books by your ministers are read with benefit also. Many of our people, at least in Canada, are subscribed to *Clarion* and to other periodicals related to the Canadian Reformed people. There is, in general, among us much appreciation for your academic and journalistic achievements. In short, we thank God for you.

Scripture's mandate for church unity has led to the present consideration of deciding whether to recognize each other as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to grapple with some of the implications and consequences of that act. As a member of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches, and having been part of the dialogue with the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches for some five years, I am aware of the significance of the discussions taking place these days.

On the part of the URC we are fully committed to pursuing ecumenicity with the intent and objective of eventual complete and full federative integration with the Canadian Reformed Churches. One might even designate such pursuit and desire a 'primary' mark of the true church. Certainly, the United Reformed Churches consider themselves true churches of Christ. The Scripture and Reformed Confessions leave no doubt that two federations with identical symbols and practices, as well as a strikingly similar history must leave no effort undone to reach the goal of full unity. Therefore, our churches at Synod Escondido in June wish to enter ***Ecclesiastical Fellowship*** with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Such a step involves mutual recognition as true churches, thereby considering each other as sister churches, with all the responsibilities of such a relationship.

The ten Statements of Agreement reached between the two unity committees, in our assessment, constitute a mutual agreement that both federations adhere in life and practice to the Three Forms of Unity. It is also our conviction, and have written so to Synod Escondido, that agreeing to enter ***Ecclesiastical Fellowship*** is not done on the basis of the Agreements, but on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity, with the Agreements constituting evidence of an agreeable conformity to them in church life. It is possible that even if one synod fails to implement all of the ingredients or provisions of the Agreements, or even alters a relatively small detail of an Agreement, that synod should nevertheless be able to agree to proceed to Phase Two. In the evaluation of the Committee for Ecumenicity and Church Unity the Statements of Agreement are agreements between the two unity committees, neither of whom is able to make decisions for its synod. Certainly, the Agreements were wholeheartedly and without reservation entered into and are presented as such to both synods.

It is the fervent, prayerful hope of the United Reformed Churches that Synod Neerlandia will decide that in following the clear guidance of Scripture and the Reformed Confessions, the time has come now to proceed to closer fellowship. I recognize that such a step is not easy for the Canadian Reformed Churches. The principle of the matter is easier to espouse than its implementation. There is, first of all, the fact that the United Reformed Churches is a young federation, composed of churches lacking the cohesion and uniformity which a longer history would likely produce. Moreover, the history of alienation that has developed in a number of local settings may constitute some residual opposition to entering into ***Ecclesiastical Fellowship.*** Also, the practice of some long standing among Reformed churches in our tradition, of limiting this particular relationship to sister

churches geographically removed, makes it more difficult to implement the recommendation of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity with the United Reformed Churches.

Especially with the last mentioned factor in mind, it is understandable that both committees were prepared to recommend to their synods that the proposed ***Ecclesiastical Fellowship*** phase should only last three years, and that in 2004 when your next synod is scheduled to meet, the final phase of Church Union should be entered. As several years passed since that initial concurrence, our committee has developed greater caution on this point, and believes that it would be more edifying and unifying if the churches employed a step by step approach.

The URC committee understands and appreciates the assessment of your deputies in their report, *"... all with the proviso that the URCNA in their upcoming synod have adopted the proposed time schedule towards ecclesiastical unity ... as long as both local churches involved commit themselves to calling their own federations to federative unity on the adopted basis by the year 2004."* However, in our understanding of the dynamics of church life in both federations, such an assessment and condition may not be helpful for church unity. It is desirable, to be sure, that a time frame should be countenanced. But to make a stringent three-year schedule the condition for church unity may be counter productive at Synod Escondido, as well as for a harmonious implementation of the steps toward federative union.

The Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity has read and discussed the recommendation to Synod Neerlandia, *"all with the understanding that both federations are committed to reach the final phase of these discussions in 2004."* In all humility and candor I encourage you brothers to consider carefully the need for and the implications of such a brief period of ***Ecclesiastical Fellowship***. We understand that some reaction to past experiences is unavoidable. However, our committee has not seen with clarity what Scriptural or Confessional principle, or even what church orderly injunction might be involved here, in order that both synods should adhere to a three-year time period.

It is therefore that our report to Synod Escondido contains this interpretation and recommendation, *"The committee also notes that the time element or the extent of time required for the two federations to be in* ***Ecclesiastical Fellowship*** *is not predetermined. Should synod proceed to enter into that relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the committee recommends that the next synod consider the progress made in Phase Two, particularly the work of the committees synod 2001 may have appointed to work out the details of a joint church order, a future song book, and theological education for ministers. We recommend that synod at that time decide how to proceed toward 'eventual integrated federative church unity,' the objective being Phase Three,* ***Church Union."***

Brothers, it is our sincere wish that the King of the Church should guide you, and that the Holy Spirit may give you a rich measure of insight into the Word of God, so that in its light you may come to decisions that are pleasing in the Lord's sight, in order that the church may indeed be one, as our Lord prayed. To Him be all the glory and praise!

1.8 Response to Rev. R. Stienstra by Rev. R. Aasman.

Rev. Stienstra: it is with great delight that I am permitted to respond to your address this evening on behalf of Synod Neerlandia and our churches. Part of this pleasure stems from the fact that you and I have been meeting each other for almost ten years and thus know each other well. This began with the meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches in the early 1990s; more recently we have worked together in our respective church committees which have had unity talks; moreover, you and I have been invited to speak back-to-back on the subject of church unity between our two churches in such exotic places as Smithers and Neerlandia. I can remember the first time that I met you at the Alliance of Reformed Churches in the Chicago area. I heard you speak in plenary session a number of times, and something gripped my heart as I thought to myself: a brother in the Lord! A spiritual father!

You have spoken this evening quite extensively about the work which our respective committees have done. As far as that is concerned, you have been far more involved than I. We in the CanRC are delighted that the CanRC brothers and the URC brothers could come to a mutually agreeable document known as **The Statement of Agreement.** How beautiful and wonderful it is that there is a clear and unequivocal unanimity on such things as *the covenant, the church, the church order and the supervision of the Lord's supper*, to mention just a few things. May this serve the churches well as you outlined in your address! I know that you personally, along with your committee, have been getting some heat over this Statement of Agreement. It is probably not even my business to comment on what is going to happen at your upcoming Synod Escondido, CA, but we do wish you strength and blessing from the Lord at this Synod. We think particularly about the discussions regarding relations between your churches and our churches. Please pass on to the brothers there our greetings and our prayers for the Lord's blessings on the decisions of your Synod.

Brother Stienstra, you also spoke about entering into the **Second Phase of Ecumenicity**. You know, of course, that our CPEU has recommended that our churches enter into this second phase. This is an important step, a step of ecclesiastical fellowship which carries with it the unique privileges and pleasures of pulpit exchanges and shared table fellowship. The thought that Rev. Bill Pols, who was here earlier this week and who is my neighbouring colleague in Edmonton, that he and I could exchange pulpits in the near future is something that gratifies me! How satisfying it was for us to witness this evening that our General Synod agreed to enter into Phase 2, with the expectation that this will be realized in federative unity. May your Synod also agree to enter into Phase 2 with our churches!

As you know, our committee which is known as the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, recommended that we enter this second phase only when there is a mutually agreed upon decision to work to federative unity by a specific target date. The date that was mentioned was 2004. You pointed out in your address that a stringent 3-year schedule for church unity may be counter productive at Synod Escondido. The presentation of our advisory committee here

at Synod and the dialogue which stemmed from it, suggests that there is a great deal of sympathy for this. I can understand the concern as well. This is why in our decision this evening we did not include a specific target date of 2004.
However, here is the salient point. What our committee wanted to avoid at all costs is that we enter into the second phase of ecclesiastical fellowship - complete with pulpit exchanges and an opening of the Lord's table to one another – without keeping as an objective a federative unity! Our committee reasoned that a target date which would be mutually agreeable would send out the clear message to one another that this federative unity is our goal. Clearly our Synod felt that it was not possible to specify such a target date because it felt too much had to be accomplished in such a short period of time. What is gratifying, however, is that Synod's decision made clear in no uncertain terms that federative unity must be our mutual goal. The essential point is that *our objective* is the clearest and highest expression of church unity. As Christ said: that they may be one. You yourself spoke about **"Scripture's mandate for church unity."** No doubt you were thinking about passages such as John 17 and Ephesians 4. For this, I am deeply thankful. May the Lord guide our respective churches in this respect and guide us along a path which is pleasing in his sight.

Rev. Stienstra, thank you for being at General Synod Neerlandia as a delegate of the United Reformed Churches. It is our hope that your being here will help cement the spiritual bond between our respective churches. Please leave with the knowledge that we keep the URC in our prayers, and that we sustain you in our prayers as a sister.

In all of this we seek only one goal: the glory of Him who is the King and Head of His church which He gathers from the beginning of the world to the end, by His Word and Spirit, in the unity of a true faith.

Thank you

2. Committee Reports

2.1. Committee on Bible Translation

Report to General Synod Neerlandia 2001
from the
Committee on Bible Translation

Dear brothers,

Greetings in the Lord.

We submit to you our report in fulfilment of the mandate given to us by General Synod Fergus 1998. The mandate was much lighter than those given to the Committee on Bible Translations by general synods in 1992 and 1995; hence, this report is brief.

Mandate

Our committee had received as mandate from General Synod Fergus 1998 the following charge:

1. to receive comments from churches and / or members about passages in the NIV in need of improvements;
2. to scrutinize these comments, and pass on valid concerns to the NIV Translation Center;
3. to bring to a resolution those matters that have already been submitted to the NIV Translation Center;
4. to monitor developments in the NIV as the text is revised;
5. to serve the next General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

Comments from churches and / or members

We have receive no comments from churches and / or members about the text of the NIV.

Resolving Matters Submitted by the Previous Committee

On February 9, 1998, the Bible Translation Committee serving General Synod Fergus 1998 had brought their labours to a conclusion by submitting to the NIV Translation Center a selection of passages in the NIV texts which where judged to be in some manner deficient, along with the reasons for that opinion. General Synod Fergus 1998 charged the present Bible Translation Committee to bring this matter to a resolution. We understood this charge to mean: inquire from the NIV Translation Center whether these particular recommendations will be adopted or not.

On April 28, 1998, Dr. John H. Stek acknowledged receipt of the above-mentioned correspondence, with appreciation for the 'careful study and discussion' that it represents. He requested, however, that before putting our proposed changes before the NIV's Committee on Bible Translation (not our committee, but the one which continues to update and make minor revisions to the NIV text), he might receive further elucidation on four of the nine proposals. He responded to the proposed changes and questioned some of the underlying assumptions.

On March 10, 1999, our Committee replied to Dr. Stek's comments (see

Appendix). Essentially, we acquiesced to Dr. Stek's defence of the NIV text on one point, but maintained and fine-tuned our position on the other three.

Our Committee does not expect to receive any further communication from the NIV Translation Center since, as Dr. Stek observed concerning the above-mentioned submission of February 9, 1998, it would be considered by the NIV Committee on Bible Translation "over the next 2-3 years".

Given the fact that we have had the opportunity to offer additional elucidation on the submission of February 9, 1998, and furthermore, given the fact that our recommendation will eventually be dealt with, this part of our mandate would appear to be concluded. We would consider the matters submitted by the previous committee to be resolved.

Monitoring the NIV Text

In a letter dated March 18, 1999, we inquired of Mr. S. Johnson, Director of Communication for the International Bible Society

1. whether the inclusive-language NIV was still being published by Hodder and Stoughton Publishing House, and
2. whether a non-inclusive-language NIV text with Canadian (or British) spelling had been published.

We did not receive a response to this correspondence.

The mandate to monitor the NIV text, we found difficult to fulfil. We understand why Synod felt it necessary to include this element: It seems that the committee serving Synod Abbotsford 1995 did not monitor developments in the NIV bureaucracy, with the result that shortly after Synod Abbotsford 1995, an inclusive-language edition appeared without warning. We are convinced that the Committee on Bible Translations serving Synod Abbotsford could not have notified Synod of the imminent publication of an inclusive-language edition since that particular development was not accessible to that committee. If there were to be other developments, we feel that we would be similarly unable to monitor them. We do not see a need for this mandate to be renewed.

The matter about which we inquired (but have not received reply) is not of an urgent nature and need not be pursued.

Conclusion

We are pleased to observe that none of the churches have submitted to our committee any points of concern or criticism regarding the NIV text. None had submitted such to the former committee either. This testifies to the fact that the decision of General Synod Abbotsford 1995, to recommend the NIV for use among the churches, has been a blessing to the churches. The transition from use of the RSV to the NIV has been remarkably harmonious.

Your committee has been pleased to serve the churches; however, since there appears to be no need to bring the conclusions of the Report to General Synod Fergus 1998 to further resolution, and further, since none of the churches have submitted concerns regarding specific texts of the NIV during the past six years, and finally, since the mandate to monitor developments in the NIV text seems almost impossible to fulfil, we recommend General Synod Neerlandia 2001 not reappoint a Committee on Bible Translation.

Respectfully submitted by your committee,

P. Aasman; J. Geertsema;
W. Helder; C. Van Dam

2.2 Board of Governors of the Theological College

BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD NEERLANDIA 2001

November 1, 2000

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord,
The Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches hereby submits to your assembly, according to section 6.1 of the Canadian Reformed Theological College Act, 1981, a report of its work and decisions since May 1998.

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors can report with thankfulness that the work of the Theological College could continue without interruption during the past three years. The Board met five times during the past term: June 18, 1998; September 10, 1998; September 9, 1999; March 22, 2000; September 7, 2000. Minutes of these meetings will be available for your assembly. General Synod 1998 appointed to the Board the brothers J.Moesker, W.Oostdijk and W.Smouter. These brothers signed the Declaration of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The brothers J.Visscher, H.J.Sloots, P.G.Feenstra, W.DenHollander and D.G.J.Agema have completed their term as Governors. The Board expresses thankfulness for the work done by these brothers. The Board submits a proposal to fill the vacancy in the Property and Finance Committee. Your assembly will receive confidential information concerning the proposed appointment. Recommendations to fill the other vacancies will have to come from Regional Synod East 2000 and Regional Synod West 2000.

Senate / Faculty

The Board can report with thankfulness that the professors were able to do their work during the past three years. The Lord granted them health to do their work. At the end of each academic year the Board received a report of the course work. The Board expresses thankfulness for the dedication of the professors. In the fall and the spring of each academic year the Board visited the lectures. All reports in the past three years were positive. The Governors concluded that the lectures are presented in a clear and scholarly way. The Board can also testify that the instruction is in accordance with the Holy Scripture, the Confession and the Church Order (see By- Law 1, section 3.16 (b)) The professors visited the churches. Dr. VanDam visited the churches in British Columbia (1998), Dr.J.DeJong the churches in Alberta / Manitoba (1999) and Prof. J.Geertsema the churches in British Columbia (2000). In March 2000 the Board approved a change to the scheduling of these lecture tours. The churches in the West are now divided into

three territories, instead of two. This means that all the western churches will be visited once every three years. The three territories are Manitoba (with Denver), Alberta and British Columbia. In terms of time this would make the tours more equitable. In addition the rotation among the professors can now proceed without adjustment. Dr.VanDam also visited Mexico, Australia and New Zealand. He submitted reports on these visits to the Board.

Dr.Gootjes requested a sabbatical leave for the Fall semester of the year 2000. The Board approved this request and appointed as his replacement Drs.J.M.Batteau, minister of the Gereformeerde Kerk in Wageningen, The Netherlands.

In accordance with the decision of General Synod of Fergus 1998 (Acts, Art. 83), the Board decided to grant tenure to Prof.Dr.J.DeJong and Prof.Dr.N.H.Gootjes.

In September 2000 Dr.J.Faber requested the Board to accept his resignation from the Senate. The Board decided to accept Dr.Faber's resignation and thanked him for his faithful labours as a member of the Senate during the time of his retirement.

In March 2000 the Senate informed the Board by letter that Prof.J.Geertsema would like to retire as Professor New Testament effective at the end of the academic year 2000-2001. By that time Prof. Geertsema will have reached the age of 66 years (See By-Law 6, Regulation 1, section 2, as amended in By-Law 8). The Senate noted that this request is about half a year too late according to By-Law 8, nevertheless the Senate was of the opinion that this request ought to be granted. The Board decided to accede to Prof. Geertsema's request and granted him honourable retirement as Professor of New Testament at the end of the academic year 2000-2001. The Board expresses deep gratitude for the many years of faithful service of Prof. Geertsema. The Board also instructed the Senate to proceed with investigations that would lead to the proposal of a nomination to fill the vacancy of Professor of New Testament. Your assembly will receive a confidential proposal in this regard.

Synod Fergus 1998 decided "to appoint Prof. Dr. J.DeJong as principal for the period of September 1999 to September 2002, and to designate Prof. Dr. C.vanDam as Principal for the years 2002 to 2005, the Lord willing. This transfer of responsibilities will take place the day after the Convocation in 1999." In September 1999 Prof. Dr. J.DeJong took on the responsibilities of Principal. The Board requests Synod to appoint Prof. Dr. C.vanDam as Principal for the years 2002 to 2005, and to designate Prof. Dr. N.H.Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005 to 2008, the Lord willing. The transfer of responsibilities will take place the day after the Convocation in 2002.

Students

Currently nine students are enrolled in the College. In the past three years eleven have graduated from the College. Eight have entered the ministry of the Word, of which three now serve as missionaries. Two graduated with a Diploma of Theological Studies. With thankfulness the Board reports that the students could continue their work unhindered. We pray that under the blessing of the Lord the churches continue to endeavour that there be students of theology (Art.21 C.O.)

Facilities

The Annual Reports of the Property and Finance Committee will give your assembly more accurate information with regard to this point. The past three years the Committee has been occupied with the new addition to the College building. Synod 1998 directed "the Board of Governors to proceed with the 'Recommended Plan' on the basis as set out in this report" (Art. 87.IV.B.) In June 1998 the Board appointed a Promotion/Fund Raising Committee. The Fund Raising Committee consisted of the brothers H.Berends, G.Kuik and P.Lindhout - representing the Western churches, the brothers D.Pot and B.Veenendaal representing the Australian churches, and the brothers M.Kampen and W.Smouter, representing the Eastern churches. In September 1999 this Committee could report that the fund raising had been completed successfully. The Board expresses thankfulness for the willingness of the churches in Australia, Canada and the United States of America to contribute to this cause.

This also meant that the Building Committee could start its work. This Committee consisted of the brothers W.Oostdijk and J.VanderWoude and the sisters C.Mechelse and M.VanderVelde. With gratitude the Board can report that the work on the addition was completed before the start of the 2000-2001 academic year. On September 8, 2000 there was an official opening and an Open House. The Board appreciates all the work done by many. Above all we give thanks to the Lord for His blessing and we pray that the Lord may use these new and updated facilities for the glory of His name.

In this connection the Board expresses thankfulness for the work of the Women's Savings Action. Each year they donate a substantial amount to the College. Without their faithful labours we would not be able to fill the library with the necessary books. The Board also acknowledges with deep gratitude the continued support by the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. The Board invited a representative of the Australian Deputies for Training for the Ministry and one of the brothers involved in fund raising to be present at the official opening.

Pastoral Training Program

Synod 1998 decided (Art. 107.IV.C.) to direct the Board of Governors:

1. to proceed with the components of the proposed program, including the internship, on a trial basis, assessing their effectiveness and considering possible alternatives without making them prerequisites for entrance to the ministry at this time (Art.4.B.1. C.O.);
2. to consider how elements of this proposed program can best be integrated with the academic courses presently being taught at the College, and whether this can be accommodated without extending the present course beyond four years;
3. to consider the addition of another faculty member for the diaconiological department;

In September 1999 the Board appointed Rev.J.DeGelder of Flamborough as Coordinator of this program. In cooperation with the Senate he has developed Guidelines for this Program. The Board notes with thankfulness the enthusiasm expressed by those who have already been involved in this program. The Senate has

also taken a closer look at the remuneration of the students involved in this program. Because Synod 1998 decided that the program be introduced on a "trial basis," The Board is of the opinion that due to the short time it cannot come to your assembly with definite proposals. The Board asks Synod for a mandate to come to the 2004 Synod with a specific proposal about the program, as well as the financial remuneration.

The Board also investigated the other items mentioned in the decision of Synod 1998. The Church at Orangeville submitted a suggestion to the Board in this regard as well. It suggested:

1. To significantly increase the weight of the Poimenics course in the existing academic program at the Theological College.
2. To appoint another faculty member, so that one professor can concentrate on the field of Diaconiology, and thus facilitate the above.

With regard to the appointment of a fifth professor the Board is of the opinion that this is not feasible at this point of time. It would mean an increase in assessment of $11.00 per communicant member. With regard to increasing the weight of the poimenics course, the Board decided upon recommendation by the Senate to increase the weight of the Diaconiological disciplines. This would mean that the other departments will need to sacrifice « hour per week for the whole year, or 1 hour per week for one semester. The Senate is looking at using part-time lecturers in those diaconiological disciplines that need strengthening.

Master of Theology Program

The Board requested the Senate to investigate the possibility of instituting a Master of Theology program at the College. The Senate came to the conclusion that such a program is not viable at this point. The Board is in agreement with this conclusion. This does not mean that the idea should be completely abandoned. The Board wants to make the churches aware of the need for further education of ministers. This will not only benefit the College in connection with future vacancies, but also benefit the churches.

Accreditation

The Board instructed the Senate to research the matter of obtaining accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). The Senate concluded that membership in the ATS is not feasible. The Board concurred with this report, but did decide to have a closer look at developing and improving College policies.

Auditor

General Synod 1998 appointed sr. A.Spithof C.A. as Auditor until the next Synod (Acts, Art.86.IV.B). In November 1999 sr. Spithof submitted a letter of resignation due to time restraints. The Property And Finance Committee accepted this resignation and appointed br. H. Salomons C.A. as Auditor. The Board is thankful for sr. Spithof's many years of faithful service.

Committee for the Official Web-site

The Board requests General Synod 2001 to appoint sr. Margaret VanderVelde to the synodical Committee for the Official Web-site. It gives the following grounds:

1. such an appointment would facilitate the integration of information from

the Theological College that should be posted on the Canadian Reformed website

2. such an appointment would reflect the reality that sr. VanderVelde is already involved in posting information of the Theological College on the website.

Recommendations:

1. to receive this report and all its appendices.
   2. to acknowledge the expiration of the term of office of the brs. J.Visscher, H.J.Sloots, P.G.Feenstra, W.DenHollander and D.G.J.Agema as Governors with grateful acknowledgement of their labours, and persuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.04 of By-Law 1 (as amended)
      a. to appoint, elect or re-appoint six active ministers to hold office until the next General Synod and to appoint at least three substitutes from each Regional Synod area;
      b. to re-appoint the brs.M.Kampen and J.VanderWoude as Governors for a term from the date of his re-appointment until the first General Synod held after the date of their re-appointment;
      c. to re-appoint the brs.W.Oostdijk and W.Smouter as Governors for a term from the date of their re-appointment until the second General Synod held after the date of their re-appointment; to appoint br. G.J.Nordeman from Burlington as Governor for a term from the date of their appointment until the third General Synod held after the date of his appointment (with as alternate br. L.Jagt from Burlington).
   3. to appoint Prof.Dr.C.VanDam as Principal for the period of September 2002 to September 2005, and to designate Prof.Dr.N.H.Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005 to 2008, the Lord willing. The transfer of principalship will take place the day after the Convocation in 2002.
   4. to approve all decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 until the day of this report.
   5. to express thankfulness for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.
   6. to mandate the Board to present to Synod 2004 proposals regarding the Pastoral Training Program and the financial remuneration
   7. to consider the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditors for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; to appoint br. H.Solomons as Auditor till next General Synod, and to thank sr. A Spithof for her many years of faithful service.
   8. to appoint sr. Margaret VanderVelde to the synodical Committee for the Official Web-site.

   The Board wishes your assembly the blessing of the Lord in all your deliberations and decisions.

For the Board of Governors,

	J.Moesker
R.Aasman	W.Oostdijk
D.G.J.Agema	H.J.Sloots
W.DenHollander	W.Smouter
P.G.Feenstra	J.Visscher
M.Kampen	J.VanderWoude

2.3. Committee for the Promotion of Ecumenical Unity

Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to Synod Neerlandia 2001

A. MANDATE

The Committee appointed by Synod Fergus 1998 received the following mandate:

"Synod decide...

E. To give this committee the following mandate:

1. To make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation wherever necessary;
2. To represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of pursuing ecclesiastical unity;
3. to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity;
4. To represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity;
5. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments;
6. To discuss and develop a proposal as to how to proceed in encouraging federative unity;
7. To provide information to the churches at regular intervals, and to serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod. (Acts General Synod Fergus 1998 Article 96 V E, pp. 85-86).

With regard to the Free Reformed Churches, the following addition was made to the mandate:

8. To take up contact with the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches of North America.
9. To initiate fraternal dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches in North America with a view to establishing federative unity."(Acts General Synod Fergus 1998 Article 98 IV B p. 99)

B. THE COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKINGS

The Committee has once again enjoyed a good working relationship. Most of the work is done by correspondence, but recently we have been making more use of e-mail options. We have followed the general rule that the local concerns in western Canada would be dealt with by western delegates, and local issues (meetings, consultations, etc.) in eastern Canada would be covered by the eastern delegates.

C. ACTIVITIES

1. Contact at federative meetings

A. Alliance of Reformed Churches

Although we were invited to attend the 1998 meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, we declined this invitation, since it appeared that ecclesiastical unity was no longer a part of the agenda of this organization. In 1999 the Alliance was disbanded, since its raison d 'etre had ceased to be a living issue among the remaining churches. In effect, it was always seen as a sort of shadow federation paving the way for the formation of a genuine federation of churches. Those churches that have not federated have since formed regional alignments or remained independent, but most have no intention of pursuing unity talks with the Canadian Reformed Churches or the United Reformed Churches.

B. Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America, held in Kalamazoo on June 15-17, 1999.

Dr. J. De Jong and Rev. W. Den Hollander attended the third synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America, held in Hudsonville on June 15-17, 1999. The line charted in our previous report was continued at this synod. The United Reformed Churches have consolidated as a federation, and are engaged in pursuing ecumenical relations with a substantial number of church groups on our continent as well as around the world. The report of this synod as well as the speech of our fraternal delegate were published in *Clarion* (Appendices 1 and 2).

The dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches received extensive attention both in the report of the Committee to synod and in the discussions at synod. The activities and proposals of the External Relations committee with regard to our churches were approved by synod. Synod thereby approved the placement of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the position of contact at the first Phase of the URCNA "Guidelines" on ecumenical relations. This is an exploratory phase designed to foster discussions leading towards the establishment of closer ties and fellowship.

The Committee felt it was our obligation to pursue continued talks with the URCNA Ecumenical Relations Committee, while not necessarily adopting all elements of their "Proposed Guidelines to Ecclesiastical Relations" (See Appendix 3). We felt that according to the arrangements we had adopted at the outset in this Committee, we would not sanction a closer relationship of pulpit exchange or table fellowship until a substantial margin of agreement had been achieved on fundamental issues, including the mutual adoption of a time frame towards federative unity. As will be clear later in the report (See section 2: "Committee Contact"), we believe the time has come to move to closer forms of fellowship in the context of our overall plan towards full and integral unity by 2004.

On September 27, 2000, Rev. W. Den Hollander functioned as a fraternal delegate at Classis Ontario (Fall, 2000) of the URCNA in Etobicoke, Ont. He was invited to address classis, and used the opportunity to explain the "Statement of Agreement" as adopted by the Unity Committees of both federations.

C. Synod of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, Cambridge, ON , October 17-19, 1999.

One member of our Committee functioned as fraternal delegate to the synod of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches held last fall in Cambridge, ON. Rev. W. Den Hollander was present at various times for most of the synodical deliberations. A report of the meeting, along with Rev. Den Hollander's address to synod is accompanied with this report (Appendices 4 and 5). The synod did not deal with the matter of establishing correspondence with the Canadian Reformed Churches, nor was there an official request for them to do so. However, they were

extensively engaged with the issue of federative union with the United Reformed Churches, having received the official offer from the latter body allowing all OCR churches to join their federation without their ministers being required to take a colloquium doctum. This was a unilateral declaration of trust extended to the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, but the OCR concluded that it was not ready to unilaterally enter the URCNA fold.

On March 27, 1999 Rev. W. Den Hollander attended an Officebearers' Conference hosted by the OCRC in Bowmanville. At the conference he presented a paper concerning the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The spirit of the Conference was very positive, and we believe there is great potential for more detailed talks with this federation.

D. Synod of the Free Reformed Churches held in Hamilton, May 23-26, 2000

Two of our deputies, Dr. J. De Jong and Rev. W. Den Hollander also visited the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches on May 23-May 26, 2000. Dr. J. De Jong addressed this Synod as a representative of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The text of this speech as well as our report on this synod are included with this report (Appendices 6 and 7). This federation of churches has also adopted a tiered grid with regard to ecclesiastical relations with other Reformed and Presbyterian church groups. The Synod decided to include the Canadian Reformed Churches into the first category on the FRCNA grid, called "Limited Contact" (See Appendix 8 for the grid).

As in the case of the URCNA, and given our mandate, our Committee felt duty bound to enter into talks with the FRC without thereby endorsing all elements of their adopted guideline for ecclesiastical unity. It should be understood that the FRC at this point in their history are still discussing on the committee level whether federative unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches, or with other Reformed federations, ought to be pursued. Currently their blueprint for unity, adopted in line with the criteria functioning in the ICRC, ends with the relationship of "Corresponding Relations" covering all churches with whom they are in contact, including those federations within the same territorial region.

The position of our Committee on this point is that although the churches may not endorse this scheme, everything possible should be done to foster closer understanding of each other's unique histories, and every opportunity should be exploited to bring our two federations closer together. Perhaps a revised model will surface in the FRCNA in the future. In the meantime, we ought to continue to pursue discussions with the FRCNA as opportunity allows, retaining for our own purposes the goal of federative union with this body of churches. If we for some time in the future continue to be explicit about our aims, we can thereby afford the FRCNA every opportunity to revise its goals and strategies in line with what we see as a higher set of aims and goals regarding ecclesiastical unity.

2. Committee Contact

Intensified Committee contact has occurred especially with two of the above mentioned federations:

a) United Reformed Churches of North America

Since our report to Synod Fergus 1998 a total of eleven (11) meetings were held with dialogue between three representatives of the Canadian Reformed Committee (the eastern delegation, composed of the members Dr. J. De Jong, Rev.

W. Den Hollander and br. F. Westrik) along with four representatives of the URCNA External Relations Committee. These meetings, in which a brotherly spirit of cooperation and frank discussion was always present, were conducted along the lines of the "Guidelines for Ecumenical Relations" as adopted by the URCNA with the provisos as previously mentioned. The results of the these discussions was agreement on all the outstanding areas of discussion which would be of concern to our two federations. The memorandum of agreement is appended to this report, (See Appendix 9). On the basis of this agreement, we recommend that the URCNA be recognized as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that both federations initiate steps to move to a second phase of discussions and consultations, including occasional pulpit exchange on a local level, with possible table fellowship in due time, particularly in those localities where discussions have progressed well for some time.

b) Free Reformed Churches of North America

At the time of the writing of this report three meetings have been held with representatives of the Free Reformed Churches and a delegation of our Committee (Rev. R Aasman, Rev. W. Slomp, and elder P. Van Woudenberg). At these meetings papers were discussed dealing with pertinent issues related to our differences with the Free Reformed Churches. The first meeting, held on September 29, 1999, dealt with confessional and nonconfessional issues in the pursuit of ecclesiastical unity. The document in discussion was a part of a paper presented by Rev. H. Overduin to the consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Chilliwack, B.C. wherein the questions were raised, "What must we agree on and what can be tolerated in the pursuit of ecclesiastical unity?" In the paper Rev. Overduin argued that in things essential there must be unity. He agreed that "in pursuit of ecclesiastical unity, the Word of God as summarized and explained in the Three Forms of Unity deals with matters essential." But "...how do we define common agreement and adherence to the Reformed confessions?" He asks whether there should also be a common understanding of what the confessions teach and mean. Great divisions and strife can come within a church union if this is not respected. "Common subscription to the confessions does not mean common adherence to the confessions."

A second meeting held on February 3, 2000, dealt with the topics "What is experiential preaching?" (FRC delegate) and "How do we see the congregation?" (CanRC delegate). The results of these discussions have been positive in the sense that appreciation was expressed on both sides for the opportunity to articulate the different perspectives and chart a course in order to deal with them openly and frankly. Reports on these discussions as well as the papers involved were published in *Clarion* for the benefit of our membership, (Appendices 10-11).

A third meeting was held on September 27, 2000. The topic of this day was, "Biblical Principles of Church Unity." During the morning session an OPC report entitled "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church" was introduced. Various points of that report were discussed, such as the idea of the pluriformity of the church, hierarchy, and the need for federative unity. The Canadian Reformed brothers made clear that "Unity" implies not only spiritual unity, but also federative unity. The Free Reformed brothers agreed that they do not have an answer as yet as to the need for such a unity, and that such an answer will be crucial for the future of our meetings. In the afternoon a paper published by the Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity of the CanRC was discussed. Some of the same points of the morning session were discussed, and it was agreed that a joint statement be drawn

up to spell out the various points we agree on. In this way our discussions should be further facilitated. Another meeting is set for February 15th, 2001. At that time the topic will be, "The Historical Development of our Churches." This will also be combined with a public meeting wherein two speeches will be delivered, one by a Canadian Reformed minister, and another by a Free Reformed minister.

At the FRCNA synod the possibility whether similar discussions could take place among the eastern delegates of the Committees was also discussed, but this remains in the planning stage.

3. Local Discussions

We received reports on the progress of discussions with local URCNA congregations from Winnipeg (Grace) and London. A Memorandum of Agreement was also received from Grace Canadian Reformed Church of Kerwood, outlining the agreement between this congregation and the URCNA congregation of Wyoming. We received formal requests for advice from Winnipeg (Grace) and Rockway. In both cases, the local congregations have come to the point where they can recognize the local URC congregation as a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are ready to move to more advanced forms of fellowship. In order to provide a guideline for situations like these (of which there may be more in the future) we have included a separate section charting a suggested procedure for conducting local discussions (see Section E).

A request for advice was also received from the Canadian Reformed Church of Ancaster, relating to a non-federated independent congregation. We also received all correspondence from the URC of London with regard to their consultations with Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church in London.

On February 7, 2000 a meeting was hosted by the Hamilton Canadian Reformed Church in which a delegate from the URCNA External Relations Committee (Rev. J. Bouwers) and one from our Committee (Dr. J De Jong) spoke on the progress of the unity discussions up to that point. This is another situation in which there is a more advanced recognition between the two local churches.

On February 23, 2000 a similar meeting was held in Smithers, B.C. with Rev R Stienstra representing he URCNA Committee, and Rev. R. Aasman speaking for the Canadian Reformed Churches. This meeting was hosted by the Canadian Reformed Church in Smithers. The surrounding area has two URCNA congregations. A similar meeting was held on June 23, 2000 in Neerlandia, which also has a congregation affiliated with the URCNA in the neighborhood.

E. Summary

Relative to our last report we can say the work of the Committee on the federative level has been fruitful. While we were only marginally known among several of these groups at the time of our last report, currently we have been included in the ecumenical endeavour of two of these federations. This indicates that the Canadian Reformed Churches are respected by these federations for their faithfulness to Scripture, and their willingness to seek closer ties with like minded church groups. We should continue in this vein until it becomes clear that further progress with any federation appears impossible.

D. DEPUTIES' ASSESSMENT

Our assessment on the progress so far is as follows:

a) United Reformed Churches

We feel with the agreements as presented to your synod that we have reached a stage in which a closer form of cooperation with the URCNA is warranted. Although there are a number of outstanding issues, there is substantial agreement on most key areas of church government and general ecclesiastical policy, (See Appendix 9). We are therefore confident that synod can recommend entering into Phase 2 of the negotiations on our own proposed strategy schedule (See Appendix 12), which is almost analogous to the second phase of the URCNA grid. On the basis of the Statements of Agreement which are the results of our discussions regarding the marks of the true church ad Art 29 B.C., we recommend that Synod recognize the URCNA as faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, and express the hope and wish that through our deepened cooperation and fellowship, we may benefit one another and serve each other in the service of Christ. This would mean that the synod allow closer ties of fellowship such as occasional table fellowship (recognizing each other's attestations) as well as occasional pulpit exchange in those localities where talks have progressed to such a point that both parties are ready for this stage,— all with the proviso that the URCNA, in their forthcoming synod, have adopted the proposed time schedule towards ecclesiastical unity and also adopt the agreement reached by our respective sub-committees, and adopted by our full Committee. Barring any unforeseen obstacles, this should move us to a position of federative unity in 2004.

The implementation of our recommendations is thus a local matter, and can vary from place to place, depending on the level of discussions that have taken place at the local level between churches of the two federations. Where these discussions have advanced to the level of deepened mutual recognition and understanding, fellowship on the Phase 2 level can take place, as long as both local churches involved commit themselves to calling their own federations to federative unity on the adopted basis by the year 2004.

b) Free Reformed Churches

As mentioned, the FRCNA are still in the process of discussing whether federative unity must be pursued. In that sense contact with this group of churches falls outside of the immediate concern of our Committee. However, we concluded that we should give this body of churches the benefit of the doubt, and first ascertain the motivations behind their adopted strategy schedule for external relations, and determine what would prevent them from working towards the goal of federative unity, especially in the light of the overwhelming scriptural evidence in favour of it. As indicated, these issues are also a part of the negotiations being conducted at the present time, and therefore we would recommend that these discussions be continued until we have a more advanced clarification concerning which direction the FRCNA wishes to pursue with regard to our federation.

Unity negotiations take much time and patience. The discussions on the federative level between our counterparts in the Netherlands, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt have being going on for over thirty years. But they also testify to a new rapprochement which has brought the federations closer together than they ever were prior to this point. Therefore, we are convinced that an easy abandonment of the discussions from our side would be out of place, even though our federation may find some valid grounds to do so from a formal and legal point of view. Therefore, we would recommend that synod express its gratitude for the initiative taken by the FRCNA, and mandate the Committee to work within the 'limited contact' category of the FRCNA guidelines towards full ecclesiastical unity.

c) Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches

So far no formal discussions have been initiated with this body on the federative level. However, from all reports that we have received, as well as classical press releases, we are discovering that on the regional and local level, the exchange of delegates is occurring more frequently. The OCRCs are more conscious of our existence, and are also showing a greater desire to reach out to other like minded fellowships in order to foster mutual understanding and growth towards unity. Therefore we are of the opinion that steps should be taken to address this federation formally concerning the call and duty to pursue federative unity. We are eager as committee members appointed by synod to be instrumental on behalf of the churches for the purpose of promoting unity on the federative level.

E. PROPOSAL RE FEDERATIVE UNITY

Part of the mandate given to our Committee was to chart out a proposal for the best way of encouraging federative unity. In the initial meetings we had with delegates from the URCNA the CanRC delegates also introduced a strategy proposal regarding federative unity with like minded church groups. However, since the URCNA Guidelines had been adopted by URCNA Synod 1997, the CanRC Committee agreed to continue working within the context of their guidelines. But this did not imply that we abandoned our own proposal. In effect, we feel we are still working along the lines of our proposal, and have dovetailed our own criteria within the parameters dictated by the URCNA guidelines.

The Strategy Proposal for Church Unity is appended to this report, and can be used as a working document by all churches involved in discussions at the local level as well (see Appendix 12) With regard to the local discussions we have learned much from our counterparts in the Netherlands who have developed a series of specific guidelines for local churches. Making some necessary modifications and adjustments, we would offer these guidelines to synod Neerlandia to serve as a general directive for churches involved in discussions at the local level. These guidelines serve to ensure that local discussions are properly dovetailed into discussions at the federative level, and that in all local discussions the obligation we owe to each other as churches of one federation are not forgotten. These guidelines concern especially discussions with the FRC and OCRC, but may include discussions initiated with other Reformed bodies as well. They do not apply directly to our discussions with the URCNA, since we are beyond this stage at the federative level. But for all other federations, we would offer the following points for consideration:

1. The goal of local ecclesiastical discussions with churches from another federation is ecclesiastical unity of the two (or more) participating churches on the basis of God's Word and in submission to the Reformed confessions, according to the regulations of the Reformed Church order.
2. In local discussions the participating churches promise to submit to all which accords with the Word of God, inclusive of all matters properly brought forward from both parties.
3. In the discussion the congregations involved must be kept informed. Important steps will not be taken except with the approbation of the local congregations. The consistory will only proceed when according to its judgment there is sufficient unity of mind on the issue of unity to move ahead.
4. According to the rule of Art. 31 C.O. local churches must abide by the decisions of broader assemblies, and take note of the work and directives

adopted by synod as suggested by the committee for ecclesiastical unity and correspondence on the federative level.

5. Regular reports concerning the progress of local discussions will be given at classis in the context of Art. 44 C.O. Major policy decisions should only take place with the approbation of Classis. Classis here shall make use of the advice of the deputies of regional synod ad art. 49 C.O.
6. Major policy decisions include: a) recognizing the other church in the discussion process as a true church of Jesus Christ; b) granting occasional pulpit exchanges; c) recognizing each other's attestations for table fellowship.
7. Recognizing each other as true churches can only take place if the congregations involved promise each other a) to work for federative unity with the other party's body of churches in their own federative relationships; b) not to accept members from each other's churches except by mutual agreement; c) to adopt and follow through with each other's disciplinary processes.
8. Local churches shall only allow pulpit exchanges or table fellowship after it has been clearly determined at the federative level that the churches with which they have contact stand on the basis of God's Word and the Three Forms of Unity, and have also indicated in a federative context that they are prepared to work towards federative unity within a mutually adopted pre-established time frame.
9. Local fusions of churches shall not take place as long as federative negotiations are still in progress. If such negotiations eventually break off, a local fusion or entrance of another church to the federation can only take place with the approbation of classis coupled with the advice of the deputies of Regional Synod ad Art. 49 C.O.

We would expect the above points to be applied in the context of the Statement of Strategy that we have proposed to synod (See Appendix 12). Local churches can make minor adaptations of the schedule to their own situation, but in principle the guidelines should be followed for the sake of preserving federative unity as much as possible. Two local churches in negotiations do not exist on an island. Therefore it will be incumbent on them to preface all their unity declarations with the promise not to practice full unity until they have gotten their own federations on side in the unity process. This accords with the principle that one's primary obligations are to the federation of churches, above and beyond what may arise in terms of other faithful churches in a local setting.

F. SUGGESTIONS AND REQUESTS

We have the following suggestions:

1. A more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the Orthodox Reformed Churches should be mandated by Synod. All our meetings to date have indicated that these churches are not only sincere in their desire to serve the Lord according to his word, they also recognize more than in the past the obligations that churches have to help and serve each other in one federation. Some of the local congregations are beginning to realize that living on your own in a very small federation poses problems for the youth and for suitable church growth, including internal growth. Hence, they are more open to discussion with our churches than they perhaps were in the past. It may then be in the interest of our synod to

mandate that a formal letter be written to their churches with a view to pursuing more official talks on the federative level for the purposes of promoting unity between the two federations.

2. If synod would move in the direction charted above, it may be appropriate to add two more ministers to the committee, (one from the east and one from the west) in order that in these matters we can continue to divide the work load among the various members of the committee, allowing certain members to concentrate on one federation.

Our recommendations are :

1. that synod thank the URCNA for accepting the CanRC into Phase 1 of their guidelines for ecumenical relations, and express gratitude that with this acceptance via appointed committees much contact could be experienced with the URCNA.
2. that deputies be instructed to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches of North America with a view towards establishing federative unity. This will include the following elements:
    1. That the Statement of Agreement with its accompanying time frame be adopted by Synod 2001, and that, with the recognition of the URCNA as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, we move to Phase 2 of the negotiations on the Statement of Strategy (Appendix 12) all with the understanding that both federations are committed to reach the final phase of these discussions in 2004.
    2. That special committees be appointed in accordance with the recommendation in the Agreement regarding the church order and theological education, for the purpose of meeting with the URCNA counterparts in the period 2001-2004.
3. that synod acknowledge that the CanRCs have been received into the stage of 'limited contact' of the FRCNA unity guidelines at the FRCNA synod May, 2000, and thank the FRCNA for this initiative, expressing the hope that it may lead to federative unity.
4. that the Committee continue dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches of North America with a view to promoting federative unity, and identifying whatever obstacles there may be with the FRCNA on this path.
5. that the Committee represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity.
6. that local churches with OCR churches in their vicinity be encouraged to initiate local contacts with these churches, out of which eventually more formal federative talks may evolve.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. R. Aasman
Dr. J. De Jong
Rev. W. Den Hollander
Rev. W. Slomp
Elder P. Van Woudenberg
Elder F. Westrik
Note: Archives of all correspondence will be available at Synod in Neerlandia

Selected Appendices from CPEU Report

Addendum to the report to General Synod Neerlandia 2001 of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity.

Under Section 1 (Federative meetings) the following may be added:

E. Other meetings

1. On September 23, 2000 Rev. W.G. Van Hal (Woodstock) as representative of the URCNA attended and addressed Classis Ontario North.
2. On November 17, 2000 Rev. W. Den Hollander attended and addressed the Classis West of the OCRC.
3. On February 21, 2001, Rev. D.J.A Agema, on personal invitation, attended Classis Southern Ontario of the URCNA. Rev. W. Den Hollander will attend the classis scheduled for March 21, 2001.

(Appendix 9 of CPEU Report)

STATEMENTS OF AGREEMENT

Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
Canadian Reformed Churches

and

Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

United Reformed Churches in North America

Church History

We acknowledge from both sides that with sin and shortcoming, that both of the most recent secessions in our history, the liberation of 1944 and the 1990s secessions, were acts of obedience required and obligated in keeping with the will of God (as confessed in Art.28 and 29 BC).

The Covenant

The covenant is a relationship between God and man established by God at the time of His creation of Adam and Eve. It is one sided in origin and two sided in existence. God established it to live in fellowship with man and show him His love and favour, and to receive from man love, obedience, trust, and honour. When man broke this covenant of favour by his rebellion and fall into sin, God in His grace maintained this relationship and promised to redeem man by the sacrifice of His Son, the Seed of the woman in its deepest sense. The Lord makes this covenant of grace with the believers and their offspring.

The promises of the covenant together with the demand to repent from sin and believe the promises must be proclaimed throughout all the world. All who repent

and believe and receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour are grafted into the covenant and share in its promises and blessings. The death of Christ on the cross represents the fulfilment of the terms of the old covenant. Therefore in the new dispensation of the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, believers and their seed are called by the power of God to live in true thankfulness and live according to all the commandments of God.

In an obedient response to the covenant obligations the believers are called to gather together in unity with Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, and in unity of faith with the church of all ages. These gatherings are found where the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed in purity, where the sacraments are administered in purity, and where church discipline is exercised for the correcting and punishing of sins. All people belonging to God's covenant of grace are called and obliged to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church. The fullness of this covenant takes place at the consummation of all things when the one triune God will live with His chosen people in perfect love and fellowship through all eternity.

The Church

We acknowledge that due to the many limitations and shortcomings of human understanding there is a brokenness of the church both in local situations and in broader federations. This implies that there can be more than one true church in a particular place at any given time. We need to reject a broad denominationalism on the one hand, as well as a narrow sectarianism on the other. Churches of various backgrounds but one confession have the duty to pursue the highest forms of ecclesiastical fellowship possible in their context, in order to promote the unity of the church locally as well as in the federation of churches.

The Church Order

The unity committees express their gratitude that both federations have maintained the principles, structure, and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort in their respective adaptations for Reformed church life. The committees discussed the specific differences between the orders of the Canadian Reformed and the United Reformed Churches. The agreement was reached that a recommendation be sent to the next synods
that each synod appoint a church order committee, and that the two committees work together to produce a suitable and agreeable adaptation of the Church Order of Dort. The differences between the current orders of the federations would be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and Confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Church Order of Dort.

NOTE: The Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches has agreed to recommend to synod 2001 that the last sentence of Art.34 of the URC Church Order be suspended during the period of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, should both synods agree to enter such a relationship. The sentence in question reads, "Fraternal activities between congregations which need not be reported to classis may include occasional pulpit exchanges, table fellowship, as well as other means of manifesting unity." The committee will also recommend to synod that all churches are urged to maintain this provision.

The Song Book

The unity committees gratefully observe that both federations have maintained the principle that while preaching is the central ingredient in the church's worship, congregational singing suitably accompanied forms a significant part of a Reformed worship service. The committees discussed the differences between the Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise* and the United Reformed Psalter Hymnal. The agreement was reached to recommend to the 2001 synods that when the two federations agree to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship each synod appoint a song book committee, and that the two committees work together to produce a song book that contains the Anglo-Genevan psalter and other suitable metrical versions, while including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The committees recommend that the churches continue to use their accustomed song books, also after the Union should the Lord grant this, until the new song book is ready and adopted.

Creeds, Confessions, Liturgical Forms, and Prayers for Inclusion in the Proposed Song Book

The unity committees also note with thankfulness that both federations have translations of the Three Forms of Unity in their song books which adhere to and reflect the original languages as adopted by the Synod of Dort. The committees are also grateful that the liturgical forms and the prayers for special and designated purposes appear in each federation's song book since they form a direct link with the history of the early Reformed churches in Europe where they originated. The unity committees recommend that the first Synod of the new combined federation, should the Lord grant the Union to take place, appoint a committee or committees to coordinate and harmonize the present translations of the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity, the liturgical forms, and the special prayers, consulting where possible the original languages, for eventual inclusion in the new song book.

Proposed Agreement on Theological Education for Ministers

With thanks to God the unity committees concur that both federations have maintained the traditional Reformed practice of requiring and providing a thoroughly confessional and scholarly theological education and training for their students aspiring to be ministers of the Word. The Canadian Reformed Churches own and support their Theological College in Hamilton, Ontario, and the professors are Canadian Reformed. Graduates normally become candidates and ministers in their churches. The United Reformed Churches have no federational seminary, and the candidates for their ministry are trained by a number of Reformed seminaries, especially by the independently owned and operated Mid America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana, but also by the similarly independent Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California.

The committees discussed the potential and actual differences in the confessional requirements, the church membership of the professors and teaching staff of these

three theological schools, the appointment procedures, as well as the institutions' curricular diversities. Agreement was reached to recommend to the synods of 2001 that when the two federations agree to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship each synod appoint a theological education study committee. The unity committees recommend that each synod's committee also have serving on it one or two professors from its own theological school or schools, and that the two committees work together to draft proposals for their synods in preparation for the eventual Plan of Union in accordance with their mandates.

The unity committees recommend to the synods of 2001 that the mandates for the proposed theological study committee of both federations contain provisions for the commitment that should the Lord of the Church grant eventual Union, the resulting United Churches will retain at least one federational theological school and that the synod recommend the school's professors and teaching staff for appointment. A further
recommendation to be included in the study committees' mandates is that the synod of the United Churches select those non-federational seminaries for the preparation of its future candidates for the ministry whose professors and all teaching staff sign the Form of Subscription indicating agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Another recommendation for inclusion in the study committees' mandates is that should an aspiring candidate's preparation fail to have adequate instruction in significant courses such as Reformed Church Polity or Reformed Church History, he will be required to supplement his education before being able to be declared a candidate for the ministry of the Word in the United Churches.

Preaching

Grateful to the King of the Church, the unity committees report their agreement that both federations seek to maintain a high standard of preaching as required by Scripture. Fully trained and ordained ministers are called to preach the whole counsel of God. This includes the regular preaching of the Reformed Confessions focusing especially on the Heidelberg Catechism during one of the worship services on each Lord's Day. The committees agree that preaching the full counsel of God requires the proclamation of the promises of God, together with the command to repent and believe the gospel, thus calling all to flee from the wrath to come. With suitable exhortations and admonitions all the hearers are encouraged to appropriate the promises of the gospel with a living faith. In this way, the committees agree, every effort is expended in the churches of the two federations to promote the proper explication and application of the Scriptures for the building up of the congregations.

Proposed Agreement on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Noting that the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them is a mark of the true Church, the unity committees agree that in both federations the sacraments are maintained and administered according to the ordinance of God. The elders exercise supervision with regard to the administration of both sacraments, and only confessing members in good standing are allowed to present

their children for baptism. After making public profession of faith members are admitted to fellowship at the Lord's Table. It is in this way that the sacraments are celebrated to the glory of God and for the edification of His people.

The committees discussed the different practices of supervising the participation of guests at the Lord's supper. The Canadian Reformed practice is to require of guests an acceptable certificate or attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct issued by the elders of their "sister churches." The United Reformed Churches generally accept upon an interview with the guest, his or her signed personal attestation concerning doctrine and conduct thereby assuring the consistory of their church membership by profession of faith and of their godly walk.

Agreement was reached that the celebration of the Lord's supper is entrusted to the congregation in each location, and that its elders are charged by Christ with the pure administration of this sacrament. In receiving guests from elsewhere, the committees have agreed that a travel attestation from a guest's home consistory is a time honored and effective practice in supervising guests at the Lord's Table. A personal attestation prepared and administered by the consistory of the church celebrating the Lord's supper is also an acceptable and Reformed way of supervising attendance at the Lord's Table, when as much as possible the elders have attempted to secure confirmation of the guest's godly life from reliable sources. In the attestation the signatories state that they are communicant members not under discipline of a faithful church which confesses the doctrines of the Scriptures. The consistory would send the personal statement to the person's home church.

Ecclesiastical Discipline

Since both federations seek to govern themselves according to the pure Word of God, all of the churches exercise church discipline for correcting and punishing sins, the unity committees agree that the implementation of Scripture, the Confession, and the Church Order are duly practiced in the churches. The Canadian Reformed and the United Reformed Churches consider Christian discipline to be spiritual in nature, and for the purpose that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church and his neighbor, and that all offense may be removed from the church of Christ.

(Appendix 12 of CPEU Report)

Position Paper: Strategies to Church Unity

Preamble

The final goal of all local discussions with churches from other Reformed federations is ecclesiastical union on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, in agreement with the Reformed confession, according to the rules of Reformed church government.

All parties in the discussions should agree at the outset to submit in all things to the word of God, and to a commonly agreed upon confessional framework (in our case the *Three Forms of Unity*).

The respective congregations should be kept informed of the progress made in the discussions throughout the entire process.

Local congregations will also factor in the decisions of the broader assemblies with regard to ecclesiastical unity and maintain these decisions in their own local discussions. Reports of the discussions should also be presented at classis, and essential decisions regarding the advance of the discussions should receive the approval of classes from both federations.

Discussion must proceed on both the local and national level, and one approach should never cancel out the other. These various levels of discussion should not end up working at odds with each other. Discussions at the level of synodical committees will keep the churches informed by means of regular published reports.

The Stages

We can distinguish three main stages in the process of discussions towards ecclesiastical unity: recognition, acceptance, and union. We will review these stages in turn:

a. Initial Recognition and Exploration

In the first stage the discussions should be exploratory and should concern a mutually agreed upon understanding of the confessional heritage of the church, specifically of Articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession. Here use can be made of work done by the Ecumenical Relations Committee, (URC) as well as statements agreed upon by participating consistories in various locales.

This recognition stage would benefit from a mutual understanding that accepts one another's more recent histories as being, despite many weaknesses and shortcomings, required and obligated separations according to the standards of the word of God, especially the Liberation 1944, and the 1990 separations in the CRC.

This stage of recognition should also isolate areas where differences of approach exist, and which need to be examined more closely in order for progress to be made towards a integral ecclesiastical union, i.e. worship, theological education, schooling, and so on. There should be some form of agreement as to the scriptural and church orderly way that these differences can be overcome.

b. Acceptance and Cooperation

This stage of the discussions envisions a mutual acceptance by the two participating consistories of each other's faithfulness as churches to the Word of God and the confessions of the church. In other words, the consistories are able to declare agreement on the fundamentals, and to publicly note that they recognize each other as true churches of Jesus Christ.

Ideally this stage will also include a specific proposal regarding the options open to come to closer ecclesiastical fellowship. This could occur if the agreement reached at the level of the synodical committee could receive the approbation of the churches by the time it is ready to be forwarded to the broadest assemblies.

Once the point of recognition has been achieved certain forms of cooperation can be explored and implemented. For example various groups may hold combined meetings, e.g. men's clubs, women's service agencies, Bible studies, speeches or addresses by each other's ministers, cooperation in evangelism, and so on.

Delegates should also visit broader assemblies, e.g. classes and synods. Meetings of combined consistories (or meetings of consistory committees) should be held regularly to isolate the specific differences that need further attention.

If agreement could be reached on a proposed time schedule towards union (say the period 2001 to 2004) with a commitment to attain integrated unity by the set target date, the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship as outlined in the URCNA "Guidelines" (a to f) could be implemented in the relationship between the two church federations.

c. Advanced Recognition to Union

In the stage of advanced recognition the consistories should come to an agreement as to the form of merger they wish to pursue. If both consistories defend and promote federative unity, proposals regarding a mutually agreeable time table should be tabled at consecutive classes and synods. With the assistance of the deputies for ecclesiastical unity, these proposals should be coordinated into one mutually acceptable draft plan for union, agreeable to all parties, all along the lines of the agreement reached in Phase 2.

The more detailed draft plan for union, including the formulation and adoption of a mutually agreed upon text of the church order, should be ready for adoption by the broadest assemblies of both federations in 2004.

The agreement of Phase 2 should include some initial mutually agreeable provisions regarding theological education, song books, liturgical forms and customs, and Bible translations. The further coordination of these matters in a definitive form would be the subject of the more detailed arrangement in Phase 3, as well as subsequent negotiations.

Drafted June 1997
Amended September, 1998

2.4 Report of Committee for Contact with the Churches in the Americas to General Synod Neerlandia 2001

Dear brothers

The following is the report of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas. The report contains the following:
Report of the subcommittee for Contact with the ERQ
Report of the subcommittee for Contact with the OPC
Reaction of the CCCA to the report of the CCOPC
Report of the subcommittee for Contact with the RCUS
Request for further clarification on the Overall Mandate of the CCCA
Three appendices for each Committee Report

We wish you the Lord's blessing as you seek to make decisions that are pleasing to Him and for the well being of the churches.

Report of the Committee for Contact with the ERQ for the upcoming General Synod 2001

INTRODUCTION

Esteemed brothers,
What follows is a report from the Committee for Contact with *l'Église Réformée du Québec* (abbreviated as ERQ). This committee was appointed for the first time by Synod 1995 and summarized its findings in a Report to General Synod Fergus 1998. Synod 1998 decided to continue the work of the committee, giving it a revised mandate. It appointed the following people as members of the committee: the Revs. P.G. Feenstra (convener) and A.J. Pol (secretary), and the brs. J. Boot and W. Oostdyk.

MANDATE

The mandate given by General Synod Fergus 1998 was:

1. To clarify and discuss the points raised in Consideration B in view of the concerns raised by the churches;
2. To keep the churches informed about the ERQ so that they may be able to respond to financial and other needs of the ERQ;
3. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy;
4. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ;
5. To serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

In "Considerations B" the following was stated:

> From the observations and concerns expressed by the churches it is evident that the following areas need further clarification and should remain topics of discussion:
>
> 1. The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses;
> 2. The matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance;
> 3. The fencing of the Lord's Table and possible different practices among the various congregations;
> 4. The need of confessional binding for members and office bearers;
> 5. The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs;
> 6. The question whether federative unity is possible or not.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The committee met seven times (September 22, 1998, December 8, 1998, February 23, 1999, May 12, 2000, May 23, 2000, June 9, 2000, June 21, 2000). All of the committee members attended these meetings. Two of these meetings (May 12, 2000 and June 9, 2000) took place with two delegates from the ERQ present, namely the Revs. J.G. deBlois and J. Zoellner.

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[1] *Acts of General Synod Fergus, ON - 1998*, pages 92-93.
[2] *Acts of General Synod Fergus, ON - 1998*, pages 92-93

The *Acts of Synod Fergus* were sent to the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the ERQ in October, 1998. Since there was no official response from this committee for some time, our work came to a standstill. This was mainly due to internal difficulties within the ERQ. During this time we were advised not to attend the Synods of the ERQ since most matters were being dealt with in closed session. Rev. P.G. Feenstra attended a Synod of the ERQ in November of 1999 and was given opportunity to extend greetings (A report was published in Clarion Vol 49 Number 1 and is included in an appendix).

On June 28, 1999, the Inter-Church Relations Committee of l'Église Réformée du Québec (composed of the Revs. J.G. deBlois and J. Zoellner) gave the following response to the decision of Fergus 1998:
"The Synod of the Église Réformée du Québec thankfully acknowledges the Canadian Reformed Churches' expressed desire to be of assistance to us and appreciates that the issues raised by Synod Fergus 1998 are important and legitimate. Considering that some of the same issues have been raised by our local consistories will need to be discussed within the ERQ; and that other observations and concerns expressed by Synod Fergus 1998 are not of present concern to us; therefore,(1) it is recommended that the ERQ begin its own synodical discussions in order to clarify the concerns of our local consistories which have also been raised by the Canadian Reformed Churches; and
(2) that our Synod (through its Inter-Church Relations Committee) advise the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the ERQ that the items of discussion raised by Synod Fergus 1998 which are neither current nor urgent within the ERQ be dealt with if and when they are raised by our local consistories."

It took some time before mutually convenient arrangements could be made for further contact with the brothers from the ERQ.

In preparation for further contact, we asked the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the ERQ if they could provide us with further information regarding the points raised by Synod Fergus 1998. They did this in a letter dated April 17, 2000, from which we quote the following:

> "We have gone through all of our Minutes and have come up with the followinglist. We enumerate the points as they were raised by your Synod, May 18,1998, pp. 92-93:
> (1) At the June 1998 ERQ Synod meeting, we revised our Church Order (point 4.2.5.) by removing the phrase " and the deacons ". No other changesconcerning deacons have been made or are proposed.
> (2) At the June 1999 ERQ Synod, it was proposed (minute 5.2.3.) that theCommittee of Ministry examine the question of who may preach in our pulpitsand under what conditions. We are awaiting this report.Previously, our Education Committee submitted a study proposingliturgical forms for the ERQ, but this report was not received, theCommittee's mandate was not renewed, and therefore this subject is notunder study.
> (3) The question of the fencing of the Lord's Supper and possible differentpractices among various congregations has not been raised within the ERQ.

(4) The issue of criteria for membership has been raised and is presentlyunder study by our Ministry Committee. We are awaiting this report.
(5) Concerning the issue of rules for ecclesiastical fellowship: despiteour Inter-church Relations Committee report of Canadian Reformed concernsregarding our rules, no motion to review these rules was proposed.
(6) The question of federative unity was never an ERQ objective. The ERQ'sinterest has always been limited to denominational fellowship."

The items raised in this letter formed a point of departure for the first meeting with these delegates on May 12, 2000. Further discussions took place on June 9, 2000. What follows is a summary of observations. We begin with their explanation concerning their procedure with regard to matters raised by Synod Fergus 1998. What follows after this is their response to the subjects that Synod Fergus mandated the Canadian Reformed committee for Contact with the ERQ to focus on for clarification and discussion.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Explanation concerning procedure

The delegates from the ERQ explained that there were several reasons for not deciding to deal directly with the issues raised by Synod Fergus. Their standpoint is that matters to be discussed at Synod should be raised by at least one of the member congregations first. There was also the concern that if time and energy would be put into all the matters raised by Synod Fergus it would not mesh with what the ERQ sees as priorities, given their local tasks and responsibilities, and limited manpower.

Mandate 1

The first item of the mandate in *Acts General Synod Fergus, ON 1998* refers to six points under "IV Considerations B" that are to be clarified and discussed in view of the concerns raised by the churches.

1 The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses.

At the June 1998 ERQ Synod meeting, their Church Order point 4.2.5 was revised by removing the phrase "and the deacons."

Clarification regarding this revision was requested. What are the implications of this decision in view of Article 2.4? What are the nature and status of the deacons? Point 2.4.3 states that "The parish can call to the office of deacon *all members* who show evidence of their competence . . ." Does this also include women?

Regarding point 2.4.3: Although women have never been ordained in the office of deacon, they could serve as deaconesses. If there would be a deaconess in the ERQ she would work under the supervision of elders. Only the elders exercise pastoral care and have disciplinary oversight. Deacons are also under their supervision. This has been made clear by the revision of 4.2.5. Article 4.2.1 also makes it clear that the deacons are not part of the local council.

The ERQ wants to emphasize the ministry of all believers. This is related to the missiological context of Roman Catholicism, where the lay people have no real function. There is the need to have women ministering to other women. In Quebec, the relationship between men and women is often a problem. There are many situations of single women or women separated from their spouses. The system as it exists now guards against women having authority. It was stated: "We acknowledge the principles involved. We are also trying to ensure that women are able to use their gifts in faithfulness to Scripture."

2 The matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance.

* *Liturgical forms:* The Education Committee of the ERQ submitted a study to Synod proposing liturgical forms for the ERQ, but this report was not received and the committee's mandate was not renewed. This subject is not under study at present. The delegates from the ERQ did, however, indicate that the study of this matter will be taken up again in the future.

* *Order of worship:* The matters of liturgical forms and the order of worship were discussed with the delegates from the ERQ on May 12, 2000. In the ERQ each church does have a certain liturgical order and there are forms that are in use. However, they have not been officially approved by Synod. There is principial homogeneity in terms of how things are done. The principles are maintained and taught according to the confessions. In practice there is diversity as to how those principles are put into practice.

Because the congregations are small, there is the opportunity for congregation members to participate in prayer during the worship services. This is seen as an expression of the office of all believers under the oversight and authority of the elders. There is also the awareness that the larger you become, the less participatory you can be. With larger numbers, more organization and structure become necessary.

* *Supervision of the pulpit:* At the June 1999 ERQ Synod, it was proposed (minute 5.2.3) that the Committee of Ministry examine the question of "who may preach in our pulpits and under what conditions." They are awaiting this report. At present, it is left to the responsibility of the local council as to who is allowed to preach.

* *Lord's Day observance:* Some explanation regarding this can be found on page 8 of the "Report to General Synod Fergus 1998" from the Committee for Contact with the ERQ. Reference is made to the Westminster Confession (Art. XXI.8), which highlights the principle of keeping the Lord's day "holy unto the Lord." This not only involves refraining from "worldly employments and recreations" but also devoting the day to "public and private exercises of worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."

The delegates from the ERQ indicated that one of the challenges for the ERQ is how to make the whole day special, aside from having the worship service from Sunday to Sunday. There is much learning to be done, especially by new converts, as

to how to do this. As one of the delegates put it: "We challenge people to make changes." In many of the churches there is not only the worship service but also hours of further interaction, including much conversation and instruction as well as a meal together.

3 The fencing of the Lord's Table and possible different practices among the various congregations.
On page 13 of the Committee Report to General Synod Fergus 1998, a description is given as to what takes place in the congregations of the ERQ. "The invitation is addressed to all who repent and believe in the Gospel of salvation, and who are engrafted into Christ by faith and live accordingly."
In our meeting with the brothers of the ERQ it was asked if this was consistent with what the ERQ Church Order stipulates concerning the members of the church in Chapters 5 and 6. In Article 5.1 reference is made to professing members who "have *publicly professed their faith* before the elders and the ministers of the Word and before the Church, and who are, *as a consequence,* accepted to share *fully* in the community of the church." Article 5.2 speaks of preparing children "to enter into the *full communion* of the Church *by profession of their faith.*" Article 6.1.10 speaks of "repeated warnings by the local council, and the suspension of the *right* to participate in the Holy Supper." Is it appropriate to have what seems to be one standard for church members and another more open approach to those who are not members of the local church?

The question the ERQ delegates raised in response to this was: "Is there not a different responsibility with respect to members and non-members?" The members of the ERQ are under the supervision of the office bearers. This oversight is not exercised over other people. The delegates stated that the following procedure is followed in their local church, "We explain the gospel, highlighting how we understand it. There is a warning that the sacrament is for believers only. The invitation is addressed to all who are baptized believers and entitled to partake of the sacrament in the churches of which they are members." They also stated that the procedure is not the same in every local congregation. There is no disagreement in the ERQ on whether or not the table should be supervised. The question is how this is to take place. In this context the statements of Synod Fergus 1998 concerning fencing of the Lord's table were discussed.

4 The need for confessional binding for members and office bearers.
In Article 6.2.1 of the ERQ Church Order, it is stated that "Spiritual discipline applies to elders and to ministers of the Word as to other members of the Church." This seems to imply confessional binding. How is this made explicit in the life of the church? What is the present practice with respect to admitting members to becoming professing members of the church? How do the office bearers of the ERQ satisfy themselves that prospective professing members and office bearers do wholeheartedly agree with the confessions of the ERQ and submit to the supervision and discipline of the church?

In an e-mail dated April 17, 2000, the Revs. Zoellner and deBlois indicated that "The issue of criteria for membership has been raised and is presently under study by our Ministry Committee. We are awaiting this report."

The delegates from the ERQ promised to bring our questions to the attention of this Committee.

5 The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs.
The ERQ proposed a different set of rules in 1997 than what we had in 1992.
The delegates from the ERQ gave the following information as to why these rules have been formulated somewhat differently.

Article 1 highlights the importance of mission for the ERQ and expresses a willingness to help each other in the matter of advancing the cause of the gospel.

The difference between the terms "worship" in the ERQ rules and "liturgy" in the CanRC rules is not substantive.

6 The question of whether federative unity is possible or not?
This question was already addressed on pages 18-19 of the Committee Report to General Synod Fergus 1998. As a further explanation it was pointed out that being part of another church would not be in the best interests of the development of the ERQ. In terms of mission, culture, background and history, there are many differences. Missiologically, Scripturally and practically, it was felt that it would be desirable to take the best of what could be found in other Reformed churches and develop that in an indigenous ministry in Quebec.

Mandate 2
To keep the churches informed about the ERQ so that they may be able to respond to financial and other needs of the ERQ.

To date, our committee has not received specific requests for financial help or for help regarding other needs on the part of the ERQ. Help is requested through the news bulletin. Last year the CanRC gave $21,000. So far this year $15,000 has come in, not counting help given through the church of Owen Sound.[3]

When questioned as to whether there is any way in which we as a committee can help the ERQ beyond the help already being given in response to ERQ newsletters to churches and members of our federation, and the help given through the church at Owen Sound, it was stated that at this moment this is not necessary. An unexpected corporate gift and the fact that support to the church of Trois Rivieres is not necessary have led to a surplus at this moment.

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[31]The church at Owen Sound has responded to a specific request from the ERQ church in St. Georges de Beauce to assist them in developing church life. Rev. Paulin Bedard has been called by the church as second minister. With the generous assistance of several churches and individual donors the church at Owen Sound has coordinated both financial and spiritual support for this project. An article appeared in *Clarion*, Volume 49 Number 1 explaining the nature of this work (see Appendix). Rev. Bedard spent three months in Owen Sound to become familiar with our churches. He attended consistory meetings, catechism classes, and a study weekend. The church at St. Georges de Beauce gave Rev. Bedard a list of twenty-four questions on matters for which they sought assistance from the church at Owen Sound. These were answered in respective meetings with the deacons, elders, and minister. Rev. Bedard also went on a speaking tour in the churches of Classis Northern and Central Ontario.

Mandate 3

To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy.

There are no specific requests on such matters to which we can respond. But as things develop, input would be appreciated.

Mandate 4

To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ.

No specific invitations to attend have been extended. However it was stated that delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches are welcome to come at any meeting. Synods are held on the third weekend of September, November, March and June. There is a formalized agenda, but it does not specify the details of what would be dealt with.

Further help

The brothers of the ERQ expressed the hope that even though Ecclesiastical Fellowship may not materialize at this time there would be an "interim relationship" whereby we would continue to assist them in their work of mission. As Committee we would like to pass this on to the Canadian Reformed Churches. We propose that this be done by broadening point 3 of our previous mandate to include assistance in the development and advancement of mission, as expressed in the "Rules 1997" of the ERQ. This, however, should be done in response to a request on the part of the ERQ for such assistance, whereby they indicate the nature and parameters of the help required. The brothers of the ERQ also expressed that if a suitable candidate would be found he could be examined by the CanRC's prior to providing support.

EVALUATION

There were six points listed under "IV Considerations B" on page 92 of the *Acts General Synod Fergus, ON 1998*. Your committee has come to the following evaluation.

The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses.

The ERQ does not have female deacons, although in its Church Order (the "Order and Discipline of the ERQ," abbreviated as "ODE") it is apparent that women could potentially function as such. However, the ODE of the ERQ stipulates that the deacons do not make up part of the ruling council of the church. To make this principle clear, an inconsistency in the ODE on this point has been eliminated in a recent revision of its ODE made by its Synod. Now that they have made this revision it is even more clear than before that the ERQ does not wish to have women participate in a position of oversight over the church.

The ERQ acknowledges what is written by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." The fact that the CRC has opened the offices to women has even been a reason for the ERQ to terminate the relationship with the CRC.

The matter of liturgical forms.

The delegates from the ERQ have stressed that there is principial homogeneity in terms of how things are done in their churches, even though there is diversity in practice.

We can explain the importance of using common, adopted liturgical forms in all the churches and encourage their use. However, as long as there is indeed principial homogeneity, the existence of diverse practices should not form an impediment to ecclesiastical fellowship.

Order of worship
The ERQ has no formal synodical decision regarding an order of worship. In comparing this with our situation, we must remember that our *Book of Praise* page 581 gives no prescription by synod either. It simply describes what is"commonly used."

During the worship services there is more freedom for input in congregational prayers by members of the ERQ. This is related to the fact that the congregations are still very small. Although it was acknowledged that congregational input could lead to a disorderly situation, this does not seem to be a problem at this point in time.

Supervision of the pulpit
The June 1999 Synod of the ERQ gave the mandate to a Committee of Ministry to examine the question of "who may preach in our pulpits and under what conditions." We can only await what is reported and what a future synod of the ERQ may decide on this matter.
Lord's Day observance
Although there is only one worship service, this is not because of a lack of interest in devoting the day to worship and fellowship. It is clear that the ERQ strives to maintain the Lord's Day as a special day. As indicated above, in many of the churches there is not only the worship service but there are also hours of further interaction, including much conversation and instruction as well as a meal together.

Fencing the Lord's Table and Confessional membership; and
The need for confessional binding for members and office bearers
It must be remembered that no official position has been adopted regarding these matters. The discussions with the delegates indicate that further interaction is needed. This may help the ERQ to consider the various aspects relating to these matters and to come to an official position.

The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs.
This matter has been sufficiently dealt with. We should consider honouring the emphasis they put on mission as expressed in their "Rules 1997" by broadening the mandate "to respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy" to include mission.

The question whether federative unity is possible or not.
The delegates from the ERQ have highlighted the differences of history, language, and culture, as well as the different context in which the ERQ works. They do not see forming one federation with English-speaking churches as a necessity or even as desirable. They wish to remain autonomous. They do, however, value interaction and cooperation with the CanRCs and hope that it would even be possible for the CanRCs to sponsor mission work in conjunction with the ERQ in Quebec. Your committee is of the opinion that we should accept the desire of the ERQ to function independently and not pursue the matter of federative unity further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Your committee recommends that Synod decide the following:

A. To note with gratitude that the ERQ strives to be faithful to the Word of God and to bring the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context.

B. In order to continue developing closer ties with the ERQ with a view to Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Synod re-appoint the Committee for contact with the following mandate:

1. To continue discussions in particular regarding the matter of confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table.
2. To discontinue discussion on the matter of federative unity and differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
3. To encourage the churches to continue supporting the ERQ financially when needed.
4. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, liturgy, and mission.
5. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ.
6. To serve Synod 2004 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. P.G. Feenstra (chairman)
Rev. A.J. Pol (secretary)
J. Boot;
W. Oostdyk

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TO THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES TO BE HELD IN NEERLANDIA, AB IN 2001

I Introduction

After General Synod Fergus 1998 the task of the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (CCOPC) was limited. In the present situation the contact between our churches consists mainly of communications between the General Assembly of the OPC and the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We could do little more than conveying the decisions of Synod Fergus to the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) for consideration by the General Assembly, and returning the response from the Assembly of the OPC to Synod Neerlandia, with some recommendations.

II Decisions of Synod Fergus 1998 re. the contacts with the OPC

Synod appointed Rev. J. DeGelder, Dr. N.H.Gootjes, br. G.J.Nordeman and br. G. VanWoudenberg as members of the CCOPC, which became a subcommittee of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas.

The CCOPC was instructed

to pass on to the CEIR of the OPC the amended 'Proposed Agreement' on Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership for adoption by the General Assembly of the OPC (Acts p.157).

to initiate Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC according to the adopted rules, should the General Assembly of the OPC adopt this Agreement (Acts p158).

to make recommendations to the next General Synod, if the General Assembly of the OPC would not adopt the above mentioned Agreement, in which case the General Synod would have to reconsider the present relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the OPC.

The CCOPC was also confronted with the response of Synod Fergus to an appeal of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC re. Rev. B. Hofford's statement declaring the ministers and elders of the OPC false shepherds, and the impact of this decision on our relationship with the OPC.

III Overview of the activities of the CCOPC

The Committee met 5 times by itself, and 3 times with the CCCA. At the first meeting Rev. DeGelder was appointed as chairman, Dr. Gootjes as secretary, and br. Nordeman as treasurer.

The Committee corresponded with the CEIR, and in July 2000 Rev. DeGelder and br. Nordeman attended the 67th General Assembly of the OPC in Tacoma, WA. A copy of their report and of the speech by Rev. DeGelder will be added to this report as an appendix.

The Committee regrets to have to report that it was not possible to arrange a meeting between representatives of the CEIR and the CCOPC, since the CEIR was not mandated to deal with our Committee. The reason will become clear later on in this report.

IV Brief historical survey of the contacts between the OPC and the CanRC

To place the present situation in its historical context, a brief survey of the development in the relationship between the OPC and the CanRC between 1989 and 1998 will be given at this point.

Synod Winnipeg 1989 instructed the CCOPC to continue the discussion on and evaluation of the divergencies between the OPC and the CanRC. They were listed as follows: "the doctrine of the covenant, visible and invisible church, the assurance of faith, the observance of the law, the fencing of the Lord's Table, confessional membership, church-political differences, and the contact with the CRC" (Acts 1989, p.66). The CCOPC had to coordinate the discussion of the divergencies with the discussion concerning the OPC document concerning "Biblical Principles on the Unity of the Church" (Acts 1989, p.67).

The CCOPC, reporting to Synod Lincoln 1992, observed that the divergences between OPC and CanRC over time had received increasing emphasis as a condition for continuous efforts toward full correspondence. It asked Synod for a focussed mandate to make it possible to clearly determine whether progress had been made in the discussions of the divergencies and issues of mutual concern (Acts.1992, p.174).

Synod Lincoln 1992 limited the topics for discussion between the committees. It decided that the divergencies evaluated before, in 1971 and 1986, had been sufficiently discussed to conclude that they are not impediments for ecclesiastical fellowship. The matters that still required resolution were identified as follows:

"a. the matter of confessional membership

b. the matter of supervision of the Lord's Table

c. the matter of the relationship with the Christian Reformed Church" (Acts 1992, p.55).

With regard to the second issue Synod considered that "it should be agreed that (also for guests at the Lord's Supper) a general verbal warning alone is insufficient, and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required"(Acts 1992, p.50).

The same Synod decided to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) (Acts 1992, p.73), and to offer a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship to the Free Church of Scotland (Acts 1992, p.93).

The CEIR responded particularly to Synod's decisions concerning these presbyterian churches. It argued that these churches have essentially the same position as the OPC on the issues of confessional membership and the supervision of the Lord's Table. The CEIR asked whether the CanRc were dealing fairly and evenhandedly with the OPC. Why are these issues impediments to Ecclesiastical Fellowship in the case of the OPC, and not with the other churches? (Acts 1995, p.152).

Synod Abbotsford 1995 instructed the CCOPC to use the statement of Synod Lincoln as a guideline to arrive at an agreement with the OPC on the matters of fencing the Lord's Table and confessional membership. Synod considered in this respect that the different practices with regard to these issues gave reason to continue the discussion with the OPC, but they cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Acts 1995, p.71). Concerning the third outstanding issue, the relationship with the CRC, Synod noted with gratitude the OPC's continued warnings against the unscriptural course taken by the CRCNA. The CCOPC was instructed "to communicate to the OPC the discomfort in our churches with respect to their continued relationship with the CRCNA (Acts 1995, p.74).

In the interval between Synod Abbotsford 1995 and Synod Fergus 1998 two important developments took place. The first was that the CCOPC came to an agreement with the CEIR on the outstanding issues of Fencing the Lord's Table and of Confessional Membership. The second was that the OPC terminated its official relationship with the CRCNA (Acts 1998, p.307).

In its report to Synod Fergus 1998 the CCOPC was able to inform Synod that the above mentioned agreement had been reached. The CCOPC recommended that Synod would acknowledge this agreement, and consequently invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC, according to the adopted rules. However, Synod Fergus amended the agreement, and instructed the CCOPC as mentioned in part II of this report.

This survey of the developments in the relationship between the OPC and CanRC between 1989 and 1998 shows that the number of outstanding issues decreased. Several of the doctrinal issues mentioned in 1989 are no longer seen as impediments. What happened to the two that still needed to be resolved?

V The amended Proposed Agreement

The CCOPC discussed the decisions of Synod Fergus 1998 with regard to the 'proposed agreement'. The first statement, dealing with the fencing of the Lord's Table, was based on the Report of the Committee for Theological Affirmation of the ICRC, a statement we agreed to within the ICRC. It drew on the confessional statements of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches to emphasize the need for supervision of the Table, and the role of the eldership, which is recognized by both sides. See the *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, 1993, Zwolle, The Netherlands*, 1993, pp 80f. In the final report to Synod the reference to this ICRC document was omitted to prevent the impression that the Agreement was a technical theological statement.

The statement read:

> *The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's Supper should not be profaned (1 Cor.11:27, see Heid.Cat. Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession, ch.29,8). This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the Church exercises discipline and manifests itself as a true church. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church, as well as to the guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.*

Synod Fergus amended the Proposed Agreement by inserting after the words "as well as to the guests":

> *This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minster alone is not sufficient, and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required.*

Reference was made to the consideration of Synod Lincoln 1992, mentioned in part IV,C of this report, whereas the consideration of Synod Abbotsford 1995, mentioned in part IV,D of this report was basically ignored.

However, the CCOPC is of the opinion that this addition brings in a specific element from earlier discussions between the OPC and the CanRC, which does not suit the character of this general statement. The original statement was based on the Reformed Confessions, mentioned specifically in the text of the Agreement. The amendment inserted by Synod Fergus goes beyond the wording found in the Reformed Confessions. In its reflection of the confession, the original agreement on the Lord's Supper would provide sufficient opportunity to address specific situations in continued discussions between our churches and the OPC.

Concerning the second change, two sentences were combined by adding the word "as". The original agreement reads:

> *Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible. The patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Cree\ and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions.*

In the amended version the sentence reads:

> *Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible* ***as*** *the patristic church has*

> *summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions.*

Regardless of the need for, or the significance of this change, the addition does have the unfortunate result that the mutual agreement was changed one-sidedly.

Although the 'proposed agreement' was no longer a real agreement, as a result of the changes made in this document by Synod Fergus, the CCOPC presented it to the CEIR for their response, according to the instruction given by Synod Fergus.
The CEIR gave its reaction in a letter dated March 31, 1999:

> *We believe that Synod's revisions have the effect of undoing the understanding reached in our joint discussions, namely, that 1) whether a general verbal warning is sufficient for fencing the Lord's Table, and 2) confessional membership, are issues that could remain unsolved and continue to be discussed within a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.*

In the report of the CEIR to the General Assembly of the OPC in 1999 a similar statement was made. We have tried to continue the discussion with the CEIR on this matter, but with little success. The CCOPC noted that in this presentation of the amended agreement to the General Assembly of the OPC the formulation was merely negative. For that reason we pointed out to the CEIR in a letter dated February 11, 2000, that the original statement was more comprehensive:

> *It is our understanding that the original Proposed Agreement contained two positive statements on this issue, one detailing the extent of the supervision: "This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to guests", the other emphasizing the responsibility: "the eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper." Our question is whether your committee still stands behind these positive statements on which we had reached an agreement.*

The CEIR answered in a letter dated April 18, 2000:

> *In view of the current restrictions placed on our contact with you by our General Assembly, we are unable to respond to your questions about the joint Proposed Agreement.*

As a result there was no discussion between our committees on the amended agreement.
The restrictions the CEIR is referring to in this letter are found in the Minutes of the 66th General Assembly (1999) of the OPC in its decision to grant an overture from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, responding to General Fergus' decision re Rev. Hofford (Acts 1998, Art.136). The General Assembly directed the CEIR to suspend further efforts by the OPC to effect formal unity (with the CanRC that is) until evidence of progress in removing the offense is forthcoming, and to restrict their contact with us to this particular matter.
Our committee greatly regrets that the discussions have been suspended. We hope and pray that the opportunity may be given to us to resume the contact with the CEIR. The gain of the Proposed Agreement should not be lost.

VI The "False Shepherds" issue

The issue that caused the General Assembly of the OPC to put the relationship with the CanRC on hold is the decision of General Synod Fergus 1998, in which Synod dealt with the complaint of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic of the OPC, concerning Rev. B.R. Hofford, who had declared the ministers and elders of this Presbytery 'false shepherds'.
Rev. Hofford's statement can be found in the Acts of Synod Fergus, p.163:

> *Because of your mishandling of the Lord's Supper complaint and you denial of the complaint, I am forced, with great reluctance, to follow Paul's instructions in Romans 16:17, and Titus 3:10. Further, I am compelled to solemnly declare you ministers and elders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church false shepherds*

Synod Fergus stated in its fifth and final consideration (E):

> *What Presbytery really wants is for "Rev. Hofford to be reconciled to his brothers and sisters in the Lord". Reconciliation is also what Rev. Hofford desires as he outlined in his letter to Presbytery, dated September 3, 1992. Based on the documents provided, it is evident that a door is open for Presbytery to discuss the "underlying issues" with Rev. Hofford, which as a result should lead to the withdrawal of the charge of "false shepherds".*
>
> *Synod urges the Presbytery and Rev Hofford to heed the scriptural demand that brothers be reconciled. This will take place when brothers can listen and talk with one another, speaking the truth in love. (Cf. Matt.5:24; Matt.18:15; 2 Cor 5:18; Ephes 4:15,16)*

Synod judged in the end that "it is necessary for the Presbytery and Rev.Hofford to seek reconciliation in the manner outlined above. (Acts 1998, Art.136)

This matter as such was, of course, not part of the mandate we received from Synod Fergus. However - our committee felt that it was unavoidable to look into this, since the G.A. of the OPC had instructed the CEIR to restrict their contact with us to this particular matter. And in its letter of October 7, 1999 the CEIR wrote to us: "Therefore we seek your response as to how that matter may be resolved".

Our committee considered and discussed Rev. Hofford's statement, with its Scripture references, and came to certain conclusions, which we shared with the CEIR. In a letter dated February 11, 2000 we wrote to the CEIR:

> *In Romans 16:17 Paul speaks of teachers who cause the church people to deviate from the doctrine Paul had taught. They are persons who do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own appetite, In Titus 3:10 he mentions someone who is factious, who is also perverted and sinful. It is unclear how the alleged mishandling and denial of a complaint about the Lord's Supper can lead to such allegations against all ministers and elders of a Presbytery.*
>
> *Moreover, the expression 'false shepherds' can only be read against the background of what Scripture says about them in Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34, and John 10. False shepherds are people who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture (Jer.23), they eat the fat, clothe themselves with the wool, slaughter the fatlings, but do not feed the sheep (Ezek.34), they are hirelings and do not care for the sheep (John 10).*
>
> *In the light of this it is our opinion as committee that this accusation should not have been made and that Rev. Hofford should have withdrawn his charge, independent of the concerns he wanted to present. We can assure you that this disqualification of office bearers in the OPC has never been taken over by a Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. And we do regret that Synod Fergus 1998 did not clearly reject such labeling, and did not state that this accusation should have been withdrawn, We hope to bring this matter up in our report to the upcoming General Synod in 2001, the Lord willing.*

Our delegates to the 67th General Assembly of the OPC discussed this issue also with the advisory committee that had dealt with Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations, as well as with some members of the CEIR that were present at the Assembly. They reported on their discussion with these representatives of the OPC as follows:

In the discussion it became clear that there is no need to address again the person, the statements, and the status of Rev. Hofford.
In the meantime it would be helpful and much appreciated if our next General Synod would declare unambiguously to reject the disqualification of office bearers of the OPC as false shepherds, and to distance itself from such labeling (see also the letter from the CCOPC to the CEIR, dated Febr.11, 2000). This would open the way to jointly move ahead and deal with the situation caused by Synod Fergus' changes in the Proposed Agreement on the 'Fencing of the Lord's Table' and 'Confessional Membership'.

We urge Synod to remove this stumbling block in our relationship with the OPC.

VII Categories of relationships

The OPC distinguishes three kinds of relationship: Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Corresponding Relations, and Limited Contact. These kinds of relationship are carefully worked out.

Limited Contact is the lowest form of contact. It is described as that relationship with another church with which it is desired to maintain some form of mutual contact.

Corresponding Relations are undertaken to become better acquainted with one another with a view towards entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship in which the churches involved are Reformed in their confessional standards, church and life though there may be such differences between them that union is not possible at this time and there might be considerable need for mutual concern and admonition. It is to be implemented by:

Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies

Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option)

Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other's members at the Lord's Supper but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership, as regulated by each session (consistory)

Joint action in areas of common responsibility

Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly before instituting changes in polity, doctrine, or practice that might alter the basis of the fellowship

The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.

For many years now the Canadian Reformed Churches have been working towards establishing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC. In the opinion of our committee these rules present a useful summary of the implications of such a relationship.

VIII Conclusion

Since the General Assembly of the OPC did not adopt the two statements of the Agreement on the Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership, as these were amended by Synod Fergus '98, the CCOPC is left with only the last part of the instruction given by Synod Fergus '98 (Acts, Art.130, VI, J).

Synod decided that, if this would be the case, the CCOPC must make recommendations to help the next General Synod to reconsider the present relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the OPC.

Reconsidering the present relationship with the OPC in the light of what has transpired since Synod Fergus, and of the stalemate we find ourselves in, could lead to different conclusions. One option would be to conclude that because of the stubbornness of the OPC it might be better to put an end to this relationship, and to give up the efforts to come to ecclesiastical fellowship. Would this then also imply that we do no longer consider the OPC to be a true church of Christ……?
The CCOPC is convinced that this would be a bad decision, harmful for the church gathering work of Christ, as well as for the reputation of Him who gathers His church in this world by His Word and Spirit.
Reconsidering the present relationship with the OPC could also lead to some thorough self examination with regard to the question how our actions and decisions as Canadian Reformed Churches may have alienated from us a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After all, up to Synod Fergus 1998 all our General Synods since 1980 have consistently denied appeals that asked to rescind the decision of Synod Coaldale 1977, and have acknowledged with thankfulness the desire of the OPC to be faithful to the Scriptures and to defend the Reformed heritage. We continue to speak about the OPC as a true church of Jesus Christ, according to the biblical standard, summarized in Art.29 B.C., but have we also treated the OPC as a true church in this sense?

This self examination forces us to have a critical look at the matters that have caused the present stalemate in our relationship with the OPC: the manner in which Synod Fergus dealt with the charge of 'false shepherds', and the amended agreement.

In light of the last part of our instruction our committee was faced with the question what would be the best way to make recommendations that would be helpful for Synod to deal with, and hopefully overcome the stalemate.

IX Recommendations

Although it may be unusual for a committee to critically evaluate decisions made by the previous Synod, given the present situation in our relationship with the OPC, and based on the views expressed especially in the parts V and VI of this report, your committee feels compelled to recommend that Synod decide:

To reject unambiguously a general disqualification of office bearers in the OPC as "false shepherds", as in conflict with the fact that our churches have acknowledged the OPC as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To undo the changes made by General Synod Fergus 1998 in the Proposed Agreement with the OPC on the issues of the Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership, and to return to the original document, presented by the CCOPC to Synod Fergus, as sufficiently reflecting the Reformed Confessions.

To use this agreement as a basis for establishing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC.

To acknowledge that the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, as formulated by the OPC are compatible with our own rules for this relationship, as formulated by General Synod Lincoln 1992 (Acts, Art.50).

To continue the contact with the OPC by the CCOPC as subcommittee of the CCCA, with the mandate to continue the discussions on the existing differences in confession and church polity, including the proper fencing of the Lord's Table, and confessional membership.

Respectfully submitted,
J. DeGelder
N. H. Gootjes
G. J. Nordeman
G. VanWoudenberg

Reaction of the CCCA to the CCOPC report

The majority of the brothers in CCCA do not endorse the recommendation of the CCOPC (or the reasoning that leads up to it) that Synod 2001 decide "to undo the changes made by General Synod Fergus 1998 in the Proposed Agreement with the OPC on the issues of the Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership, and to return to the original document, presented by the CCOPC to Synod Fergus, as sufficiently reflecting the Reformed Confessions."

In its treatment of the "amended proposed agreement" the CCOPC Report has basically become an appeal against the decisions of Synod Lincoln 1992, Abbotsford 1995 and Fergus 1998. We believe the CCOPC should have simply stated that they were not able to fulfil their mandate because the decision of the 66th General Assembly re: the "false shepherd" issue. There are three reasons why we cannot endorse the CCOPC's recommendation to return to the "proposed agreement"

The CCOPC Report passes over the fact that Synod Fergus 1998 could not finalize Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC on the basis of the Proposed Agreement because of the many responses of the churches which deemed the agreement was too vague. As stated in the Acts of Synod Fergus Article 130, Consideration C.2 and 3,

"Two divergencies remained which still required resolution before entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod Abbotsford mandated the CCOPC to work towards coming to an agreement on these two remaining divergencies and to formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, hopefully in 1998.

Hence the CCOPC has come to General Synod Fergus 1998 with the text of the Proposed Agreement between the CanRC and the OPC as mentioned above. However, there is considerable concern as outlined above that the agreement is too vague and does not sufficiently address the differences. Proceeding with the relationship under the Proposed Agreement as it is will only add to the unrest in our churches and will not help the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to function in a manner that is suitable to one of the Churches of the Reformation."

The present CCOPC Report gives a one-sided impression of the decision of Synod Abbotsford: "Synod considered in this respect that the different practices with regard to these issues gave reason to continue the discussion with the OPC,

but the cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Acts 1995, p.71)." If that is all that can be said, why did Synod Abbotsford not immediately decide to establish a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC? The answer to that question can be found in the mandate Synod 1995 gave to the CCOPC: "to work towards formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules by using the statement of Synod Lincoln 1992 (Acts 1992, Art. 72, IV.A.1.e.i,ii) as a guideline to arrive at an agreement with the OPC on the matters of the fencing of the Lord's Table and confessional membership." The CCOPC in its "Proposed Agreement" as submitted to Synod Fergus did not use the statement of Synod Lincoln as it should have. Synod Lincoln expressed the hope that "in time the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches may come to a common understanding and unified practice regarding the supervision of the Lord's Table. This is not to say that an identical practice is required with respect to the supervision of the Lord's table to come to ecclesiastical fellowship. It should be agreed, however, that a general verbal warning alone is insufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required in the presence of the supervising elders from the guests wishing to attend the Lord's Supper." Synod Fergus did not introduce a new element by revising the "Proposed Agreement" when it added the sentence: "This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient, and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required." Synod Fergus preserved the continuity with the decision of Synod Lincoln and Synod Abbotsford.

The CCOPC rejects what was decided by Synod Fergus 1998 because, as they suggest, "Regardless of the need for, or the significance of this change, the addition does have the unfortunate result that the mutual agreement was changed one-sidedly." It should be noted, however that the "Proposed Agreement" departed significantly from the wording suggested in the decision of Synod Lincoln (Considerations IV.A.1.e.ii): "It should be agreed, however, by the Canadian Reformed churches and the OPC that all who profess their faith accept the doctrine of God's Wor This means that all members are bound by the Word of God in the unity of faith as confessed in the accepted standards."

Synod Fergus 1998 instructed the CCOPC to pass on the Proposed Agreement as amended to the CEIR for adoption by the General Assembly. The decision of the OPC General Assembly did not allow this to happen. Therefore it is our recommendation that Synod decide:

1. To reject unambiguously a general disqualification of office bearers in the OPC as "false shepherds."

2. To instruct the CCOPC to as yet fulfill Article 130 recommendations F,G,H,I J of Synod Fergus 1998.

3. To acknowledge that the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, as formulated by the OPC are compatible with our own rules for this relationship, as formulated by General Synod Lincoln 1992 (Acts, Art.50).

October 25, 2000

Report of the Subcommittee for Contact with the Reformed Church

In the United States (RCUS)

1. History of the contact and mandate Fergus 1998

A. Our contact since 1984

As early as 1984 our churches have had (official) contact with the RCUS. In 1984 some church members visited RCUS churches in North and South Dakota.

A delegation of the RCUS visited our college in Hamilton with a view to establishing an RCUS seminary.

In 1985 Rev. P. Kingma was a visitor at the RCUS Synod. Rev. P. Kingma was again present at the 1988 Synod.

From 1987-1992 the consistory of the Church at Carman had official contact with the RCUS. This local consistory paid five visits to the RCUS, in Oct. 1987, in Oct. 1988, in Sep. 1989 to RCUS churches and pastors, in Feb 1991 to RCUS classis in Pierre SD, and in April 1991 Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer and Elder Jake Kuik attended the RCUS Synod in Garner, IA.

During the 1989 visit the Canadian Reformed visitors received an urgent request to provide a document which would state clearly what the doctrine of the church really all entails according to Canadian Reformed ecclesiology.

The object of Carman's contact was: continuing investigation to determine whether a proposal should be made to major assemblies to seek further contact with the RCUS and to work towards full recognition of each other as true churches of Christ Jesus.

The findings of Carman in 1990 were:

- that the objective cannot be realized at this time. There are too many inconsistencies within the RCUS such as concerning the communion of saints, church discipline and Christian education. Traditional influences seem to be an obstacle to overcoming these inconsistencies.
- that it recognizes the sincere intention of some in the RCUS to be truly Reformed and that through further local contact we can, the Lord willing, help them in the direction they desire to go.

Carman's concerns especially pertain to the doctrine of the Church (the invisible church), the admission to (an open?) Lord's Supper, and Erasure. They write to Synod 1992 that "there are serious doctrinal and church political difficulties which prevent us from making recommendations for ecclesiastical unity with the RCUS." (Carman disagrees with the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad that contact with RCUS should become a matter of the whole federation).

In 1991 the RCUS sent a letter to our Deputies on Relations with Churches Abroad, informing them that they would like to establish fraternal relations with our churches and will be sending an observer to Synod Lincoln 1992.

Rev. F. Walker was present at Synod 1992 as an observer and addressed our Synod. There he said: "It is clear that we are basically of one mind in Christ Jesus."

In his report to the 1993 RCUS Synod (Sutton) Rev. Walker complained about "overly critical and often inaccurate [CanRC] reports."

Synod Lincoln 1992 decided to make the contact with the RCUS a federative matter, and mandated the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, making use of the findings of the church at Carman, MB.

B. Mandate Synod Fergus 1998

Deputies for Synod Fergus 1998 investigated the RCUS according to their mandate with due attention to the three marks of the church (BC art.27-29), and recommended: "that the CanRC enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS under the adopted rules."

However, Synod Fergus was not completely satisfied with the deputies' report and considered that closer investigation should take place on admittance to the Lord's Supper, Sunday observance, the doctrine of the Church, erasure and the position of the CRCNA among the NAPARC churches.

Synod Fergus 1998 decided:

A. To thank the CRCA for fulfilling its mandate with regard to the RCUS.

B. To acknowledge with gratitude the commitment of the RCUSto the Word of God and the Reformed heritage.

C. To decline the invitation of the RCUS at this time to enter into a fraternal relationship (sister church relationship) of ecclesiastical fellowship.

D. To give the following mandate to the CRCA:
   1. To continue working towards a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS;
   2. To resolve the matter of proper supervision of the Lord's Supper so that only those who confess the Reformed faith will be admitted;
   3. To discuss the matter of Sunday observance and the doctrine of the church;
   4. To seek clarification of the concept of erasure;
   5. To investigate the position of the CRCNA among the NAPARC churches;
   6. To serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the opening of Synod.

In fulfilling this mandate the sub-committee for contact with the RCUS met 13 times. The committee invited Rev. G. Syms to Carman for a general acquaintance visit. Two meetings with the full Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS (IRC) were held. Our committee attended 5 RCUS Worship Services and visited the 2000 RCUS Synod in Hamburg, MN.

Proper minutes and reports were duly made of these activities. The reports of our official meetings are appended to this report.

2. Conclusions

The committee's findings are as follows:

a. Working towards a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS.

We have tried to foster a good rapport with the ICR committee and with many other RCUS members. We have studied the 1984-1999 RCUS Abstracts and other documents like position papers. We received great encouragement from the RCUS brothers and we have endeavoured to reciprocate the spiritual encouragement on the basis of the Reformed faith. Our contacts have fostered a greater appreciation of each other's heritage.

b. Proper supervision of the Lord's Table.

1. The Elders, who form the spiritual council, admit the baptized youth of the church to the Table of the Lord. The Elders first examine them (Article 193 RCUS Constitution), and then the young people make Public Profession of their Faith in a Worship Service. In the RCUS this procedure is called Confirmation.

As in our churches, the baptized youth receive extensive Catechism Instruction in view of their Public Profession of Faith. The IRC sent us the following information in regard to the examination by the Elders. "The catechism is recited to the Elders, normally in two or three segments on two or three days respectively. However, it is also our practice to have the youth recite the catechism in its entirety before the congregation. This is not normally done in a Worship Service but rather in a Sunday Bible Class setting with the congregation present. Again, such recitation of the catechism is normally done in two or three parts before the Elders and most often at the end of each years work."

2. The RCUS doesn't require an attestation from guests, but Elders will usually conduct an examination of prospective guests. Agreement was expressed with J. Murray's article on restricted communion (see Collected Writings Vol.2 p.381ff). On page 383 Murray writes: "It seems utterly unreasonable to leave the matter [= participating in the Lord's Supper celebration] entirely to the conscience of the person concerned, when this is not done and should not be done in the case of the members of the congregation."

On September 7, 2000, the IRC sent us the following information in regard to the procedure of such an examination.

A. [Guests seeking admission] are required to be prepared to be examined in a timely fashion. In other words we do not rush the examination process because they arrive at the last minute for worship. Our members know to bring guests to be examined well before our Lord's Day activities begin. If the elders have insufficient time to examine, the guests seeking admission receive an explanation and are not admitted.

B. The following statement of belief must be signed giving the name and address of their home church. This statement is as follows:

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is restricted to believers who have made a public confession of their faith and who are communicant members in good standing of an orthodox Protestant church. Please read the following statement and determine whether you agree with it. If you do then complete the information requested and return it to an Elder.

I believe that the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

I believe that Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, and has joined therewith these promises: First that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord communicated to me; and further that with His crucified body and shed blood, he Himself feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, as certainly as I receive from the hand of the Minister and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord which are given me as certain tokens of the body and blood of Christ.

I come to the Table of the Lord because I am displeased with myself because of my sins, yet trust they are forgiven me, and that my remaining infirmity is covered by the suffering and death of Christ; I also desire more and more to strengthen my faith and amend my life.

I believe that partaking of the Lord's Supper will not merit my salvation, but is a means of grace to strengthen my faith.

Your name:

Name and address of your home church.

Note: If you are a communicant member of a Reformed or Presbyterian Church would you like your church to be advised of your participation with us in the Lord's Supper?

Yes_____ No _____

Then the applicant fills out the following, which is gone over with him or her by an Elder (or Elders) thoroughly.

To determine whether they are sound in doctrine the following questions are asked:

1. Are you in complete agreement with the statement you just read?
2. Are you a regular active member of your home church?
3. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments to be the infallible

   Word of God and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
4. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your Saviour and sovereign Lord?
5. Do you confess that Jesus Christ is both God and man, two natures in one person?
6. Do you believe that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone?
7. Do you hold any doctrines or beliefs, that so far as you know, do not accord with historic orthodox Protestantism?

Then the following questions are asked to determine whether the applicant is sound in life.

1. Are you a member in good standing of your home church? (Under discipline? Under suspension?)

2. Are you engaged in profane or scandalous behavior or living secretly and impenitently in any sin?
3. Are you engaged in any activity that is a wilful, known violation of the Law of God?

The above comprises the substance of the questions asked. The Elder, of course, has liberty to move from these into other areas if the answers to the above warrant it.

The procedure of examining guests seeking admission to the Table in the RCUS clearly shows that the RCUS does not have an open but a fenced Table. Although we see differences here with regard to the doctrine of the church (e.g. what is an "orthodox Protestant church"?), the keys of the kingdom are exercised by the elders in the method outlined above.

Therefore we believe that the Lord's Supper is guarded in the RCUS in a manner consistent with Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 30, Question and Answer 82.

c. 1. Sunday observance

Having only one Worship Service per Sunday has been a long tradition within the RCUS. Since the Bible doesn't say that people have to go to church twice, the important question for them is, where do you draw the line?

However, the RCUS has a statement about profaning the Sunday in its constitution. Art. 180 of their "Church Order" reads: "The Lord's Day (Sunday) shall be kept a holy day, devoted to the public worship of the Lord, to reading the Holy Scriptures, to private devotions, and to works of love and mercy ..."

The ICR committee informed us that the more recently instituted churches tend to have two Worship Services more often than the older established churches.

We found that there is awareness in the RCUS that they should not be complacent about how to observe the Lord's Day. Overall the RCUS is less strict on this point, but in its teaching and preaching it strongly emphasizes worship. On Sundays people should use their time for the Lord. We witnessed that this teaching is given. The profaning of the Lord's Day is addressed and if members do not attend church regularly, they will be disciplined.

2. The doctrine of the church

Regarding this doctrine there remains a difference of approach. The RCUS speaks more in theological and practical terms about the church, while the CanRC speaks about the church as our confessions define the church.

The RCUS clearly rejects the separation of the church into a visible one and an invisible one. They emphasize that the distinction is used only to show two aspects of the church. The church is visible in the believers, as the gathering of the believers under the guidance of the office bearers.

However, not everything is visible in the church. There are hypocrites according to BC art. 29, and there can be a time that the church is hardly visible, since it is nearly extinct in the eyes of man. However, God keeps his chosen ones as in the time of Ahab, the 7000 who had not bowed their knees to Baal!

We feel, though, that the danger of separating the visible and the invisible church is not always avoided. Then one speaks about the plurifomity or the multiformity of the church; the latter term is used in their Church Unity paper. We warned against this danger of denominationalism, the danger of ignoring the mandate of the Lord to express the unity of faith.

The RCUS does not want to do away with the distinction visible/invisible to avoid the impression that they would claim to be the only true church. Furthermore, we could witness the strong emphasis within the RCUS regarding organic union.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the RCUS church "concept" differs somewhat from ours. This is an area, as has been acknowledged before, about which we need to continue to listen to one another, since both churches want to base their approach on Scriptures. And both churches strongly fight independentism and synodicalism. It must also be emphasized that the RCUS practices confessional membership.

While terminology may differ and practices vary, we conclude that the doctrine of the church in the RCUS is in agreement with the Reformed confessions.

d. Erasure

Erasure is a form of discipline and excommunication. Why does the RCUS have an official procedure for Erasure besides excommunication? The RCUS is of the conviction that everyone must have a hearing in disciplinary matters. However, if the person cannot be reached anymore, such a hearing cannot take place. Erasure, therefore, is the means to declare such a member outside of the body of Christ.

The RCUS brothers emphasized the same principle we do. Church members should not withdraw.

The RCUS has two kinds of erasure: disciplinary erasure and administrative erasure. In both cases the church makes a public declaration that the person is excluded from the body of Christ.

Erasure can be compared with the Can.Reformed practice of the public announcement regarding the withdrawal of a member by his/her actions. However, in the RCUS the element of discipline is more strongly emphasized in cases of erasure. The member who is erased cannot be readmitted unless he has received restoration.

e. To investigate the position of the CRCNA among the NAPARC churches.

With strong support from the OPC but with CRCNA opposed, the RCUS became a member of NAPARC in 1994/1995. This council of churches in Northern America has existed for some 25 years. Its stated goal is "to promote greater spiritual unity among the member churches in view of organic union." The RCUS pursues this goal with vigour in the midst of this council.

At the moment the CRCNA is suspended as member due to the CRC's deviating position regarding Holy Scripture, in particular concerning issues like the position of women. The suspension of the CRCNA from NAPARC was an action in which the RCUS played an important role.

3. Some additional observations

a. Position Papers

Among other things we observed in our various contacts with the RCUS churches, we note yet the matter of the status of position papers, which have been drawn up and approved by RCUS synods in the past.

As noted in the report concerning our visit to the 254th Synod of the RCUS, the RCUS has as a body made certain declarations in the form of position papers concerning various social, moral and theological subjects. These are: Principles of Church Unity, Creation in Six Days, Ecclesiastical Divorce and Remarriage, Theonomy, Women in the Military, Abortion, Homosexuality, Use of Pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ. We were interested in what their Synod would decide about the status of these papers and declarations within the RCUS. Would they be given some type of semi-creedal status? This reminded us of our own history, when declarations were made by synods in the 1940's which were given status equal to Scripture and confessions and were the basis on which many were put out of the Reformed Churches at that time.

The 254th Synod of the RCUS decided that the contents of the position papers are authoritative advice to the members of the RCUS and serve as the RCUS's witness to the world of its understanding of Scripture and confessions. The positions put forward in these papers are therefore also not strictly binding on all, to the point that they can be used to discipline members as such.

We are thankful that the RCUS avoided giving such declarations and positions creedal or semi- creedal status. Their members ultimately remain bound to Scripture and confessions only.

We hope that this puts the "distinctive" positions held in the RCUS in proper perspective.

b. Training for the Ministry

The RCUS supports a number of theological seminaries. Their ministers, then, come from a variety of backgrounds. There is some recognition within the RCUS that they should have their own theological institution. We believe that this desire for a theological training of their own is encouraging.

In our discussions we agreed that the ecclesiastical relationship between the churches ought not to remain on a formal level only, i.e. exchanges of delegates to broader assemblies, sending the Acts of synods to each other, etc. Our relationship should be filled out also in more practical ways, i.e. working together in the Training for the Ministry, Mission, etc.

c. Federation or Merger

The IRC committee has asked how we see the relationship with them unfolding. Do we have the desire that the RCUS become Canadian Reformed?

We envisage that the RCUS remains a separate federation in the US (see "Hamburg" report p.5/6.

We are also of the opinion that this matter of federative organization within Canada and the United States needs to be considered in view of our developing relations with the URCNA churches.

4. Recommendation

In the light of its research and contacts, this committee believes that it has fulfilled its mandate and that it has determined:

That the matter of the Lord's Supper celebration has been resolved, since members and guests alike are admitted in accordance with Lord's Day 30.

That the matter of Sunday observance has been sufficiently discussed and cannot be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship,

That the doctrine of the church has been adequately discussed, and though there may be differing views in the RCUS, the statements of the Catechism and the Belgic Confession alone are binding,

That the concept of erasure has been satisfactorily clarified,

That the CRCNA has been suspended from NAPARC with agreement of the RCUS, and the RCUS's membership in this body should not hinder our relationship with the RCUS at this time.

Therefore we acknowledge with thankfulness that the RCUS stands on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity as a faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We recommend that the Canadian Reformed Churches enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Church in the United States under the adopted rules.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. J. Moesker (convener)
Rev. K. Jonker (secretary)
W. Gortemaker
A. Poppe

Clarification on Overall mandate

With regard to our mandate Synod Fergus stated "this Committee will take over the mandate of the CRCA in as far as it relates to the Americas by establishing and maintaining relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship with churches located in North and South America." Synod gave specified instructions concerning the contact with ERQ, OPC and RCUS.

Each subcommittee had its own meetings throughout the past three years. To fulfill the overall mandate the CCCA met yearly to keep each other informed. Each subcommittee prepared its own report, in the form of recommendations. The draft reports were discussed by the whole committee at our meeting in September 2000.

The past three years have been an experiment for the CCCA. We have seen the merit and benefit of working together as subcommittees. Our yearly meetings have allowed us to touch base with each other as we seek to take a united approach in our contacts with other churches.

Nevertheless, we would like to bring the following points to your attention and ask Synod Neerlandia to give us further direction:

1. Although a great deal of correspondence could be done through email, the CCCA is spread out over two provinces. Cost and time restraints limit us from having more meetings than once per year. This restricts the overall work of the Committee. Our first meeting was largely used to discuss the mandate given by Synod Fergus, the second allowed each subcommittee to give a progress report and the main item on the agenda of the third meeting was the draft reports of the subcommittees. Of the almost three years between synods only two years allow for productive work.

2. We also wish to receive further clarification on the extent of the work that is included under our mandate

   a. Synod Fergus gave our Committee the mandate to establish and maintain relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship with churches located in North and South America (Acts, Article 72). Since, as we perceive it, the main purpose and function of the CCCA at the present time is to streamline the contact with churches in North and South America we question why the committee was structured in such a manner that our specific mandate was limited to the ERQ, the OPC and the RCUS. Why is the contact with the Orthodox Christian Reformed, United Reformed Churches of North America and the Free Reformed Churches of North America not under the umbrella of the CCCA? Synod Fergus gave no reason justifying why they should not have been a subcommittee of the CCCA.

   b. To this point our contact has largely been with churches in North America. In July 2000 the missionary churches in Brazil formed a federation of churches. Is it our responsibility as Committee to seek contact with them? Who of the CCCA would be responsible for this, since Synod Fergus specifically assigned who would be in each subcommittee? Is it our responsibility to visit these churches?

3. Each subcommittee is expected to make their own report. What does Synod expect the CCCA to do if a subcommittee takes a different direction than desired by the whole committee? Can a report by a subcommittee be overruled by the other members who are not part of that subcommittee?

4. From our contacts with the ERQ, OPC and RCUS the question has been asked both formally and informally as to why we are not involved in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). It has always been a hindrance for us to be part of NAPARC because of the presence of the CRC. At the present time the membership of the CRC in NAPARC has been suspended. Since the ERQ, OPC and RCUS are involved in NAPARC, and obviously see the benefit of it, we request permission to send an observer to a future meeting of NAPARC who would be mandated to report on the character and the usefulness of joining this organization.

Respectfully submitted,

P.G. Feenstra (coordinator)	W. Gortemaker	W. Oostdyk
N.H. Gootjes (secretary)	K. Jonker	A.J. Pol
J. Boot	J. Moesker	A. Poppe
J. deGelder	G. Nordeman	G. VanWoudenberg

Appendix A
Regarding the ERQ

St. Georges de Beauce – Own Sound

A developing relationship

Two years ago our local congregation expressed a strong desire not only to fulfill the missionary calling of the church in a foreign land but also within our beloved country of Canada. As a result, a "mission committee" was established and met for the first time in August 1998. The Committee was instructed to look at the possibility of starting a new project or supporting one that already existed. Two areas of work were suggested: Northern Ontario or Quebec. The province of Quebec was given priority. The Committee was instructed to see if there was any way of helping the l'Église Réformée du Québec in their work of mission.

A request from St. Georges

In the process of doing this work a request was received from the ERQ church in St. Georges de Beauce (located approximately one-and-one-half hours south of Quebec City). They asked if we were willing to support the calling of a second minister who would help develop Reformed church life within the congregation. This is an area where there is a great need within the ERQ in general. Rev. Paulin Bedard was called by the congregation and he accepted the call on the condition that financial support would be forthcoming. Whereas their present minister, Rev. Mario Veilleux, will concentrate on evangelism, the emphasis in Rev. Bedard's work will be on a teaching ministry (training elders, catechism classes, translating Reformed material etc.). Yet there will be some flexibility in the division of the workload.

By far the majority of the members in the church at St. Georges de Beauce, and all the congregations in the ERQ, are very new to the faith. The congregation is small (35 communicant and 30 non-communicant members, plus about 20 other participants who as yet have not professed their faith). Presently they are self-supporting. Yet the addition of a second pastor will require additional resources. As they wrote to us, "According to the experience of Rev. Paulin Bedard and the ERQ scale of wages for ministers, an annual amount of $43,000 is needed."

In their letter to us the consistory of St. Georges also wrote:

> During the last few years, we have been encouraged and stimulated by the development of relationships between the Canadian Reformed Churches and l'Église Réformée du Québec, through many personal contacts and also through the work of our synodical committees. Our consistory believes that we can learn a lot through these contacts and that the Lord gives us opportunity to be a source of fraternal encouragement to each other. We see the usefulness and importance to deepen these relationships and promote them on a local level, between a CanRC congregation and an ERQ congregation. It is the reason why we approach you and present to you our project, so that you may pray more specifically for us and know our needs.

During the first week of August 1999, a delegation from Owen Sound was sent to meet with the consistory of St. George and to visit the congregation for a weekend. They found among the brothers and sisters a sincere desire to serve the Lord in a Reformed manner and an eagerness to learn more about church life in our federation. Many things we take for granted need to be developed in these young churches.

Acceptance of the invitation

As a result of this visit the consistory of Owen Sound decided to pursue this project provided:

1. Rev. Bedard spends approximately three months in the Owen Sound area to become familiar with the overall functioning of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
2. St. Georges sends a delegation to our church on a yearly basis.
3. A delegation is sent from Owen Sound to St. Georges to review their situation.
4. This contact draws us closer together as church federations.
5. Financial help is received from other congregations (and individuals) in our federation.

The church in St. Georges has agreed to pursue this course of action.

We believe this project is very much in line with the recommendations of Synod Fergus. We hope that through this type of contact the ERQ will learn and have a better understanding about us as Canadian Reformed Churches and we about them.

Visit on November 19-21, 1999

Last November I was given opportunity to visit the Reformed Churches in Quebec. I attended on behalf of the Committee for Contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec and because of the contacts we have been developing between our local congregation in Owen Sound and the church at St. Georges de Beauce.

The ERQ Synod November 19-20

On Friday evening I attended the Synod that was held in Charny at the Institut Farel. Seven brothers were present as delegates. They were: Rev. David Craig, Jean Zoellner, Ruben Kwint, Mario Veilleux and the elders Yves Bergeron, Patrice Michaud and Luc Thibaudeau. Rev. Paulin Bedard was present as an observer. The atmosphere was more relaxed than our major assemblies tend to be. For example, observers were given opportunity to ask questions and questions were directed at them. Voting, however, is done only by the delegates. The chairman of the meeting was elder Patrice Michaud. He led the meeting in a very impressive and efficient manner keeping everyone in line (including the ministers)!

The following morning the delegates returned at 8:30 a.m. Rev. Jean-Guy DeBlois arrived having just returned from attending the meeting of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). He was not seated as a delegate because there were already two delegates from the congregation in Montreal. The first hour-and-a-half was spent in devotion, song and prayer. Rev. Ruben Kwint gave an extensive meditation on Ecclesiastes 7:16.

During the meeting of the Synod every church was given opportunity to report on matters pertaining to their local church. The joys and the difficulties of the churches were expressed. Two of the six churches, Trois-Rivieres and Quebec City, are without elders. The minister of Quebec City, Francois Cordey, has been given a leave of absence due to health problems. Several churches indicated that they are already or are planning to use catechism material that has been translated and adapted by Rev. Bedard.

The project of support for St. Georges de Beauce received considerable attention at the Synod. It was agreed that the first 75% of the funds collected would be for local work in St. Georges and that the remaining 25% would be used for work Rev. Bedard would be doing for Institut Farel (teaching and developing courses for the Internet). It was also stressed that the salary schedule as used for ministers in the ERQ be used.

At this point in the meeting I was given opportunity to address the delegates and to pass on greetings on behalf of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas and on behalf of Owen Sound.

Committee Reports

Several Committees gave an oral report of their work. The Committee for Inter-church relations now consists of two men, Rev. DeBlois and Rev. Zoellner. They informed the brothers that they had passed on to our Committee the decision made by the June Synod of the ERQ. In reaction to the decision of Synod Fergus 1998 the June Synod of the ERQ decided,

> The Synod of the Eglise reformee du Quebec thankfully acknowledges the Canadian Reformed Churches' expressed desire to be of assistance to us and appreciates that the issues raised by Synod Fergus 1998 are important and legitimate. Considering that some of the same issues have been raised by our local consistories; and that other observations and concerns expressed by Synod Fergus 1998 are not of present concern to us; therefore, (1) it is recommended that the ERQ begin its own synodical discussions in order to clarify the concerns of our local consistories which have also been raised by the Canadian Reformed Churches; and (2) that our Synod (through its Inter-Church Relations Committee) advise the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the ERQ that the items of discussion raised by Synod Fergus 1998 which are neither current nor urgent within the ERQ be dealt with if and when they are raised by our local consistories.

Rev. DeBlois reported on his visit to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. He attended as an observer and found it would benefit the ERQ if they would apply for membership. As an observer he was given ample time to present the situation of the ERQ.

There was considerable discussion on the work of the committees appointed by the ERQ Synods and the usefulness of the work that was done. Reference was made to an extensive report on liturgical forms that had been prepared by the Committee for Education which was defeated and never picked up again. A discussion was also held on the possibility of Synod employing an individual for work in the ERQ. This discussion came about because Ben Westerveld (formerly of the CRC in Dunnville, ON and now a member of the OPC) is presently living in Quebec and hopes to receive a call from one of the churches in the future. In the meantime he is being supported by OPC members. Apparently the donators need receipts and the only legal way this can be done is when Ben can prove that he is employed by the ERQ. In this debate it became evident that there is some tension as to which model of church government should be followed (Presbyterian or Reformed). Is it possible for a synod to be the employer of an individual or should this be done on a local level?

Sunday worship

On Sunday I attended the worship service in St. Georges de Beauce. Rev. Mario Veilleux read three passages of Scripture (Genesis 39:7-9; Jeremiah 8:6; Romans 8:5-8) and on the basis of these texts spoke about how sin wrongs God in all his attributes (in his goodness, omniscience, wisdom, sovereignty and justice.) The mediator by which we must be saved must be God himself. The reason is because sin has done such infinite wrong to God.

After the service I was given opportunity to address the congregation. I passed on greetings from our local congregation and briefly spoke about our desire that the contact we have may draw us closer in the Lord and that we may be encouraged by what we receive in each other as Reformed Churches. The response of the congregation was overwhelming. My overall impression was that the congregation in St. Georges genuinely treasures the contact.

In General

The visit was very beneficial to get a better picture and understanding of the life of these young churches and to see it first hand in the life of the congregation at St. Georges. The people with whom I spoke are full of eagerness and enthusiasm for the service of the Lord. Most of them did not grow up in a Reformed home and are eager to learn more of what it means to live as Reformed Christians in all areas of life. On more than one occasion I heard the phrase "You have such a rich heritage!" The blessings of Reformed church life which we tend to take for granted are valued as a new-found treasure. It was refreshing and a reason for great joy and thankfulness to see how the Lord also preserves his church in Quebec.

Financial Support

We are responding to financial and other needs of the ERQ (Synod Fergus, Article 97 V C 2). We have asked the churches in Classis Northern Ontario to support this work either as an item on their church budgets, through collections or through the deaconry. We are hoping to have Rev. Bedard and his family come to the Owen Sound area as of March 1, 2000. The amount that will be needed will be approximately $45,000. We are now soliciting funds from any individual or church that wishes to support this project. Please make your cheques payable to the "Owen Sound Canadian Reformed Church" and indicate it is for "Project Quebec." Individual donations of $10 or more will be given a tax receipt. If we receive more support than we need to support this project we will pass it on to the ERQ. If you have any further questions please feel free to write us.

As local consistory we are very thankful for this opportunity to be of assistance to these brothers and sisters and in the process, to be enriched in faith and in our common desire to serve the Lord in the future. We pray that the Lord may continue to bless the developing relationship between the congregations of St. Georges and Owen Sound so that it benefit all the churches in the ERQ and draw us closer together as church federations.

P.G. Feenstra

Appendix B
Regarding the OPC

REPORT OF THE DELEGATES OF THE CCOPC TO THE 67th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Introduction

The undersigned, Rev. J. DeGelder and br. G.J.Nordeman were delegated by the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to attend the 67th General assembly of the OPC, which was held at the Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA, July 5 - 12, 2000.

Wednesday evening, July 5, a worship service was held, led by the Rev. L.G. Mininger, Moderator of the previous General assembly. The next morning the Assembly elected as its Moderator Dr. J.S. Gidley, a ruling elder from the Presbytery of Ohio.

We arrived Thursday late afternoon and, and found the Assembly adjourned and working in advisory committee meetings.

Activities in chronological order

Thursday, July 6.

Since many commissioners were still involved in the meetings of the advisory committees, we tried to make use of the possibility to speak to members of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations that were available. We also used our time that evening to familiarize ourselves with the reports of the Standing Committees and other matters on the agenda.

Friday, July 7

Although the advisory committee that dealt with Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations had actually finished its discussions already, we met this morning with this committee, in the presence of some members of the CEIR (Gaffin, Tyson and Peterson) for about 1.5 hour. We had the opportunity to explain our position as CCOPC of the Can. Reformed Churches. We expressed our disappointment with the decision of the 66th G.A. (1999) in response to the overture of the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, to put all further action concerning the relationship between our churches on hold, until the offense, created by our G.S. Fergus 1998 (Acts, Art.136), had been removed.

In its report to the G.A. the CEIR had expressed the hope that our next G.S. (2001) will act to settle this matter in a satisfactory manner... Our question was what was meant by "a satisfactory manner". In other words: what do they expect our Synod to do or to say, in order to resolve this problem? In the discussion it became clear that there is no need to address again the person, the statements, and the status of Rev. Hofford. As far as that is concerned there is willingness to drop the matter.

In the meantime it would be helpful and much appreciated if our next G.S. would declare unambiguously to reject the disqualification of officebearers of the OPC as false shepherds, and to distance itself ^rom such labelling (see also the letter from the CCOPC to the CEIR, dated Febr.11, 2000). This would open the way to jointly

move ahead and deal with the situation caused by Synod Fergus' changes in the Proposed Agreement on the "Fencing of the Lord's Table" and "Confessional Membership".

We did not discuss with the Committee the implications of these changes since neither the CEIR, nor the advisory committee had dealt with the two issues in the Proposed Agreement. We can say that the discussion was open and honest, and that there was definitely a willingness to bring the matters between the OPC and the Can.Ref.Churches to a positive closure.

However, after the decision of last year's G.A. the next move is expected from our next G.S. in 2001. For that reason there was no recommendation regarding the relationship with our churches, neither from the CEIR, nor from the advisory committee.

In the afternoon the Assembly reconvened. Rev. Peterson officially introduced us as fraternal delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches, and on motion we were seated as corresponding members. In this session the Assembly dealt with the reports of the Stated Clerk, the Trustees, and the Statistician. Rev. Donald J. Duff was re-elected as Stated Clerk for the term 2001 - 2004. Some discussion took place on financial matters and on proposed small amendments to the standing rules of the G.A.

The report of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension was then presented, and|3 "organizing pastors" in Home Mission Works were invited to tell about the developments in their particular areas. The OPC is very active in Home Mission and has seen considerable growth over the past decade.

In the evening the Committee on Foreign Missions presented its extensive report (38 pages), introduced and explained by the general secretary of the CFM, mr. Mark Bube. There were also missionaries present, and two of them gave a personal presentation on the work they are involved in: Rev. Karl Hubenthal, who works in Suriname, and Dr. Anthony Curto, who is active in Uganda.

Much time was spent that evening in an - at times very emotional - debate on a passage of the committee report that spoke about the difficulties between the CFM and Middle East Reformed Fellowship, especially focussed on the position of Rev. Victor Atallah, as the director of MERF. The discussion was complicated by the fact that the content of the problems was not before the Assembly, since these matters are at this time before Rev.Atallah's Presbytery, the Presbytery of the Midwest, in the form of charges against Rev. Atallah, filed by the CFM.

It is not necessary to go into details here, but there appeared to be a deep division in the Assembly on this issue, and that evening it did not come to a satisfactory conclusion.

Saturday, July 8.

The next morning a number of members of the CFM presented a motion to partly delete and re-write, in view of publication in the Minutes of the Assembly, the section in the CFM report that dealt with the MERF issue. This motion evoked another, but much shorter debate, and was adopted.

Much attention was also given this morning to the report of the Committee on Christian Education, introduced by Rev. Thomas E. Tyson, the general secretary of

the committee. In the Fall of this year Rev. Tyson will resign as general secretary, since he has accepted a call from the Presbytery of Philadelphia to serve as its Regional Home Missionary.

There was much appreciation and enthusiasm for the relatively new MTIOPC, which stands for Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC, operated by the Subcommittee on Ministerial Training. This subcommittee is also responsible for the extensive Internship Program for men who desire to be ordained as pastors in the OPC.

Rev. Alan D. Strange presented the activities of Great Commission Publications, a joint venture between the OPC and the PCA to produce Sunday School and Catechism curriculum, as well as other study material for the church.

The Assembly dealt also with the reports of the Committees on Coordination and on Diaconal Ministries, and later on in the afternoon with the report of the Committee on Pensions. These are almost entirely financial matters, which are explained, and sometimes discussed in detail. This is a good thing in view of responsibility and accountability in dealing with church finances, but does not make for much excitment for visitors.

After lunch it was time for fraternal delegates to address the Assembly. Rev. Dale Clark spoke on behalf of the RCUS, and Rev. DeGelder on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. His speech is added to this report as an appendix.

Late afternoon we returned to the Fraser Valley, and after Sunday, July 9, we returned to Ontario.

Observations from some of the reports

Foreign Missions

Through its Committee on Foreign Missions the OPC is conducting mission work in 8 areas in the world (China, Ethiopia, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Middle East, Suriname, and Uganda), employing some 15 workers in the field.

Christian Education

This committee has seven regular subcommittees, each of which is responsible for research and promotion of a particular area of ministry, as they are performed by the members of the church. These areas are: worship, teaching, fellowship, evangelism, Christian schools, equipping ordained officers, website._ A variety of publications is available to equip and teach, and to support activities in these areas (among other things the magazine for office bearers, *Ordained Servant*), sometimes produced in cooperation with Great Commission Publications.
A special subcommittee is the Subcommittee on Ministerial Training. Since the OPC does not have its own Theological College or Seminary, this subcommittee has to consult regularly with selected seminaries, and is also reponsible for the Internship Program of the OPC. Since 1999 they operate the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC, which offers various courses in doctrine, church history, church polity, homiletics, liturgics, and catechetics. The hope and expectation is that this may grow into a more permanent institute of theological learning under the direct responsibility of the General Assembly.
The Magazine Subcommittee is responsible for the publication *New Horizons*.

Home Missions and Church Extension.

In the OPC today one of every five congregations is a mission work, which is over 50! This has quite an impact and means that the OPC is now a younger church, as well as a larger one, and therefore different from past decades. 20 % of the congregations were formed within the past five years. The resultant growth has necessitated the establishment of two more presbyteries in the year 2000, which brings their total to 16.
With the support of the Committee on Home Missions the OPC employed in 1999 6 full-time regional home missionaries. The Presbyteries are responsible for home mission and church planting in their areas. The Committee only assists (also financially if necessary), encourages and coordinates.

Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations.

At present the OPC is in ecclesiastical fellowship with 11 churches, which are:

the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church,

the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,

the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland,

the Free Church of Scotland,

the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin),

the Presbyterian Church in America,

the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland,

the Reformed Church in Japan,

the Reformed Churches of New Zealand,

the Reformed Church in the United States,

the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

Churches in Corresponding Relationship are:

Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

United Reformed Churches in North America

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales.

The Canadian Reformed Churches are not mentioned in either of these lists. We are probably hanging somewhere in between. The report does reflect on the relationship with the Can.Ref.Churches, quoting from correspondence with the CCOPC, and expressing the hope that after our next General Synod (2001) we may move ahead to establishing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship.

The report gives considerable attention to the split in the F.C.S. and publishes in full the official statements of both groups, the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

The OPC will be the host church for the 2001 ICRC. The plans are to hold the conference at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, June 20 - 29, 2001, using the facilities of Beaver College for billeting.

The Statistician

The OPC grew significantly again in 1999. Total church membership reached 25,302, while the number of local organized churches is 204, plus 63 home mission works, which makes for a total of 267 congregations, compared to 253 a year before. The number of ministers is 397.

Other comments

– We had ample opportunity for personal discussions with many commissioners, and some expressed appreciation for the strong doctrinal stand of our churches, and even on the issue of travel attestations for guests at the Lord's Supper.

– We were approached by Rev. Karl Hubenthal, missionary in Suriname, who is very much in need of more support for his work. Suriname, as a former Dutch colony, has a history and background strongly related to the Netherlands. He was wondering whether there would be resources available in the Canadian Reformed Churches, as English speaking churches with a Dutch background.

Conclusion

Although it is hard to assess the benefit of such a visit, we can say that we were well received and that the discussions we had were clarifying and encouraging.

It is a joy to recognize in the OPC a church with a strong commitment to remain faithful to the Word of God.

Respectfully submitted,

J. DeGelder
G.J.Nordeman

Speech held by Rev. J. DeGelder at the 67th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Tacoma (WA) on July 8, 2000

Mr. Moderator, brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

For us, elder Gerry Nordeman and myself, it is a privilege to be with you again these days, as delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches to the General Assembly 2000 of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. it is not for the first time that we are in your midst. We were also present at your General Assembly in 1997, and over the years many others have addressed you as well on behalf of our church federation.

And it is the same way the other way round: many of our General Synods have had the privilege of receiving delegates from the OPC, among whom Rev. Jack Peterson stands out as the most frequent visitor. As a matter of fact Jack is so well known among us, that we are all familiar with his nickname.

All this goes to show, brothers, that by now we have a long history together. A history marked by many meetings, discussions, evaluation-papers, and what have you. We had

- and we still have - our arguments and disagreements, but somehow there has always been - and there still is - a sense of unity. We do recognize each other's desire to be faithful to the Word of God, and to defend the heritage of the Reformation.

And so we do consider it a privilege to be here again. We appreciate the possibility to enjoy your company, to speak with you personally, and to address you as Assembly on behalf of our churches. We wish your Assembly the Lord's blessing and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your discussions and decisions. It is our sincere wish that your work may serve the glory of God, the upbuilding of His church, and the strengthening of the Reformed faith.

You know, brothers, when I got the invitation. and read the name 'Tacoma' as the place-of-meeting for this Assembly, I was right away wondering why the name of this place sounded so familiar to me. I have never been here, and it has been less than 9 years since I left Holland.

But then I remembered. I have read about Tacoma in a book that you probably all know, written by one of your well-known pastors, who went to be with the Lord twenty years ago, Mr. Robert K. Churchill. Under the title Lest we forget Mr Churchill shares the memories of his personal experiences in the early years of the OPC.

In the plane from Toronto on my way to this meeting I read it again, and was again struck by the significant, and very relevant message of this little book. And the developments in the Presbyterian Church of Tacoma during the first decades of the 20th century serve as a remarkable example to illustrate this message. The history of the Church is full of those examples - lest we forget!

There is first the warning message. The call to stand firm in the Reformed faith; to hold on to the doctrine of the Holy Word of God, as summarized in the confessions of the Reformation.

But the warning message in Churchill's book is also an encouraging and comforting message. For it speaks about God's faithfulness, about the glorious reign of Jesus Christ Who continues to gather His church, also in the face of apostasy and false teaching; also in times of persecution; also when the numbers are small, and - humanly speaking - become more and more insignificant in our world. Brothers, that stand, that commitment, as described by Mr. Churchill in his book about the past.... that is what we recognize and appreciate in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church - also today!

And as Canadian Reformed Churches it is our commitment to maintain and defend the same truth. Our churches have been present in North America for about 50 years. Our first General Synod was held in 1954 in Carman, Manitoba. Most of our members have their roots in The Netherlands, and have arrived in Canada (some in the U.S.) after the Second World War. We may say with thankfulness that the Lord has blessed us in our church life. At this time we have a little over 15,000 members in 50 congregations, most of them in Ontario and British Columbia.

A few more details: We also recognize the gracious blessing of our God in the fact that almost all of our covenant-children can attend Christian day schools, at least at the elementary level, and many of them also in High School. Teachers for these schools are being trained at our Teacher's College in Hamilton.

As some of you may know, Hamilton is also the location of our Theological College.

It is our conviction that the training for the ministry should be controlled by the church, and because of that we maintain this relatively small College to prepare our future pastors for their important task of shepherding the flock of Jesus Christ. Just recently a significant extension could be added to the building, facilitating especially our growing library.

Foreign Mission is carried out in Brazil and in Papua New Guinea, while besides local Home Mission activities, we also have the privilege of being involved in a new Home Mission work in French speaking Canada, in cooperation with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec.

Our churches maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with various Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in the world. With you and many others we share membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches, and we rejoice that in many ways we may recognize the ongoing church gathering work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Especially when we recognize this work of the Spirit close by, it confronts us with new challenges. With thankfulness I may mention the positive developments in our discussions with the United Reformed Churches. We recognize how much we have in common in many respects, not only at the level of unity committees, appointed by synods, but also in local congregations. Many of our churches are engaged in intensive discussions with United Reformed congregations, and we see a growing consensus in many areas.

It must be said, brothers, that it is not always easy to value these interchurch relationships. We can say that our ultimate goal is - or should be - to come to complete visible unity. That seems feasible if there are two local congregations, or two denominations in one country, that have a lot in common. But other than that? The other extreme would be to let, what we call 'ecclesiastical fellowship' become an empty formality, an opportunity to send delegates to Assemblies to speak a few friendly words, a reason to send each other the Minutes or Acts of these assemblies to be put in some archives - and that's it.

But brothers, I am convinced that there is more to it than that. How wonderful, how encouraging to recognize the reality of what we confess in our Belgic Confession , as well as in your Westminster Standards about the gathering of the church as the work of our glorified Saviour all over the world - a work that will go on until the very end of the history of our world. And as God's people on our way towards the glorious day of Christ's return we need each other. We'll need each other to encourage each other, but also to warn each other; to support each other in whatever way we can to remain faithful to the Gospel of Salvation in our modern world.

The challenge before us is clear. How do we make use of today's possibilities to make the most of our ecclesiastical relationships to equip God's people for faithful service? There is so much we can share, brothers; there is so much we can learn from each other.

You may ask: that's all fine, but how does the relationship between us - between the OPC and the CANRC - fit into this picture?

When I addressed your G.A. in 1997 I spoke about the approach of a new and historical moment in the long history of our contact. There was hope that we would be able to finalize our protracted discussions and to formalize the unity that we have in Jesus Christ into the format of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

However - the turning-point we were hoping for, and looking forward to, did not come. Not yet, anyway. In the church of Jesus Christ we never give up hope, do we? After all, we are not running our own show, or our own business - we are talking about the work of Christ, and about the power of the Spirit of Christ!

But we must say that after the decisions of our General Synod in Fergus in 1998, and the decisions of your G.A. in 1999 it is hard to speak of real progress. In my address in 1997 I referred to the long history of our contacts with the title of a booklet, written by one of our ministers on this topic, as "one step forward - one step backward'. Well, at that time we were all hoping for a major step forward. But it turned into a serious step backward.

Now, to avoid all misunderstanding, the point I want to make is not, who would be to blame for this particular development. But I think that we all should agree that afer more then 25 years of contacts this is a disappointing and humbling conclusion. At times it seems to be so difficult to reach out to each other, and to understand each other. Do we not often run into human littleness and stubbornness, also within the church of Christ? We can feel helpless to overcome the brokenness, the lack of understanding and the lack of patience.

And then, brothers - is this all there is to say? There is this stalemate - and that's it? I don't believe it! This can and may not be the last word between churches which both claim to be faithful churches of our Lord, and which recognize each other as such.

Oh yes, we both have our own history, and there are many things we do differently. There are differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. There are differences between your Form of Church Government and our Church Order. But when there is a genuine love for God, and a strong commitment to be true to His Word, as well as the desire to live accordingly - then I believe that these differences will not hinder us to find ways towards each other.

And if not? Brothers, in all this there is one tremendous comfort. Out of all the nations and peoples on earth Jesus Christ gathers His church. And His work will continue - always! He does so, and want to do so through us. That is a huge responsibility for all of us.

But let us not forget - He will also continue to do so in spite of us. In the end His work does not depend on our rules and requirements for ecclesiastical fellowship. Yes - the Holy Spirit wants to use us. He calls us and our churches to be faithful. But He does not depend on us. that keeps us humble, and we can all use that!

But it also comforts. And we can use that too! Remember what I mentioned before, what the name 'Tacoma' in the book of Bob Churchill reminded me of. Remember what the OPC and the CanRC both stand for in this world: the eternal truth and reliability of God's Word. I am convinced that, no matter how things will develop, that is what ultimately unites us in a hostile, postmodern world, in which for more and more people Christianty is just some outdated, or even dangerous, way of thinking.

Brothers, the Canadian Reformed Churches greet you in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our wish that you may continue to defend and stand up for the truth. That you may rejoice in the goodness of our heavenly Father. And that the peace of Christ may govern your Assembly and your Church.

Thank you.

Appendix C
Regarding the RCUS

Report of the Meeting of the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the RCUS and the RCUS Committee on Interchurch Relations on January 17/18, 2000 in Salem-Ebenezer Reformed Church, Manitowoc, WI

At our Committee meeting of December 20, 1999 arrangements were made with Rev. G. Syms to meet the RCUS Interchurch Committee on January 17-18, 2000 in Manitowoc (WI). Considering the time of the year it was decided to book a plane. A ticket over the weekend would be considerably cheaper. It would also give opportunity to worship in an RCUS church again. The consistories of Carman-East and Winnipeg Grace granted their ministers release of their preaching duties so that a flight from Saturday January 15 - Tuesday, January 18, 2000 could be booked.

Saturday, January 15, 2000

On Saturday, January 15, 2000 about 11:00 a.m. our committee boarded a flight which took us via Minneapolis to Milwalkee (WI), about a one-and-one-half hour drive from Manitowoc. We arrived at 14:15 and were met by an elder from the RCUS congregation at Manitowoc who transported us to the manse of Rev. Don Vance, minister of the Salem-Ebenezer Reformed Church. The church building is in the country, near the village of Newton.

We were warmly welcomed by Rev. and Mrs. Vance as well as two members of the RCUS committee, Rev. Jonathan Merica from California and Rev. Ron Potter who pastors a congregation in Pennsylvania who had arrived earlier that day. We informally exchanged thoughts on matters involving church order, liturgy, psalms and hymns, choirs, etc. That evening we enjoyed a delicious meal at the Vance residence, and we were later taken to various homes where we would be billeted during our stay.

Saturday, January 16, 2000

After a refreshing sleep we went to church on Sunday, January 16, 2000. The church service started at 10:00 a.m. Before the church service, Sunday school classes were held at 8:45 a.m., one for young children, another for the youth, and one for adults. The youth class discussed "dating" in the light of Hosea 2, while the adult class discussed Hebrews 4. On the whole, there was good participation.

After the Sunday schools were concluded at about 9:45 a.m., church members entered the auditorium and after the sounding of the church bells, the worship service began. An elder and deacon were ordained in this service. As in most RCUS churches, this was the only actual worship service of the Sunday.

The Order of Worship was as follow:

Organ playing and Announcements
Call to Worship
Responsive Singing
Salutation and Invocation
Responsive Singing

Reading of a part of the Heidelberg Catechism in unison, followed by the reciting of the Apostles Creed
Congregational Prayer
Singing of the Church Choir
Scripture Reading which was followed by the Ordination of an Elder and a Deacon
Responsive Singing
Sermon
Closing Song with collection
Benediction

This order clearly shows the Reformed pattern of a church service with the preaching central., and preceded and followed by praise and prayer. The singing of a choir in church and the recitation of a Lord's Day from the Heidelberg Catechism were different from our manner of worship. The new office bearers were ordained with the RCUS form for ordination, which is not too dissimilar from ours. The men ordained had to vow that they accepted the teachings of the OT and the NT, and that they would do their work in agreement with the confessions of the church.

In connection with the ordination of these brothers, Rev. Vance preached about "Elders and Deacons" using 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Hebrews 13:17 as his Scripture passages. We heard an expository sermon, which stayed close to the Bible passages on which it was based. However, we figured the message would have been much stronger if there had been more Christology.

In the Church Bulletin of this Sunday of January 16 we read that the Young Peoples' Society meets at 7:30 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month. Furthermore, it was stated in the same bulletin, "This Congregation is a member of the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States. Its purpose is to provide its members with the preaching of the Gospel of Christ; to grant them the enjoyment of the means of Grace, so that they may more easily fulfill their Christian duties. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are called canonical, being recognized as genuine and inspired, are received as the true and proper Word of God, and the ultimate rule and measure of the whole Christian faith and doctrine. The Heidelberg Catechism is received as an authoritative expression of the truths taught in the Holy Scriptures, and this Catechism alone, and no other shall be used as the standard of doctrine in the services, and in all instruction of the youth of this church." Constitution, Art 2.

The above information seems to suggest that the RCUS has only the Heidelberg Catechism as its doctrinal standard. However, in 1994 the RCUS also adopted the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort as their confessions, so that they now hold the Three Forms of Unity. Since for years the Heidelberg Catechism was the only standard the churches have a living relationship with this confession while the use of the other confessions has to grow. More on this matter follows below.

In the afternoon our hosts showed us the countryside around Manitowoc. In the evening the monthly Adult Bible Class was held. The topic for that evening was "Men and Women in the Church." This topic had to do with questions raised at a meeting concerning women's voting rights. The RCUS as a whole has taken a strong stand against women's voting rights. Rev. Vance had prepared a handout with the following headings:

A. Few thoughts from 1 Timothy 2:1-7
B. Men in the Church: 1 Timothy 2:8
C. Women in the Church: 1 Timothy 2:9-15

A lively discussion took place with the help of prepared questions, like: Who is to take the leadership in prayer (and in worship)? What were the men to do when they prayed? How can men make people feel welcome at worship services today? What two commands does Paul give to women in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12? How might women misinterpret subjection or submissiveness today? A concluding statement was: Members of the church today must become familiar with this word "egalitarianism." This will explain why women are pursuing roles that traditionally belonged to men.

After the Adult Bible Class coffee was served and we enjoyed the atmosphere of good Christian fellowship. We again received very good care by our host families who looked after our meals on Sunday and on Monday morning.

Monday, January 17, 2000

The first part of the Monday was used for a visit to Manitowoc. This place is known in the USA for its ship building industries. One of the shipyards built submarines, which were used in WW11. We visited the Marine Museum and enjoyed a very interesting tour through a complete WW11 submarine with a 79-year-old guide who had served for six years on a similar vessel.

DISCUSSION WITH THE INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE (IRC) OF THE RCUS

After our lunch in Manitowoc we returned to the church building to prepare ourselves for the meeting. We received our mandate from Synod 1998 and decided that we would raise the following matter:

1. Does the RCUS have difficulty with our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship as has been decided by our Synod 1992?
2. What is the RCUS doctrine of the church (with special attention to the visible and invisible church distinction)?
3. What is the common RCUS procedure for the admission to the Lord's Table?
4. How does the RCUS observe the Sunday?
5. What is the RCUS procedure regarding erasure?
6. What is the RCUS position in NAPARC?

In the course of this day we met the other members of the committee, Rev. M. Koerner and Elder R. Spitzer. Rev. G. Syms and Elder D. Stelpstra were unable to be present in Manitowoc, the former due to illness and the latter due to other commitments. The RCUS committee also met on its own to prepare for our joint meeting for the evening.

The meeting with IRC of the RCUS

At about 8:00 p.m. that Monday evening we began our combined meeting. The meeting was opened in a Christian manner with Bible reading and prayer. Rev. R. Potter chaired the meeting. We agreed to exchange reports. On behalf of our committee Rev. J. Moesker explained the mandate given by Synod Fergus 1998. It was agreed that the points of concern raised by this Synod should be discussed.

1. Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship

Making a start Rev. J. Moesker read our rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship as adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992. The RCUS committee asked some general questions regarding our practices. Especially the practice of issuing attestations received attention. Our method regarding attestations was explained. The RCUS gives leaving members a certificate of dismissal or transferral. See their Constitution art.5.

In connection with church relations, the questions of who is allowed to preach in the RCUS churches was asked. This was answered as follows: on rare occasions an orthodox minister of another orthodox church could be asked to preach by a local consistory. However, the consistory is accountable to the Classis at all times.

The general feeling of the RCUS committee appeared to be that they have no real difficulties with our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship. However, they did question whether something like a three-step approach to fellowship (primary, interim and final) might not be advisable.

2. The doctrine of the church

Next, the doctrine of the church was discussed. Rev. K. Jonker was assigned to introduce our concerns re: the view of the church in the RCUS. He took the position paper re Biblical Principles of Church Unity, adopted by Synod 1999 of the RCUS, as his reference material.

First the question concerning the exact status of this paper was raised. The RCUS brothers' response was that the principles of this paper were accepted, but the body not officially adopted. Next attention was given to some characterizations in this paper.

The 5 Principles stated in this paper are:

> **Principle 1:** In establishing relationships with other churches, there must be a mutual agreement regarding the fundamental nature of the church, including the three marks of the church as set forth in the Word of God.
>
> **Principle 2:** In pursuing the unity of the visible church it must be remembered by all faithful denominations that within the multiformity of the visible church there is a true uniformity, and that multiformity does not per se obscure the unity of Christ's church. Therefore, it is not absolutely necessary to unite the visible church on earth into a single church government by merging all faithful denominations into an organic union.
>
> **Principle 3:** When establishing an ecclesiastical relationship with another denomination, the primary consideration is the other church's faithfulness to the doctrines of Scripture and practice of the true Christian faith. Ecclesiastical fellowship must never be established with an unfaithful church.
>
> **Principle 4:** Ecclesiastical unity with other churches may be achieved by entering into a corresponding or fraternal relationship where Biblical counsel may be given and received by an exchange of delegates at Presbytery/Classis meetings, as well as at the General Assembly/Synod meetings.
>
> **Principle 5:** Organic union with other denominations is desirable if the denominations are separated by unessential differences, and when unity may be accomplished without surrendering Biblical and creedal convictions.

We are of the opinion that the characterizations of the church used in that paper as well as in some of their other documents are not fully in agreement with the confessions, in particular the Belgic Confession. The attention was drawn to the following characterizations:

- "the visible church" and "the invisible church,"
- "branches of the Christian Church,"
- "denominations."

In our view the RCUS uses the language of the Westminster Confession too much. It even refers to this confession in the Biblical Principles, whereas those characterizations re the Church are not found in either the Heidelberg Catechism or Belgic Confession. The reference to the Westminster standards and the writings of certain theologians such as R.B. Kuiper has brought about the RCUS' more philosophical approach to the church, notably separating the church into an invisible and a visible church. In this regard, we as Canadian Reformed Churches simply speak the language of the BC, art 27-29.

We referred among other things to an article of John Murray: "The Church: Its Definition in Terms of Visible and Invisible Invalid" (Collected Writings, p. 231). We also pointed out some of the dangers inherent in the idea of a pluriformity of the church of Christ. One of the most obvious dangers is that there is no church consciousness, which results in little commitment to church. Members and even pastors then easily hop from the one church to another. This easy change from one church to another undermines church discipline.

During this discussion the RCUS brothers asked about whether we see the Canadian Reformed Churches as the only true churches in Canada. If the distinction visible and invisible for the church isn't used, are we not compelled to say that there can only be one true church? In the RCUS there is some feeling that this kind of thought lives in the Canadian Reformed Churches. The RCUS wants to avoid the impression that they claim to be the only one true church. Our committee explained that this is a wrong perception of what the Canadian Reformed Churches believe. We wish to speak only Scriptural and confessional language. According to Art. 27-29 of the Belgic Confession every member should be convinced and willing to say that he or she belongs to the true church of Jesus Christ. As well, when there are two true churches in one place, then the members should not use the idea of an invisible church to justify such a situation so that each remain in their own church. It's not right to say, "We don't need to be organizationally one since we already have spiritual unity anyway." we Believe in the light of what we confess in the Belgic Confession that while it may come about that there are two true churches in one place, this cannot be accepted as normal but those two churches are called on in Scripture to work towards full organic unity. We cannot interpret Christ's prayer in John 17:23 as being a prayer only for spiritual unity and not organic unity. We make no such distinctions.

The RCUS brothers largely agreed with us on this point and stated that the distinction visible and invisible was used to make clear that the church itself doesn't save people. At the same time they wish to emphasize covenant obedience in response to the Lord's call. There is agreement from their side on the 1993 summary of Rev. E. Kampen concerning the church. We stated that though the church is "unoverseeable" the idea of the invisible church should not be used as an escape from the obligation (Art. 28, BC) to join oneself to and to maintain the unity of the true church of Christ.

We can conclude that the RCUS committee was very appreciative regarding our speaking of the church on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity. They made very clear to us that their language regarding the church is largely influenced by the Westminster Confession, since most of their ministers have received training at Presbyterian theological institutions. They are fully prepared to look at their formulations concerning the doctrine of the church and are ready to go over to using the plain language of the Belgic Confession. Since this confession was accepted in 1994 as their standard it will take some time before it effectively is used in their church papers. The RCUS committee will study this matter further.

At about 10:00 p.m. the meeting was adjourned to the next day, Tuesday, January 18 at 8:00 a.m. Br. W. Gortemaker led in closing prayer.

Tuesday, January 18, 2000

Having enjoyed a good nights rest, all the members were present and bright-eyed on Tuesday morning. Rev. R. Potter led the opening devotions. It was mutually agreed that the matter of the church was finalized last night.

3. The admission to the Lord's Supper

Rev. J. Moesker introduced this issue. He informed the meeting about the practice in the Canadian Reformed Churches. They have a policy of restricted communion. He then asked the RCUS brothers about the common practice in the RCUS.

The RCUS brothers responded that their church does not have a universal policy on this matter. It is basically left up to the local churches. In some congregations, therefore, admission of guests to the table might be more open than in others. The RCUS doesn't require attestations, but prospective guests re usually interviewed by the consistory before admission is granted, sometimes during the week before, but also on the same Sunday.

From guests an understanding of the sacrament itself is required, and those are excluded who deny any articles of the Reformed faith. A distinction is made here between ignorance and rebellion. Someone who deliberately denies the articles of the faith will not be received. Someone, who does not have a full knowledge of the Reformed faith, but confesses his or her salvation in Christ's suffering and death alone, would in all likelihood be received. The guest, however, must be a member of a certain church. That church need not be a church with which the RCUS has fraternal relations, but should be an "orthodox" church.

We pointed out that the Lord's Supper is not just a personal matter but also a communal matter. At the Table the bond with each other must also strongly be felt. We must be sure that as our Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper states: "as one bread is baked out of many grains and one wine is pressed out of many grapes, so we all, incorporated into Christ by faith, are together one body" (see 1 Cor 10:17).

The RCUS brothers made clear that we must understand their practice is influenced by the evangelical culture in the USA. In this culture, in which the Baptist faith is prominent, the emphasis is on the personal relationship between the individual and God. In the RCUS there are those who wish to see a closer guarding of the table of the Lord. There has been a development in understanding this need

over the past few decades. In the past the procedure of admitting guests was much looser, and only by means of a verbal warning before the invitation. Over the past few decades, however, the RCUS has generally moved into the direction of practicing more restricted communion. In principle, the RCUS committee agree that a general verbal warning was insufficient, and that the table needs to be carefully fenced.

The baptized youth of the church receive instruction out of the Catechism. In order to become professing members they are first examined by the elders as the spiritual council. If they are deemed ready for confirmation, public examination takes place in a worship service after which the young people make public profession of their faith.

We can conclude re admission to the Lord's Supper that in the RCUS there is a growing awareness of the need to carefully guard the Table of the Lord and to be more cautious in admitting guests to the sacrament. In this we noted a readiness to reform and to conform what Scripture and the confessions say.

4. The observance of the Lord's Day

The next point was the observance of the Lord's Day. This issue was introduced by br. W. Gortemaker. He explained our custom of two worship services on the Lord's Day. The young people have their Bible Study on Sunday evenings. In the Canadian Reformed Churches the one service per Sunday in the RCUS has raised numerous concerns. In the Canadian Reformed Churches the members must diligently attend church twice, and those who consistently attend once are admonished. The whole Sunday, we believe, is the Lord's Day, and so we worship the Lord in the Morning and afternoon. How do the RCUS members spend their Sunday?

The RCUS committee made clear that this is an area where there is diversity among members and pastors, varying from the more strict sabbatarian view of the Westminster Confession to a more relaxed view. Though some churches have an afternoon or evening service, having only one service per Sunday has been a long tradition within the RCUS. All churches have activities besides worship on Sundays, such as Sunday school and Bible study. Since the Bible doesn't say that people have to go to church twice, how can a church demand two worship services? Where do you draw the line?

The RCUS has an article against the profanation of the Sunday in its constitution. The RCUS brothers informed us that the newer churches tend to be stricter than older, established churches. In the newer churches the emphasis is that the whole day should be kept holy. The day should be spent for ecclesiastical worship and for family worship, with only a modest amount of recreation. In the older churches there would be more a tendency to do other things on Sunday, e.g. going out for a meal. Some of the RCUS brothers expressed their own views of Lord's Day observance, and mentioned that they also discouraged, for example, watching TV and shopping on Sundays.

We conclude that there is an awareness in the RCUS that there cannot be complacency concerning the observance of the Lord's Day. Overall the RCUS is less strict on this point than the Canadian Reformed Churches, but in teaching and preaching the matters of worship and rest are strongly emphasized. On the Sunday people should use their time for the Lord. Our committee could read this first

hand. In a document made for the local congregation in Manitowoc the pastor admonished those who were irregular in church attendance. Profaning of the Lord's Day was addressed and it was stated that members who don't attend church regularly would need to be admonished concerning this. We feel, however, that a single worship service on Sundays does not maximize the use of the day of the Lord for devotion to Him.

5. Erasure

The practice of erasure was also a concern of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Br. A. Poppe introduced this issue and asked the RCUS committee if erasure was a replacement for the proper steps of Biblical discipline.

The RCUS committee made very clear that the practice of erasure is not an easy way to rid the church roll of disobedient members. It have have been used for that to some extent in the past, but that is not the present practice.

Erasure, we were told, is a form of church discipline, no less serious than excommunication. It is not used when there is immorality and members still wish to remain members. Excommunication is then used. Erasure is used when people just disappear without requesting a letter of dismissal and transfer. It was necessary to have a means to disfellowship those who "vote with their feet." Those who do that should not be admitted to the sacraments in another RCUS church.

Why does the RCUS have an official procedure in distinction from church discipline? RCUS has the conviction that everyone must have a hearing in disciplinary matters. However, if the person is not or does not make himself or herself available any longer, such a hearing cannot take place. It is contrary to the ninth commandment (Lord's Day 43) to condemn anyone unheard. Erasure therefore is the official means to declare such a member outside of the body of Christ. It has the effect of excommunication.

The RCUS brothers emphasized the same principle as we do. Church members should not withdraw. However, if they cannot be contacted anymore, they they are erased. In fact, the RCUS has two kinds of erasure: disciplinary erasure and administrative erasure. In the former, the member refuses contact, while in the latter the member has simply disappeared without requesting a certificate of dismissal or transfer. In both cases the church make a public declaration that the person in case is excluded from the communion of the church and from the body of Christ.

We conclude that erasure can be compared with the Canadian Reformed practice of the public announcement regarding the withdrawal of a member by his/her actions when those members do not make themselves available for contact for an extended period of time. However, in the RCUS this is not just an announcement, but there is an element of church discipline to it. Members who have been erased can only become members again through a readmission process.

6. NAPARC

RCUS membership in the NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) was the last issue we discussed. Rev. J. Moesker asked about the status of the CRC (Christian Reformed Church) in this organization, and what RCUS membership in this organization involved.

We were informed that the position of the CRC in NAPARC is unusual at this time. The RCUS with support of others in this organization have proposed to suspend the membership of the CRC in NAPARC due to the CRC's deviation from Scripture in particular concerning its position on women in office. Exclusion from NAPARC, however, involves two actions: first, suspension and then after some years, removal. The CRC has been suspended, but a vote on suspension will only take place in the future. As such, the CRC is still represented at NAPARC.

And though the vote to suspend was unanimous, that may not be the case with the vote on removal. The RCUS is determined, however, to bring the process to its conclusion with removal of the CRC if the deviation from Scripture is maintained.

The RCUS brothers explained that they are members of NAPARC for similar reasons as they are members of the ICRC. It is a forum to discuss common issues, such as the present study on the place of women in the miliary. However, it is now also moving towards becoming a vehicle to also consider organic church unity. Member churches now express a desire to work towards real unity with each other, and they also express the need for such organic unity. Therefore the member churches have decided to discuss the distinctives, which still separate them. The RCUS committee is presently preparing papers for this discussion.

If this working towards unity would not be an important element in NAPARC, the RCUS would not be part of this council. Because NAPARC has this objective the RCUS brothers encourage the Canadian Reformed Churches to consider joining this organization and to be of influence in the broader Presbyterian and Reformed scene in North America. The Reformed testimony of NAPARC would be challenged and strengthened. A considerable statement has already been made in North America with the CRC's suspension from NAPARC. Both Reformed and Presbyterian churches which take their confessions seriously should stand firm together.

The discussion of the above points took until noon. Lunch was to be served in the church, after which we had to make our way back to the airport. The intention to come to a joint report was therefore unattainable, and it was decided that reports would be exchanged later and an account acceptable to both committees could be adopted later.

Furthermore, it was agreed that we should continue to meet as committees. The next opportunity for such a meeting would be at the time of the RCUS Synod in the second week of May. This Synod will be convened, D.V., in Hamburg (MN). The committee members will make an effort to come to Hamburg on the Friday/Saturday before the RCUS Synod will commence meeting on Monday evening. The agenda for this meeting has to be set yet, but one item to be discussed should be: the difference in ecclesiastical language, for instance why the RCUS names itself Reformed Church while the Canadian Reformed Churches use the plural. The book edited by Prof. J. DeJong: Bound yet Free was recommended for further study. We promised to send copies of this book to the members of the RCUS Interchurch Committee.

We also briefly discussed the training for the Ministry. The RCUS does not have its own theological training and allows their students for the ministry to study at a number of different theological institutions, including Westminster Seminary and Mid-America Reformed Seminary. We encouraged the RCUS brothers to consider

sending their students to the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton. The response of the brothers was: send a representative of the College to our Synod so that he can speak about the training for the ministry in the Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. J. Moesker, being a governor of our college, was duly "appointed" to arrange this presentation.

The meeting was declared closed, and Rev. R. Potter led in thanksgiving prayer.

We again enjoyed a good lunch, prepared by the Ladies Aid. Rev. Merica led in closing devotions. He emphasized on the basis of Matthew 16:18 that we may always be comforted in this unstable world with the knowledge that the church is not our work, but Christ's glorious work. He maintains, builds and keeps her to the very end.

An elder of the Manitowoc church brought us back to the Milwaukee airport. We arrived there on time for our flight back home. By God's grace we were safely back in Winnipeg on Tuesday evening, January 18, 2000.

Brief Evaluation

The Lord blessed us richly in granting us a very successful meeting with the RCUS brothers in Manitowoc. We learned much from them, and hope they learned from us. The meetings were encouraging and we felt a strong bond of common faith as we socialized and met with these men and worshipped in the congregation. We look forward to meeting again, and hope to also address the 254th Synod of the RCUS in May. Praise to God from whom all blessings flow.

Elder W. Gortemaker (Winnipeg Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church)

Rev. K. Jonker (Winnipeg Grace Canadian Reformed Church)

Rev. J. Moesker (Carman East Canadian Reformed Church)

Elder A. Poppe (Carman West Canadian Reformed Church)

Report of the Meeting of the Canadian Reformed Committee for Contact with the RCUS and the RCUS Committee on Interchurch Relations on May 8, 2000, St. Paul's Evangelical Reformed Church, Hamburg (MN)

On Monday afternoon we arrived on time for our meeting with the RCUS committee at 1:00 p.m. (For some more background information see Rev. J. Moesker's personal report on this visit : *Clarion,* Vol. 49, No. 22). Present were from the RCUS committee: all the ministerial ministers, since they had come to Hamburg for the 254th Synod meeting of the RCUS. They were: Revs. M. Koerner, J. Merica, R. Potter (convener), G. Syms, and D. Vance. Three members of our committee were present: Br. W. Gortemaker, Rev. K. Jonker and Rev. J. Moesker. Much to his regret Br. A. Poppe was not able to join us at this time.

Before this meeting we had shared the respective reports re our January meeting in Manitowoc (WI) via email. Rev. Potter had also sent their final report to Synod by ordinary mail to us. At the meeting itself an addendum re the decisions of Synod GKN (Lib) was handed to us. The meeting was chaired by Rev. Potter. He opened with Scripture reading and prayer. The agenda was adopted as previously agreed upon at the close of our meeting in January 2000.

We first reviewed the respective reports. After that we discussed the outstanding issues from our last meeting regarding the discinction of visible/invisible church (Murray's article), the distinction of church/churches (the federation of churches), the education of the youth, the practical consequences of a fraternal relationship, the actual supervision of the Lord's Supper.

a. Review of our Reports of the Meeting at Manitowoc, WI

From our proposed changes (see our Committee minutes, dd. April 17, 2000) the committee only took over the change re admission to the Lord's Supper in the Canadian Reformed Churches. They added the proposed words "as a rule" to the sentence: "CanRC congregations (. . .) would not admit members of other churches to their communion services who were not in sister church relationship with them."

We would have liked that our other suggestions also were incorporated intheir report to Synod, like the element to make progress in introducing a second worship on Sundays but we understood that they had only little time for writing their report.

Therefore, during this review Sunday observance (having one or two services) was briefly discussed again. In this discussion the place of the Ten Commandments in the liturgy was raised. We were informed that the Ten Commandments are posted next to the pulpit in some churches or they are read from the pulpit in other congregations. We were assured that when the law is left out of the liturgy this is not done because they have a problem with the law. Regular teaching of the law takes place in the Catechism teaching in the worship service and in Catechism classes.

We again emphasized the importance of having two services per Sunday as has been the historical distinctive of the Reformed Churches. As evidence for this practice we referred to the Church Order of Dordt (our art. 52).

We also pointed out that the emphasis, the Reformed confessions place on the (diligent) use of the means of grace (see Canons of Dordt III/Iv, art. 17 and V, art. 14, Heidelberg Catechism, LD 38), implies an optimum number of worship services and not a minimum number of one service per Sunday.

We believe that if all the RCUS churches would have two worship services per Sunday, it would be more diligently carrying out its own constitution. For Article 180 reads: "The Lord's Day (Sunday) shall be kept a holy day, devoted to the public worship of the Lord, to reading the Holy Scriptures, to private devotions, and to works of love and mercy . . . ." This teaching within the RCUS shows clearly that the Sunday should be filled to the praise of our Lord, to maximize the day time for worship. This is done best by having two worship services as has been a longstanding tradition within the Reformed Churches. Our remarks were well receive.

b. The Distinction "visible/invisible" Church

The committee had discussed this distinction with the help of Murray's article (Collected Writings 1, p. 231 – The Church: Its Defeinition in Terms of "Visible" and "Invisible" Invalid). Murray is of the opinion that "the distinction between the church visible and the church invisible is not well-grounded in terms of Scripture, and the abuses to which the distinction has been subjected require correction." . . . "Sometimes resort is made to the thought of the 'church invisible.' In the absence of unity and fellowship in the denomination, comfort is derived from the unity and fellowship supposed to exist in the 'church invisible'."

> Murray concludes: "According to Scripture we should speak of 'the church' and conceive of it as that visible entity that exists and functions in accord with the institution of Christ at its Head, the church that is the body of Christ indwelt and directed by the Holy Spirit, consisting of those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints, manifested in the congregations of the faithful, and finally the church glorious, holy and without blemish." (p. 236)

The brothers basically agreed with Murray, that is to say: as far as his principles wer concerned, but they were not convinced that they had to bury the distinction visible/invisible re the church. They find Murray's conclusion problematic as if the distinction would nullify the visible church. On the other hand they were also very adamant that they didn't want to follow Abraham Kuyper's position. Kuyper virtually makes the distinction into two churches: a visible church and an invisible church. Linked with his idea of church as institution and church as organisim he came to his pluriformity theory of the church.

The RCUS brothers wanted to continue to use the distinction as it is used in dogmatics throughout history. Using the distinction the Reformers reacted against the strong emphasis of the Roman Catholic Church on the visible institution of the church. God knows who are His. He did so also during the serious decline of the church at the end of the Middle Ages. The invisible church is "the 7000 who didn't bow their knees for Baal" (BC, art. 27).

The brothers referred to Calvin's Institutes, chapter IV, 2, 4, 7; to Ursinus' Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, LD 21, p. 285; to Turretin, Institutes of Elenetic Theology, Q. 7, p. 32; James Bannerman, The Church of Christ, ch. 3. These Reformed works clearly distinguish the two aspects of the church as visible and invisible.

This follow-up discussion made clear that the RCUS brothers recognize the danger of the visible/invisible distinction. They definitely reject the modality church concept. When spiritual unity is present and recognized within different bodies of the churches, the contacts between these churches should not be just expressed by receiving each other's delegates on Synods, but the churches should strive towards organizational unity. Like the Canadian Reformed Churches, the RCUS takes an ecclesiastical relationship very seriously.

At the end of this discussion the RCUS brothers reconfirmed their agreement with Rev. E. Kampen's summary on the Reformed doctrine of the church, which he have in his speech to Synod 1993 (see Committee Report of Correspondence with Churches Abroad 1995, pages 30-32). Rev. Kampen gave a hard copy of his address to the committee members so that they have his summary on file. We quote the passage concerned below.

The question of the "true Church" (by E. Kampen, 1993)

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

distinction of visible and invisible. I think it is safe to say that within our churches there is a recognition of the fact that there is an invisible *aspect* to the church. After all, man is limited in his vision, so no man can see the whole work of Christ. However, there is an unwillingness to speak of an invisible church as distinct from the visible church. The one catholic church of Jesus Christ becomes quite visible, and we can recognize it by the three marks of the preaching, sacraments and discipline. Where we see a group which answers to those three marks, then we see the catholic Church being gathered. The general contention within the Canadian Reformed Churches is that true churches should not be content to remain on their own, but should seek also organizational unity. That organizational unity must be sought especially at the regional and national leve. On the international level we speak of sister churches. Thus, we are not satisfied to accept a sort of status quo where different reformed bodies agree to co-exist, even overlap. Unity of faith requires organizational unity, a unity which at the same time recognizes the autonomy of the local church. It is our hope that such greater unity can be achieved in Canada among the various faithful reformed bodies. This position is very much in line with that of our sister churches in the Netherlands, as can be seen in their report as printed in your Abstract of 1989, pp. 27-31. Further, that is a position you yourself also seem to be pursuing, considering some of the remarks as found in your President's Report, (e.g., Abstract 1986, p. 12, and efforts to work in cooperation with OPC (Abstract 1990, p. 128). (Cf. also Reformed Herlad, January 1993, p. 3.) Judging also from the remarks throughout your Constitution, and your concern to maintain the Reformed faith, it seems right to assume that also you are not ready to call everything that presents itself as Church truly "Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." It would seem to me that we are not that far apart from each other on this point, and that some more careful discussion would be mutually beneficial. Maybe as young sister we can be of some help ot our older sister."

c. "Church" and "Churches"

The next point discussed was that the RCUS calls itself the Reformed Church in the US, while we are the Canadian (American) Reformed Churches. The one speaks in the singular, the other plural. The RCUS brothers referre to their position paper called: "The view of the church and its form of government as held by the RCUS," item E. "The denomination as Church." Here we read that in Art. 95 of the constitution the Name of their Synod is: THE SYNOD OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES." The brothers emphasize that the position paper clearly shows that the RCUS considers a local church a full-fledged church. The paper states that "RCUS polity sees no conflict between using the word "church" to refer to either the local congregation or to the whole denomination."

The RCUS speaks about the church as a local congregation and as a denomination since they find this usage back in Scripture (see position paper E. 2). This church political paper also clearly shows how the RCUS congregations live together within their federation. They voluntarily submit themselves to the decisions of the higher judicatories (we would say: to the broader assemblies). The brothers repeatedly underscored their position that the RCUS is dead set against independentism and synodicalism.

Like our church government the RCUS character of church polity is strongly anti-hierarchical! In Ch. III, point 3 reference is even made to the classic CO of Dordt (Art. 84): "No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons." In the light of this basic principle for church polity their usage of "higher body," "higher judicatory" must be explained. "Higher bodies" must not be taken as positional or hierarchical, but as a body which has a higher function in appeal matters. These higher assemblies are on par with our broader assemblies (we even read this terminology in their own paper, in IIC!) A judicatory is explained as: an assembly made up by officebearers. It was also emphasized that the fact that a minister is a member of the local congregation and not of a presbytery clearly shows that their church polity is truly Reformed.

We understand that in RCUS ecclesiology the office gives authority to a major assembly (in RCUS terminology: to a higher judicatory), while in the Canadian Reformed Church polity the proper delegation gives authority to a major assembly.

d. Education of the Youth

Regarding this point the brothers referred us to their constitution Art. 192. This article reads:

> "Every pastor shall carefully prepare the youth in his pastoral charge for communicant membership in the Church by diligently instructing them in the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. The period of instruction shall, if possible, be so extended that the pupils memorize and are able to recite the entire Heidelberg Catechism before confirmation. The course of instruction shall include catechetical explanation and memorization, Bible history, Bible readings, and memorizations, and the study of the books and contents of the Bible, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dordt, church history, also the singing and memorization of Psalms, hymn, and Scripture songs."

The brothers informed us that the RCUS is again becoming more covenant conscious; In their midst there is a growing conviction that covenant education should be a distinctive of the Reformed church. The Catechism instruction starts around the age of 10 yrs. Ministers of the RCUS have written or are in the process to write (text) books on the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the redemptive (covenantal) history of the Bible, and Church history. At the end of their catechism instruction the RCUS young people are confirmed as confessing members of the church. Confirmation which can take place from 15yrs and up confirms their covenant position. Adult non-baptized people who have come to faith through the ministry of the church, join the church by making public profession of faith.

e. Practical Consequences of Fraternal Church Relationship

When we arrived at this point, we agreed that this matter should be covered by the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The RCUS rules (adopted in 1992) are mentioned in their paper: "Biblical Principles of Church Unity," which is adopted by their Synod of 1999. The rules are mentioned under principle # 4. This principle reads: "Ecclesiastical unity with other churches may be achieved by entering into a corresponding or fraternal relationship where Biblical counsel may be given and

received by an exchange of delegates at Presbytery/Classis meetings, as well as at the General Assembly/Synod meetings."

The RCUS has the following 5 rules:

1. Agree to take heed of one another's doctrine, liturgy and church government, that there be no deviations from the Holy Scriptures or from the Reformed confessions.
2. Will exchange delegates at one another's assemblies or general synods and invite them to participate as advisors.
3. Will inform one another of the decisions taken at their assemblies or general synods by exchanging minutes or at least by forwarding decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned.
4. Will inform one another in case of changes in or additions to confessions, church order or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature. The denomination concerned will notify the other denomination of these changes so that consultations can take place if considered necessary.
5. Will inform one another regarding new relationships with third parties and membership in ecumenical organizations.

For comparison's sake our rules, also adopted in 1992, are as follows:

1. The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defense 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.

The above shows that the rules are the same in principle. The relationship should be exercised on the clear basis of our Reformed confessions. A very important area in which we could cooperate is the one of missions, like the RCUS is doing with our sister churches in the Netherlands. Another area of cooperation could be the Training for the Ministry. The RCUS could send their students to Hamilton as it was suggested at our meeting in Manitowoc. Rev. J. Moesker as a governor will give some information about Hamilton to the RCUS Synod.

The RCUS brother asked: what do you see as the aim of our relationship? Must we become Canadian/American Reformed? We answered: no, that's not what we expect. Since the great majority of our churches are in Canada and your churches in the United States we should remain two federations of churches. Over time the American Reformed Churches could join the RCUS federation.

f. Supervision of the Lord's Supper

This was the last item we discussed at our meeting in Hamburg. From the brothers we understood that the supervision of the Lord's Table is not covered by a position paper nor by the constitution. However, to a certain extent Art. 119 of their Constitution can be referred to.

> This art. reads as follows: "If a member is negligent in partaking of the Holy Communion, or refuses to contribute to the support of the Church, or continually absents himself from public worship, such conduct, in one or all of these requirements, shall be regarded as an offense against the Church, and he shall be admonished by the pastor or elders. If after admonition he continues in such negligence of duty, the Spiritual council shall notify him that he is no longer in good and regular standing. If after not less than six months and not more than one year of such suspension he continues in such neglect of duty, the Spiritual Council shall erase his name."

It was again emphasized that the RCUS doesn't have an open but a clearly fenced table. A verbal admonition from the pulpit is not sufficient. The consensus was that there should be an examination by the elders before guests are admitted. Agreement was expressed with J. Murray's article on restricted communion (see Collected Writings Vol. 2 p. 382ff). On page 383 Murray writes: "It seems utterly unreasonable to leave the matter [= participating in the Lord's Supper celebration] entirely to the conscience of the person concerned, when this is not done and should not be done in the case of the members of the congregation."

Conclusion

We all concluded that, with the discussions at the Manitowoc meeting and with our exchange of thoughts re the above points at this meeting in Hamburg, the salient matters of Synod Fergus 1998 have been discussed. The overall sentiment from both sides was that although some practices are different, yet our principles are the same in all areas. Both churches desire to base their doctrine and life on the accepted Reformed Confessions, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt, and the principles of the Church Order of Dordt.

The chairman of the RCUS committee made the following frank comments to us: "You as committee might be positive about us, but what about your federation? It is possible that the federation sabotages the progress. We cannot wait for 35 years. We like to move forward. As far as we are concerned most of your questions are solved!

At about 5:00 p.m. the meeting was closed in a Christian manner by Rev. Potter.

After having enjoyed good Christian fellowship at a delicious supper, we joined the RCUS delegates and visitors in the church auditorium for the opening of the 254th RCUS Synod (see separate report).

Brief Evaluation

We concur with the sentiment of the RCUS committee that the concerns of Synod Fergus 1998 have been addressed sufficiently, and that there should not be any hindrance for establishing a fraternal relationship with the RCUS.

We know that our churches take church relations very seriously, as we should. However, this does not mean that all differences need to be ironed out before we can enter into an ecclesiastical fellowship. We need to acknowledge that the Lord goes different ways with His people at different times and places. This means that churches also end up with differentiation in practice. We view our differences with the RCUS especially from this historical perspective.

There are certainly weaknesses within the RCUS, as the RCUS brothers readily admit. And we must admit the same: the Canadian Reformed Churches are not perfect churches. We need constant sanctification and reformation of our faith. This is also acknowledged in our first rule for ecclesiastical fellowship! We shall (mutually) assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith! We are thankful to the Lord that He has preserved the RCUS as a faithful Reformed church throughout its history. Through a close relationship we will be encouraged by their heritage and we will have opportunity to share our Reformed heritage with them.

It is our humble prayer that the Lord may bless our discussions with the RCUS.

The Committee:
W. Gortemaker (Winnipeg Redeemer Can. Ref. Church)
K. Jonker (Winnipeg Grace Can. Ref. Church)
J. Moesker (Carman East Can. Ref. Church)
A. Poppe (Carman West Can. Ref. Church)

Report visit to the 254th Synod of the RCUS in St. Paul's Evangelical Reformed Church at Hamburg (MN), May 8-11, 2000

254th RCUS Synod at Hamburg (MN)

The same delegates (W. Gortemaker, K. Jonker and J. Moesker) who met with the RCUS permanent Interchurch committee on Monday afternoon of May 8, 2000, attended this Synod till Wednesday evening, May 10th. We again refer to a personal report by Rev. J. Moesker for some more background information (see Clarion, Vol 49, No 22). The report below is written with the help of some general information, gained from Minutes of previous RCUS Synods.

This **254th Synod** started with a church service on Monday evening in the church building of the RCUS congregation at Hamburg. On Wednesday evening another church service was held. During the session of this Synod several devotionals were conducted as well. These worship activities clearly showed a strict adherence to the Scriptures and confessions.

A number of visitors from other churches and bodies attended this **254th RCUS** Synod. The only fraternal delegate seated by the assembly was Rev. David King from the OPC. Next to us the following churches had sent observers: the ARPC (Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church) and the URCNA (United Reformed Churches in North America: Revs. R. Pontier and H. Zekveld).

A number of care and educational institutions had sent their representatives too (Westminster Theological Seminary in California, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, New Geneva Seminary, Greenville Seminary, Dordt College and Hope Haven - a home for people with mental disabilities). All delegates and representatives received ample opportunity to address Synod.

During breaks the appointed Synod committees met, preparing their recommendations for decisions to be taken on reports and overtures. We also observed that brief Classes meetings were convened for dismissals of ministers and approbation of calls. We would call the last meetings: Classes Contracta.

The daily Synod sessions started as early as 8:00 a.m.

Synod re-elected its officers from the previous year. A quick look at the minutes of RCUS Synods tells us that Rev. V. Pollema has been chosen as president of every Synod since 1990! As we could witness at this Synod, having the same officers doesn't create any problems within the ranks of our RCUS brethren.

After the opening and the constitution of the 254th Synod the following agenda was adopted:

- Welcome to fraternal delegates and visitors
- Reception of new ministers and new congregations
  Overtures and Standing Committee Reports
- Reports of Officers:
  - A. President's report on the State of the Church
  - B. Stated Clerk's Report, on the Minutes (incl. Necrology)
  - C. Treasurer's Report and Auditor's Opinion
- Membership and Financial Statistics
- Reports on contacts with other Churches and Institutions
- Addresses of their delegates or representatives'
- Reports of Special Committees
  - A. 2000 Family Convention
  - B. Authority of Position Papers
  - C. Confer with Dordt College
- Reports of Standing Committees, like Benevolence (retirement fund), Ecumenical, Missions, etc.
- Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business, like Adoption of Stated Clerk's Report
- Closing Procedures, like reading Minutes and closing devotions with Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, Benediction and Doxology.

This agenda clearly shows that all the varied business of a church receives due attention. The most important items like Overtures re doctrine, liturgy, etc., Training for the Ministry, the Contact with other churches, appeals are also found on the agenda of our Synods. Other matters are done by our Classis like "the supervision" of the local churches. We have church visitation, while in the RCUS the annual church reports (written by the local pastors) are perused by the Classes. The president of the Classis writes his annual president's report from the pastors reports and sends his report to the Synod. Then the president of the Synod writes his "Report on the State Of The Church" to Synod with the help of the reports from the four classes.

So, what in our churches is a private undertaking, giving an annual overview of the life of our churches in the Yearbook of the Canadian Reformed Churches happens in the RCUS in an official report to Synod. Other matters on the agenda of the RCUS Synod like Mission and Evangelism remain the responsibility of our local churches.

Furthermore the RCUS regard some matters as ecclesiastical where we don't, e.g., a family convention, the publication of books and a church paper "The Reformed Herald," Christian education, regular contact with Dordt College, contact with a care institution for the handicapped (Hope Haven).

Reports

President's Report

These reports (as noted above we have also read the reports given to previous Synods) contain valuable information about the overall condition and the status of the RCUS. These official reports faithfully compare the actual situation of the RCUS with the marks of the true church. The Lord of the Church is praised and thanked for His mercy and grace of perseverance in the faith. The joys and disappointments of church life are mentioned. Also contacts with other churches are not forgotten in these reports. As early as 1984 we find a reference to the Canadian Reformed Churches.

In the 1986 Abstract (the RCUS term for "ACTS of Synod") the President warns against being of lukewarm (Rev. 3:16). He said that the joy and the exuberance of the man who has found the pearl of greatest price should be shown! Then the longing to share the riches and the goodness of the Lord with others is expressed (with a reference to Numbers 10:29, 32). Then he posed and answered the question: "Who should we say this to? On the individual level, to our family, friends and neighbours. On the denominational level to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, the Canadian Reformed Churches, the conservatives within the Christian Reformed Church. We have, I believe been too hesitant in approaching others within the corporate body. Are we not to have an ecumenical spirit? We must shed our isolationist tendencies if we are to have any impact." And he expressed the wish to take church relations more seriously.

In the Abstracts up to 1999 it can be seen that the RCUS has acted out this wish in accordance with their confession. In fact, there is an increasing emphasis on what the true Church is. The questions of our churches regarding this important point were not ignored. In fact, the concerns of Carman were discussed in 1990 and evaluated in 1991. Since 1993 our deputies of Synod tabled the same concerns. The Synod Abstracts show that the RCUS has taken the Canadian Reformed concerns seriously. It started an indepth study about the doctrine of the Church. In 1995 this study resulted in the adoption of the RCUS position paper: Constitutional Principles of RCUS Church Government! In this paper the RCUS ecclesiology is defended on the basis of Scripture and Confession. It clearly follows the Reformed principles of church government.

The above-mentioned paper is not the only study about the church by the RCUS! In 1997 (this is the year the RCUS offered fraternal relationship to the Canadian Reformed Churches!) a special study committee was formed. This committee was mandated to study the Biblical doctrine of the unity of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to formulate a statement of principles on the unity of the church to be

used by the RCUS to govern the establishment of relationships with other churches. In 1999 this study was completed and adopted. The position paper, which resulted from this study is called: Biblical Principles of Church Unity. The 5 Principles of this paper are mentioned in the report about our meeting the Interchurch Relations Committee at Manitowoc. (The full text can be found on the official website of the RCUS: www.rcus.org/.)

In the President's Report to the 254th Synod, special attention was given to the Training for the Ministry. We quote an important paragraph:

> "Recommending seminaries and overseeing the education of our students is vitally important. It is part and parcel of our concerns as elders for the marks of the true church: the pure preaching of the Word of God, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. We must not abdicate this responsibility to seminaries (in our case, independent seminaries) and the professors."

To this Synod at Hamburg the President reported "that the state of the Reformed Church in the United States is strong."

Interchurch Relations

The RCUS maintains the following fraternal relations with other churches at home and abroad:

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

Reformed Confessing Church of the Congo (formerly Zaire)

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

(The Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico (IPCM)

IPCM

In 1991 the RCUS established a fraternal relationship with the IPCM. However, because of lack of response from them over the years, and especially to a letter written in March 1998 (expressing the desire for a more effective interchurch relationship) the RCUS suspended this relation in 1999. The Interchurch Relations Committee reported to the RCUS Synod 2000 that IPCM sent a letter regarding the position of Dr. J.P. Roberts but no response regarding RCUS letters. The Committee recommends: that the Clerk of Synod send a letter to the IPCM, including copies of the 1998 and 1999 letters sent to them, advising them that this is the final request for a response to these letters. Failure to respond within 8 months of the date of this letter will result in the termination of the fraternal relationship between the IPCM and the RCUS.

OPC

In his report to OPC-GA 1998 the fraternal delegate from the OPC to 1998 RCUS Synod had accused the RCUS of a change of direction. What was going on in the RCUS according to this OPC delegate? He reported: "It is my opinion that the leadership of the RCUS feels itself to be under pressure to justify its separate existence by upholding (to the hilt) certain distinctives" (reference was made to

some position papers). The RCUS didn't take this charge lightly. It was distressed about the radical tone.

In reaction to this fraternal OPC report the Interchurch Committee received the mandate from 1999 Synod: "to respond by letter to the CEIR of the OPC concerning the report of the OPC delegate to the 252th Synod of the RCUS, and that this letter address carefully and graciously the content and manner of said report."

The Committee reported to RCUS Synod 2000 that this mandate was carried out and a letter was hand delivered to the OPC delegation to NAPARC. To date no response has been received.

In the RCUS IRC report to RCUS Synod 2000 we read among other things re OPC:

a. The delegate from RCUS has raised the issue of RCUS positions in his address to the 66th OPC-GA, June 1999. To the assembly he emphasized " that we (RCUS) had not elevated position papers to the level of our confessions."

b. "The subject of fidelity to the covenant was raised in the light of the practice of some sessions in the OPC to admit communicant members without also requiring that their young children be baptized." This matter will be further discussed in the future.

c. Re the contact between OPC and Can. Ref. Churches the RCUS delegate to OPC-GA 1999 reported: "Talks between the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches have apparently ground to a halt. The obstacle that separates the two bodies pertain to comments made by a pastor who left the OPC and joined the Canadian Reformed Church. Upon leaving the OPC this man called other ministers in the presbytery "false shepherds." A good deal of offence was taken by the OPC brothers to that comment. The OPC has formally spoken to the Canadian Reformed Church about these comments and to date the Canadian Reformed folk have done nothing."

Furthermore it must be noted that the RCUS Abstracts till Synod 1995 speak about a possible organic union with the OPC. However, the Abstract of 1996 states that union talks are premature because of existing essential theological issues which keep the two churches separate. In the 1997 Abstract the Committee reports that the union with OPC is unlikely and since organic union is not before us the fraternal relationship should be used as an opportunity for fellowship and joint ministries.

This change of direction regarding the relationship with the OPC also affects the RCUS approach with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The 1996 Abstract suggests that the dealings the Canadian Reformed Churches have with the OPC could be a stumbling block for a possible relationship between RCUS and Canadian Reformed Churches. We quote the 1996 Abstract:

> "Our committee recommends that we continue to pursue a sister-church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. One caution and consideration, however, that was made clear was that if the Canadian Reformed Churches do not recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as "a true church" it would be an affront to our close relationship with the OPC. This issue is expected to be resolved at the next Synod (1998) of the Canadian Reformed Churches."

This caution from the side of RCUS in 1996 seems to have disappeared in 1997, most probably because of the above-mentioned change in the realtionship between RCUS and OPC. In 1997 the RCUS decided to "extend an invitation to the Canadian Reformed Churches to enter into a fraternal relationship." And no conditions to this invitation were attached.

In his fraternal address to the RCUS Synod 2000 the OPC delegate extended the warm greetings of the OPC. He was not a member of the CEIR but was delegated by this OPC committee. He had to pass on the OPC's apology for the tone of the 1998 report about the RCUS. He was surprised and distressed that this apology was not in written form on the Synod's table and that he had to do it verbally.

Dwelling on the OPC position he mentioned that in the 80's the OPC was seized by an inferiority complex. At that time the OPC was flirting with other churches and with evangelical/seeker-friendly groups. However in the 90's the OPC resorted to a more united spirit on the basis of the confessional standards. Now some new issues may threaten this union - e.g. the view on the position of women. The threat of our contemporary culture is emphasis on experience while the Church should continue to emphasize Truth.

The delegate expressed the hope that in our fighting the spirits of this age we should not bite and devour each other. "You have never pulled your punches. We are listening to your admonitions." The delegate was interested in the discussion on the status of position papers. Regarding the Church unity paper he commented: The RCUS seesm to accept the pluriformity concept. This is not the OPC position, he stated. Furthermore, the OPC doesn't have an exclusive position re 6-day creation.

His address was well received and the OPC delegate, who enjoyed the privilege of the floor, interacted amicably with the RCUS brothers.

The Canadian Reformed Churches

In the 1998 Abstract we read that the RCUS waits "with patience for the Canadian Reformed brethren to deal with our proposal for fraternal relations."

The Abstract of 1999 mentioned the RCUS reaction on our Synod Fergus 1998. It was decided "that a subcommittee of the IRC of the RCUS meet with the Canadian Reformed Churches to discuss the issues that are hindering our entering into fraternal relations."

Regarding this contact between the two churches the IRC committee reported briefly to RCUS Synod 2000, that they discussed the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship, the doctrine of the church, especially on the point of the idea of pluriformity and the visible/invisible church distinction, the admittance to the Lord's Supper Table, keeping of the Lord's Day holy, and RCUS's involvment in the NAPARC.

We give some quotes from their report about our meeting at Manitowoc Jan 2000:

> "The CanRC has a concern that RCUS has a pluriformist view of the church. It is their belief that the RCUS was making too much of a distinction between the visible and the invisible church. By making too much of a distinction between the visible and the invisible church they feared too much of a disunity is introduced into the church. They also raised the concern about people under discipline and who may have been removed from a local

> church saying in defiance to the discipline that they could still be members in good standing in Christ's invisible church without being a member of a local church. In this way people could excuse their behavior that led to the act of discipline from a visible church. (…)

The report also noted regarding their usage of the visible/invisible church distinction, that the Can.Ref. delegation indicated,

> "that it would not be a problem towards further church unity between our churches if we continued to use the word "invisible" in our official documents. They also emphasized that the CanRC view of the visible church has led to misconceptions of their views. They also made it clear that it was not their view that the CanRC saw herself as the only true church."

Regarding the issue re admittance to the Lord's Table the report stated:

> "We (=RCUS committee) pointed out that the RCUS has a restricted view of who may come to partake of the Lord's Supper, We guard the table through 1) a verbal warning, 2) the elders talking with visitors prior to the service. We see a difference between people being ignorant of the Reformed Faith and those who are in rebellion against certain aspects of the Reformed Faith.

The RCUS involvement in NAPARC was discussed. We read about this Can.Ref. concern:

> "We explained what the current status was with regard to the CRC. It was also explained that there are two separate steps in the process of discipline and/or removal. The first step is suspension. The second step (which is a complete separate action) is of removal. Currently the CRC has been dealt with according to the first step.
>
> It was explained the the brothers that NAPARC is a council, not a synod. It holds to the desirability of the need for churches to be unified. We spoke about other goals of NAPARC. We spoke about the differences between the ICRC and NAPARC. NAPARC is a more geographic and predates the ICRC. We encouraged the CanRC to join NAPARC."
>
> The conclusion re our contacts read: "Your Committee plans to continue discussions with the CanRef Churches through our respective sub-committees."

In his address to RCUS Synod 2000 our committee member, Rev. J. Moesker, didn't interact much with the discussion between the two sub-committees, but he provided some general information regarding our churches. However, the committee's findings so far are well expressed at the end of the speech: "Brothers, we are delighted to be among you here, among people who by God's grace cherish the Reformed faith and want to continue in that. This is a great encouragement to us, and it's our hope and prayer that it may come to a close relationship with each other as churches who want to "keep the pattern of sound teaching" as the apostle Paul says in 2 Tim 1." (The speech is appended)

United Reformed Churches of North America

Another contact of the RCUS, which is of great importance to us, is with the URCNA. This contact dates from Synod 1997. Then the IRC wrote (p.36) "Your committee believes that the RCUS, as the established denomination, ought to

extend a hand of invitation to the URCNA to meet representatively with the IRC of the RCUS, with a view to exploring a fraternal relationship with that body." Synod 1997 did not accept this recommendation, but decided to "send two observers to the 2nd annual meeting of the United Reformed Churches in North America at St. Catharines, ON, October 21-23, 1997.

To Synod 1998 the IRC reported that they had begun studying the church order of the URCNA. "Several distinctives and various terminologies that might cause confusion were identified and discussed in the meeting. In addition, a comparison was made at some points with the church order of Dordt and differences noted.

Synod 1998 decided: "That the RCUS, through its Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee, continue to maintain contact with and observe the URCNA, including face-to-face meetings with their committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, with a view toward establishing fraternal relations." This 1998 RCUS Synod also decided: "That Synod encourage the various Classes to initiate the exchanging of observers with URCNA Classes.

The 1999 Abstract informs us about the ongoing contact with the URCNA. We read that a subcommittee "has formulated a series of questions to be submitted to the URCNA." Observers were sent to the respective Synods.

In the report to RCUS Synod 2000 the IRC referred to two meetings with the URCNA. No information was given about the discussions. An observer's report to the URCNA (3rd) Synod Indiana 1999 was appended. This report states about the URCNA:

> "It is very apparent that there is a certain amount of fear of authority from the top down, which is a result of the experiences which many of the brethren had in the CRC (…)
>
> There is no doubt that the URC is a denomination with which we have a great deal in common. There is a serious commitment to be faithful to the Scriptures as interpreted by the reformed creeds. Many of the delegates have gone through a tremendous struggle with liberalism. (…) It will be important that we continue to observe, encourage, and communicate with them as they find their way. They clearly do have some issues to deal with and to determine just what specific direction they want to take. The greatest concern is in the area of church government. This is important because it will determine how they will maintain their orthodoxy."

The address of the URC delegate, Rev. H. Zekveld, to the Synod was of great interest to us. He started by observing that both churches have much in common. We have the same historic Reformed faith. Furthermore he remarked that as a federation of churches the URC is very young. Since they are still in the process of finding out their positions on different issues in the light of the Three Forms of Unity, he asked for understanding concerning the fact that the URC has not expressed themselves on a host of issues.

From his speech it became apparent that the URC committee has the same concern re the visible/invisible church distinction. Like we did in our discussions with the IRC he too made clear that the distinctions the RCUS uses in their Church Unity paper are not found in the Three Forms of Unity.

He also fears that the RCUS separation between spiritual unity and organizational unity may serve to undermine the call to express faithfully and organically the visible unity of Christ's Church.

Clearly rejecting any justification for the existence of separate reformed denominations he appealed to the RCUS: "let us commit ourselves to rise above all unnecessary multiformity that has been established due to our sins and weaknesses."

He refers to their conviction expressed in a meeting between them and IRC: "The God given spiritual unity we recognize and confess demands that we seek reconciliation on those issues of doctrine and polity which divide us. Such reconciliation should be visible in ever increasing cooperation and organizational unity."

He expressed appreciation for the clear positions the RCUS has taken, e.g. in the matter of Creation. At the same time the hope was expressed that the RCUS distinctives won't preclude full union with other true churches. Honest and sincere consultations need to take place between denominations on the issues that divide. "Let us leave to the Lord where this pathway will lead."

GKN (lib) - The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

The ecclesiastical relationship between RCUS and our sister churches in the Netherlands dates from 1991. Since that year the Abstracts mention with gratitude the good cooperation with the GKN (lib) in the area of the Mission work in Zaire. Delegates have visited the Synods of the respective churches.

In the 1995 Abstract p.36 we read:

> "These relations with the Reformed brethren in other lands strenghtens our faith, warms our hearts and furthers the work of the Lord's kingdom. While the brothers are with us (a delegation from the GKN in 1995) we can happily inform them of our adoption of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort in addition to the Heidelberg, and also express our concern with regard to the action of the GKN (Liberated) on the matter of women voting in the congregational meeting."

Additional concerns which have arisen in the RCUS are about decisions of the last Synods of GKN (Lib.): the blessing elder and an adapted marriage form which shows signs of succumbing to "an increasingly egalitarian society/culture."

Other relations and contacts

- Reformed Confessing Church of the Congo (ERCC - the previous mission churches in Zaire). This fraternal relationship takes place via the Missions Committee.
- the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) - these are the "American" Covenanters. This is a fraternal relationship. The RCUS observer to the RPCNA Synod reported that the proposed merger with the American Presbyterian Church was declined. The APC is a small denomination which came out of the Bible Presbyterian Church and is committed to the regulative principle of worship." The chief reason for declining the merger was that the proposal was not clearly defined on important particulars.

  The RPCNA has an attractive Manual of Interchurch Relations, with 7 clear principles on church unity:

1. The Church and Christians are one…
2. Denominational divisions result from sin…
3. The blessing of unity is to be looked for in the future…
4. Visible unity must be the goal we work toward…
5. Unity must be based on Biblical truth and order…
6. Fraternal relations are to be fostered…
7. Stumbling blocks are to be removed so that organic union will be secured…

- The RCUS has also contact with the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC) and with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC - a delegate was present at Synod): these contacts are practiced via NAPARC.

The RCUS is a member of two ecumenical councils:

1. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

   Member churches of this council are: ARPC, CRC (suspended), KAPC, OPC, PCA, RCUS, RPCNA. The RCUS is a member of NAPARC since 1995.

   A report was given of the 25th Annual Meeting Nov. 16-17, 1999. At this meeting churches who sent observers were the L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec, the Presbyterian Reformed Church and the URCNA. Rev. R. Potter from the RCUS was chairman. Rev. M. Koerner was re-elected as Treasurer.

   The basis of NAPARC fellowship is to be the Word of God and the Reformed Creeds. It also states: "That the adopted basis of fellowship be regarded as warrant for the establishment of the formal relationship of the nature of a council, that is, a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice."

   At the moment the NAPARC is studying the distinctives of each participating church. The goal is to promote greater spiritual unity among the churches in view of organic union! We also find this remark in the ICR report to Synod 2000: "One of the things that NAPARC facilitates that is not part of the actual meetings is informal contact between the Interchurch Relations Committees of churches who are in fraternal relations."

   The 26th Meeting will be in Los Angeles, CA November 14-15, 2000.

2. International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

   The RCUS is a member since 1993.

   The RCUS has sent communication to the next meeting of the ICRC 2001 in Philadelphia PA, expressing its concern about the changes made to Art. IV.1.a: thus expressing agreement with our Synod Fergus 1998. The RCUS therefore overtures the ICRC to maintain its confessional integrity!

   With reference to Constinution Article IV.2, the RCUS overtures the ICRC "to substitute the requirement for positive reaffirmation of membership every second meeting after initial approval of a church. Affirmation would be by the same process as original membership qualification, namely, recommendation by two member churches and acceptance by a two-thirds

> majority of the conference at which the vote is taken. Failure to receive affirmation will result in suspension for four years, at the end of which affirmation will be required for continued membership."

The RCUS committee plans to have 4 delegates present at this meeting with two alternates.

Finally the IRC reports that it is compiling an Interchurch Relations Committee Handbook. The goal is "to draw together information germane to establishing and maintaining relations with other ecclesiastical bodies for committee and synodical use and to ease the learning curve for new members of the committee coming on board in the future!"

Report on the Authority of Position Papers

Over the years the RCUS has adopted position papers re important theological and moral subjects. In every Abstract of the Synods these positions are mentioned under the heading of Special Studies. Special papers are written and adopted about the following subjects:

- Biblical Principles of Church Unity
- Creation in Six Days
- Ecclesiastical Divorce and Remarriage
- RCUS ecclesiology (RCUS Church polity)
- "Right to Die" issue
- Theonomy
- Voting in Congregational Meetings
- Women in the Military

Furthermore, the RCUS has made special declarations re Abortion, the original text of the Bible (autographa), the condemnation of Homosexuality, Hyperpreterism, (Freemasonary? this topic mentioned in a report but we could not find it listed), the Use of Pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The past few years the RCUS has debated the position of the position papers. The big question was the relationship of these papers to the confessions. They should not be put on the same level as the Three Forms of Unity. Synod Hamburg resolved this problem by taking the following decision:

> "That the recommendations of position papers adopted by a judicatory of the RCUS are authoritative advice to the members under the authority of that judicatory and serve as its witness to the world of its understanding of Holy Scripture and our subordinate ordinances."
>
> An explanatory statement was added to this definition:
>
> "That a position paper is intended to enlighten and instruct the Church on matters not spelled out in the ordinances of the Church, with the goal of promoting unity within the Church.
>
> That position papers are not judicial decisions, nor can they be used as the charge in an accusation. Nevertheless, the expectation should be that when a matter relating to a position taken comes to the judicatory, the adjudication will be consistent with the position taken. Should the RCUS desire to make a position strictly binding, it must use the process spelled out in Article 104 (RCUS Constitution)."

This decision has made clear that the conclusions of RCUS position papers are presented as the distinct biblical teaching of the RCUS. However, at this Synod the RCUS specifically spelled out that the position papers are not on par with the Reformed confessions adopted by the RCUS. So, if someone deviates from the position taken, then he cannot be charged on the basis of the position paper itself, but on the basis of God's Word and the confessions.

Training for the Ministry

Within the ranks of the RCUS the desire lives to have their own training. As early as in 1984 a delegation visited our college in Hamilton in view of establishing their own college. However, they find the costs of such an institution prohibitive. At every Synod the RCUS makes up a list of seminaries worthy of their support. It must be said that the RCUS keeps a close eye on the approved ones by appointing liaisons who report to Synod.

In the 1999 Abstract the following institutions are listed:

- Mid-America Seminary, Dyer IN (the favourite one)
- New Geneva Theological Seminary, Colorado Springs, CO
- Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, CA
- Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA

(Delegates of these seminaries were present at the Synod and addressed the body, promoting their institution.)

After a long debate Synod 2000 decided to drop its approval of Westminster Seminary in California, because of its stand on the issue of the days of Genesis 1. It was a painful decision for the RCUS since this seminary had served them well in the past. Synod also decided to investigate Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia and make a recommendation concerning its continuing support to the next Synod.

At the moment other seminaries are investigated. Our delegated provided Synod with information regarding our Theological College in Hamilton.

Christian Education

It must be said that in this area the RCUS wants to maintain its distinctive Reformed Character. They don't only desire to guard and promote this character by publications but also by organizing a bi-annual family convention. At such a convention reformed families meet each other for mutual upbuilding and support, and especially as an opportunity for the reformed youth to meet each other. It must have been a great disappointment for many that the organizing committee had great problems in booking a facility. This year's convention had to be postponed to next year.

The RCUS keeps close ecclesiastical tabs on their students at Dordt College. This college is supported financially with about $ 2.25 per communicant member. Their involvement includes having a representative on the board of Trustees. A special RCUS Synod committee frequently meets with RCUS students to give them the necessary support. The same committee has also meetings with the President of Dordt College and its representatives to discuss matters of mutual interests and concerns.

The reporting shows that the RCUS doesn't remain silent about some serious misgivings they have regarding some professors at Dordt and about Dordt's strong link with the CRC. On the other hand the RCUS is very appreciative about the

positive Christian atmosphere at Dordt College. The objective with this "confer with Dordt" College is that the RCUS is assured that their students receive higher education on a Biblical basis and from a Reformed perspective. It was reported at this Synod meeting that this fall some sort of cooperation will take place with a reformed college from our sister churches in Zwolle, the Netherlands.

At every RCUS Synod the permanent committee Christian Education reports about its work. The RCUS is in the midst of an ambitious project to develop a Sunday School curriculum based on "Promise and Deliverance" by SG DeGraaf.

Missions

Foreign mission fields

More than once the Abstracts mention that mission is the lifeblood of the church. The RCUS has foreign mission fields in Kenya and in the Congo (formally Zaire). This mission work in Africa is carried out in close cooperation with our sister churches in the Netherlands. Other work continues with the International Reformed Radio Mission and the new confessing Reformed Church in Germany. The latter church is in the process of establishing a seminary.

Home mission fields

The Deaf Reformed Church (RCUS) in Maryland has been active in promoting the Reformed Faith among the Deaf churches. It looks like up to seven Deaf Reformed Churches will be joining the RCUS! There is hope that this will happen at the next Synod.

In the 1999 Abstract the following Home Missions are listed: Yuba City, CA; Watertown, SD; Modesto, CA; Rapid City, SD; Minneapolis, MN; LA Basin, CA. Some of these mission posts are close to institution. Other places are mentioned where formal mission work many be started like in Fargo-Moorhead (ND). The reports clearly show that the RCUS is very active in mission work.

Organization matters

The RCUS Synod 2000 reviewed and made decisions about a host of financial issues and other organizational matters.

Evaluation:

In a short period of time the RCUS managed to take care of their synodical work in an efficient way. The atmosphere at Synod was excellent. At tense moments the brothers continued to act in a brotherly way. Although the RCUS follows different procedures we could witness that things were done decently and in good order conform to reformed ecclesiastical principles.

Our overall impression regarding this 254th Synod of the RCUS is very positive. We could witness the blessings and power of God's grace and mercy in the midst of our brothers at this Synod. The discussions, debates and decisions show clearly that the RCUS is and wants to remain a church in faithful adherence to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.

The Committee: W. Gortemaker J. Moesker
K. Jonker A. Poppe

Appendix:

Address to the RCUS: May 2000 by Rev. J. Moesker

Esteemed brothers, officers of synod:

I find it a great honour to be able to bring you and the churches of the RCUS sincere greetings on behalf of the **Canadian Reformed Churches.** Rev. Jonker, elder Gortemaker and I are three quarters of the Subcommittee for Relations with the RCUS. Our other member, elder Art Poppe, who is a farmer, was unable to attend because of fieldwork. We thank you for the hospitality and kindness which we again experience being among you.

Last year, Rev. Syms made a quick visit to Carman, Manitoba and met with our committee to sort of introduce us to your churches, as we are a new subcommittee appointed by Synod Fergus 1998. It was a good beginning, which made us all the more eager to get to know the RCUS better. Near the end of last year, then, three of us on the way to a Regional Synod West meeting in Taber, Alberta, drove in a loop and made a Sunday visit to South Dakota and attended worship in Eureka and Herried. We enjoyed this worship and were privileged to enjoy supper and some good conversation with Rev. Robert Davies. Then, in March all four of us were able to worship at Salem-Ebenezer Reformed Church in Manitowoc and meet extensively with your Committee for Interchurch Relations. We were well received and had very warm and frank discussions with them, not only in our meetings, but also over some excellent meals provided by the ladies of that church. I think we went home with expanded girths as well as hearts.

We again took the opportunity provided by the occasion of this synod to continue discussions with your committee. We also wanted to see your synod in action. And again, I must say we have been well received and also well-fed. It is a real joy to get to know you and to see for ourselves the evidence of the Lord's work among you.

Compared with the RCUS the Can. Ref. Churches are just infants in diapers yet on the North American continent. Over the past month or so two of our churches celebrated 50th anniversaries, having been instituted in 1950. Immigrants from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated tried to join the Christian Reformed Church as well as the Protestant Reformed Church first, but found they could not do so. The Christian Reformed Churches continued relations with the Synodical Churches in the Netherlands, the same churches which had bound its membership beyond Scripture in 1945 and thrown those immigrants out in the old country. The Protestant Reformed Churches adopted a Declaration of Principles in 1950 which bound its members to a doctrine of the covenant which was basically the same as adopted by the Synodical Churches in the Netherlands. So, in 1950, those immigrants instituted churches which they called the Canadian Reformed Churches. They did so because they wanted to remain Reformed in doctrine and in church government. In other words, Biblical in doctrine and non-hierarchical in church government.

From those couple of churches in 1950, the Canadian Reformed Churches have grown into 48 churches and 3 small home congregations. Four of those churches and one home congregation are in the U.S. The initial growth in the 1950s was through immigration from the Netherlands, but that is now a trickle. Some of the growth is through others joining these churches. More and more names of non-

Dutch origin appear in the membership lists. A number of churches now have local home mission efforts. A new one is just underway in Vancouver, where a minister of Chinese descent is about to begin urban mission in the large Chinese community there. Most of the growth by far, however, has been internal growth, through the birth of covenant children. Canadian Reformed people in general are convinced that the Lord desires covenant children, godly offspring as He says in Malachi 2:15. So the families are larger than the average Canadian family, and there is much emphasis on Reformed instruction and education. Most of the youth attend catechism classes for six or seven years before profession of faith, or confirmation as you call it in the RCUS. And almost all Canadian Reformed youth attend Reformed elementary and high schools or are home-schooled. Covenant education and instruction is one of the strengths of the Canadian Reformed Churches. However, no matter how strenuous our own efforts, it's still the Lord who works faith, and we see the Lord's blessing in that strong internal growth. We have to do our best, but it is the Lord alone who gives blessing on what we do.

The Canadian Reformed Churches convene a synod normally once every three years. Our next synod will be convened, D.V., by the church of Neerlandia, Alberta, in May 2001. The last synod, Synod Fergus, dealt very much with relations with other churches. One of the more difficult matters which that synod had to deal with was the matter of our relations with the OPC.

In our relations with the OPC there were still two outstanding issues which previous synods wanted dealt with, namely confessional membership (holding of all members to the confessional standards) and fencing of the Lord's Table (mainly about supervision of the Lord's Supper for guests as well as members). Synod proposed an agreement on these two matters to General Assembly of the OPC. Unfortunately, however, contact has in the meantime been terminated by the OPC because of statement made in the past about OPC ministers by someone who is now minister in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Hopefully this matter can be resolved and the Proposed Agreement on Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership can be tabled again.

The Canadian Reformed Churches are also in the midst of talks with the L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (Reformed Church of Quebec). We are excited that in predominantly Roman Catholic Quebec there are churches of distinctly Reformed character. They wish to carry on the heritage of the French Hugenots, and though they are very small, they are aggressive in outreach. We hope that our relations with these churches may blossom into close fellowship and cooperation. One of their churches is presently actively exchanging information and visits with the church of Owen Sound in order to learn more about each other.

Relations with the United Reformed Churches were also dealt with by Synod 1998. The so-called Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity (with those who have left the Christian Reformed Church) were given the mandate to continue fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity, and to continue exploring possibilities of federative unity with the Orthodox Reformed Churches. I might add that there appears to be a growing towards each other especially of the United Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches. This is also due to local talks between churches taking place in numerous locations.

As the RCUS has taken a strong stand contra women's participation in election of officebearers, I might mention yet that Synod Fergus 1998 also had to deal with some appeals and overtures regarding that. They were all denied on the ground that the proper route for these matters to come to synod, namely via the minor assemblies, had not been followed.

With regard to relations with the Reformed Churches in the US, Synod 1998 received letters from various churches in the federation with questions about some views and practices in your churches. Synod acknowledged with gratitude the commitment of the RCUS to the Word of God and the Reformed heritage, but declined your invitation to enter into a fraternal relationship at this time. Our committee was mandated to continue pursuing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship, and to look into some of the questions from some of our churches concerning supervision of the Lord's Supper, the doctrine of the church, Sunday observance, the concept of erasure, and membership in NAPARC.

We are trying to fulfill this mandate, and we have found your committee and our visits most helpful in that. We have to draw up a report after this meeting for a September meeting of the full Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad, and that report will then be finalized for the next synod to be convened in May 2001.

Brothers, we are delighted to be among you here, among people who by God's grace cherish the Reformed faith and want to continue in that. This is a great encouragement to us, and it's our hope and prayer that it may come to a close relationship with each other as churches who want to "keep the pattern of sound teaching" as the apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 1. God bless you in your work here, and may it all lead to the glory of the Saviour who is our Chief Shepherd.

I would now like to introduce to you **the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

At the first synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Carman, Manitoba in 1954, the concept of an own facility for theological training for the ministry was already discussed. At the time the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches had fifteen churches spread across Canada in two classes, served by eight ministers. Subsequent synods built on this idea. Synod 1962 set up a provisional form of training in which students would spend time in instruction with various ministers. Only one present minister completed his training this way. A few students ended up studying at Kampen in the Netherlands, while others commenced studies at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

Synod 1968, however, took the step of establishing a regular theological college with three full-time professors and two part-time lecturers. Training took place over three years, with preferably a BA as requirement for admission. A building was purchased in Hamilton, and by 1969 the college was operational. In 1981 the college was incorporated by act of provincial parliament so that it could confer degrees in theology to graduates. There are, I believe, eight students at this time.

Most ministers in the churches have completed their studies at this college. Not only have the students come from North America, but also from such diverse places as Australia and New Zealand, Indonesia, Italy and China. Graduates have also included men from other churches such as the Christian Reformed Church and the Free Reformed Church, and some graduates are ministers among our sister churches in the Netherlands. The present building, purchased in 1985, is now being expanded, as

additional room was needed for the library. This library now houses a collection of almost 23,000 books and magazines from 100 periodicals. A considerable number of books even date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Right from the start, the Canadian Reformed Churches have taken the position that the training for the ministry should be under the control of the churches themselves. Training by the churches for the churches. This idea has Biblical roots in what Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2: *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others*. There is also a historical background to this, dating from the time of the so-called Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands. Rather than sending students of theology to state-run institutions where liberalism was rampant, the churches of the Secession started their own training, and instituted the Theological College in Kampen in 1854. This is why the drive to inaugurate our own training for the ministry was so strong from the beginning, and why the Canadian Reformed Churches gladly maintain this college.

Operating funds come via assessments levied to the churches, and the college is run by a board of governors appointed by synods. Presently the college has eleven governors appointed by synods for three-year terms.

The college is a distinctly Reformed institution of learning. Not only is the faculty chosen by the churches through synods, they are also required to sign a Form of Subscription to the doctrinal standards of the churches, namely, the Three Forms of Unity. They promise to teach and faithfully to defend those doctrines and not to either directly or indirectly contradict them in teaching or writing.

There is also a decidedly strong emphasis on academics at our college. The confession of the professors is important, but the academic qualifications also play a role.

At this time there are four professors, three of whom have PhD's and one who has an MTh degree. In the curriculum considerable weight is given to language studies. Two years of Hebrew and Greek studies and one year of Latin are required for admission, and language instruction continues throughout the four-year program of studies. BA degrees are a requirement for admission. The college presently grants Bachelor of Divinity and Bachelor of Theology degrees, and Master of Divinity degrees. Also offered are Diploma of Theological Studies and Diploma of Missiology, which are not degrees. At the present time we are in the process of trying to expand the instructional time spent on the practical subjects, and a so-called Pastoral Proficiency Program has been set up in which students for the ministry receive some hands-on experience in congregations with instruction, pastoral work, and sermon preparation.

Brothers, as it says in the Handbook of our College, it considers itself called to explore in a scholarly way the riches given by God in the Reformation of the church to the best of its ability, in order that these riches may be a blessing for the life of the church into the 21st century. It is realized that this can only be done in grateful obedience and humble submission to the authority of the infallible Word of God. I invite you to consider the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches for investigation by your academic committee. This college, by God's grace, has been a blessing for our churches, and we are not shy of sharing this blessing with others.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to introduce it to you today.

2.5. Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad.

COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD NEERLANDIA, 2001

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

1. Introduction

General Synod Fergus gave our Committee the mandate to:

1.1. Continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Korea and the Free Church of Scotland (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, A).

1.2. Send an invitation to these churches to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of their churches if invited and when feasible (Acts 1998, Articles 34, IV, D; 40, V, F; 108, V, B; 132, III, D,2).

1.3. Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, D, 1).

1.4. Respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, D, 2).

1.5. Report on our findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod (Acts 1998, Article 132, III, D,3).

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

2. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

2.1. Mandate

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

2.2. Correspondence

2.2.1. A letter was sent to the FRCA commending them for their generous support given to the Theological College in Hamilton

2.2.2. The Acts of Synod Launceston 1998 were received.

2.2.3. A copy of a letter sent to the GKN concerning the deposed Rev. F.J. van Hulst was received.

2.2.4. An invitation was received to send a delegate to the Synod to be convened on July 5, 2000 in Albany. A letter of greeting was sent.

2.3. Acts of Synod Launceston 1998

This Synod met in Launceston from June 2 - 15 and September 8 - 17.

From the Acts we glean the following highlights:

2.3.1. The following officers were elected: Chairman - Rev. C. Bouwman; Vice Chairman - Rev. C. Kleyn, while later Rev. A. vanDelden was added; First Clerk - Elder J. Eikelboom, Second Clerk - Rev. J. Poppe.

2.3.2. As a result of the required expression of agreement with the Three Forms of Unity at the beginning of the meeting a number of churches in their instructions had raised concerns about the confessional integrity of Rev. F. J. van Hulst of Launceston. In line with the Subscription Form Rev. F. van Hulst was asked to provide "further explanations" regarding the concerns brought forward by the churches which were considered to be of a public nature. Synod concluded that his "teachings on regeneration, and conversion, the church, and the forgiveness of sins are not in accordance with Scripture and Confession". Synod therefore decided that Rev. F. J. van Hulst could not remain seated as member of Synod. A committee was appointed to investigate his teachings regarding the law. In a later session it was concluded that his teachings of regeneration and conversion affect his teachings on the law, and so distort the full biblical message.

2.3.3. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided to continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia, the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the established rules.

2.3.4. Contacts with the Reformed Churches of Australia will continue in face-to-face meetings.

2.3.5. Deputies were mandated to strive for sister relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Their existing relationship with the Reformed Churches of Australia was still considered to be an impediment. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand as well as the Free Reformed Churches have sent a letter of appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia to "return to a distinctly reformed direction".

2.3.6. Synod decided to offer sister relations as a first step to full unity to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia if they can agree with statements made by Synod concerning the fencing of the Lord's supper table, the supervision of the pulpit and the place of children in the covenant. These statements dealt with areas of concern from the previous contacts and declared among other things that: 1. Visiting guests at the table require a testimonial from an office-bearer of their local church, to ensure that they are members in good standing of another church of Christ which displays the three marks of the church. 2. The pulpit ought to be supervised so that

only ministers or licentiates who have undergone the proper ecclesiastical examinations will be invited to preach. 3. The covenant is not made only with the elect but with all believers and their children.

2.3.7. Synod decided to assess the areas of concern with respect to the contacts with the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Areas of concern are: supervision of the Lord's Supper, supervision of the pulpit, position of children in the covenant, covenanting and purity of worship.

2.3.8. Correspondence will be maintained with the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines for the purpose of becoming acquainted.

2.3.9. A proposal to grant women the right to participate in the voting for the election of office bearers was rejected. Insufficient material and Scriptural analysis in the submissions were given as the ground.

2.3.10. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia continue to support the Theological College in Hamilton, ON by means of assessments as well as in other ways. Plans were made to invite a guest lecturer from the College to visit the churches in Australia.

2.4. Considerations

2.4.1. From the general correspondence and the Acts, we may conclude that the FRCA continue to be faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed confessions and the adopted Church Order.

2.4.2. Although it becomes clear that the FRCA had to deal with difficult matters at the Synod with regards to the concerns arising from the person of Rev. J. F. van Hulst, we note with thankfulness their sincere desire to test all matters in the light of the Scriptures and Confessions. With sadness we note that the controversy resulted in a split in the church of Launceston, Tasmania, and the deposition of Rev. F.J. van Hulst.

2.4.3. With thankfulness we note the continued support of the FRCA of the Theological College in Hamilton in various ways.

2.5. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 2001:

2.5.1. Continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia under the adopted rules.

2.5.2. Express appreciation to the FRCA for their continued support of the Theological College.

3. The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

3.1. Mandate

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

3.2. Correspondence

3.2.1. A letter was sent to express the prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches of the Free Church of Scotland as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation.

3.2.2. An invitation was received to attend the General Assembly scheduled for May 1999. Rev. E. Kampen was delegated to represent the Churches. His report is found in the appendices.

3.2.3. An official "Statement to Other Churches" dated January 28, 2000 was received in which an explanation is given of the schism which occurred in the Free Church on January 20, 2000 (see: Appendices).

3.2.4. An invitation was received to attend the General Assembly scheduled for May 2000. A letter of greeting was sent.

3.3. Acts of the General Assemblies

3.3.1. The Acts of the General Assemblies held in May 1998 and May 1999 were scrutinized. These Acts make it clear that while the Free Church strives to attend to all its regular activities, the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod refuses to go away. The 1999 Assembly also had a number of submissions which tried to get the matter reopened. The appellants refuse to consider the decisions made by previous Assemblies as binding. The Commission of the Assembly was appointed to deal further with these matters.

3.3.2. At the 1999 Assembly, Prof. D. Macleod was appointed as principal of the Free Church College in Edinburgh.

3.3.3. In 1998 the FCS established fraternal relations with the Evangelical Presbyterian Reformed Churches of England and Wales. While the FCS is seeking to establish contact with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, in 1999 it established fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Churches of North America.

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

3.4. Division within the Free Church

3.4.1. As was reported under 3.2.3, we received a statement from the Free Church informing us of a secession which had taken place. The statement, as found in the appendices, gives an explanation of the circumstances leading up to this sad development. Those who seceded claim to be the legitimate continuation of the Free Church and have taken the name "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)". The Committee received an e-mail dated May 3rd, 2000 inviting us to a send a delegate to their General Assembly scheduled for May 22-26, 2000. The Committee did not feel free to send a letter of greeting. This did not mean, however, that we thereby wished to pass judgment at that time. When we reflect on the developments after World War II where the Christian Reformed Church received invitations to attend the General Synods of two groups claiming to be the legitimate continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands but then chose for the larger group without any serious inquiry, we do feel that it is incumbent to make a clear judgment in this matter.

3.4.2. Many of the ministers which have seceded were affiliated with the "Free Church Defence Association". In publications of this Association, as available on the Internet, reference is made to various trends in the churches which gave them reason for concern. The center of the concern, however, is the person of Prof. D. Macleod. There continued to be dissatisfaction with the way the accusation of immorality against him was handled. As the Acts show, up till 1999 there was a persistent effort to have the matter dealt with once again after previous General Assemblies had tried to bring closure to the matter. When the matter came to a head in January 2000, it was on the point of ministers refusing to accept the decisions of previous assemblies as settled and binding. They were accused of "contumacy", that is, "defiance of the Presbyterian courts", denying their ordination vows in which they promised to submit to the government and discipline of the church. Those who seceded claim that this was an abuse of power on the part of the Commission of the Assembly called to deal with the issue.

3.4.3. In the first rule for Ecclesiastical Fellowship it says, "The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations". Our task is therefore to determine if the Free Church deviated from its church polity in dealing with this matter. It is important to note that we must judge them by **their** church polity and not ours, for it is not their **polity** that has to be scrutinized but their **adherence** to their polity. In all fairness to those who claim to be the Free Church (Continuing) this requires us to evaluate their "Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland". This document was obtained via their web site and is included in the appendices.

3.4.4. The aforementioned "Declaration" gives three reasons for secession. In this "Declaration" all the factors which have been at play in the background over the years seem to come together. It has to be kept in mind that with a view to the actual secession, the point at issue was the handling of the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod and the refusal of a number of ministers to accept the decisions made. The other issues raised in the Declaration do not appear in the Acts of the General Assemblies as issues which had reached the stage of an impossible impasse. In light of that, the only relevant ground for secession would appear to be that there was a violation of the Form of Process in that the Commission of the General Assembly pursued the charges of contumacy while according to the Form of Process all processes against any minister are to begin before his Presbytery (Chapter VII, paragraph 1). This is understandable as in Presbyterian polity the minister is minister of Presbytery, not of the local session.

3.4.5. While it appears that the Form of Process was not adhered to in that the Commission began conducting the disciplinary process, those who seceded made no effort to appeal that action to the

forthcoming General Assembly but ended the process by seceding. While this action may reflect a lack of confidence in the General Assembly, it would nevertheless be incumbent upon them to defend themselves. Beginning a process of discipline is not the same as being removed from office. It appears that those who seceded forfeited the opportunity to defend themselves. They have not shown that the process was exhausted.

3.4.6. Even though the action of secession cannot be justified based on the information available, one is left to wonder if everything possible was done to remove the root cause, namely, the controversy surrounding Prof. D. Macleod. This is all the more so in light of what is said in the same Chapter VII "Concerning Processes against Ministers" at the start of Paragraph 3, namely, "And because a scandal committed by a minister hath on these accounts many aggravations, and once raised, though it may be found to be without any ground, yet it is not easily wiped off;...".

3.5. Considerations

3.5.1. From the Acts of the General Assemblies received it continues to be clear that the Free Church takes its task in the world seriously. It has a real concern for mission both at home and abroad. It is also concerned to give a Christian testimony to the issues of the day.

3.5.2. While there are questions about the discipline process leading to a secession, there is no evidence at this point to conclude that we should discontinue our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church (Majority). Further, while there may be concern about the appropriateness of the act of secession, at this time it is not possible to fully evaluate the actions of those who seceded. Since the FCS (Continuing) will present itself to the ICRC as the legitimate continuation of the FCS and will ask its judgment, it would seem best at this point to suspend judgment with the hope that perhaps they are reconciled unto each other or that greater clarity will help us come to a responsible conclusion.

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

3.6. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that General Synod 2001:

3.6.1. Continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland (Majority) under the adopted rules while continuing to monitor the situation with the Free Church of Scotland(Continuing) in order to come to greater clarity on the matter.

3.6.2. Remind the FCS of the rules for Fellowship which include, among others, that churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship be consulted before entering into third party relationships.

4. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

4.1. Mandate

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

4.2. Correspondence

4.2.1. A letter was sent to convey commendations to the FRCSA for their endeavours in establishing a Theological College.

4.2.2. The Acts and a summary of the Acts of the 1998 Synod were received.

4.2.3. In an e-mail dated August 11, 2000 we were informed that the Rev. C.F. Heiberg had been released from his calling church (Johannesburg) and was available for call.

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

4.3.1. A Synod of the FRCSA met on Apr. 30 and May 1, 1998. Br. J. Smit, elder of the convening church at Pretoria welcomed those present. He expressed gratitude that this was the first synod of the FRCSA at which 5 churches were represented since the institution of the Pretoria-Maranata congregation. Each church had delegated three members; in addition, three missionaries, one emeritus minister and two Dutch ministers were present as advisers.

4.3.2. Synod rejected the overture that the Acts should be published with "Considerations" and "Conclusions". Instead clearly formulated decisions will express the motivation that led to these. The Acts, excluding confidential matters, will be posted on the computer.

4.3.3. Synod spent a considerable amount of time on the Theological Training, established during the Ad. Hoc Synod of July 4, 1997, and in operation since Jan. 1998. A Constitution, regulating matters as purpose, government, staffing, study requirements, etc. was adopted. The curators and lecturers presented their reports regarding the first term of operation. Also, offers to possibly operate under the auspices of the Theological University of Kampen, The Netherlands, or the Theological College in Hamilton, ON, Canada had been declined in favour of an independent institution. The possibility of rounding off the study by attending classes in Kampen upon completing training in South Africa would be pursued.

4.3.4. Synod considered the report from the Mission Committee (Sendings deputate). It was decided not to deal with the proposed Mission Agreement between the FRCSA and the supporting churches in The Netherlands. (Regional Synod Friesland and Classis Grootegast). Examination of the document by the sending churches in South Africa and their recommendation for adoption was deemed necessary before Synod could discuss the matter. A report by the deputies looking into the matter of the office of evangelist in mission stated that more time was required to study this issue.

4.3.5. The Deputies for Contact with Churches within South Africa

presented their report. Synod considered the written information and encouraged the continuation of contact with various concerned members, ministers, and seceded congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and Reformed Churches of South Africa, as well as the English Reformed Church of Randburg. A few ministers of the Reformed Churches of South Africa were present at this synod as observers and received the opportunity to address the delegates. Their call for continued contact was heeded, but Synod did charge the Deputies to focus on essential aspects of church life within these churches.

4.3.6. Synod dealt with a lengthy report of the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad. It was decided to continue sister-church relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. Brotherly contact will be maintained with the Reformed Churches of Indonesia and the Presbyterian Church of Korea. Exploratory contact with the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire, Reformed Fellowship in Kenya and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA will be continued, and possibly with the Christian Reformed Fellowship of Kenya, the Igreja Reformada Colonia Brasolandia in Brasil and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

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

4.3.8. The next Synod of the FRCSA will be convened in Bethal, SA in 2000, DV.

4.4. Observations

4.4.1. The correspondence and Acts of Synod Pretoria 1997 attest that the FRCSA strive to live faithfully according to the Word of God, and the adopted Confessions.

4.4.2. The FRCSA, though small in number, display great zeal in missionary activity (five churches supporting 3 missionaries!), as well as the preparation for the ministry (the establishment of their own Theological Training). In addition it appears they carry on extensive contact with and support for concerned members of other Reformed denominations.

4.5. Recommendations

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

5. Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

5.1. Mandate

With respect to the GKN, Synod mandated the CRCA:

5.1.1. To be vigilant in applying the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship in regards to any concerns coming to their attention.

5.1.2. To as yet inquire about the matters of the "blessing elder" and the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the GKN.

5.1.3. To discuss the alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage and the points raised by the Church at Guelph (Acts 1998, Article 40, V.B,C,D).

5.2. Issues Mandated by Synod

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

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

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

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

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

5.2.2. Inform. With respect to the difference between the word "inform" rather than "consult", the response from the deputies BBK was that they were not eager to reopen this discussion. Experience showed that a common approach was not always possible, especially in their contacts with churches which were unknown to us. They reiterated, however, that before entering into a relationship with a church in a country where they already had a

sister Church, there had to be good communication with this sister Church before proceeding. In such situations, it was indicated, "inform" certainly meant "consult". This approach was spelled out time and again in relevant Synod decisions.

As Committee we feel that this answer takes away any fear that different approaches could potentially lead to difficulties where both church federations are working toward a relationship with the same third party (Acts 1995, Article 19, IV, F). It should also be noted that in this respect we subject the Dutch Sister Churches to greater scrutiny than other federations with whom we have fellowship. We think in particular of the fact that the FCS established fraternal relations with the Free Reformed Church of North America as a sister church without any consultation with us (see 3.3.2).

5.2.3 *Marriage Form*. The matter of changes to the Form for Marriage was mentioned in the speech our delegate delivered to General Synod Leusden. While the new form does speak about the husband leading and the wife following, the Scriptural terms of "obey" and "submit" are absent. By omitting these words, the Scriptural teaching is diminished.

5.2.4 *Points raised by Guelph* . The Committee discussed Synod Fergus' instruction to discuss the points raised by the Church at Guelph based on information from the press dealing with homosexuality. The Committee felt that it was not its task to pursue matters based on information from the press as this would go beyond the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (see Rule 1). The Committee always has had to deal with the *official decisions* of sister churches as found in Acts and Minutes. The Committee has never scrutinized the press of the various churches with which we have fellowship.

5.3. Correspondence

5.3.1. In January 1999 an invitation was received to send a delegate to their upcoming General Synod. Rev. E. Kampen was delegated. A copy of the Report of the Deputies BBK to Synod Leusden was also received.

5.3.2. In a letter dated Nov. 5, 1998, the Church at Elora requested the Committee to investigate concerns regarding the position of the Dutch sister Churches on homosexuality. In a letter dated Feb. 2, 1999, we responded that we did not see it as our task to investigate items from the press but to go by the official Acts. In a letter dated April 8, 1999, the Church at Elora provided us with a list of references on which they based their concerns. This matter was raised in a discussion with the Dutch Deputies. As Committee, however, we concluded that the information presented was based on press reports, most of them dating back to 1991 and 1992, with one reference from 1995, but there was no reference to any official decision of the churches on this matter. As such, we have no mandate to deal with the matter. The Church at Elora was informed

of this in a letter dated June 30, 1999.

5.3.3. In a letter dated February 25, 1999 the Church at Elora requested the Committee to investigate whether the appeals regarding women's voting rights were handled properly. In a letter dated June 30, 1999, we responded that we did not see this as our responsibility since Synod Fergus was aware of the number of appeals against this decision but did not mandate the Committee to investigate the matter. The Dutch deputies, when made aware of this question, did give the reminder that all the information is readily available in the Acts. It was also pointed out that if a Church suspected there was a problem, the onus lies on that Church to study the matter and come with grounds to show deviation on the part of a sister Church.

5.3.4. In a letter dated June 6, 1999, the Church at Yarrow called upon our Committee to pursue the matter raised by the Church at Guelph, and to be proactive also in such issues as the increased number of hymns. The Church at Yarrow was answered in line with the response to the Church at Elora, namely, that we deal with official decisions and our Committee can only act upon information based on the official decisions of the Sister Churches.

5.3.5. In July 2000 a copy was received of the BBK publication "Wereldwijd" ("World wide") which contains information about the various churches with which the GKN has contact.

5.3.6. The Committee received a copy of a letter by M. Noort addressed to Synod Leusden while it was still in session in which he expressed his concern about decisions of former Synods as well as the present Synod calling for a reconsideration on the issues raised by him.

5.4. Acts of Synod Leusden

5.4.1. Synod met from April till December 1999. By the time the Report had to be prepared to send to the Churches, the printed Acts had not yet been sent to us. The electronic version available on the Web was reviewed. The order of the items which follow are not necessarily in this order in the Acts.

5.4.2. Fourth Commandment: Synod had to deal with an appeal concerning a statement made by Rev. D. Ophoff in a sermon on Lord's Day 38 HC in Nieuwegein on June 2 1996. He had stated, among other things, "Let it be known how valuable the day is to you. As far as I am concerned, not based on an absolute, divine command. But because it is a good thing that we together have a day of rest every week, after the example of Israel's sabbath".[1] An appeal concerning this sermon had been denied by a classis but granted by a regional synod. The appeal to General Synod came from the consistory of the church at Nieuwegein. Synod judged

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

that in the sermon in question a) the importance of the worship service had clearly been presented; b) that in *this* sermon it did not come to the fore clear enough that in LD 38 there is a command, namely, that especially on the day of rest one should attend the worship services; c) that the opinion of Rev. Ophoff that the Sunday as *day of rest* not being based on a divine command, cannot be condemned; d) that there is no reason to assume that Rev. Ophoff in his functioning as Minister of the Word in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands departs from the teaching of the church with respect to the fourth commandment.[2]

5.4.3. Examinations for the Ministry: Synod Leusden approved a new method of ecclesiastical examinations. Graduation from the Theological University is taken as evidence of academic proficiency and a classis no longer will need to examine with a view to factual knowledge. In order to be declared eligible for call, a candidate must provide proof of graduation, a letter in which he expresses his faith experience, motivation for seeking the ministry and his vision of the ministry. He must also submit three sermon proposals (OT, NT, Catechism). The purpose of the classical exam is to evaluate his motivation and Reformed character by means of a number of conversations about his motivational letter, his sermons, and his outlook about such matters as Scripture and Confession. What was formerly known as the peremptory examination has taken on the character of a colloquium doctum. The Church Order was modified in articles 5 and 49 to accommodate this change.

5.4.4. *Bible Translation "Groot Nieuws- 1996 edition"*. A request to use this translation in the regular worship services was denied. Room was left to use it in special circumstances (eg., Evangelism among illiterates and refugees who know little Dutch).

5.4.5. *Liturgy*: Synod approved for use in the Churches a third order of worship. One of the key features is the the reading of the law after the sermon, the use of the Creed also in the morning service. Three new forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper were approved for use. The motivation for the development of these three forms was to give opportunity for more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper in the morning worship service without taking away from the preaching of the gospel.

5.4.6. *Hymns*: Synod approved a selection of about 120 hymns for use within the churches.

5.4.7. *Lord's Supper*: Synod gave approval to having Reformed Ministers serving as army chaplains administer the Lord's Supper to all

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[2]*Besluit 4:*uit te spreken: 1. dat in de preek van ds. D. Ophoff van 2 juni 1996 over Zondag 38 HC het belang van de eredienst en van de ruimte daarvoor duidelijk naar voren zijn gekomen; 2. dat evenwel in *deze* preek onvoldoende uitkomt, dat in Zondag 38 HC sprake is van een *gebod,* nl. om vooral op de rustdag trouw de kerkdiensten te bezoeken; 3. dat de opvatting van ds. D. Ophoff dat de zondag als *rustdag* niet gegrond is op een goddelijk gebod, niet te veroordelen is; 4. dat er bovendien geen reden is om aan te nemen, dat ds. D. Ophoff in het geheel van zijn functioneren als dienaar van het Woord binnen de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland afwijkt van de leer van de kerk met betrekking tot het vierde gebod van de Wet van de Here.

soldiers present at a service regardless of church affiliation. This was one of the conditions imposed by the government for continuing to participate in the chaplaincy program.

5.4.8. *Mission and Evangelism:* Synod involved itself in missionary and evangelistic endeavours as it dealt with the IRTT (Institute for Reformed Theological Training), which is meant to help train people from churches in other countries and addressed the development of an organization for national evangelistic efforts. It also gave approval to give financial assistance for church planting in the city of Maastricht.

5.4.9. Synod mandated a committee to study the position of a "pastoral worker" (kerkelijke werker), including how such a position would stand in relation to the other offices of the Church.

5.4.10. It was reported to Synod that major changes were being implemented at the Theological University in Kampen in order to have it function as a "Knowledge Centre" (Kenniscentrum) for the Churches in which the training for the ministry would be one of the functions. This shift in emphasis had not been requested or mandated by any previous Synod. Upon request from the Theological University, Synod gave permission to students who had finished their theological training, but are doing further studies, to preach in the churches in the classis in which they reside. The rationale was to give them practice to retain the things they had learned.

5.4.11. Regulations were also put in place concerning continuing education of ministers, especially for those new to the ministry.

5.4.12. Relations with Churches Abroad: Synod decided to continue contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches. It was decided to enter into a sister church relationship with the OPC. Further contact would be sought with the United Reformed Churches of North America. There was to be a continuation of the contact with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB). In these matters the relevant committees were to be in contact with Committees from our Churches. Many other contacts are maintained.

5.4.13. Contact with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken has come to an impasse at the federal level. At the same time, there is room for allowing pulpit exchanges and admission to the Lord's Supper in local situations.

5.5. Considerations

5.5.1. The discussion concerning the blessing elder and the word "inform" has taken place and all the relevant information has been gathered. It appears that the discussion has been exhausted.

5.5.2. The CRCA is bound by the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which specify that we deal with sister churches based on their official decisions and not information from the press (see Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship #1). It has to be kept in mind that things published in the press do not reflect the official position of churches but merely the sentiments of some individuals. Further, these discussions take place in a broad context with nuances which cannot always be fully appreciated by those living in other countries.

5.5.3. A number of the decisions of Synod Leusden give reason for concern:

5.5.3.1. By allowing the opinion that the Sunday as a day of rest is not based on a divine command, and that LD 38 only emphasizes the command to attend the worship services, Synod has taken away any real ground for calling people to obedience to the fourth commandment as traditionally understood (i.e. not working and not causing others to work).

5.5.3.2. Article 6 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship reads "When major changes or additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy, the churches shall be informed in order that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is taken". The CRCA was never consulted concerning the changes to the Church Order resulting from the revision in the manner of examinations. It appears to constitute a major change. By removing this responsibility from the classis they have eliminated one of the safeguards put in place to ensure that candidates are academically qualified. This is now left solely in the hands of the place of theological training. In this respect, too much power is put in the hands of the institute of theological training. It also takes away from the principle of freedom of study since the degree from only one place of theological training, namely, the Theological University in Kampen, seems to be acceptable. Furthermore, the elements of the candidate's faith outlook, motivation, and reformed character were certainly not excluded in the preparatory and peremptory examinations.

5.5.3.3. With respect to liturgical matters, the Dutch sister churches continue the pattern of Synodical regulations rather than leaving matters in the freedom of the churches.

5.5.3.4. In allowing the celebration of the Lord's Supper by army chaplains, there is a departure from admitting to the celebrating of the Lord's Supper only those who have made profession of the Reformed faith, under the supervision of a consistory. This gives the impression that the Synod seemed more concerned to fit within society rather than maintaining a long standing principled tradition.

5.5.3.5. In dealing with matters of Mission and Evangelism Synod Leusden continued the path of centralization. It appears that the nerve centre of church life is shifting from the local congregations to national organizations/committees far removed from the people in their daily life.

5.5.3.6. While there is no principial objection to the use of hymns in the worship service, historically the proliferation of hymns has come at the expense of the singing of the Psalms.

5.5.3.7. The rise of the "pastoral worker", the granting of permission to those pursuing doctoral studies to practice their

preaching skills, and concern to regulate the continuing education of ministers, especially for those new to the ministry suggest a "professionalizing" of the ministry. Further, the development of the Theological University as a "Knowledge Centre" for the Churches signals a departure from the long standing principle that such a school has as its only aim the training of future ministers of the Word.

5.5.3.8. The enormous amount of contacts with churches all over the world makes one wonder about the significance of such contacts and how well each church is really known before a relationship is established.

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

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

5.6. Recommendations

Your committee recommends that Synod 2001:

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

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

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

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

6. The Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK)

6.1. Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA:

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

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

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

6.2. Issues Mandated by Synod

6.2.1. Professor Exchange. Synod Fergus in its considerations pertaining to the PCK noted that "there is no evidence in the report of the Committee that this mandate (professor exchange [Acts 1995, Art 101, II, C, 2, 3]) was fulfilled" (Art. 120, IV, B). Perusal of the Minutes of the Committee indicated that this matter was discussed in a meeting held on September 16, 1996. At this meeting there was a letter from the Theological College which suggested that an exchange of professors could best be worked out when the delegates attended the ICRC in Korea in October 1997. It can be noted that Prof. Faber visited Korea in August/ September, 1998.

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

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

6.3. Correspondence

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

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

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

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

6.4. Considerations

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

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

6.5. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that Synod 2001:

6.5.1. Conclude that the matter of exchange of professors had been sufficiently dealt with but this point was inadvertently overlooked in the report to Synod 1998.

6.5.2. Mandate the Committee to continue to pursue the questions concerning the Fencing of the Lord's Supper and Confessional Membership.

6.5.3. Continue ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCK under the adopted rules.

7. International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

7.1. Mandate

Synod mandated the CRCA to:

7.1.1. Continue to participate in the ICRC and submit a report to General Synod 2001 on the activities of the Conference, along with an evaluation.

7.1.2. Represent the Canadian Reformed Churches at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in the USA in 2001 by two voting delegates.

7.1.3. Make and support membership recommendations at the ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations.

7.1.4. Convey to the next meeting of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches disapprove of the change made in the Constitution Article IV.1.a. and to recommend that this Article be changed in such a way that the concerns of the Canadian Reformed Churches are addressed. (Acts 1998, Article 52, V.B,C.D.E.F).

7.2. Issues Mandated by Synod

7.2.1. In letter dated April 26, 1999, the concern raised by Synod Fergus 1998 was forwarded to the secretary of the ICRC.

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

7.3. Correspondence

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

7.3.2. In a Newsletter dated June 14, 1999 we were informed of the topics and speakers for the Fifth Assembly of the ICRC, to be held at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, June 20-29, 2001.

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

7.4. ICRC 2001

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

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

7.5. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that Synod 2001:

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

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

8. Other Matters

8.1. Lanka Reformed Church

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

8.2. Free Reformed Church in Kenya.

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

8.3. Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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

8.4. Brazil

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

9. General Activities

9.1. Declarations

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

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

9.2. Acts of Synod Fergus

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

9.3. Notifications and Invitations

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

9.4. Interim Information to the Churches.

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

10. Financial Statemtns 1998-2001 and Budget 2001-2004

10.1. Budget 1998-2001

Synod adopted the following budget for the CRCA/ICRC:

Fees	$ 3,500
Meeting ICRC 2001	$ 1,000
Travel	$ 2,500
Miscellaneous	$ 3,000
Total	**$10,000** (Acts 1998, Article 131, III,E)

10.2. Expenditures

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

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

10.3. Budget 2001-2004

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

Fees	$ 3,500
Meeting ICRC 2001	$ 1,000
Travel	$ 2,500
Miscellaneous	$ 3,000
Total	**$10,000**

11. Terms

Synod determined the following length of terms for the members of the Committee:
Rev. E. Kampen (convener) (2001), Rev. C. VanSpronsen (2001),
br. H.A. Berends (2001), br. H. Hoogstra (2007) (Acts 1998, Article 143, II).

12. Organizational and Related Matters

12.1. Considerations

12.1.1. The decision of Synod Fergus 1998 to revise the structure of the various committees dealing with other Churches into the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with the Churches in the Americas (CCCA), has resulted in a gap in the matter of interchurch relationships. This gap becomes apparent when it is noted that Synod mandated both the CRCA and the CCCA to "investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship" and to "respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meeting of other churches" (Art. 132 III D, 1,2). The CCCA, however, is not truly a Standing Committee but is in fact three ad hoc committees to work through current contacts. Since there is no such Committee as a CCCA, there is no one to deal with requests for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship which come from churches in the Americas. It seems that insufficient thought was given to all the implications. By default requests (like the request from Brazil and the information from NAPARC) come to the CRCA but it is not truly within our mandate. Refinement and clarification are thus called for either in terms of making the CCCA truly a Committee with three subcommittees or recognizing the ad hoc nature of the three committees and leaving all new requests the responsibility of the CRCA.

12.1.2. From the Acts it appears that there is uncertainty as to whether the CRCA is the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad" or the "Committee *for* Relations with Churches Abroad" (cf. Appendix 5, p. 248 ff, note title of report and headings of appendix!). It should be noted that both the Committee letterhead and the name on the Reports over the years speak of the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad". A Synod is free to change this but up till the time the change is officially made the Committee should be called by the name it has been assigned.

12.1.3. While a Committee will try to make as full a report as possible, items can be overlooked. Further, items taken for granted by Committee members may be unclear to Synod members. For that reason, it may be beneficial to have a Committee member present for consultation. In this way, it can be avoided that minor items of a

mandate are carried on year after year (eg. Korea, professor exchange), or that Committees are given instructions the logic of which eludes them (eg. ICRC Constitution).

12.1.4. While the CCCA has 12 members over 3 subcommittees to deal with three churches, the CRCA, having been released of the responsibility of dealing only with the RCUS, was reduced to only 4 members to cover the rest of the world. For the purpose of discussion and workload in terms of visiting the churches, 6 is a better number.

12.1.5. The present Committee has three of its four members coming to the end of their term in 2001. This is not very beneficial for the sake of continuity.

12.2. Recommendations

Your Committee recommends that Synod 2001:

12.2.1. Either refine the structure of the CCCA to enable them to deal with requests for ecclesiastical fellowship from churches in the Americas or to clarify that the CCCA consist of three ad hoc committees and **all** new requests for contact be handled by the CRCA.

12.2.2. Consistently refer to the CRCA as the "Committee *on* Relations with Churches Abroad".

12.2.3. Contact the convener of the Committee or ask one member to be present for part of the discussion at Synod to clear up questions.

12.2.4. Increase the number of members on the committee from four to six.

12.2.5. Work out a staggered retirement schedule for future appointments.

12.2.6. Extend the term of the present convener of the Committee by three years to give greater continuity.

Respectfully submitted by:
Mr. H.A Berends
Mr. H.E. Hoogstra
Rev. E. Kampen (convener)
Rev. C. VanSpronsen

(*Appendix 1 of CRCA Report: Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship*)

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

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

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

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

2.6 Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*

Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*
c/o 110 West 27th Street, Hamilton ON, L9C 5A1

REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD NEERLANDIA 2001

Esteemed brothers,

The *Standing Committee for the Publication of the 'Book of Praise'* hereby submits the report on its activities in regard to the mandate given to the Committee by General Synod Fergus 1998.

1.0 ***Printing and Distribution:***

The Committee authorized a re-print of the *Book of Praise* shortly after Synod Fergus 1998. This edition incorporates the revised text of the *Nicene Creed* adopted by *Synod Fergus 1998* (*Acts Fergus 1998,* Art. 140 - VII C, p. 179).

The Committee authorized the printing of just over 7950 copies in 1998/99, of which 2867 copies have been sold to churches, 739 copies to schools and 3624 copies to bookstores and other. Geographically, the distribution is as follows: Canada - 5635 copies; United States of America - 380 copies; Australia - 1053 copies; Other - 162 copies.

2.0 ***Renewal of Printing & Distribution Contract:***

The Committee recommends that the contract with Premier Printing Ltd. be extended for a five year period under its original terms, to be reviewed in the year 2006.

3.0 ***Corporate Status:***

The Committee has maintained its status as a corporation, and all necessary documents for this purpose have been kept up to date. This also includes filing the annual *Income Tax* forms with Revenue Canada, even though the Committee does not operate under an annual budget, and the Corporation does not generate an income or a profit.

4.0 ***Publicity:***

The Committee continues to respond to the various requests for information regarding the *Book of Praise*. Also in the past three years,

requests originated from individuals and church groups outside of our Federation of Churches. In particular, we wish to mention the interest expressed by the *Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church*, Saint Louis, Missouri, USA. It is encouraging to note the interest in and respect for the rich heritage of the Reformed faith as it is expressed in the Psalms, the Hymns and the *Three Forms of Unity*.

The Committee deals with the requests for the use of materials from the *Book of Praise* on a per-request-basis, and responds in a manner which seeks to maintain the purpose and intent of the *Book of Praise*. Also in this respect, the Committee is encouraged by recent audio recordings and concert performances by choral groups featuring Psalms taken from the *Book of Praise*. When permission for use of the text of the psalms and/or hymns is granted for such a purpose, it is expected that full acknowledgement of the *Book of Praise* as source is made.

With gratitude, the Committee notes that the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* continues to function actively in all aspects within our Federation of Churches.

4.1 Contact with the Official Website Committee

The two Committees met in order to identify areas of mutual interest and concern. We are pleased to note that the *Book of Praise* is now accessible electronically via the website of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Issues around copyright and 'fair use' continue to be thorny ones in this technological age. We will continue to maintain contact with the Official Website Committee.

4.2 Availability of harmonizations and organ editions of the Psalms and Hymns

In order to foster an increased awareness of the availability of harmonizations of the Psalms and Hymns, the Committee notes that the following editions are available on a regular basis. [Please note that suggested prices are approximations only!]:

Landsman, S.	*Koraal book 150 psalmen*	$ 91.00
Nieuwenhuyse, J.	*Miscellaneous books on the psalms*	N/A
Schippers, L.	*Miscellaneous books on the psalms*	N/A
Worp	*Psalmen ritmisch*	84.00
Zwart, W.H.	*Psalmen en enige gezangen*	106.00

These items are available from: Inheritance Publications
Church Music & Records
Box 154, Neerlandia, AB
T0G 1R0 CANADA
(tel.: 780-674-3949; FAX: 775-890-9118;
email: inhpubl@telusplanet.net)

5.0 *Mandate:*

With respect to the mandate the Committee received from Synod Fergus 1998 we may report the following:

5.1 Overleaf Musical Notation (*Acts Fergus 1998,* Art.140 III C1, p. 173)

The committee has instructed Premier Printing Ltd. to prepare the overleaf notation for all the psalms and hymns. This preparation included a new typesetting of the music, and a new configuration of the text of the overleaf stanzas. In order to keep costs to the churches down, we have not included a copy of the full overleaf notation for all 150 Psalms and 65 Hymns. Rather, we will make available (via *Premier Printing*) a sampling of 15 psalms.

Observations:

a. Overleaf notation for all the Psalms and Hymns will add approximately 100 pages to the *Book of Praise*. This represents an increase in bulk of approximately 16 %.
b. It is anticipated that with the overleaf notation, the cost of the *Book of Praise* will increase from $ 19.00 per copy, to $ 25.50 ($Cdn.; retail) per copy.

5.2 NIV References in the prose section of the *Book of Praise* (*Acts Fergus 1998,* Art. 140 IV C1, p.176)

The committee prepared the prose section consisting of the *Three Forms of Unity* and the *Liturgical Forms* with NIV Bible references. The procedure followed included:

a. A re-examination of all NIV proof texts and reference texts found in footnotes and margins to ensure the validity of the intended application for each text. This applies in case of indirect references.
b. The insertion of the italicized NIV text in the body of the prose text in the *Book of Praise*. This applies in case of a direct quotation.

Further, in an effort to strive for consistency, the committee followed the capitalization used in the NIV. This means that pronouns referring to God are in lower case lettering.

Observations:

After carefully examining all proof texts, indirect reference texts, as well as direct reference texts, the committee is confident that the application of the NIV references does not alter the intent or purpose of the reference.

As the NIV text has been adopted for use by our churches, the committee did not deem it necessary to include the entire text of the prose section in this *Report to the Churches*. Rather, a sampling has been enclosed as *Appendix A*.

5.3 NIV Bible references and the Prayers in the prose section of the *Book of Praise* (*Acts Fergus 1998,* Art. 140 IV C1, p.176)

The committee also adapted the Prayers in the prose section of the *Book of Praise*. The procedure followed is similar to the one described

under Section 5.2 of this report. Also in the prayers, direct and indirect references to scripture passages are changed to the NIV text. No footnote references are included.

The change from "Thee & Thou" to "you" necessitated other modifications as well. In addition to the obvious adjustments to 'verb endings', changes were made to update some of the archaic expressions. In a few instances, long sentences were divided into shorter segments.

The full text of the Prayers (*Revised*) may be found in *Appendix B*.

6.0 *Other Matters:*

6.1 Changes to the Psalms and Hymns *(Acts Fergus 1998,* Art. 140 IV C2, p.176)

Although *Synod Fergus* decided "(t)o mandate the Committee not to proceed with changes to the Psalms and Hymns", it ought to be noted that during the past three years, the committee did receive requests (and in some instances, specific suggestions and recommendations) for the additional Hymns.

6.2 Future Revision

The implementation of the recommendation to the churches to adopt a new bible translation for use by the churches may imply a substantial modification to the rhyming of the Psalms to reflect the text of the NIV. It is the opinion of the committee that such a substantial change in the future ought to be planned carefully in the present.

The committee seeks direction from Synod in this matter.

6.3 Input from Australian Sister Churches

Our Australian sister churches make full use of the *Book of Praise*. As Committee, we are thankful for this. We express our hope that within the English-singing world, the Anglo-Genevan Psalter may indeed continue to serve for many year to come.

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* receives its mandate directly from the Canadian and American reformed Churches. By implication, no input from the Australian sister churches is solicited when considering revisions to the text of the *Book of Praise*. Although not part of the Recommendations, *Synod Fergus* in its considerations alludes to taking "into consideration the input of our Australian sister churches" *(Acts Fergus 1998,* Art. 140 V B1, p.175). Given that there is no direct relationship, how and by what venues might we initiate a formal request for input? How might we consider unsolicited input and suggestions from our Australian sister churches? As Committee, we seek direction from Synod in this matter.

6.4 The *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* and the *Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity.*

On several occasions during the past years, the Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity have reported publicly (e.g., via *Clarion*)

on their discussions. These reports included references that may affect directly the mandate of the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise*.

The committee urges Synod to consider the potential implications as it articulates the next mandate for the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise*.

7.0 *Further Recommendations*

We make the following recommendations:

7.1 Committee Membership

That the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* be continued and that the size of the Committee be kept to four members in order to carry out its regular mandate. Should the mandate of the Committee be expanded considerably, the Committee recommends that an *Ad Hoc* Committee be appointed. Close cooperation between such Committees is essential.

Rev. B.J.Berends is due to retire from the Committee in 2001 (*Acts 1995,* p.86).

For health reasons, br. T.M.P. Vanderven has requested to be relieved from the Committee.

7.2 Committee Mandate

i. To function according to the arrangements for publishing and distribution accepted by *General Synod Cloverdale 1983* (*Acts 1983*, pp. 297-299).

ii. To maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters concerning the *Book of Praise*.

iii. To foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* among others and to promote the availability of a book of harmonizations facilitating the use of the *Book of Praise* in the English-speaking world.

iv. To serve as the address to which any correspondence regarding the *Book of Praise* can be directed.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. B.J.Berends

Rev. C.Bosch (convener)

Mr. T.M.P. Vanderven

Mrs. C.van Halen-Faber (reporter)

APPENDIX A:

RE: NIV BIBLE REFERENCES IN THE PROSE SECTION OF THE *BOOK OF PRAISE*

A SAMPLING TAKEN FROM THE BELGIC CONFESSION

THE BELGIC CONFESSION

[text of *Introduction* remains unchanged]
Sample Articles to illustrate NIV references: *Articles 1, 2, 3, 14, 21, 26*

TRUE CHRISTIAN CONFESSION

Containing the Summary of the Doctrine of God and of the Eternal Salvation of Man

ARTICLE 1 THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth[1] that there is only one God,[2] who is a simple and spiritual Being;[3] He is eternal,[4] incomprehensible,[5] invisible,[6] immutable,[7] infinite,[8] almighty,[9] perfectly wise,[10] just,[11] good,[12] and the overflowing fountain of all good.[13]

1 Rom 10:10.
2 Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; 1 Tim 2:5.
3 Jn 4:24.
4 Ps 90:2.
5 Rom 11:33.
6 Col 1:15; 1 Tim 6:16.
7 Jas 1:17.
8 1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:24.
9 Gen 17:1; Mt 19:26; Rev 1:8.
10 Rom 16:27.
11 Rom 3:25, 26; Rom 9:14; Rev 16:5, 7.
12 Mt 19:17.
13 Jas 1:17.

ARTICLE 2 HOW GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO US

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book,[1] wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to *see clearly God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - ,* as the apostle says in Rom 1:20. All these things are sufficient to convict men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word[2] as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

1 Ps 19:1-4.
2 Ps 19:7, 8; 1 Cor 1:18-21.

ARTICLE 3 THE WORD OF GOD

We confess that this Word of God did not have *its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,* as the apostle Peter says (2 Pet 1:21). Thereafter, in His special care for us and our salvation, God commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed Word to writing[1] and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law.[2] Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.[3]

1 Ex 34:27; Ps 102:18; Rev 1:11, 19.
2 Ex 31:18.
3 2 Tim 3:16.

ARTICLE 14 THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN AND HIS INCAPABILITY OF DOING WHAT IS TRULY GOOD

We believe that God created man of dust from the ground[1] and He made and formed him in His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy.[2] His will could conform to the will of God in every respect. But, when man was in this high position, he did not appreciate it nor did he value his excellency. He gave ear to the words of the devil and wilfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse.[3] For he transgressed the commandment of life which he had received; by his sin he broke away from God, who was his true life; he corrupted his whole nature. By all this he made himself liable to physical and spiritual death.[4]

Since man became wicked and perverse, corrupt in all his ways, he has lost all his excellent gifts which he had once received from God.[5] He has nothing left but some small traces, which are sufficient to make man inexcusable.[6] For whatever light is in us has changed into darkness,[7] as Scripture teaches us, *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (*Jn 1:5); where the apostle John calls mankind darkness.

Therefore we reject all teaching contrary to this concerning the free will of man, since man *is a slave to sin* (Jn 8:34) and *a man can receive only what is given him from heaven* (Jn 3:27). For who dares to boast that he of himself can do any good, when Christ says: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him* (Jn 6:44)? Who will glory in his own will, when he understands that *the sinful mind is hostile to God* (Rom 8:7)? Who can speak of his knowledge, since *the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God* (1 Cor 2:14)? In short, who dares to claim anything, when he realizes that *we are not competent to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God* (2 Cor 3:5)? Therefore what the apostle says must justly remain sure and firm: *It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose* (Phil 2:13). For there is no understanding nor will conformable to the understanding and will of God unless Christ has brought it about; as He teaches us: *Apart from me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).

1 Gen 2:7; Gen 3:19; Eccles 12:7.
2 Gen 1:26, 27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10.
3 Gen 3:16-19; Rom 5:12.
4 Gen 2:17; Eph 2:1; Eph 4:18.
5 Ps 94:11; Rom 3:10; Rom 8:6.
6 Rom 1:20, 21.
7 Eph 5:8.

ARTICLE 21 THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST

We believe that Jesus Christ was confirmed by an oath to be a High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.[1] He presented Himself in our place before His Father, appeasing God's wrath by His full satisfaction,[2] offering Himself on the tree of the cross, where He poured out His precious blood to purge away our sins,[3] as the prophets had foretold.[4] For it is written, *the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was numbered with the transgressors* (Is 53:5,7,12),[6] and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though he had first declared Him innocent.[7] He was forced to restore what He did not steal (Ps 69:4). He died as *the righteous for the unrighteous* (1 Pet 3:18).[8] He suffered in body and soul,[9] feeling the horrible punishment caused by our sins, and *his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground* (Luke 22:44). Finally, He exclaimed, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me* (Mt 27:46)? All this He endured for the forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore we justly say, with Paul, that we know nothing *except Jesus Christ and him crucified* (1 Cor 2:2). We *consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus* our *Lord* (Phil 3:8). We find comfort in His wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means of reconciliation with God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which the believers are perfected for all times (Heb 10:14).[10] This is also the reason why the angel of God called Him *Jesus,* that is, Saviour *because he will save his people from their sins* (Mt 1:21).[11]

1 Ps 110:4; Heb 7:15-17.

2 Rom 4:25; Rom 5:8, 9; Rom 8:32; Gal 3:13; Col 2:14; Heb 2:9, 17; Heb 9:11-15.

3 Acts 2:23; Phil 2:8; 1 Tim 1:15; Heb 9:22; 1 Pet 1:18, 19; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 7:14.

4 Lk 24:25-27; Rom 3:21; 1 Cor 15:3.

5 1 Pet 2:24.

6 Mark 15:28

7 Jn 18:38

8 Rom 5:6

9 Ps 22:15

10 Heb 7:26-28; Heb 9:25-28

11 Lk 1:31; Acts 4:12

ARTICLE 26 CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

We believe that we have no access to God except through the only Mediator[1] and Advocate Jesus Christ the righteous.[2] For this purpose He became man, uniting together the divine and human nature, that we men might not be barred from but have access to the divine majesty.[3] This Mediator, however, whom the Father has ordained between Himself and us, should not frighten us by His greatness, so that we look for another according to our fancy. There is no creature in heaven or on earth who loves us more than Jesus Christ.[4] *Who, being in very nature God, made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant* (Phil 2:6, 7), and was *made like his brothers in every way* (Heb 2:17). If, therefore, we had to look for another intercessor, could we find one who loves us more than He who laid down His life for us, even while we were His enemies (Rom 5:8,10)? If we had to look for one who has authority and power, who has more than He who is seated at the right

hand of the Father[5] and who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18)? Moreover, who will be heard more readily than God's own well-beloved Son?[6]

Therefore it was pure lack of trust which introduced the custom of dishonouring the saints rather than honouring them, doing what they themselves never did nor required. On the contrary, they constantly rejected such honour according to their duty,[7] as appears from their writings. Here one ought not to bring in our unworthiness, for it is not a question of offering our prayers on the basis of our own worthiness, but only on the basis of the excellence and worthiness of Jesus Christ,[8] whose righteousness is ours by faith.[9]

Therefore with good reason, to take away from us this foolish fear or rather distrust, the author of Hebrews says to us that Jesus Christ was *made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high Priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted* (Heb 2:17,18). Further, to encourage us more to go to Him, he says: *Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need* (Heb 4:14, 15).[10] The same letter says: *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith* (Heb 10:19, 22). Also, *because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them* (Heb 7:24, 25).[11] What more is needed? Christ Himself says: *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (Jn 14:6). Why should we look for another advocate? It has pleased God to give us His Son as our Advocate. Let us then not leave Him for another, or even look for another, without ever finding one. For when God gave Him to us, He knew very well that we were sinners.

In conclusion, according to the command of Christ, we call upon the heavenly Father through Christ our only Mediator,[12] as we are taught in the Lord's prayer.[13] We rest assured that we shall obtain all we ask of the Father in His Name (Jn 16:23).[14]

1 1 Tim 2:5.
2 1 Jn 2:1.
3 Eph 3:12.
4 Mt 11:28; Jn 15:13; Eph 3:18,19; 1 Jn 4:10.
5 Heb 1:3; Heb 8:1.
6 Mt 3:17; Jn 11:42; Eph 1:6.
7 Acts 10:26; Acts 14:15.
8 Jer 17:5, 7; Acts 4:12.
9 1 Cor 1:30.
10 Jn 10:9; Eph 2:18; Heb 9:24.
11 Rom 8:34.
12 Heb 13:15.
13 Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4.
14 Jn 14:13

APPENDIX B:

RE: THE PRAYERS *[REVISED]*

PRAYERS

1. A GENERAL CONFESSION OF SINS AND PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON AND ON DAYS OF FASTING AND PRAYER

O eternal and merciful God and Father, we humble ourselves before your great majesty, for we have frequently and grievously sinned against you. We acknowledge that if you should enter into judgment with us, we would deserve nothing but temporal and eternal death. We are deeply conscious of the fact that we are conceived and born in sin, and that all manner of evil desires against you and our neighbour fill our hearts. We continually transgress your commandments, failing to do what you have commanded us, and doing that which you have expressly forbidden. We all, like sheep, have gone astray and each of us has turned to his own way. We acknowledge our waywardness, and are heartily sorry for all our sins. We confess that our transgressions are innumerable, and that we have nothing with which to repay our debt. Therefore we are not worthy to be called your children, nor to lift up our eyes to you in heaven.

Nevertheless, O Lord God and gracious Father, we know that you do not desire the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn to you and live. We know that your mercy toward those who turn to you is infinite; and so we take courage to call upon you from the depths of our hearts, trusting in our Mediator Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Have compassion on us and forgive us all our sins for Christ's sake. Wash us in the pure fountain of His blood, so that we may become clean and white as snow. Cover our nakedness with His righteousness, for the glory of your Name. Free our understanding from all blindness, and our hearts from all stubbornness and rebellion.

Open now the mouth of your servant, and fill it with your wisdom and knowledge, that he may boldly proclaim your Word in all its purity. Prepare our hearts to receive it, to understand it, and to preserve it. Inscribe your law, as you have promised, on our hearts, and give us the desire and the strength to walk in the ways of your precepts, to the praise and glory of your Name, and to the edification of the church.

All this, gracious Father, we implore in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Or: . . . who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

2. A PRAYER FOR ALL THE NEEDS OF CHRISTENDOM

Almighty and merciful God, we confess that we are unworthy to come before you in prayer. Our consciences accuse us and our sins testify against us. We also know that you are a righteous judge who punishes the sins of those who transgress your commandments.

But you, LORD, have commanded us to call upon you in all our needs and have in mercy promised to listen to our petitions. We realize that this is not because of our merits, for we have none, but because of the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have appointed as our Mediator and Advocate. Therefore we forsake all other help and refuse to take our refuge in anything but your mercy alone.

Heavenly Father, you have showered upon us so many blessings that we are not able to comprehend them, much less to count them. We especially thank you that you have led us to the light of your truth and to the knowledge of your holy gospel. Time and again, however, we have ungratefully forgotten your benefits, deserted you, by following the desires of our own hearts. We have not honoured you as we should have. We have grievously sinned against you. If you should bring us into judgment, we could expect nothing but condemnation and eternal death. But, LORD, look upon the face of your Anointed, hide your eyes from our sins and remove your wrath through His intercession. Work in us mightily by your Spirit, that He may daily put to death our sinful nature and work the daily renewal of our life.

As it pleases you that we should pray for all mankind, we implore you, bless the spreading of your holy gospel, that it may be proclaimed and received universally so that the whole world may know you. Enlighten the ignorant, strengthen the weak. May everyone by word and deed magnify your holy Name. To this end send faithful servants into your harvest and equip them to discharge the duties of their office diligently. Destroy, we pray, all false teachers, fierce wolves and hirelings who seek their own honour and profit rather than the honour of your holy Name and the salvation of men.

Graciously preserve and govern your Christian churches throughout the world in the unity of the true faith and in godliness of life, that your kingdom may come day by day. Destroy the kingdom of Satan until the perfection of your kingdom arrive when you shall be all in all.

We pray for the mission among Jews, Moslems, and heathen, who live without hope and without you in the world. Grant your blessing upon the spreading of the gospel among those who still call themselves Christians but have deviated from your truth in doctrine and life.

Remember all Christian instruction and all who are engaged in it. Bless all societies which, in accordance with your holy Word, seek to hallow your Name, to further your kingdom, and to fulfil your will. Be with all Christian institutions of mercy and grant those who work there the full measure of your love.

We also pray for the civil government, for our Queen and her house, and for all national, provincial, and local authorities, whom you have set over us. Grant that they may perform their task in such a manner that the rule of the King of kings is acknowledged by them and by their subjects. May they as your servants more and more oppose the kingdom of Satan, which is a kingdom of lawlessness. Grant that under the rule and protection of the governing authorities we may lead a quiet and peaceful life, godly and respectful in every way.

We pray for all your children who suffer persecution for the sake of your Name and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Comfort them with your Holy Spirit and deliver them from the hands of their enemies. Do not permit the memory of your Name to be removed from the earth. Do not let the enemies of your truth have occasion to dishonour and blaspheme your Name. But if it is your will that persecuted Christians by their death bear witness to the truth and glorify your Name, comfort them in their sufferings. May they accept their trials as from your fatherly hand and remain faithful in life and death to the honour of your Name, to the edification of the church, and to their salvation.

We remember before you all those whom you are chastening with poverty, imprisonment, physical illness, or spiritual distress. May it please you to heal the sick and to restore soundness of mind to the mentally ill. Surround those who

are handicapped in body or mind with your care and bless all that is done to help them. Lift up those who are cast down. Be a Comforter to the widowers, a Protector to the widows, a Father to the orphans. Show your love to the lonely, your strength to the weak, your grace to the dying, your sustaining power to the bereaved. Grant that all trials may yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Glorify yourself in the faith, love, and endurance of all those whom you have called to your eternal glory in Christ.

O LORD, take us and our dear ones into your care and keeping. Watch over our families. Strengthen the expectant mothers and grant them a good delivery. Bless the bond between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. Be with those married couples whom you, in your wisdom, do not give children. Bless them and cause them to be a blessing in the midst of your household.

Help us in our daily work, and protect us when we travel. Bless our work for the promotion of your kingdom and for the benefit of our country, or for the advancement of honourable personal interests. Bless the products of the soil and grant favourable weather and fruitful increase.

Enable us in our respective callings to live according to your will. May we use the talents we have received from your hand in such a way that they may not hinder but rather promote our life in your kingdom. In all temptations strengthen us so that we fight the good fight of the faith, obtain the victory, and hereafter with Christ inherit eternal life.

We pray all this in the Name of our faithful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Or: . . . who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

3. A PUBLIC CONFESSION OF SINS AND PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON

Heavenly Father, eternal and merciful God, we acknowledge and confess before your divine majesty that we are poor wretched sinners. We were conceived and born in sin and corruption, and are inclined to all manner of evil and incapable by nature of doing any good. We also transgress your holy commandments continually. We grieve you by our sins and bring judgment on ourselves because of them. But, LORD, we are truly sorry for our sins, by which we have provoked you to anger. Our conscience accuses us and we acknowledge that we are to blame for our sinfulness and transgressions. Yet we plead for your mercy on the ground of the suffering of your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Have compassion on us, gracious God and Father, and forgive us our sins for the sake of His death. Grant us also the grace of your Holy Spirit, that He may teach us to confess our sins sincerely and to know our wretchedness. May He so lead us that we die to sin, rise up to a new life, and bring forth fruits of holiness and righteousness acceptable to you through Jesus Christ.

Make us understand your holy Word in accordance with your divine will, so that we may learn to put our trust in you alone and not in any creature. May our old nature with all its evil desires be put to death day by day and may we present ourselves a living sacrifice to you, to the honour of your Name and the benefit of our neighbour.

We also implore you, gracious God, to bring back to yourself in true repentance all who depart from your truth, that we all with one accord may serve you through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(Or: . . . who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

4. A PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON

We thank you, merciful God and Father, that you have brought us to know you and your Son by your Spirit and Word and have caused your Word to be proclaimed to us. Grant that we, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, may live in Him*, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness* *– Col. 2:7. But since we, through ignorance, unthankfulness, and discontent, do not obey you as we should, we implore you, O Lord, remember your great mercy and have compassion on us. Teach us truly to know our sins, sincerely to repent, and to amend our life. Strengthen the ministers to preach your holy Word faithfully and steadfastly. Likewise, Lord, give strength to all civil authorities, that they may use the sword entrusted to them in justice and equity.

Keep us, we implore you, from all hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, and frustrate all evil and subtle designs against your Word and your church. O Lord, do not withdraw from us your Word and Spirit, but grant us a strong faith, patience, and steadfastness in all suffering and adversity. Help and sustain your church, and deliver your people from opposition, ridicule, and tyranny. We pray in particular for _____. Strengthen those who are weak and burdened with sorrow. Grant us your peace through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who gave us this sure promise*: I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name* – John 16:23, Amen.

(Or: and who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

5. A PRAYER BEFORE THE EXPLANATION OF THE CATECHISM

Heavenly Father, your Word is perfect, reviving the soul; your testimony is sure, making wise the simple. Your gospel is the power unto salvation to everyone who believes. We, however, are by nature blind and incapable of doing any good. Therefore we implore you, illumine our darkened minds by your Holy Spirit. Give us a humble heart, free from all conceit and worldly wisdom, which is enmity against you, so that, hearing your Word, we may rightly understand it and let ourselves be governed by it. Confirm us in our catholic and undoubted Christian faith. Graciously bring back those who are leaving your truth, that we all in unity may serve you in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. We ask these things only for the sake of Christ. Amen.

(Or: Who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

6. A PRAYER AFTER THE EXPLANATION OF THE CATECHISM

Gracious God and merciful Father, we thank you that you have established your covenant with the believers and their children. You have not only sealed this by holy baptism, but also show it daily by preparing praise to yourself out of the mouths of children and infants, whereby the wise and prudent of this world are put to shame. You reveal it also by teaching us your ways and will in Christ Jesus our

Lord. You gave pastors and teachers to equip the saints for serving you so that the body of Christ may be built up. We implore you to continue to work in the hearts of all the children of the covenant, both old and young, in order that we all may grow in the knowledge of your grace in Christ until we reach complete maturity in Him. May we, by your power, not be tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching. Bless our families and endow the parents by your Spirit with wisdom from above, that they may bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. We pray for all teaching which is based on your holy Word, as we have summarized it in the confessions of the church. Be with all who labour in it and provide them with knowledge and wisdom which is rooted in the fear of your Name. Put to shame those who are high and mighty in their own eyes and in the estimation of the world. May by the godliness of your people, the kingdom of Satan be destroyed and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in all your churches be strengthened, to the glory of your holy Name and unto our salvation.

All this we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ Your Son, Amen.

(Or: Who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

7. A PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

Almighty God, faithful Father, you have made the world and uphold it by your powerful Word. You did provide Israel in the desert with food from on high. Will you also bless us, your humble servants, and renew our strength by these gifts, which, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have received from your bountiful, fatherly hand. Give that we may use them in moderation. Help us to put them to use in a life devoted to you and your service, for we do acknowledge that you are our Father and the Source of all good things. Grant also that at all times we may long for the lasting food of your Word. May we so be nourished to everlasting life, which you have prepared for us by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour. In His Name we pray. Amen.

8. THANKSGIVING AFTER MEALS

Lord God, our heavenly Father, we thank you for the food and drink which we have enjoyed in this meal, and for all your gracious gifts, which we continually receive out of your hand. We thank you especially for your divine Word which we were allowed to read together. Through it you have caused us to be born anew to a living hope, which you have revealed in the holy gospel. Merciful God and Father, we pray, let our hearts not be weighed down by the cares of this life nor become too deeply attached to earthly and perishable things. Grant us your grace, that in our daily tasks we may seek the things which are above, expecting our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is coming on the clouds for our deliverance.

We give our thanks and submit our prayer in His Name. Amen.

9. A PRAYER FOR THE SICK AND THE SPIRITUALLY DISTRESSED

Merciful God and Father, you give eternal hope and salvation to the living and eternal life to the dying. You alone have life and death in your hands, and Christ alone has the keys of death and of the grave. All things are in your power so that

neither health nor sickness, good nor evil, life nor death can happen to us without your will. We also know that by your power and direction all things must serve our salvation. Gracious Father, we implore you to grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that He may teach us truly to know our misery and to bear patiently with your chastisements. If you O Lord kept a record of our sins these chastisements should have been ten thousand times more severe. We believe that they are not evidence of your wrath but of your fatherly love towards us, that we might not be condemned with the world.

LORD strengthen our faith by your Holy Spirit, so that we become more and more united with Christ our Head, since it is your good pleasure to unite us to Him in both suffering and glory. Enable us to bear what is brought upon us by your fatherly wisdom. We submit ourselves entirely to your will, whether you leave us on earth or whether you take us home unto yourself. We trust that with body and soul, both in life and in death, we belong to Christ, whose resurrection is the guarantee of our blessed resurrection.

Grant that we may experience the comfort of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. May His innocent blood wash away the dirt of our sins and may His righteousness cover our unrighteousness in your sight. Arm us with faith and hope, so that we may overcome the assaults of Satan and not be put to shame by any fear of death. When our eyes grow dim, let your eyes be open toward us. When you take away from us the ability to speak will you then hear the sighing of our hearts. When our hands have lost their strength, continue to support and carry us on your everlasting arms.

Father, we commit our spirit into your hands. Deal with us according to your promise. Never forsake us, but always be with us, even in the hour of death.

Hear and answer us for the sake of Christ, our dear Saviour. Amen.

(Or: Who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

10. A PRAYER FOR THE SICK AND THE SPIRITUALLY DISTRESSED

Righteous God and merciful Father, you are the Almighty, without whose will nothing occurs in heaven or on earth. Life and death are also in your hand. We are not worthy to call upon you and, if you should keep a record of our sins we could not hope that you would hear us and answer us. We pray that you will look upon us according to your mercy in Christ Jesus, who carried our sorrows and was pierced for our transgressions. We acknowledge that of ourselves we are incapable of doing any good and are inclined to all evil. Therefore we are justly chastised and disciplined by you and yet we do not nearly receive what we deserve.

Lord, you have made us your people and you are our God. Your mercy, which you have never withheld from those who turn to you, is our only refuge. We pray, therefore, do not hold our sins against us but impute to us the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, so that in Him we may stand before you. Graciously grant us recovery, take this suffering and sickness away from us, and bless the means of healing you have provided. If it pleases you to prolong our trial, give us patience and strength to bear it all according to your will. You are wise and good. May, whatever you decide, serve the renewal of our life.

Lord rather chastise us here, than that we should perish with the world hereafter. Grant that we may forsake the world and crucify our old nature, and that

we may more and more be renewed after the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us never be separated from your love, but draw us closer to you from day to day. Grant that we with joy we may fulfill our calling, which is to die with Christ, to rise with Him triumphantly, and to live with Him eternally. We believe that you will hear us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Or: Who taught us to pray, *Our Father* . . . .)

11. A MORNING PRAYER

Merciful Father, we thank you that in your great faithfulness you kept watch over us during this past night. Strengthen and guide us by your Holy Spirit, that we may use this new day and all the days of our life in holiness and righteousness. Grant that we in all our undertakings may always have your glory foremost in our minds. May we always work in such a manner that we expect all results and fruits of our work from your generous hand alone.

We ask that you will graciously forgive all our sins according to your promise, for the sake of the passion and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through your grace we are heartily sorry for all our transgressions. Illumine our hearts, that we may lay aside all works of darkness and as children of light may walk in the light and live a new life in all godliness.

Bless the proclamation of your divine Word here and in the mission fields. Strengthen all faithful labourers in your vineyard.

We pray for those whom you have set over us, that as servants of you, the King of kings and Lord of lords they may rule according to the calling you give them. Give endurance to all who are persecuted because of their faith and deliver them from their enemies. Destroy all the works of the devil. Comfort the distressed. Show your mercy and help to all who call upon your holy Name in sickness and other trials of life. Deal with us and with all your people according to your grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, who assured us that you will do whatever we ask in His Name. Amen.

12. AN EVENING PRAYER

Merciful God, in whom is no darkness at all, we come before you at the end of this day. We thank you that you have given us strength for our daily work, and have guided us safely through this day. Bless what was good in our labour and conduct.

We pray that you will give us peaceful and undisturbed rest so that we may be able to take up our daily task again. Command your angels to guard us and cause your face to shine upon us. We cast all our anxieties on you, for you take care of us.

Control our sleep and rule our hearts, in order that we may not be defiled in any way but may glorify you even in our nightly rest. Defend and protect us against all assaults of the devil and take us into your divine protection.

We confess that we did not spend this day without grievously sinning against you. In your mercy please cover our sins as you cover the earth in the darkness of the night.

Grant comfort and rest to all who are ill, bowed down with grief, or afflicted with spiritual distress. your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not abandon the works of your hands.

All this we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

13. AN OPENING PRAYER FOR ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES

Heavenly Father, merciful God, it has pleased you according to your infinite wisdom and lovingkindness to gather a church unto yourself out of the peoples of the earth. Through your Word and Spirit, you govern her through the service of men. You have graciously called us to be office-bearers and have charged us to keep watch over ourselves and all the flock which Christ has bought with His precious blood.

In your name we are now together to deal with matters concerning the upbuilding and welfare of your churches and to do so in an ecclesiastical manner. We realize that we are unworthy and unable of ourselves to think, speak, or accomplish any good. We implore you, that your Holy Spirit may govern us in our deliberations and decisions and may lead us into your truth.

Keep all misunderstanding away from us and guard us against the sinful inclinations of our hearts. May your Word be our only rule and standard, so that our work may glorify your Name, serve the well-being of your churches, and bring peace to our consciences.

We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep. Amen.

14. A CLOSING PRAYER FOR ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank you that in the gathering and preservation of your church in our country you are pleased to use our services. You have graciously ordered all things so that your gospel can be preached without hindrance and we may engage in public worship and have our ecclesiastical assemblies. At the close of this meeting we humbly ask forgiveness for the shortcomings and sins which did not remain hidden from your eyes. We bring thanks for the good we received from your fatherly hand. Will you, O faithful God and Father, bless all decisions taken in agreement with your holy Word. Preserve your church by the purity of doctrine, by the proper administration and use of the sacraments, and by the faithful exercise of church discipline.

Destroy all wicked counsels conceived against your Word and church, and strengthen the ministers to preach your gospel boldly and steadfastly.

Give perseverance to the overseers and the deacons, that they may be a blessing to your people through the faithful administration of their offices.

Bless our Queen and her house, that she may reign by your wisdom. So govern the civil authorities that they may rule in justice and with wise restraint. May their rule be directed to your supremacy as the King of rulers and ruled alike. Let in this way the shameful and wicked dominion of Satan be increasingly broken down. Grant that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life, godly and respectful in every way.

Hear us, O God and Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

15. AN OPENING PRAYER FOR THE MEETINGS OF THE DEACONS

Merciful God and Father, you have not only declared that we will always have the poor with us, but have also commanded us to support them in their need. You have ordained the service of deacons for your church, in order that the needy members may receive the necessary support. You have called us to the office of deacon in this congregation, and we are now assembled in your Name to deal with the matters pertaining to our office. We humbly implore you to dwell among us with the Spirit of discretion. Grant us His help, that we may be able to establish who are the ones that are truly in need. Lead us to them and help us to distribute the offerings that have been collected in a spirit of joy, fidelity, and liberality.

Kindle fervent love for the needy in the hearts of your people, that they may generously contribute to them as your stewards. Grant us sufficient means to bring relief to the needy. May we discharge the duties of our office as Christ's ministers of mercy.

Give us your grace to relieve needs by means of material gifts and to instill the comfort of your holy Word into the hearts of the afflicted, that they may put their trust in you alone. Bless, we pray, our work of mercy that we all may praise and thank you, while we await the blessed appearance of your Son, Jesus Christ, who became poor for our sakes that He might enrich us with eternal treasures.

In His Name we pray. Amen.

2.7. Website Committee

Report to GENERAL SYNOD NEERLANDIA 2001 from the COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL WEBSITE

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

With fraternal greetings in the name of our Saviour, we hereby submit our report to General Synod Neerlandia 2001, as mandated by General Synod Fergus 1998.

1. COMMITTEE MANDATE

A. Background

The Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* reported to General Synod Fergus 1998:

"The requests we received for material taken from the *Book of Praise* in a format other than the paper format we currently have, leads us to suggest that Synod appoint a church to develop and maintain a formal web page of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches."

On the basis of this report, General Synod Fergus 1998 concluded:

"Synod concurs with the Committee to make available the *Book of Praise* in an electronic format and to develop and maintain a formal presence on the internet. Consideration must be directed to the matter of copyright and the matter of cost. Instead of appointing a particular church to maintain the web-page, several brothers who are competent in these matters can be appointed for this purpose."

B. Mandate

General Synod Fergus 1998 appointed this committee

"for the purpose of creating and maintaining an official web page for the Canadian Reformed Churches with the following mandate:

a. to serve the churches by creating and maintaining an official web page which would contain official and semi-official materials that reflect the life of the churches, are of benefit to the membership, and of assistance to her witness in this world;
b. to report to the next General Synod regarding the activities and noticeable benefits of this web page." (Acts, Art. 140)

2. COMMITTEE FUNCTIONING

A. Communication

The geographic distances between committee members have made it difficult for the committee to meet in person. In order to fulfil our mandate, the committee has met a few times in person, and has made use of conference calls by telephone. Most of our discussions, however, have been (appropriately) via email. On the whole this has proved to be an effective means of communication amongst committee members, although this can occasionally lengthen the decision making process.

B. Distribution of tasks

Two of the committee members possess a high level of technical expertise, and internally our committee agreed that these brothers would focus on the technical aspects, whereas the other two members of the committee focused more on the administrative and content aspects. The committee would have been more productive had there been more members with advanced technical ability, since much of the work needed to be done by the technical personnel.

The committee has also on occasion sought the advice and assistance of other individuals from among the federation to perform specific tasks for the committee. In this way the committee sought to utilize the talents of other members of our churches, and spread the work-load.

3. COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

A. Technical Setup

1. Internet Service Provider

The services of a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) called "BBS42" in Guelph have been used. This has proven to be reasonably priced and reliable.

However, because of the services we are using (mail redirects, cgi-bin scripts, etc) the existing service agreement we have with BBS42 is not adequate. Relatively frequent changes to email redirects, the lack of mailing list functionality (currently provided by one of the committee members), and use of a search engine require additional functionality. We have investigated other full service ISPs and are not able to obtain the levels of functionality we need at a reasonable cost. BBS42 has offered us

a co-location service option whereby we operate a separate server on BBS42's premises. (See further details about cost under 3.F.2 & recommendation under 4.C.)

2. Domain name

In order to have something short, memorable, and reflective of our church federation, our preferred choice for a domain name was www.carc.org (an acronym for **C**anadian and **A**merican **R**eformed **C**hurches). Since this was unavailable, the committee registered the following domain name for the web-site: www.canrc.org.

3. Email

As part of the arrangement with our ISP, the committee was able to offer "permanent" email addresses to all ministers in our federation, of the type: ministername@canrc.org (which redirects email to their existing personal email account). Feedback from the ministers about this arrangement has been positive.

4. Presentation

The committee has endeavoured to maintain a standard format throughout the web-site, one that is aesthetically pleasing, functional, easy to navigate, and compatible with a wide range of web browsers.

B. General direction

1. Web-sites of local churches and organizations

Many local churches and organizations in our federation have their own web-sites. In line with the principles of Reformed church polity, the committee felt that the official web-site should focus on content that is of common concern to the churches, and should not stifle local initiatives by seeking to replace them.

2. Target users

In line with the mandate, the committee has endeavoured to provide information on the web-site that would especially serve the needs of three main target groups:

a) Members of the Canadian and American Reformed churches
b) Members of other Reformed churches
c) People unfamiliar with our churches

3. Content

The committee has focussed on presenting information with official and semi-official materials, rather than pointing to existing information on the Internet by means of links.

C. Current content

1. Introduction to the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

An existing unofficial web-site for our federation (made previously by one of the committee members) was revised and integrated as part of the official web-site. This section introduces our federation by providing basic information about the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The content is largely based on a booklet produced by the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce, and includes information about our basis in Scripture and the Reformed confessions, Reformed church government, church history, mission work, and church life.

2. Online resources

a) The Book of Praise

The complete text of the creeds and confessions, complete with words of introduction, and links to all the Scripture proof-texts, is available online as part of the official web-site. The church order is also accessible in entirety. The committee is still working on making all the liturgical forms and prayers available online, as well as the complete text of the psalms and hymns. The committee regrets that at the time of writing it has not yet completed this part of its mandate, but has been hindered by various obstacles (see details below).

b) The Acts of Synod

The site contains the complete text of the Acts of Synod Fergus 1998. The electronic text of the Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995 has been obtained, but work needs to be done in formatting it before it can be placed online.

3. Church directory

The site contains an online church directory arranged by geographical location. Every church of the federation is listed, along with the location and times of worship, the name and email address of the minister, and a link to the local church web-site where appropriate. This is one of the most popular parts of the existing web-site.

4. Church news

Church news and events are listed as soon as they become available, such as announcements about the calling of ministers, results of classical exams, as well as special events and lectures at the Theological College. Site statistics confirm that this is the most frequently accessed part of the web-site. Feedback has confirmed that this is much appreciated by members throughout the bond of churches, in order to stay up to date be up to date with church news.

5. Theological College

An existing web-site for the Theological College (made previously by one of the committee members) has been improved and integrated as part of the official web-site. The content is largely based on the official handbook for the Theological College, and has been reviewed and approved by the Senate of the Theological College. This portion of the web-site includes information about the history and operation of the Theological College, the Senate, programs of study, admissions information, and names of the current students, as well as contact information for the staff and faculty.

6. Search engine

This facility enables visitors to the web-site to search the entire site (including the creeds and confessions) by key words.

D. Future Content

The committee has given consideration to including content such as articles from various church magazines, lectures and speeches, press releases of the broader assemblies, past Acts of Synod, sermons, and links to official web-sites of Canadian Reformed organizations. These have not yet been included, since the committee wanted to give priority to completing its mandate concerning the online publication of the *Book of Praise*.

E. Obstacles

The committee has had difficulty obtaining the complete and correct text of the *Book of Praise*. This has hindered our progress in completing this part of our mandate.

Given the revisions to the *Book of Praise* being proposed to this Synod by the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, the committee also foresees that the material published on the web-site will soon need to be revised, to keep it in line with the officially adopted version of the *Book of Praise*.

F. Other Considerations

1. Copyright

The committee has determined that the laws of copyright that apply to printed material apply also to material published on the internet. Any electronic reproduction of the *Book of Praise* legally requires permission from the copyright holders. The committee has obtained permission from the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* to publish the contents of the *Book of Praise* on the internet. Since the *Book of Praise* is copyrighted, all material from the *Book of Praise* is published online along with a copyright notice practically identical to the copyright notice in the printed editions of the *Book of Praise*, thus legally preventing unauthorized duplication of its contents. The committee has endeavoured to ensure that the online version of the *Book of Praise* is identical in all respects to the printed version most recently approved by General Synod.

2. Cost

Costs have been limited to some minimal travel expenses, and the cost of domain name registration and internet service. The cost of maintaining the current web-site is $350 per year, since the existing content consists of only text and graphics. The committee has considered publishing audio versions of sermons and speeches, but this would increase the cost significantly (up to ten times the current amount) due to the extra resources required, and for this reason the committee has decided not to pursue this as yet. With the current arrangement, the cost of developing and maintaining the web-site has been minimal.

However, given the services we are currently using, the fees for maintaining the present site are expected to increase by at least $200 in the next year. Furthermore, as noted under 3.A.1, the current arrangement with our Internet Service Provider does not adequately meet our needs. The best solution at this time appears to be that the committee purchase suitable hardware that will meet our needs, and enter into a co-location agreement with our Internet Service Provider where the systems will reside on their premises and the committee will provide all operations. The approximate costs are as follows:

Capital costs of hardware:	
Server (includes disks)	$1800 (initial purchase)
Switched power supply	$ 300 (initial purchase)
Operating costs	
Hydro and bandwidth	$ 600 (per year)

We can reasonably expect the hardware to last 2-3 years, so the capital costs of the hardware are about $58-$87 per month, and the operating costs are about $50 per month. The total cost would be approximately in the range of $1320 to $1680 per year. These costs are only estimates, since they were obtained at the time of writing this report, and could be subject to change when they are actually incurred.

G. Feedback

1. Site statistics

The total number of web pages viewed per month currently averages about 10,000. Visits to the news page account for approximately half of these page views.

2. Existing content

Feedback about the existing content has been almost exclusively positive. Aside from helpful comments identifying typographical errors, the committee has received much encouragement by word of mouth and by email from various members throughout the bond of churches. Appreciation has especially been expressed for the regular church news, online church directory, and various parts of the *Book of Praise*.

3. Suggestions

The committee has received several requests to have the entire *Book of Praise* available, a project which we have been working on as part of our mandate anyway. The committee has also received several suggestions to include sermons on the web-site.

4. Questions

The committee has received a variety of questions by email from sources both within and outside our church federation. These questions have ranged from requests for further information about the *Book of Praise* to theological questions and requests for advice on pastoral issues. The committee has responded to such questions by answering them as best as possible, or by redirecting them to other committees or qualified individuals in our churches.

H. Noticeable Benefits

The committee has identified several noticeable benefits of the existing web-site:

1. For members of our own churches

The news page enables members to keep in touch with news and events throughout the bond of churches, fostering an interest and concern in the well-being of the entire federation. The church directory is especially useful to those who are looking for information for local churches, their places and times of worship, or contact information. Judging by the enormous interest in the Acts of Synod that were placed online at the time of General Synod Fergus, placing such information on the internet promotes an interest in the broader assemblies at the grass roots level, and enables the local churches to be well informed about the activities of Synod. The information about the Theological College serves to promote a greater awareness of our theological training, as well as provide detailed information for those considering pursuing the training for the ministry.

2. For members of other Reformed churches

There has especially been interest from people of the Reformed faith interested in the Anglo-Genevan Psalter and the contents of the *Book of Praise*. By placing this material on the web-site, an appreciation and understanding of the *Book of Praise* outside our federation is promoted. The web-site also serves to provide detailed information to people from other Reformed churches who are seeking to become aware of the activities and principles of the churches in our federation.

3. For people unfamiliar with our churches

The existing web-site has served to enable newcomers to our churches to find a local place of worship, and to answer basic questions that they have about our church life.

The committee is confident that the web-site serves well to distribute information about Reformed church life and doctrine and to foster interest in our church federation both within and outside of our bond of churches.

4. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Future direction

The committee feels that the work done thus far has been profitable, and needs to be continued. Ongoing work is necessary to maintain the email addresses, as well as updating and revising the existing content, such as the church directory. This is especially the case with the impending revisions to the *Book of Praise*.

Despite the benefits of the content of the existing web-site, the committee is also of the opinion that there are also many opportunities for incorporating new material and content on the Internet. The internet is quickly becoming a powerful and popular medium of communication in our society, and we would do well to harness some of its possibilities in a manner that would serve our church community, and promote the doctrines and practices of our Reformed federation of churches in this world.

The committee recommends that General Synod continue the committee.

B. Committee composition

The committee recommends that General Synod appoint a committee consisting of two members who are ministers, one member associated with the Theological College, and four members with advanced technical abilities (two from Eastern Canada and two from Western Canada).

Names of suitable and willing candidates will be sent to Synod in a separate letter. The committee endorses the recommendation from the Board of Governors that the librarian of the Theological College, Margaret VanderVelde, be appointed as a member of the committee.

C. Technical setup

The committee recommends that General Synod direct the committee to purchase suitable hardware that will meet its needs, as described under 3.A.1 & 3.F.2.

Considering that the web-site serves the entire federation, these costs are quite reasonable. This will also overcome the limitations of the current service arrangement, which is proving inadequate for the effective functionality of the present web-site and its future development.

D. Web page content

The committee recommends that the General Synod direct the committee to continue their present work on further developing the web-site, by completing the online publication of the Book of Praise *and exploring the possibilities of adding new material such as sermons and speeches, articles, and the Acts/Press-Releases of ecclesiastical assemblies***.**

E. *Book of Praise*

The committee recommends that General Synod mandate the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise to make an electronic edition of the Book of Praise *as adopted by this Synod available to the Committee for the Official Web-Site as soon as possible.*

This ensures that the material published online is current and accurate.

F. Mandate

The committee recommends that General Synod give the committee the following mandate:

1. To maintain the existing web-site, including:
   a) its associated technical functions.
   b) its existing content, revising this content whenever necessary.
2. To complete the online publication of the entire *Book of Praise*, using the text most recently adopted and revised by General Synod.
3. To incorporate any new official and semi-official material that would reflect the life of the churches, be of benefit to the membership, and of assistance to witness of the churches in this world. Consideration should especially be given to the inclusion of sermons, speeches and articles, as well as the Acts/Press-Releases of ecclesiastical assemblies.
4. To report to the next General Synod regarding the activities and noticeable benefits of this web page.

Respectfully submitted by your committee:

T.J. Flach

J.M. Hoogerdijk

R.E. Pot (secretary)

G.H. Visscher (convener)

2.8 GENERAL FUND REPORT

CARMAN EAST CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCH
Carman, Manitoba

To General Synod Neerlandia

Financial Report General Fund from

January 21, 1998 to February 14, 2001

Brother G. Vandersluis is taking care of the books for the General Fund. Two office bearers of the Carman East Church have audited the books for the General Fund and found them to be in good order.

As authorized by General Synod Fergus (article 77 1V B), the churches were assessed $2.00 per confessing member for the year 1998, $1.50 per confessing member for the year 2000 and $1,00 per confessing member for the year 2001.

INCOME:	
Balance January 21, 1998	4,704.73
Assessment from the Churches	23,201.78
Interest	401.19
Exchange	62.05
TOTAL	**28,369.75**
DISBURSEMENTS:	
Committee for Ecclesiastical Unity	5,043.38
Committee for Contact E.R.Q.	1,117.20
Committee for Contact O.P.C.	1,079.42
Committee for Contact RCUS	5,817.93
Committee for Contact Churches in the Americas, including ICRC 8,207.30	
Bible Translation	1,351.89
Book of Praise	700.00
Website	1,125.99
Bank Charges and Cheques	63.73
TOTAL	**24,506.84**
Balance February 14, 2001	**3,862.91**

With brotherly greetings,

FOR THE CONSISTORY

Chairman: J. Moesker

Clerk: W. Weidenhammer

2.9 FINANCES SYNOD FERGUS

Emmanuel Canadian Reformed Church
P.O. Box 1636, Guelph, ON N1H 6R7

September 1, 1999

General Synod 2001
c/o Canadian Reformed Church at Neerlandia

RE: AUDIT OF FINANCES OF SYNOD FERGUS 1998

Esteemed Brothers,
The church at Guelph was appointed by Synod Fergus 1998 to audit the finances of Synod 1998 and reports that they were found to be in good order.
To assist us in this, we appointed a committee consisting of Br. P. VanderSchaaf and Sr. J. Lodder. They brought the following to our attention and we deem it advisable to bring it forward for your consideration as well.
The meals, etc., which were prepared and served by a host of dedicated sisters to the members and guests of Synod, were obtained by the sisters in their own vehicles, and not one of them charged a single kilometer, though some had to drive considerable distances. All that labour of love cannot easily be overestimated.
Since the bank did not return the canceled cheques, all that could be done was compare the invoices and expense reports with the debits in the passbook. Therefore it could not be established to whom the cheques had been made payable.
There does not seem to be any regulations in place regarding the management of finances for synod. The accountability could be improved if such regulations were put into place.
We have the following recommendations:

1.) That the convening church instruct the treasurer of Synod to pay only those invoices and expense reports which have been authorized for payment by an executive of Synod in order to improve accountability.
2.) To instruct the treasurer of Synod to have the canceled cheques returned if it is possible. In the event that the canceled cheques are not returned to the treasurer, that the recipient of the money state on the expense report that payment has been received and in which manner.

Finally, pleased find enclosed a summary of the expenses, along with a comparison with those of three preceding General Synods.

We wish you the Lord's blessings in your work.
On behalf of Council,

Rev. A. J. Pol
Chairman

G. B. VanWoudenberg
Correspondence Clerk

FINANCES OF GENERAL SYNOD

	Fergus 1998	Abbotsford 1995	Lincoln 1992	Winnipeg 1989
	$	$	$	$
Stationary, Postage, Telelphone		987.01		
Stationary, Postage				639.28
Telephone				405.21
Stationary	1,399.78	1,340.41		
Postage	757.99	505.66		
Telephone	146.34	129.67		
Travel			E&W	12, 937.99
(delegates East)	1,787.90			1,935.09
(delegates West)	5,245.34			4,450.28
(delegates East)		6,200.34		
(delegates West)		1,336.07		
Meals, etc.	2,560.79	2,164.76	1,345.05	2,989.99
Equipment Rentals	2,468.00	2,210.46	1,511.92	735.00
Acts of Synod	14,326.23	13,936.48	11,684.44	2,930.15
Service charges Bank	16.41			33.72
Miscellaneous	86.67	333.77	706.24	737.54
Total	28,795.45	28,157.62	22,620.03	31,408.88
		See Acts	See Acts	See Acts
		G.S. 1998	G.S. 1995	G.S. 1992
		Art.76	Art.108	Art.66
		page 67	page 76	page 43

Comparison:

G.S. 1995 Abbotsford	$28,157.62	(See above)
G.S. 1992 Lincoln	22,620.03	(See above)
G.S. 1989 Winnipeg	31,408.88	(See above)
G.S. 1986 Burlington	17,009.90	(See Acts G.S. 1989, art. 147, page 109)
G.S. 1983 Cloverdale	32,413.63	(See Acts G.S. 1986, art. 24, page 18)

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