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ACTS

General Synod Chatham 2004
of the Canadian Reformed Churches
February 10-21, 2004

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Morning Session – Tuesday, February 10, 2004

Article 1

Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. H. Versteeg called the meeting to order. He asked all who were present to sing Psalm 123:1, after which he also read Psalm 123. Next he gave a meditation on this Psalm and encouraged the delegates in their task. This speech can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*. He then led in prayer, after which we sang Psalm 67:1. A welcome was extended to all the delegates, including the fraternal delegates from sister churches.

Article 2

Examination of the Credentials

The credentials were examined and all the *primi* delegates were present. The following were in attendance:

From Regional Synod West

Ministers: K. Jonker, J. Moesker, W.B. Slomp, C. Van Spronsen

Elders: J. Kuik, W. Pleiter, J. Vanderstoep, P. Van Woudenberg

From Regional Synod East

Ministers: D.G.J. Agema, J. De Gelder, W. den Hollander, J. Van Vliet

Elders: J. Jonker, F. Kampen, H. Vanderwel, G. Van Woudenberg

Article 3

Election of Officers and Constitution of Synod

The following officers were elected to serve Synod:

Chairman – Rev. C. Van Spronsen
Vice-Chairman – Rev. J. De Gelder
First Clerk – Rev. J. Van Vliet
Second Clerk – Rev. D. Agema

Then, on behalf of the convening church, Rev. H. Versteeg declared Synod constituted. The elected officers took their places. The chairman thanked the convening church for all its work they did in preparing for Synod. He also expressed the hope that the delegates will be able to work together in good harmony. Synod adjourned in order to give the moderamen time to make some arrangements for the proceedings of Synod.

Afternoon Session – Tuesday, February 10, 2004

Article 4

Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. We sang Psalm 121:1,4. The roll was called. All delegates were present.

Welcome to Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen

A special welcome was extended to Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated).

Article 5

General Housekeeping Matters

After receiving a proposal from the moderamen, Synod **decided** the following:

Presence on the Internet: Synod decided to publish the *Acts of Synod* on the church website as they become available. However, as the *Acts* are adopted, Synod will decide whether there are any decisions which should not be immediately posted on the Internet.

Privileges of the floor: Synod appointed Rev. H. Versteeg as advisor to Synod. Synod was informed that we could expect visits from Rev. G. Syms and T. Mayville (RCUS), Br. K. Wezeman and Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen (GKN), Revs. C. Schouls and L.W. Bilkes (FRCNA), Rev. J. Ferguson (OPC) and br. G.B. Veenendaal (FRCA). All representatives of sister churches will be given the privilege of the floor.

Time Schedule: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

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, February 14, 2003.

Devotions: Synod shall begin and close each day with Scripture reading, a short meditation, prayer and singing in plenary sessions. A schedule will be handed out.

Press Release: The press release will not be published until after Synod has been closed.

Committees: Advisory committees shall provide each delegate with a copy of their reports, plus a copy for the archives, before they are dealt with in plenary session.

Synod Documents: Copies of synod documents are available only to members of Synod and fraternal delegates.

Guidelines: For all procedures, the *Guidelines*, as adopted by General Synod, will apply. See Appendix #2, *Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995*.

Travel expenses: Expenses are to be submitted, with receipts, to br. M. De Boer. Delegates are to be reimbursed for travel costs at thirty cents per km. This amount is not to exceed the cost of flying.

Article 6

Committees of Synod

The following committees were appointed:

Committee 1

Members: Rev. W. den Hollander (convener), Rev. J. Van Vliet, br. J. Kuik, br. J. Vanderstoep
Topics: CCCA, Appeals re: OPC, Miscellaneous
Agenda Items: 8.1.a-g; 8.2.b; 8.3.2; 8.4.a,b,c,e,o,p

Committee 2

Members: Rev. J. Moesker (convener), Rev. J. De Gelder, br. J. Jonker, br. W. Pleiter
Topics: CPEU, Appeals re: Phase 2 with URC and re: Right of Individuals to Appeal
Agenda Items: 8.1.h,j; 8.2.f,j,n; 8.3.5; 8.4.f,g,h,l

Committee 3

Members: Rev. K. Jonker (convener), Rev. D. Agema, br. F. Kampen, br. G. Van Woudenberg
Topics: CRCA, Bible Translation, Website and Appeals re: Lord's Supper
Agenda Items: 8.2.a,c,e,h,i,k,l,o; 8.3.1, 8.3.4, 8.3.7; 8.4.d,i,j,k,m

Committee 4

Members: Rev. W. Slomp (convener), Rev. C. Van Spronsen, br. H. Vanderwel, br. P. Van Woudenberg
Topics: *Book of Praise*, Theological College, Various Appeals
Agenda Items: 8.1.i; 8.2.d,g,m,p; 8.3.6; 8.4.n,q

Article 7

Late Submissions

The regulations of Synod 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 2, *Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995*, p. 103).

Synod **decided** the following concerning late submissions:

Church at Surrey: Letters re: CRCA and CCCA reports. Decided: Admitted. Ground: Mail arrived late due to abnormal postal delays.

Church at Aldergrove: Letter re: Supplementary Report of CRCA. Decided: Admitted. Ground: The supplementary report of the committee was submitted late to the churches and, therefore, the church at Aldergrove could not submit its letter on time.

Church at Lincoln: Letters re: CPEU, CRCA and CCCA reports. Decided: Admitted. Ground: Mail arrived late due to abnormal postal delays.

Church at Houston: Letters re: CRCA report. Decided: Not admitted. Ground: Submitted too late.

Article 8

Agenda

The following agenda was **adopted**:

Opening on behalf of the Convening Church.
Examination of the Credentials
Information from the Convening Church
Election of the Moderamen
Constitution of Synod
Adoption of the Agenda
Setting of Time Schedule
Incoming Mail
8.1 General Matters

Church at Burlington-East
Request to remove the procedure of having a letter sent by Synod to churches whether they agreed or disagreed on synodical correspondence, unless it is a reply to an appeal or overture.

Church at Guelph Emmanuel
Request that Synod Chatham keep in mind the additional costs for committees and assess the appropriate fees.

Church at Fergus
Delivery of reports

Church at Orangeville
Delivery of reports

Church at Yarrow
Delivery of reports and deadlines

Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003
Admissibility of advisors

Church at Chatham
Use of acronyms

Church at Attercliffe
Right to appeal

Regional Synod West
Appointment of Board of Governors

Regional Synod East
Appointment of Board of Governors

Church at Winnipeg (Redeemer)
Article 54 Church Order

Br. W. Oostdyk
Appointment to synodical committee

8.2 Reports Received

Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches
Committee for Contact with the Churches in the Americas
(ba) Address to General Assembly OPC
(bb) Observers Report 70th General Assembly OPC
(bc) Address to 29th Meeting of NAPARC
(bd) Observers Report 29th Meeting of NAPARC
Committee on Bible Translation
Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*
Committee for Official Website
Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
Board of Governors for the Theological College
Church for the Inspection of the Archives
Addendum Report: Committee for the Relations with Churches Abroad
Addendum Report: Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity: Church Order
Church to audit finances for General Synod 2001
Address Church of the Canadian Reformed Churches
Addendum Report: Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*
Addendum Report: Theological Education Committee
General Fund
Addendum Report: Board of Governors for the Theological College re: Appointment of New Professor

8.3 Letters from the Churches
8.3.1 Re: Report of the Committee on Relations Churches Abroad
8.3.1.1 Free Church of Scotland and Presbyterian Church of Korea
Church at Grand Rapids
Church at Carman (West)
Church at Fergus
Church at London
Church at Lynden
Church at Carman (West)
Church at Fergus
Church at Orangeville
Church at Grand Valley
Church at Surrey
Church at Lincoln
8.3.1.2 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
Church at Chatham
Church at Fergus
Church at Aldergrove
Church at Carman (West)
Church at Elora
Church at Lincoln
8.3.1.3 International Conference of Reformed Churches
Church at Fergus
Church at Elora
8.3.1.4 Indonesian and New Zealand Churches
Church at Winnipeg (Redeemer)
Church at Carman (West)
Church at Guelph
Church at Grand Rapids
Church at Elora
Church at Aldergrove
8.3.1.5 Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
Church at Lincoln

8.3.2 Re: Report of the Committee for Contact Churches in the Americas
8.3.2.1 Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Church at Fergus

Church at London
Church at Winnipeg (Grace)
Church at Lynden
Church at Brampton
Church at Yarrow
Church at Lincoln

8.3.2.2 Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America
Church at Fergus
Church at Carman (West)

8.3.2.3 Reformed Churches of the United States
Church at Elora
Church at London
Church at Grand Rapids
Church at Orangeville
Church at Yarrow

8.3.2.4 L'Église Réformée du Quebec (ERQ)
Church at Surrey

8.3.2.5 The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
Church at Grand Valley

8.3.3 Re: Report of the Committee for Bible Translation
Church at Fergus
Church at Carman (West)
Church at Winnipeg (Grace)
Church at Yarrow
Church at Orangeville

8.3.4 Re: Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity
Church at London
Church at Grand Rapids
Church at Burlington-East
Church at Willoughby Heights
Church at Grand Valley
Church at Lincoln

8.3.5 Re: Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication for the *Book of Praise*
Church at Langley
Church at Aldergrove
Church at Grand Rapids
Church at Guelph
Church at Orangeville
Church at Willoughby Heights
Church at Winnipeg (Redeemer)
Church at London
Church at Carman (West)
Church at Abbotsford
Church at Abbotsford
Church at Fergus
Church at Chatham
Regional Synod East
Church at Winnipeg (Redeemer)
Church at Grand Valley

8.3.6 Re: Report of the Committee for Official Website
Church at Abbotsford

8.4 Appeals
Church at Attercliffe
Article 45 Synod Neerlandia

Church at Abbotsford
Article 45 Synod Neerlandia
Church at Grand Rapids
Article 45 Synod Neerlandia
Church at Grand Rapids
Articles 22, 34, 36, 45 Synod Neerlandia
Church at Owen Sound
Article 45 Synod Neerlandia
Church at Grand Rapids
Article 73 Synod Neerlandia
Church at Chatham
Articles 67 and 73 Synod Neerlandia
Church at Guelph
Article 75 Synod Neerlandia
Br. and Sr. M. Vantil
Use of grape juice at the Lord's Supper
Br. and Sr. M. Vantil
Art. 31 C.O.
Br. and Sr. B. VandeBurgt
Elements of the Lord's Supper
Church at Grand Rapids
Admissibility of Appeals
Church at Calgary
Status of Rev. Boersema
Br. T. Hoogsteen and Br. C. VanAndel
Decision of Synod Fergus 1998
Church at Blue Bell
Article 45 Synod Neerlandia
Br. W. De Haan
Decisions of Synod Neerlandia and Synod Fergus
Br. T. Kingma
Articles 45, 59, 73 of Synod 2001 and Article 91 of Synod 1977
Appointments
Censure ad Art. 34 C.O.
Publication of the Acts
Financial Matters
Preparation next General Synod
Adoption of the Acts
Approval of Press Release
Closing

Article 9

Committee Work

Synod adjourned for committee work.

Evening Session – Tuesday, February 10, 2004

Article 10

Appointment of a New Professor

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session. We sang Psalm 147:1,6. Synod went into closed, restricted session to consider the report of Committee 4 concerning the appointment of a new professor for the Theological College. After an initial round of discussion the committee took back its report for fine-tuning. Synod took a short break. The committee again presented its report. A vote by ballot was held. Rev. J. Moesker abstained from voting since he is a member of the Board of Governors. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Letter from the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches informing us that Dr. J. De Jong has been granted an indefinite leave of absence

as of September 4t 2003; included was an endorsement of a proposal from the Senate re: replacement

1.2. A copy of a letter from the Senate of the Theological College to the Board of Governors proposing to appoint Dr. Adriaan Jan de Visser as professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology

2. Admissibility

The letters are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Since Dr. J. De Jong has been granted an indefinite leave of absence, it is incumbent upon Synod to fill this vacancy.

3.2. The Board of Governors proposes that Dr. Adriaan Jan de Visser be appointed professor in Diaconiology and Ecclesiology.

3.3. He is currently a missionary/evangelist of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa in Soshanguve-Central and Soshanguve-

South.

3.4. He received a degree of Doctorandus Theologiae in 1987 from the Theological University in Kampen and a degree of Theologiae Doctor in Missiology from the University of Potchefstroom in Pretoria.

3.5. Dr. Adriaan Jan de Visser has a wide experience both as a missionary and as a pastor, and he has contributed to the South African federation of churches through his work on synodical committees.

3.6. In order to accede to the request of Dr. de Visser, the Board of Governors also proposes that the Rev. J. De Gelder be asked to teach Church Polity for the fall semester of 2004.

4. Considerations

4.1. From the information supplied by the Board of Governors, General Synod considers that Dr. Adriaan Jan de Visser is well qualified for this position.

4.2. General Synod notes that Rev. J. De Gelder is already teaching Church Polity as a lecturer at the Theological College.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To express deep gratitude for the work that Dr. J. De Jong was able to accomplish at the Theological College since he began his work in 1990. Synod asks that the churches continue to remember the needs of Dr. De Jong and his family before the throne of God.

5.2. To direct the Board of Governors to appoint Dr. Adriaan Jan de Visser as professor in Diaconiology and Ecclesiology, effective May 1, 2004.

5.3. To encourage the Board of Governors to ask Rev. J. De Gelder to teach Church Polity for the fall semester of 2004.

Article 11

Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Synod continued in plenary session. Rev. W. den Hollander led in closing devotions. He read 2 Tim. 2:2 and 4:1-5, as well as Titus 2:1. Then he gave a brief meditation on these passages. We sang Hymn 64 after which Rev. den Hollander led us in prayer, remembering in particular the Theological College, the De Jong family and the newly appointed professor. Synod was adjourned until the morning.

Morning Session – Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Article 12

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 1:1-11 and giving a meditation on this passage. He

led us in prayer, after which we sang Hymn 46:1,2. The roll was called and all were present. The chairman informed Synod that last evening's decision (see Article 10) was conveyed to the Board of Governors and to Dr. A. J. de Visser.

Adoption of Acts

After some corrections Articles 1-11 of the *Acts* were adopted. Synod adjourned for committee work.

Evening Session – Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Article 13

Address: Rev. R.C. Janssen (GKN)

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session. We sang Psalm 87. The roll was called and all were present. On behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen addressed Synod. Br. W. Pleiter spoke some words in response. Both addresses can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*.

Article 14

Right of Individuals to Appeal

The churches at Attercliffe and Grand Rapids have appealed Art. 45 of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* re: the right of individuals to appeal the decisions of a general synod. Committee 2 presented its report on this matter. After several rounds of discussion, Committee 2 took back its report for further consideration.

Article 15

Delegation to General Synod

The church at Guelph has appealed Art. 75 of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* re: the number of delegates to general synod. Committee 2 presented its report concerning this appeal. The following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**

   Appeal from the church at Guelph re: the number of delegates to general synod

2. **Admissibility**

   This appeal is declared admissible.

3. **Observations**

   The church at Guelph:

   3.1. Complains that Synod Neerlandia (*Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 75) denied an overture from Regional Synod West to increase the number of delegates to general synods from four elders and four ministers from each regional synod to six elders and six ministers from each regional synod.

   3.2. Asserts that Synod Neerlandia erred when it accepted the statement that "General synods are not representative assemblies" as absolutely true. According to the church at Guelph, there is truth in the fact that the churches are not "directly represented" at regional synod and general synod, however, they are "indirectly represented."

   3.3. States that more delegates will increase the likelihood of proportionate representation from the various classes and churches.

   3.4. Considers that Synod Neerlandia should have given more weight to the increased number of churches in the federation as justification for an increase in the number of delegates to synods.

   3.5. Argues that major shifts in the direction of synod decisions may be prevented by increasing the number of delegates.

   3.6. Claims that though there would be more delegates at synods with an increase in the number of regional synods, the possibility of that happening at this time is quite remote.

4. **Considerations**

4.1 The church at Guelph is correct in asserting that there is an "indirect representation" of churches to a general synod in that the churches are represented in their assemblies. This is affirmed by the following statements:

> *Like the regional and general synods, we call it a major assembly, which does not mean that it is a higher authority with more power, but simply an assembly formed by a larger number of churches through their representatives (G. Van Rongen and K. Deddens, Decently and in Good Order, p. 58).*
>
> *At a general synod all the churches are represented.*
>
> *Article 49 deals with the general synod, our broadest assembly. A general synod is a meeting where all the churches of the federation are represented* (cf. W.W.J. Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, pp. 133, 139).

4.2 Synod Neerlandia is correct that "an increase of delegates cannot *ensure* proportionate representation." On the other hand, the church at Guelph is also correct in stating that the *likelihood* of proportionate representation from the various classes and churches could result. However, the argument for proportionate representation is not a relevant consideration within Reformed church polity. In our Church Order representation is regional representation or delegation (C.O. Art. 47). Should proportionate representation of classes and churches be desired, it would require a radical change to our current church polity.

4.3 The argument of Synod Neerlandia "…that General Synods are not representative assemblies but…that Reformed Church Polity works with the principle of delegation" (*Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 75 Consideration 4.2, p. 88) does not exclude the possible increase in the number of delegates.

4.4 The church at Guelph does not prove that a major shift in direction of general synod can be avoided through an increase in the number of delegates to synod. Scripture does, however, assert that "many advisors make victory sure" (Prov.11:14; cf. Prov.15:22).

4.5 The church at Guelph is correct when it states that the likelihood of an increase in the number of regional synods is remote. With no increase in the number of regional synods, there will also be no increase in delegation to general synod.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To accede to the church at Guelph to rescind the decision of Article 75 of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*.

5.2. To amend the first paragraph of Article 49 of the Church Order to read:

> *The general synod shall be held once every three years. Each regional synod shall delegate to this synod six ministers and six elders.*

Article 16

Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Rev. J. De Gelder led us in closing devotions. He read Eph. 4:1-16 and gave a brief meditation on this passage. We sang Hymn 40, after which he led us in prayer. The chairman adjourned Synod until the morning.

Morning Session – Thursday, February 12, 2004

Article 17

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 1:12-18 and giving a meditation on this passage. He led us in prayer, after which we sang Psalm 56:4,5. The roll was called and all were present.

Adoption of Acts

After some corrections Articles 12-16 of the *Acts* were adopted. Synod adjourned for committee work.

Evening Session – Thursday, February 12, 2004

Article 18

Address: Rev. G. Syms (RCUS)

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session. We sang Psalm 108:1,2. The roll was called and all were present. On behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States, Rev. G. Syms addressed Synod. Rev. K. Jonker spoke some words in response. Both addresses can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*.

Article 19

CCCA re: The Reformed Church in the United States

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: the Reformed Church in the United States. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 20

Right of Individuals to Appeal

Committee 2 again presented its report on the appeals of the churches at Attercliffe and Grand Rapids re: the right of individuals to appeal decisions of a general synod. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Appeal from the church at Attercliffe

1.2. Appeal from the church at Grand Rapids

2. Admissibility

The appeals from these churches are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Synod Neerlandia stated that "individuals who wish to interact with decisions of Synod should begin by addressing their consistories (articles 30 & 31)" (cf. *Acts of Synod Neerlandia* Art. 45, Admissibility 2.2; Art. 87, Admissibility 2.2).

3.2. The church at Attercliffe:

3.2.1. Requests Synod to rescind the decision of Synod Neerlandia claiming, "Synod has changed the previous understanding of Article 30 & 31 of our Church Order and applied a new interpretation without any explanation."

3.2.2. Finds "no evidence that this decision was based on a request from any individual or any of the Churches."

3.2.3. States that "History has taught reformed people the importance and the necessity of the individual's right to appeal." It is claimed that "the right to appeal has been denied to individuals whereas in the past this was an accepted practice."

3.2.4. Questions how individuals in the future will be able to appeal a Synod decision.

3.3. The church at Grand Rapids:

3.3.1. Appeals the decision of Synod Neerlandia to declare letters and/or appeals from individual church members inadmissible.

3.3.2. Reminds Synod that the "Acts of Synod are public decisions, decisions which every member of the federation is duty-bound to study, examine, and test according to the Word of God, confessions and church order." The church at Grand Rapids makes a connection between the Acts of Synod and the reports of the various Synod committees. It considers them to be public reports, similar to the press releases these committees publish.

3.3.3. Believes that by declaring letters from individuals inadmissible, "all possibility for an appeal to the broadest assembly, which made the decision in the first place, is ruled out of order for these brothers."

3.3.4 Warns Synod against the potential of hierarchy of a broader assembly lording it over individual members in the churches. Requests Synod to rescind the decision of

Synod Neerlandia claiming, "Synod has changed the previous understanding of Article 30 & 31 of our Church Order and applied a new interpretation without any explanation."

3.3.5 Finds "no evidence that this decision was based on a request from any individual or any of the Churches."

3.3.6 States that "History has taught reformed people the importance and the necessity of the individual's right to appeal." It is claimed that "the right to appeal has been denied to individuals whereas in the past this was an accepted practice."

3.3.7 Questions how individuals in the future will be able to appeal a Synod decision.

3.4. The church at Grand Rapids:

3.4.1. Appeals the decision of Synod Neerlandia to declare letters and/or appeals from individual church members inadmissible.

3.4.2. Reminds Synod that the "Acts of Synod are public decisions, decisions which every member of the federation is duty-bound to study, examine, and test according to the Word of God, confessions and church order." The church at Grand Rapids makes a connection between the Acts of Synod and the reports of the various Synod committees. They consider them to be public reports, similar to the press releases these committees publish.

3.4.3. Believes that by declaring letters from individuals inadmissible, "all possibility for an appeal to the broadest assembly, which made the decision in the first place, is ruled out of order for these brothers."

3.4.4 Warns Synod against the potential of hierarchy of a broader assembly lording it over individual members in the churches.

4. Considerations

4.1. The appellants claim Synod Neerlandia has applied a new interpretation to Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. Other than stating a historical perspective, the church at Attercliffe provides no evidence that the application of Articles 30 and 31 by Synod Neerlandia was incorrect. A review of previous Acts of Synods does give evidence of letters and/or appeals from individuals directed to general synods that have been declared admissible. However, this historical evidence in itself does not necessarily establish a clear understanding or precedence for the correct understanding of Articles 30 & 31 of the Church Order. Rather, it demonstrates an inconsistency in the practice of the admissibility of submissions from individuals, which became a cause of concern at Synod Abbotsford 1995. In various articles of the *Acts*, Synod Abbotsford states:

> *Several letters are from individuals and not from churches. This raises the question whether individual members have the right to address their concerns and views about a report directly to a General Synod, without first addressing them to their local consistory/council for consideration. However, it would be unfair to declare the personal submissions mentioned above invalid for this Synod because past Synods have been inconsistent on this* (cf. *Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995*, Art. 72, II. Admissibility; Art. 86, II. Admissibility).

4.2. The church at Attercliffe is correct that there is no evidence of a request from an individual or one of the churches to change the application of Article 30 & 31 C.O. However, this presupposes that a change of application has actually occurred. The underlying question is whether or not Synod Neerlandia's application is correct as it relates to two distinct matters. The first deals with an individual's right to submit letters or overtures directly to a general synod concerning the reports of various synodical committees. The second relates to an individual's right to appeal a decision of a general synod directly on matters such as those pertaining to the churches in common.

4.3. The first matter deals with the individual's right to make submissions to a general synod concerning the various reports from the synodical committees. Synod Neerlandia is correct in stating that an individual member cannot forward their comments or concerns directly to a general synod. The reason for this is that the reports from the various committees are for general synod to engage in a discussion and make the appropriate decisions. A synod does so representing all the churches within the federation. (cf. W.W.J. Van Oene, *With Common*

Consent, pp. 133, 139; G. Van Rongen and K. Deddens, *Decently and in Good Order*, p. 58). Consistories have the opportunity to respond to these reports, as the local churches have ultimately placed these common matters on the agenda of a general synod (Art. 30). Synod Neerlandia was not consistent in this particular matter (cf. *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 96, p. 107). Individual members have opportunity to interact with these reports through their consistories. The way of the Church Order requires individuals to wait until a general synod actually makes decisions on the committee recommendations before they may begin an appeal process.

4.4. The second matter relates to an individual's right to appeal a decision of a general synod directly on matters pertaining to the churches in common. Synod Neerlandia was correct in stating that an individual member cannot forward his appeals regarding matters that concern the churches in common directly to a general synod. This does not mean that Synod Neerlandia has taken away the right of individuals to appeal. Rather, Synod Neerlandia shows the appellants the correct way of appeal according to the Church Order. Individual members must follow the way of the Church Order by addressing their concerns to their local consistory who, should they concur with the concerns, direct an appeal to a general synod. Consistory, unlike individual members, has the right to deal directly with the matters that belong to the churches in common. Consistory may do so because these decisions are to be considered settled and binding by the consistory. A consistory cannot appeal a decision of a major assembly to a minor assembly. If the local consistory does not take over the individual's appeal, he can appeal the local consistory's decision to classis and thus begin the appeal process in accordance with Article 31 of the Church Order.

4.5. Article 30 of the Church Order provides clarity as to what is to be considered an ecclesiastical matter and what should be dealt with at the broader assemblies. Article 31 of the Church Order deals exclusively with the appeal process. Article 31 states clearly that "if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly." For the individual, his local consistory is to be considered the minor assembly. When the consistory accepts a decision of a general synod, the individual's appeal is against the consistory and, therefore, Article 31 directs his subsequent appeal to the broader assembly of classis, and then regional synod and general synod.

4.6. The church at Attercliffe asks how individuals in the future will be able to appeal a synodical decision. While this has been addressed in the considerations above, it is important to note the intent of Article 31. Individual church members have the duty to consider whatever may be agreed upon by majority vote in the church assemblies as settled and binding. If someone feels concerned about a decision of an assembly, then he ought to first engage in reflection with the consistory and commit to study the matter further. There is a possibility that an ecclesiastical assembly may make a wrong decision. Yet, in general, decisions of the major assemblies ought to be held in high esteem. After all, the ecclesiastical assembly is not a discussion partner for individuals, but rather it is through these assemblies that the churches have spoken according to their rightful responsibility. With this in mind, the individual should reconsider whether he may have come to the wrong conclusion.

4.7. The church at Grand Rapids correctly notes that the *Acts* of Synods *are* provided as public information and that the reports of the various committees *may* be made available to the membership via the local consistory. This does not automatically mean that individual members have the right to interact with these reports by going directly to general synod. Once a general synod has made its decision on these reports, and an individual member has concerns about it, he is obliged to interact with his local consistory and convince it of the need to begin the appeal process.

4.8. The church at Grand Rapids is incorrect by stating that all possibility for an appeal to the broadest assembly is ruled out. Individual members do have the opportunity to appeal; however, they must do so by following the way of the Church Order outlined above.

4.9. The church at Grand Rapids is incorrect by claiming that Synod Neerlandia's application of Articles 30 and 31 may amount to incipient hierarchy. Since an individual member still has the right to appeal decisions of a general synod, in the prescribed way of the Church Order, the church at Grand Rapid's fear of hierarchy is unfounded.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to deny the appeals of the churches at Attercliffe and Grand Rapids.

Article 21

Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Rev. K. Jonker led us in closing devotions. He read Isaiah 51:1-6 as well as Matthew 16:13-20 and gave a brief meditation on these passages. We sang Hymn 59, after which he led us in prayer. The chairman adjourned Synod until the morning.

Morning Session – Friday, February 13, 2004

Article 22

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 1:18b-30 and giving a meditation on this passage. We sang Psalm 68:1,2, after which the chairman led us in prayer. The roll was called and all were present.

Adoption of Acts

After some corrections Articles 17-21 of the *Acts* were adopted.

Article 23

CRCA re: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). After several rounds of discussion the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 24

CCCA re: The Reformed Church in the United States

Committee 1 again presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: the Reformed Church in the United States. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CCCA re: the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

1.2. Letter from the church at Elora

1.3. Letter from the church at London

1.4. Letter from the church at Grand Rapids

1.5. Letter from the church at Orangeville

1.6. Letter from the church at Yarrow

2. Admissibility

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

3. Observations

3.1. From the report it is clear that the CCCA has fulfilled the mandate given to it by Synod Neerlandia 2001 with respect to the RCUS.

3.2. The report indicates that contact is growing through fraternal delegates at broader assemblies and pulpit exchanges.

3.3. *Re: Lord's Day observance*. The discussions resulted in a proposal to the RCUS Synod to appoint a study committee on this matter. The RCUS Synod 2003, however, defeated this proposal.

3.4. The Churches at Elora, London and Yarrow recommend that the discussion on the observance of the Lord's Day be continued in order to come to uniformity between the two federations in this matter.

3.5. *Re: Lord's Supper to shut-ins*. The committee reports that in some RCUS congregations the

Lord's Supper is celebrated with long-term shuts-ins under the supervision of the consistory. Office bearers, and often some members of the congregation, are in attendance and celebrate the Lord's Supper with the shut-ins. The celebration usually occurs on the same Lord's Day that the entire congregation partakes of the sacrament. The minister and at least one elder are always present, a brief exposition of the Word is given, and the Form in the Directory of Worship is used. In this way 'sacramentalism' is avoided. The committee considers that the manner in which the RCUS administers the Lord's Supper to shut-ins is acceptable. It suggests that this issue may also warrant some consideration among the Canadian Reformed Churches.

3.6. The churches at Grand Rapids, Orangeville and Yarrow disagree with the opinion of the committee that this practice is "acceptable." The church at Orangeville states that the committee expresses this opinion without having made a proper study of it, evaluating it in light of Scripture, and drawing on the practices and principles evident in our own history as Reformed churches.

3.7. The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the RCUS will pursue the task of fine-tuning the RCUS Church Unity Paper in order to align it more with the Three Forms of Unity.

3.8. The committee also reports on other matters which are already being, or could be, attended to within Ecclesiastical Fellowship. These include: admission of guests at the Lord's Table, the use of attestations, the cooperation in youth/family camps, promoting the Theological College in Hamilton and pulpit exchanges. The church at London suggests that the CCCA promote our Theological College in its contact with the RCUS. The church at Yarrow observes a lack of information regarding the discussion about the fencing of the Lord's Table.

3.9. The committee recommends that Synod:

> *Express gratitude to the Lord for the positive development of our ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCU;.*
>
> *Take note of the extensive discussions with the RCUS re: the Lord's Day observance, and if Synod deems it necessary, provide the CCCA with specific issues re: the Lord's Day observance which still must be addressed;*
>
> *Take note of the practice of the RCUS to administer Lord's Supper to shut-ins;*
>
> *Take note that the IRC of the RCUS is mandated to revise their Church Unity Paper, bringing the language of this paper more in line with the language of the Three Forms of Unity;*
>
> *Encourage our Classes to take/keep contact with the Classis of the RCUS bordering their area as proposed by the CCCA in December 2001;*
>
> *Recommend to the churches the desirability of actively pursuing our ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS via pulpit exchange, visiting RCUS churches, and invitations to youth camps/conferences held by the various churches.*

4. Considerations

4.1. The frequent interactions between our committee and the various assemblies and committees of the RCUS, show the positive effects which our relationship has for both federations. However, the matters discussed generate a need for further interaction, as suggested by the committee.

4.2. *Re: Lord's Day observance*. As the IRC and our committee have agreed, Synod considers that there is a need to interact further on the application of the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 103. It would be helpful and fruitful if our committees continue this interaction and speak together concretely about a scriptural and covenantal observance of the Lord's Day, also bearing in mind the RCUS Constitution which stresses the need to keep the Lord's Day holy (Arts. 113, 180). Synod agrees with the church at Yarrow that it would be beneficial for the churches if the committee could share more information concerning these discussions. The same applies to the discussion regarding the matter of the fencing of the Lord's table. At the same time, the churches have information available on this matter in the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* pp. 177-179.

4.3. *Re: Lord's Supper to shut-ins*. In Art. 35 of the Belgic Confession we confess that "we receive this holy sacrament *in the congregation of the people of God*" (also see Art. 56 of the Church Order). Since both federations subscribe to the Belgic Confession, it would be

beneficial to pursue further interaction on the practice of administration of the Lord's Supper to shut-ins. This practice should be evaluated in light of Scripture and confessions, also drawing on the principles and practices evident in our own history as Reformed churches.

4.4. The CCCA should encourage the IRC to pursue the task of fine-tuning the RCUS Church Unity Paper since this is all part of the RCUS assimilating the Three Forms of Unity within their federation.

4.5. In its discussions with the IRC, our committee should promote our Theological College in Hamilton, share the report on theological education produced for our contact with the URCNA and recommend that the RCUS make use of both.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for its work in fulfilling its mandate re: the RCUS.

5.2. To express gratitude to the Lord for the positive developments within our contact with the RCUS.

5.3. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS under the adopted rules.

5.4. To mandate the CCCA to continue the discussions as noted in the Considerations 4.2-5.

5.5. To encourage Classes to continue to develop contact with the Classis of the RCUS bordering their area.

5.6. To encourage the churches to pursue actively our Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS via pulpit exchanges, visiting RCUS churches, and invitations to youth camps/conferences held by the various churches.

Article 25

CCCA re: L'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: L'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ). After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CCCA re: L'Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)

1.2. Letter from the church at Surrey

2. Admissibility

The letter from the church at Surrey is declared admissible since it interacts with the report submitted.

3. Observations

3.1. From the report it is clear that the CCCA was not able to fulfill its mandate completely, as given by Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: the fencing of the Lord's Supper, confessional accountability and pulpit supervision. The reason for this is that the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the ERQ initially did not have a mandate to discuss these issues. Presently the ERQ is still studying these matters and our committee has offered its involvement in this study. The committee could not report yet on the outcome of this process.

3.2. The church at Surrey recommends that Ecclesiastical Fellowship should be established at this time on the basis of the fact that one of the purposes of Ecclesiastical Fellowship is that we help one another in our spiritual growth and establishment as fully Reformed churches.

3.3. The church at Surrey also notes that Synod Neerlandia 2001 stated that the "ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and brings the Reformed confessions and church order to expression in its own context" (Art. 22, Recommendation 5.2). Therefore, the church at Surrey concludes that "we already recognized them as being faithful churches of Jesus Christ."

4. Considerations

4.1. The committee is correct in its approach to the discussions with the ERQ, waiting for the discussion of the matters under study to be concluded. Hopefully, the respective committees can come to an agreement which will provide the framework for further discussions and growth within the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

4.2. Although Synod Neerlandia 2001 acknowledged that the ERQ is faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions within its own context, we have not yet officially recognized them as faithful churches. Therefore, the church at Surrey is premature in its recommendation.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for its work in the contact with the ERQ, with the prayer that the Lord may bless the continued study and discussions.

5.2. To continue the mandate for the CCCA as it was given in the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*. This mandate is:

5.2.1. 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;

5.2.2. To work towards formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules;

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

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

Article 26

CCCA re: Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America (KPCNA)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America (KPCNA). After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CCCA re: Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America

1.2. Letter from the Church at Fergus

1.3. Letter from the Church at Carman (West)

2. Admissibility

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

3. Observations

3.1. The committee reports that efforts to contact some of the Canadian addresses on the list of Korean pastors in North and South America have been fruitless (cf. *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 74, Observation 3.2.4). Therefore, the committee recommends that Synod decide to discontinue the mandate of the CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North America.

3.2. The church at Fergus has taken note of various parts of Art. 74 of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* (especially 3.2.4, 4.7, 5.6) and, therefore, proposes that renewed efforts be taken by our committee to contact these churches, requesting the help of the current General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, Dr. Ho Jin Jun. Fergus adduces that, in view of our relationship with the PCK, it is incumbent upon us to have meaningful fellowship with their churches here on this continent.

3.3. The church at Carman (West) submits that with the technology presently available, it should not be necessary to rely on a handwritten list of Korean pastors, but that by means of telephone, fax, internet, or contact with the PCK, the mandate can be executed.

4. Consideration

The churches at Fergus and Carman (West) bring forward valid arguments for the CCCA to continue their attempts in fulfilling the mandate in regard to these churches.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to mandate the CCCA to contact the Korean Presbyterian Churches in North

America with the help of our sister churches in Korea.

Article 27

Farewell: Rev. G. Syms, Rev. T. Mayville and br. K. Wezeman

On behalf of Synod, the chairman thanked these fraternal delegates for being in our midst and wished the Lord's blessing upon them and the churches which they represent (i.e. RCUS and GKN). These brothers, in turn, expressed their appreciation for the brotherly fellowship and helpful discussions they could have with the delegates to our Synod.

Article 28

CCCA re: The Igreja Reformadas do Brasil (IRB)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: The Igreja Reformadas do Brasil (IRB). After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Report of the CCCA re: the Igreja Reformadas do Brasil (IRB)

2. Observations

2.1. Synod Neerlandia 2001 mandated the CCCA "to maintain contact with the IRB under the adopted rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship." This mandate was interpreted by the CCCA to mean that our churches should offer and enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the IRB.

2.2. The committee felt that in the initial stages of our contact with the IRB it would be most beneficial to involve the Canadian churches conducting mission in Brazil (i.e. Surrey Maranatha and Hamilton) in order to fulfill its mandate (e.g. sending greetings via their official visitors and delegates to Brazil).

2.3. The committee reports that our sister churches (GKN-Liberated) also have contact with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brazil (IPB). Synod Zuidhorn decided to work towards a tri-partite dialogue with the IRB and the IPB. Our committee is of the opinion that as an independent church federation, the IRB is entitled to solve an issue that is primarily Brazilian.

2.4. The committee requested br. A. Nap to represent our churches at the IRB Synod 2000. In his report to the CCCA, br. Nap shows that the IRB has enjoyed growth since 1976 and is experiencing positive developments towards a mature federation. Br. Nap also made the following observations:

The contact with the IRB will, for a substantial part, remain a committee-level contact.

It is mandatory to send Portuguese-speaking observers to future Brazilian synods.

3. Considerations

3.1. Synod agrees with the committee in its evaluation that at this time it is most feasible to maintain indirect contact via the sending churches.

3.2. Synod agrees with the committee's opinion that, as an independent church federation, the IRB is entitled to solve issues that are primarily Brazilian, such as contact with the IPB.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To thank the committee for its work in our contact with the IRB.

4.2. To express gratitude to the Lord for the growth and positive developments in the IRB.

4.3. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the IRB under the adopted rules.

4.4. To mandate the CCCA to maintain contact with the IRB either directly or indirectly.

Article 29

CCCA re: The Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico (IPCM)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: The Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico (IPCM). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**

   The report of the CCCA re: the Independent Presbyterian Churches in Mexico (IPCM)

2. **Observations**

   2.1. Synod Neerlandia 2001 mandated the CCCA "to further investigate the IPCM."

   2.2. The committee made numerous attempts to fulfill its mandate, but it was unable to establish any real, meaningful contact with the IPCM.

3. **Consideration**

   The committee has fulfilled its mandate but with little or no results.

4. **Recommendations**

   Synod decide:

   4.1. To thank the committee for the attempts made to investigate the IPCM.

   4.2. To declare that at this time there is no reason to pursue actively an ecclesiastical relationship with the IPCM.

Afternoon Session – Friday, February 13, 2004

Article 30

Reopening

The chairman reopened the meeting by inviting the delegates to sing Psalm 87. The roll was called and all were present.

CCCA re: The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**

   1.1. The report, including appendices, of the CCCA re: The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

   1.2. Letter from the church at Grand Valley

2. **Admissibility**

   The letter from the church at Grand Valley is declared admissible since it interacts with the report submitted.

3. **Observations**

   3.1. Synod Neerlandia 2001 mandated the CCCA "to send an observer at our own discretion to future meetings of NAPARC, to investigate its usefulness and possible membership of this organization."

   3.2. The committee reports on the history, membership, basis, purpose and function of NAPARC. It also addresses the authority of this Council, stating that it is understood that all actions and decisions taken are advisory in character and in no way curtail or restrict the autonomy of the member bodies.

   3.3. The committee includes an evaluation regarding NAPARC. The committee suggests that membership may be useful to provide support to our sister churches, the OPC and RCUS, which are member churches of NAPARC. It also adds that it may help to express greater unity with the ERQ, and to fulfill the Biblical calling to foster unity with other reformed churches.

   3.4. The church at Grand Valley states that the CCCA has not, in any particular way, shown how the basis, purpose or function is relevant to the Canadian Reformed Churches. They question the need to be involved in another "supra-denominational organization" besides the ICRC. Grand Valley recommends Synod "to instruct the committee to desist from this development until compelling reasons be offered for courting membership in NAPARC."

4. **Considerations**

   4.1. The committee fulfilled its mandate by sending two observers to the NAPARC meetings in 2002 and 2003. The committee also served the churches well by introducing NAPARC's

basis, purpose, function, and authority.

4.2. Although the committee considers membership in NAPARC beneficial for some of our ecclesiastical relationships, the church at Grand Valley is correct in questioning the need for another organization beside the ICRC. It is true that there is significant duplication in the purpose, function and membership of NAPARC and the ICRC. Analogous to the regional mission conferences of the ICRC, the possibility could be explored for NAPARC to be integrated into the ICRC in a similar fashion.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for its work in fulfilling its mandate re: NAPARC.

5.2. To mandate the CCCA to continue to send an observer to NAPARC, with the instruction to initiate discussion on the matters brought forth in Consideration 4.2.

Article 31

CCCA re: General Mandate

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the CCCA report re: General Mandate. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Report of the CCCA

2. Observation

The committee expresses concern about the fact that the majority of the members of the CCCA are scheduled to retire at Synod 2004. As it stands now, only two of the serving members are scheduled to remain in the committee. The committee requests Synod to address this imbalance.

3. Consideration

Synod agrees with the committee that continuity in our contacts would be served best if at the most half of the membership of the committee would retire from the committee.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To thank the CCCA, as well as its subcommittees, for all the work done and presented.

4.2. To replace at the most, half of the membership of this committee.

4.3. To mandate the CCCA to:

4.3.1. 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;

4.3.2. Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship in the Americas;

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

4.3.4. Report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next General Synod.

4.4. To allocate $8,000 for the work of the CCCA.

Article 32

CRCA re: The Free Church of Scotland

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: the Free Church of Scotland. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 33

CRCA re: The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA re: The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA). After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for modification. Synod took a short break. Committee 3 again presented its proposal. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CRCA re: The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

1.2. Letter from the church at Grand Valley

1.3. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The report and letters are admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA re: the FRCSA, which is included in the *Acts*, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that Synod decide:

3.2.1. *To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa under the adopted rules;*

3.2.2. *To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of financial assistance to aid them with their extensive mission work and labours among the concerned;*

3.2.3. *To invite the Board of Governors of our Theological College to seek ways and means to offer assistance to the FRCSA by the Canadian/American Reformed Churches for the Theological Training, such as extending academic support through guest lectures and the like by the faculty of our College in Hamilton, Ontario.*

3.3. The churches at Grand Valley and Lincoln request synod to instruct the CRCA to investigate and report on the reason why the FRCSA have broken relations with our sister churches in Korea.

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report it is evident that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate with regard to the FRCSA.

4.2. The FRCSA has many missionaries in the field. This is made possible through the generous support of some Dutch churches (GKN), while the Australian churches (FRCA) assist financially with the work among the concerned members in other church federations. The CRCA recommends that the Canadian Reformed Churches financially support the South African churches as well.

4.3. The FRCSA have their own Theological College which offers a well-rounded academic program. The CRCA recommends that the Board of Governors seek ways and means to offer assistance to the college of the FRCSA and so strengthen the bond between the two theological colleges.

4.4. The report of the CRCA does not give the reasons why the FRCSA revoked the relationship with the PCK. The churches at Grand Valley and Lincoln are correct that this information could be relevant for our relationship with the PCK.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa under the adopted rules.

5.2. To mandate the CRCA:

5.2.1. To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of financial assistance to aid them with their extensive mission work and in their labours among the concerned members in other church federations;

5.2.2. To invite the Board of Governors of our Theological College to seek ways and means to offer assistance to the FRCSA for theological training, such as extending academic support through guest lectures and the like by the faculty of our College in Hamilton, Ontario.

5.2.3. To request the reasons why the FRCSA have revoked sister church relations with our sister churches in Korea and report to the next Synod.

Article 34

Committee Work

The chairman then adjourned Synod in order to give the committees time to work on their proposals. It was also decided that Synod would meet again in plenary session at 8:00 PM for closing devotions.

Evening Session – Friday, February 13, 2004

Article 35

Farewell to Rev. R.C. Janssen

On behalf of Synod, the chairman thanked this fraternal delegate for his contributions to Synod's discussions and wished him the Lord's blessing. This brother, in turn, expressed his appreciation for the brotherly fellowship he enjoyed during his stay here.

Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Br. J. Jonker led us in closing devotions. He read Phil. 2:1-11 and gave a brief meditation on this passage. We sang Hymn 19, after which he led us in prayer. The chairman adjourned Synod until Monday morning.

Morning Session – Monday, February 16, 2004

Article 36

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 2:12-30 and giving a meditation on this passage. We sang Psalm 86:1,3,4 after which the chairman led us in prayer. The roll was called and it was noted that Rev. J. Van Vliet was absent since he had to lead a funeral gathering.

Welcome to br. G.B. Veenendaal

Next the chairman welcomed br. G.B. Veenendaal, the fraternal delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Synod was adjourned for committee work.

Evening Session – Monday, February 16, 2004

Article 37

Reopening

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session, asking everyone present to sing Psalm 93. The roll was called and all were present.

Greetings

The chairman read a credential from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for br. G.B. Veenendaal. A letter of greetings from the Inter-church Committee of L'Église Réformée du Quebec was also read. The Lord willing, Mr. Philippe DeBlois will represent these churches in person later on during Synod.

Article 38

Welcome to the Newly Appointed Professor: Dr. A.J. de Visser

On behalf of Synod, the chairman welcomed the faculty of the Theological College and especially the newly appointed professor, Dr. A.J. de Visser. He then invited Dr. de Visser to address the assembly.

Dr. de Visser thanked the assembly for appointing him as Professor of Ecclesiology and Diaconiology. He also brought greetings from his wife. Next he reflected on the unity of faith that exists between the churches in South Africa and here in Canada. He acknowledged that he has been appointed to a weighty task which has profound implications for the life of the churches. For this reason he felt humbled by the call that has been extended to him. At the same time, he wished the assembly to know that he holds the mission work in South Africa close to his heart. His concern was: what will be the impact on this mission work if he accepts the call to professorship at the College? He also

recognized that the need at our College was great and came up unexpectedly due to the illness of Dr. De Jong. He requested that the delegates would remember him and the South African churches in their prayers as he contemplates this appointment. He also mentioned that Synod could expect to hear his final decision, the Lord willing, by the end of the week.

Rev. J. Moesker then responded to Dr. de Visser. He had been in South Africa himself and could testify to the work of the Lord in that country. He assured Dr. de Visser that Synod, and our churches, would keep him and the South African churches in our prayers.

Next the Principal of the Theological College, Dr. C. Van Dam, was given opportunity to address the assembly and Dr. de Visser. He thanked Synod for the invitation extended to the faculty. Then he reported that there are presently seventeen students at the College, some of which are foreign students and diploma students. With the sudden illness of Dr. De Jong, the last year has not been easy at the College. However, the Lord has provided and the work could continue. The Principal took this opportunity to publicly express gratitude to the Lord for the thirteen years of Dr. De Jong's professorship, during which time he served the churches honorably. Dr. Van Dam also thanked Synod for the appointment of Dr. de Visser, wishing him and his wife much wisdom in the coming days.

The chairman thanked the various speakers for their words. He then proposed that the clerks draft a letter from Synod to Dr. and Mrs. J. De Jong expressing our heartfelt gratitude for the labours of our brother in the midst of the churches. Synod agreed to this proposal. The chairman led us in prayer, remembering the De Jong and de Visser families, as well as the Theological College. We sang Hymn 48:1,4.

Article 39

Board of Governors for the Theological College

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the report from the Board of Governors for the Theological College. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for modification. At this point the chairman also bade farewell to the faculty of the Theological College and Dr. de Visser, as they had a long drive yet ahead of them.

Article 40

Days of Prayer

Committee 2 presented its proposal on a letter from the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) re: Days of Prayer. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**

   Letter from the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) re: Article 54 of the Church Order

2. **Admissibility**

   This letter should have come via inclusion in, or in response to, the report from the churches appointed for days of prayer ad Article 54 C.O. Since there is no report, Synod accepts the letter as admissible.

3. **Observations**

   3.1. On July 14, 2003, the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) requested both the churches appointed for days of prayer ad Article 54 C.O. to declare a day of prayer. The request was denied by both the churches at Burlington-Waterdown and Edmonton-Providence.

   3.2. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) requested the day of prayer as they "feel that the current state of our nation is a 'great affliction, the presence of which is felt throughout the churches."'

   3.3. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) supports their request by offering three key considerations:

   3.3.1. "Bill C-250 has nearly become law." Bill C-250 protects homosexuals from discrimination.

   3.3.2. "Two provinces of Canada (BC and ON) are now issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples."

   3.3.3. That our general Christian freedom may be restricted.

   3.4. While the churches at Burlington-Waterdown and Edmonton-Providence denied the request,

they agreed that the current moral state of our country is both sad and deplorable and that this should be a matter of constant public prayer. However, they claim that it does not "affect the churches as *churches*" at this time.

3.5. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) questions the validity of the expression "does not yet affect the churches as *churches*" claiming that these sad events affect the churches "because the members are affected."

3.6. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) asks "Synod to clarify the meaning of Article 54 C.O. in the context of the moral decline of our country." They also "recommend that Synod encourage the churches appointed for calling a day of prayer still to call a day of prayer because of the current moral apostasy of our beloved nation, Canada."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod has not received a report from the churches appointed for days of prayer ad Article 54 C.O. concerning their activities. While this may not have been done in the past, all committees or churches appointed by general synod should forward a report to synod on their activities.

4.2. It is understandable that the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) is concerned about the current moral state of our nation.

4.3. Synod agrees with the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) that the explanation given, for example, the phrase "does not yet affect the churches as *churches*," is not helpful in that it provides no clarity as to the application of Article 54.

4.4. Article 54 states "In time of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches…." The plain reading of this article does not include the issue of general moral decline as reason for calling a day of prayer. "The examples mentioned in the Church Order make clear that these afflictions must be of an acute nature, of extreme severity and posing an immediate crisis for the life of the church and or the nation." (cf. Letter to the editor by Rev. J.D. Wielenga, *Clarion*, Vol. 38 No. 23 [November 10, 1989], p. 502.)

4.5. The general moral decline of our nation should be a constant matter of congregational prayers.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To provide Consideration 4.4 to serve the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) as the clarification of Article 54 C.O.

5.2. To deny the request of the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer).

Article 41

Closing Devotions & Adjournment

Rev. J. Moesker led us in closing devotions. He read 1 Cor. 4:1-7 and gave a brief meditation on this passage. He led us in prayer, remembering in particular Dr. A.J. de Visser and the South African churches. We sang Hymn 59 and the chairman adjourned Synod until the morning.

Morning Session – Tuesday, February 17, 2004

Article 42

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by welcoming all the delegates as well as some students from the EbenEzer Christian School of Chatham. He read Phil. 3:1-11 and gave a meditation on this passage. We sang Hymn 28, after which the chairman led us in prayer. The roll was called and all were present.

Adoption of Acts

After some corrections Articles 22-41 of the *Acts* were adopted.

Article 43

CRCA re: The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: the Free Church of Scotland. After several rounds of discussion, the following amendment was proposed and **defeated**:

To replace Recommendation 5.3 with:

> *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS under the adopted rules while, at the same time, holding on to our contact with the FCS(c) until greater clarity has been obtained concerning this situation.*

Next the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CRCA re: The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

1.2. Letter from the church at Grand Rapids

1.3. Letter from the church at Carman West

1.4. Letter from the church at Fergus

1.5. Letter from the church at London

1.6. Letter from the church at Lynden

1.7. Letter from the church at Orangeville

1.8. Letter from the church at Surrey

1.9. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The report and letters are admissible.

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:

3.2.1. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS under the adopted rules;*

3.2.2. *To endorse the evaluation of the committee regarding the division which occurred in January 2000 and consider the matter to have been investigated sufficiently and therefore not to continue contact with the Free Church Continuing;*

3.2.3. *To rescind the mandate regarding the discussion of divergences.*

3.3. The CRCA gives as grounds for recommendation 3.2.2 above that it is not convinced that the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCS(c)) "truly exhausted the ecclesiastical process" and it is also not convinced that the struggle involves a heresy.

3.4. The CRCA gives as ground for recommendation 3.2.3 above, that when Synod Neerlandia charged the committee to "continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity," it brought something new into the relationship that is foreign to it.

3.5. The churches at Carman (West), Surrey and Lincoln object to recommendation 3.2.2. Since the CRCA reported that the FCS(c) had not truly exhausted the ecclesiastical process and that the issue is not a matter of true or false church, it would be premature to discontinue the relationship at this time.

3.6. The churches at Grand Rapids, Carman (West), Fergus, Lynden, Lincoln and Orangeville object to recommendation 3.2.3 above. These churches feel that addressing the divergences fits within the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, even if this would bring something new into the relationship. The churches have always recognized that there are divergences. Why then not discuss them for mutual benefit? It is also felt that, as a matter of consistency, these divergences should be discussed with all Presbyterian churches with whom we have contact.

3.7. The church at London requests to keep the FCS and PCK informed about the progress of our discussions with the OPC regarding the evaluation of confessional divergences.

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report it is evident that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate with regard to the FCS and FCS(c).

4.2. *Re: Discontinuing Contact with the FCS(c).* The CRCA stated that those who formed the

FCS(c) had not truly exhausted the ecclesiastical process and that the issue was one of a struggle between brothers, not a matter of true or false church. The churches which object to this recommendation use these very same reasons to propose that we continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS(c) at this time.

4.3. In its letters to both the FCS and the FCS(c) the CRCA indicates that it is not convinced that the ecclesiastical process has been exhausted and that everything was done to prevent the separation. The CRCA even admits that it was not possible for the FCS to give all the details. Due to the lack of clarity with regard to the division between the FCS and FCS(c), Synod agrees with the churches that object to recommendation 2, and considers that it is our duty to continue to investigate the situation and to encourage both sides to reconcile. This can be done in conjunction with our other sister churches that have contact with the FCS and FCS(c) as well.

4.4. *Re: Discussion of the confessional divergences with the FCS.* Synod notes that the CRCA addressed this matter with the FCS. The CRCA reports that no comments have been received from the FCS.

4.5. The CRCA is correct that Synod Neerlandia brought something new into the contact with the FCS. Synod Neerlandia did consider, however, that previous synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Confessions and the Three Forms of Unity need to be discussed within the bounds of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (see Rule #1). The Church at Carman (West) is correct that through continued discussion we may all "grow in the unity of faith" (Eph. 4:3-6, 13).

4.6. The request of the Church at London would help the churches to coordinate the discussions with the various church federations with whom we have fellowship about the differences between the Westminster Confession and the Three Forms of Unity. In our relationship with the OPC we have discussed these differences for many years. It would be helpful for the churches to have a synopsis of these discussions, so that we can share the information for the benefit of all involved.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for the work done re: the FCS and the FCS(c).

5.2. That due to the lack of clarity in this situation Synod cannot judge the division between the FCS and FCS(c) at this time.

5.3. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS and FCS(c) under the adopted rules.

5.4. To mandate the CRCA:

5.4.1. To continue to monitor the situation in the hope of gaining greater clarity and report to the next synod;

5.4.2. To assure both the FCS and FCS(c) that they have our prayerful support and to encourage both sides to reconcile;

5.4.3. To continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity in the light of Considerations 4.5 and 4.6.

Article 44

CRCA re: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CRCA re: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN)

1.2. Supplementary Report of the CRCA (December 11, 2003)

1.3. Letter from the church at Chatham

1.4. Letter from the church at Fergus

1.5. Letter from the church at Aldergrove

1.6. Letter from the church at Carman (West)

1.7. Letter from the church at Elora

1.8. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The report and letters are admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report and the supplementary report of the CRCA re: the GKN, which are included as appendices in the *Acts*, serve as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that Synod 2004 decide:

3.2.1. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules;*

3.2.2. *Not to pursue any further the matter of the Theological University as "Knowledge Centre," the matter of increased centralization of church life, and the matter of the "professionalizing" of the ministry;*

3.2.3. *To instruct the CRCA, in accordance with Rule One of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to suggest to the next Synod of the GKN that the proportion of Psalms and hymns in the Gereformeerd Kerkboek should reflect the importance – and even the priority – of the Psalms;*

3.2.4. *To instruct the CRCA, in accordance with Rule One of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to convey to the next Synod of the Dutch sister churches that the decisions of Leusden and Zuidhorn about the fourth commandment are based on unconvincing argumentation;*

3.2.5. *To instruct the CRCA, in accordance with Rule One of the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to address the next Synod of the Dutch sister churches on behalf of Synod to the effect that their recent decisions pertaining to the Marriage Form weaken the scriptural teaching about marriage;*

3.2.6. *To instruct the CRCA, with a view to the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, to explore what, if any, implications flow from the changed role of the Dutch deputies, both in relation to their Synods as well as in relation to the deputies of the CRCA.*

3.3. The supplementary report contains an update by the deputies of the Dutch sister churches on the recent developments with regard to the "Call to Reformation" in the GKN. The CRCA informs Synod that it will continue to monitor the situation.

3.4. According to the supplementary report, the Dutch Deputies took issue with the report on the visit made by Rev. J. Huijgen and Rev. C.J. Vandervelde. The Dutch Deputies published a rebuttal in *Clarion*. The CRCA regrets that the Dutch Deputies took this course of action, but sees no need to discuss this further.

3.5. The churches at Chatham, Fergus and Elora are in agreement with the recommendations of the CRCA. In regard to the decision of Synod Zuidhorn 2002 re: the fourth commandment, the Church at Fergus notes that this Synod has prescribed both positions described by the Synod of Dort, saying that both are true, instead of coming to one position through the study of Scripture.

3.6. The Church at Lincoln concurs with the recommendations of the CRCA that the time has come to officially exhort the GKN.

3.7. The Church at Aldergrove requests Synod:

3.7.1. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) under the adopted rules while seeking clarity into the legitimacy of the recent "Vrijmaking" and monitoring further developments.*

3.7.2. *To inform both the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) and the group that has departed in the recent "Vrijmaking" that they have our prayerful support in the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation.*

3.7.3. *To communicate to the churches (Canadian and American Reformed) the need for prayerful support for the situation in the Netherlands.*

3.8. The Church at Carman (West) writes that the mandate given to the CRCA by Synod Neerlandia is not fully reflected in the report on the work of the committee. Carman (West)

mentions the following items:

3.8.1. *Synod Neerlandia mandated the CRCA to stay in touch with the deputies of the GKN concerning the relationship with the OPC. There is no report on this.*

3.8.2. *There is no thorough study of the concerns mentioned in the report to Synod Neerlandia Art.80, Recommendation 5.3.3.*

3.8.3. *There is no discussion regarding the structural changes in examinations for the ministry, changes to the liturgy, allowing celebration of the Lord's Supper by army chaplains.*

3.9. The Church at Carman (West) also cautions carefulness in light of statements by the CRCA (cf. the report on General Synod Zuidhorn 2002) about "a regression and not a progression" since this may come across as a generalization that does not do full justice to our sister churches as a whole.

3.10. *Re: the Theological University as "Knowledge Centre," the matter of increased centralization of church life, and the matter of the "professionalizing" of the ministry (cf. 3.2.2 above)*. The CRCA reports that with regard to these items there is no evidence of deviation from God's Word, the Three Forms of Unity and the adopted Church Order.

3.11. *Re: the proportion of Psalms and Hymns in the Gereformeerde Kerkboek (cf. 3.2.3 above)*. The CRCA refers to the plans of the GKN to add more hymns and thus possibly change the proportion of Psalms and Hymns.

3.12. *Re: the fourth commandment (cf. 3.2.4 above)*. The CRCA is of the opinion that the decisions of Synod Leusden 1999 and Synod Zuidhorn 2002 are based on unconvincing argumentation. "These synods did not deem it necessary to go into a detailed study of Biblical texts relating to the matter; they based their decisions largely on an appeal to the history of exegesis and the history of the church." "Furthermore, the way in which Synod Leusden dispensed with the fact that Lord's Day 38 speaks of 'the day of rest' is unconvincing" (cf. report of the CRCA, section 5.2.3). The CRCA concludes that Synod Zuidhorn has given prescriptive status to the different views as identified by the Synod of Dort 1618/19. "If the Dutch sister churches wanted to prove that there has always been room for and an official acceptance of different views on the fourth commandment, they should have marshaled stronger historical evidence."

3.13. *Re: the new Marriage Form (cf. 3.2.5 above)*. The CRCA concludes that the changes to the Marriage Form affect the husband/wife relationship, the parents/children relationship, and the children/congregation relationship. The committee states that the new Marriage Form has diminished the male headship in marriage and breaks the link between receiving children and building the church.

3.14. *Re: the changed roles of the Dutch deputies (cf. 3.2.6 above)*. The CRCA speaks of a change in connection with the way in which the letter of the CRCA about the new Marriage Form was presented to Synod Zuidhorn 2002. This letter went to Synod directly and was not discussed with the Dutch Deputies.

3.15. *Re: Psalms and hymns in Gereformeerd Kerkboek (cf. 3.2.3 above)*. Synod Zuidhorn 2002 has stated that it did not want to oust the Psalms from the worship services and the hearts of believers (*Acts*, Art. 89, Decision 11). The same Synod also decided to leave the amount of hymns open-ended. (*Acts*, Art. 89, Decision 2).

3.16. *Re: the fourth commandment (cf. 3.2.4 above).* Synod Zuidhorn 2002 decided to establish a deputyship "Fourth Commandment and Sunday" and mandated the deputies to serve the churches with a guideline in which a well-argued, positive viewpoint is offered with respect to ethical action as believers and churches in the 21st century with respect to celebrating the Sunday as the day of the Lord in the light of the fourth commandment. (*Acts*, Art.13).

3.17. *Re: the new Marriage Form (cf. 3.2.5 above).* This new Form states "In following Christ, the husband should be the head of his wife in love and self denial." The Form refers to Ephesians 5:2-33. With regard to the wife, the new Form states: "For her part, the wife is to preserve unity by doing justice to the position of her husband. As the church entrusts itself to Christ and allows herself to be led by Him, so the wife should entrust herself to her husband and follow him in serving the Lord." Later on in the Form it says: "Accept him as head…."

3.18. When it comes to receiving children the new Form states: "Also today, partners

(*echtgenoten*) are called to parenthood (1 Tim 2:15), when the Lord provides the possibility thereto."

3.19. *Re: the changing role of the Dutch Deputies (cf. 3.2.6 above)*. In the *Clarion* of July 18, 2003, Vol. 52 no.15, pp. 357-358, the Dutch Deputies wrote the following:

> *From our point of view it is only logical that this piece was submitted to our synod. When a general synod is being held, synodical deputies are formally decommissioned, their mandate is finished and they have no new mandate. Since your discussion paper was received after the deadline for us to submit our report, but before synod went into session, and since the marriage form had already been placed on the agenda of synod, we thought it proper to pass on your concerns to our synod. We passed your paper on, intending it merely to be used as extra information by the committee appointed by synod to prepare the matter. It was not our intention that synod would receive this discussion paper as a formal objection from the CanRC. However, synod did so and the matter is now a fact. We sincerely apologize for thus having short-circuited the process which you, mandated thereto by GS Neerlandia 2001, had set in motion. We assure you that we had no ulterior motives in doing so.*

3.20. *Re: the Report of the CRCA on Synod Zuidhorn 2002 (*cf. the letter from the church at Carman (West)). This report contains several statements that describe the deputies' perception of the situation in the Dutch churches, such as "The Reformed character is almost unrecognizable. The Dutch churches are attempting to reinvent themselves in hopes of establishing an identity."

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report it is evident that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate with regard to the GKN.

4.2. Since the GKN is faithful to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity and the adopted Church Order in regard to the matters mentioned in 3.2.2 above (i.e. Theological University as "Knowledge Centre," the matter of increased centralization of church life, and the matter of the "professionalizing" of the ministry), the CRCA is correct that no further discussion is necessary.

4.3. *Re: the proportion of Psalms and Hymns in the Gereformeerd Kerkboek.* Synod notes with thankfulness that Synod Zuidhorn 2002 stressed the importance of the Psalms in the worship services. At the same time, the decision to leave the number of hymns open-ended could lead to hymns overshadowing the Psalms. In light of these changes the CRCA is correct that a "proper proportion between the number of hymns in itself reflects the importance –and even the priority- of the Psalms." Thus in light of our rules of Ecclesiastical Fellowship we should convey this to the GKN.

4.4. *Re: the fourth commandment*. The CRCA is correct that the Dutch Synods did not give biblical grounds for their decisions regarding the Lord's Day. It must be kept in mind that Synod Leusden 1999 and Synod Zuidhorn 2002 did not make doctrinal decisions about the fourth commandment, but had to deal with an appeal concerning a statement made by a minister in a sermon. Due to the many appeals, Synod Zuidhorn 2002 appointed deputies to study this matter further and they will report to their synod in 2005. In the current circumstances it would be prudent to wait until the results of this study have been judged by the next synod of the GKN.

4.5. *Re: the new Marriage Form*. The CRCA is to be commended for the extensive work done. Synod Neerlandia had asked the CRCA to study whether the omission of the words "obey and submit" indeed means that the scriptural teaching about marriage in this new form is flawed (*Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 80). The CRCA now reports that this new form weakens the scriptural teaching about marriage. To prove this, the committee refers to the husband/wife relationship. Synod considers that, in some aspects, the new form strengthens the biblical teaching about marriage, for example, in explaining what true, Christ-like headship is. At the same time, it is also true that the words "obey and submit" are replaced by "accept as head… and follow." It can be regretted that the new form does not use the word "submit" (Eph. 5:22), but this does not in itself mean that the biblical basis of marriage is weakened. Synod notes, however, that the new form does not address the task of the wife in her family and household (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14 and Prov. 31).

4.6. *Re: the link between church and children.* The expression "when the Lord provides the

possibility thereto" can be read differently. It could refer to a couple not being able to receive children, or, as the CRCA suggests, give opening to "secular views concerning having children." It would be helpful to ask the Dutch Deputies for clarification on this point.

4.7. *Re: change in role of Dutch deputies*. >From the report it is difficult to determine what the change in the role of the Dutch deputies is. The report refers, among others, to the March 5, 2003 letter, which deals with the discussion paper of the CRCA about the new Marriage Form, which was received as an appeal by General Synod Zuidhorn, whereas the CRCA meant it as a paper to be discussed with the Dutch deputies. The letter of the Dutch deputies published in *Clarion* shows that there is no change in the way the deputies work, but rather a misunderstanding had developed between our committee and the Dutch deputies.

4.8. It is regrettable that the report on Synod Zuidhorn 2002 contains several unproven statements concerning the GKN. Carman (West) is correct that such statements may come across as a generalization that does not do full justice to our sister churches as a whole. Synod regrets the pain this may have caused (cf. the address by the Dutch delegate, as it is found in the appendices).

4.9. The letters from the churches show that there is concern within our churches about the situation in the GKN. It is important to keep in mind that we should not judge the GKN on the basis of what we know from personal observations, hearsay, or from articles in papers, but on the basis of its official documents.

4.10. The concerns of the church at Fergus are already addressed in considerations 4.4. and 4.5.

4.11. In light of the above considerations, Synod does not agree with Lincoln that the time has come to officially exhort the GKN.

4.12. The requests of the church at Aldergrove fit within the rules of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The CRCA should seek clarity into the legitimacy of the recent "Vrijmaking" and monitor further developments. The CRCA should also inform both the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) and the group that has departed in the recent "Vrijmaking" that they have our prayerful support in the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation. It would be good to communicate to the churches the need for prayerful support for the situation in the Netherlands.

4.13. The church at Carman (West) is correct in observing that the report of the CRCA does not show that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate as given by Synod Neerlandia Art. 80, Recommendations 5.3.1. and 5.3.3. If the committee has fulfilled this mandate but has not reported on it, then it should submit this report to the next Synod. If the committee did not fulfill this mandate, then it should as yet do this.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for the work done re: the GKN.

5.2. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN under the adopted rules.

5.3. Not to pursue any further the matter of Theological University as "Knowledge Centre," the matter of increased centralization of church life, and the matter of the "professionalization" of the ministry.

5.4. To mandate the CRCA:

5.4.1. To convey to the GKN our concern with regard to the proportion of Psalms and Hymns;

5.4.2. To study the results of the deputyship "Fourth Commandment and Sunday" and report to the churches;

5.4.3. To continue the discussion with the GKN regarding the new Marriage Form, bearing in mind Considerations 4.5 and 4.6, and report to the churches;

5.4.4. To seek clarity into the legitimacy of the recent "Vrijmaking" and monitor further developments;

5.4.5. To inform both the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) and the group that has departed in the recent "Vrijmaking" that they have our prayerful support in the hope that they will, by God's grace, come to reconciliation;

5.4.6. To communicate to the churches the need for prayerful support for the situation in the Netherlands;

5.4.7. To report to the next Synod on the mandate given in the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* Art. 80, Recommendations 5.3.1 and 5.3.3.

Article 45

CRCA re: The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Afternoon Session – Tuesday, February 17, 2004

Article 46

Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. We sang Ps. 111:1,2,4. The roll was called. All delegates were present except br. G. Van Woudenberg who was absent with notification.

Article 47

CPEU: The Theological Education Committee

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the CPEU report re: The Theological Education Committee. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 48

CPEU: The Church Order Committee

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the CPEU report re: The Church Order Committee. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 49

Adjournment

The chairman adjourned Synod until the evening session in order to give the committees time to work on their proposals.

Evening Session – Tuesday, February 17, 2004

Article 50

Reopening

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session, asking everyone present to sing Hymn 3. The roll was called and all were present.

Address: Br. G.B. Veenendaal (FRCA)

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Br. G.B. Veenendaal addressed Synod. Rev. D. Agema spoke some words in response. Both addresses can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*.

Article 51

CRCA re: the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Report of the CRCA re: the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA)

2. Admissibility

The report is admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The Report of the CRCA re: the FRCA, 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. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules;*

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

3.3. Synod West Albany 2000 decided to continue its sister-relationship with the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) with a view to supporting them in a "well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches." That Synod found that the GGRI gives evidence of continuing "faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order." With regard to the Gereja-Gereja Musyafir Reformasi (GGMR) Synod West Albany 2000 considered that it "needs to be stabilized before recommendations regarding sister church relationships can be considered."

3.4. The FRCA continues to work towards establishing sister church relations with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). Both churches are members of the ICRC.

4. Considerations

4.1. The CRCA received the *Acts* of Synod West Albany 2000. The *Acts* of Synod Rockingham 2003 were not available to the CRCA at the time of writing its report.

4.2. The FRCA are to be thanked for their support of the Theological College.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the CRCA for the work done re: FRCA.

5.2. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules.

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

Article 52

CRCA re: The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the CRCA report re: The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CRCA re: The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

1.2. Letter from the church at Fergus

1.3. Letter from the church at Elora

2. Admissibility

The report and letters are admissible.

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 committee recommends that:

3.2.1. Synod give a clear answer to the question posed under Consideration 6.4.3 (i.e. whether the decision of Fergus that the CRCA has "to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations" applies to sponsorship or to the actual voting at the Conference).

3.2.2. Synod decide to mandate the CRCA:

3.2.2.1. *To continue to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC and send a delegation to the Conference scheduled for 2005 in South Africa;*

3.2.2.2. *To inform the Secretary of the ICRC that the Constitution Art. IV.1 should be left unchanged since there are no new grounds;*

3.2.2.3. *To inform the Secretary of the ICRC that issues of concern to the founding churches of the ICRC should be given due attention;*

3.2.2.4. *To submit a Report of the 2005 ICRC to the next Synod, with an evaluation and recommendations.*

3.3. The CRCA reports that the delegates, especially from the younger churches, expressed concerns that some of the topics were too abstract and did not speak to their situation.

3.4. Synod Fergus 1998 mandated the CRCA "to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations." The CRCA requests Synod to clarify whether this applies to sponsorship or to the actual voting at the Conference.

3.5. The church at Fergus proposes that:

3.5.1. *Our delegates at the Conference only sponsor those churches with which we have official Ecclesiastical Fellowship.*

3.5.2. *Our delegates at the Conference only vote in favour:*

3.5.2.1. *Of those churches with which we have official Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and*

3.5.2.2. *Of those churches which have been sponsored by two churches with which we are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship.*

3.5.3. *Our delegates abstain from voting when the church is sponsored by the churches with which we have no Ecclesiastical Fellowship*.

3.6. The church at Elora proposes to reply to the question of the CRCA as follows: "The statement of Synod Fergus 1998 that the CRCA make and support membership recommendations at the ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister church relations" should apply to both sponsorship and the actual process of voting at the Conference. Elora maintains that whether "sponsoring a church or voting in favour to receive a church, the delegation from our churches is making a statement that the other church in question is a church which is faithful to the Reformed Confessions. This means that the delegation is declaring that Church to be a true Church."

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report it is evident that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate re: the ICRC.

4.2. There is no disagreement that the decision of Synod Fergus applies to sponsoring for membership. The disagreement arises with regard to voting for membership.

4.3. Synod Neerlandia 2001 understood the decision of Fergus to apply to sponsoring only (cf. *Acts*, Art. 53, Consideration 4.3).

4.4. Leaving aside the question of whether the expression "make and support membership" also applies to voting, it must be kept in mind that the ICRC is not an ecclesiastical assembly but a conference. Synod Lincoln 1992 (*Acts*, Art. 94, pg. 64) accepted the proposal to continue participation in the ICRC for the following reasons:

4.4.1. *The integrity of our churches is not jeopardized by our being a member of the ICRC;*

4.4.2. *Membership in the ICRC is voluntary and its conclusions are advisory and therefore the Conference does not undermine the Three Forms of Unity;*

4.4.3. *Our participation in the ICRC should be one of full cooperation and continued evaluation;*

4.4.4. *The ICRC is not a super-synod but a conference;*

4.4.5. *the ICRC is a suitable organization for sharing our wealth, experience and manpower with young churches in the "third world."*

4.5. To apply the statement of Synod Fergus to voting for membership would make it difficult for our churches to function in the ICRC.

4.6. Both the churches at Fergus and Elora maintain that when they vote, our delegation is

declaring that church to be a true church. They put sponsoring and voting on the same level. This is not correct. In sponsoring a church, the CRCA indeed makes a statement about that church. Thus, as Synod Fergus correctly noted, sponsoring can only be done when it concerns a sister church. However, voting allows a church to be admitted to the ICRC so that it can be part of the Conference. Thus the decision of Synod Fergus should not prevent our delegation from voting on membership decisions.

4.7. *Re: the proposal to change Art. IV.1.a.* Synod agrees with the recommendation of the CRCA to leave the Constitution unchanged.

4.8. Whether the younger churches should have the same opportunity as the established churches to discuss things of relevance to them, is not a matter on which Synod has to make a decision. Rather, this is a matter for the Interim Committee of the ICRC to deal with.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the CRCA for the work done re: the ICRC.

5.2. To judge that the decision of Synod Fergus 1998 should not limit the delegates in voting for membership decisions at the Conference.

5.3. To mandate the CRCA:

5.3.1. To continue to represent the Canadian Reformed Churches in the ICRC and send a delegation to the Conference scheduled for October 12-19, 2005 in South Africa;

5.3.2. To inform the Secretary of the ICRC that the Constitution Art. IV.1.a. should be left unchanged since there are no new grounds;

5.3.3. To submit a Report of the 2005 ICRC to the next Synod, with an evaluation and recommendations.

Article 53

Board of Governors of the Theological College

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the report of the Board of Governors of the Theological College. After several rounds of discussion, the proposal was put to a vote. Rev. J. Moesker abstained from voting since he is a member of the Board of Governors. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. The report of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches dated September 25, 2003

1.2. From Regional Synod West (November 18, 2003) a letter including nominations for the governors of the Theological College for the Academic Committee

1.3. From Regional Synod East (November 12, 2003) a letter including nominations for the governors of the Theological College for the Academic Committee

1.4. Letter from the Board of Governors of the Theological College, dated February 11, 2004, to Synod with nominations of governors to serve on the Property and Finance Committee

2. Admissibility

The materials received are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Synod thankfully receives this report and all its appendices.

3.2. Synod acknowledges that the terms of Rev. R. Aasman, br. M. Kampen and br. J. VanderWoude have expired.

3.3. Synod acknowledges the upcoming retirement of the Rev. B.J. Berends from the active ministry of the Word and as governor.

3.4. Synod observes that Dr. J. De Jong has been granted an indefinite leave of absence as of September 4, 2003 due to his illness.

3.5. The Board of Governors recommends that pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act and Section 3.5.1 of By-Law 3 that Synod:

3.5.1. 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.

3.5.2. Reappoint brs. W. Oostdyk and W. Smouter as Governors for a term lasting from the date of re-appointment until the first subsequent General Synod.

3.5.3. Reappoint br. G.J. Nordeman for a term lasting from the date of re-appointment until the second subsequent General Synod.

3.5.4. Appoint two new non-ministerial Governors for a term lasting from the date of appointment until the third subsequent General Synod.

3.5.5. Appoint Dr. N.H. Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005-2008 and to designate Prof. G.H. Visscher as Principal for the years 2008-2011.

3.5.6. Appoint deputies for the Pastoral Training Program, who will administer funds collected from the churches, with the specific purpose of meeting the needs of students participating in the Pastoral Training Program. Any shortfall or inequities arising in the remuneration of students participating in the Pastoral Training Program will be covered by these auxiliary funds administered by the deputies. These deputies are authorized to assess the churches to ensure that the fund will be able to meet the needs of the applicants. These deputies should provide a full report of their work to the next General Synod. The deputies appointed by General Synod should include one brother from the Academic Committee and one brother from the Finance and Property Committee.

3.5.7. Approve all decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 until the date of this Report.

3.5.8. Express thankfulness for the support from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

3.5.9. 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, and to reappoint br. H. Solomons as Auditor until the next General Synod.

3.5.10. Reappoint Ms. Margaret VanderVelde to the Synodical Committee for the Official Website of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

3.6. The Board of Governors nominate the following four brothers to the Property and Finance Committee: Brs. K. Veldkamp, L. Jagt, H. Harsevoort and A. Bax, in that order.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod thankfully notes that the Theological College could continue its work in spite of Dr. J. De Jong's illness, and Synod acknowledges the excellent work accomplished by Dr. De Jong.

4.2. Synod acknowledges that the nominations for the replacements of Revs. R. Aasman and B. J. Berends are acceptable.

Nominated by Regional Synod West was Rev. W.B. Slomp. Renominated were Revs. R. Schouten and J. Moesker. Alternates are Revs. E. J. Tiggelaar, E. Kampen and C. J. Vandervelde.

Nominated by Regional Synod East was Rev. J. VanWoudenberg. Alternates are Revs. G. Ph. VanPopta and W. den Hollander. Renominated are Revs. G. Nederveen and Cl. Stam.

4.3. Synod acknowledges that the nominations for the replacements of brs. M. Kampen and J. VanderWoude are acceptable. Renominated were brs. W. Oostdyk, W. Smouter and G.J. Nordeman.

4.4. Synod takes note of the recommendation to appoint Dr. N.H. Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005-2008 and to designate Prof. G.H. Visscher as Principal for the years 2008-2011.

4.5. Synod is grateful to the sponsoring churches and ministers who have participated in the Pastoral Training Program.

4.6. Synod notes that the Board of Governors already has the authority to assess the churches in the matter of the training of the students. Synod considers the Pastoral Training

Program to be a desirable part of the training for the ministry and the funds required for this program should, therefore, be included in the regular operating budget.

4.7. Synod considers that the Board of Governors has the authority to appoint a subcommittee to take care of this program and its funding.

4.8. Synod thankfully takes note of the work done by the Board and its committees during the last three years.

4.9. Synod expresses its heartfelt appreciation to the Free Reformed Churches in Australia for their active involvement, as well as their ongoing financial and prayerful support.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To receive this report and all its appendices and to thank the Board of Governors for its work. Synod reminds the Board to prepare and present its report within the time frame as agreed upon in the "Guidelines for Synod."

5.2. To express its gratitude for the work done by Revs. R. Aasman and B.J. Berends, as well as by brs. M. Kampen and J. VanderWoude.

5.3. To express sincere gratitude for the work that Dr. J. De Jong was able to accomplish at the Theological College since he began his work in 1990. Synod asks that the churches continue to remember the needs of Dr. J. De Jong and his family before the throne of God.

5.4. To express our appreciation to the ministers and the churches who provided assistance to the Theological College during the leave of absence of Dr. J. De Jong.

5.5. To express gratitude for the work done by Professor J. Geertsema in and for the Theological College.

5.6. To express its heartfelt appreciation to the Free Reformed Churches in Australia for their active involvement, as well as their ongoing financial and prayerful support.

5.7. To appoint from the West: Rev. W. B. Slomp (alternates Revs. E. J. Tiggelaar, E. Kampen and C. J. Vandervelde)

To reappoint from the West: Revs. R. Schouten and J. Moesker.

To appoint from the East: Rev. J. VanWoudenberg (alternates Rev. G. Ph. VanPopta and Rev. W. den Hollander).

To reappoint from the East: Revs. G. Nederveen and Cl. Stam.

5.8. To appoint, on the basis of the recommendation of the Board of Governors, brs. K. Veldkamp and L. Jagt to the Property and Finance Committee and to reappoint the brs. W. Oostdyk, W. Smouter and G.J. Nordeman.

5.9. To appoint Dr. N.H. Gootjes as Principal for the years 2005-2008 and to designate Prof. G.H. Visscher as Principal for the years 2008-2011.

5.10. To reappoint Ms. Margaret Van der Velde to the Synodical Committee for Official Website of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

5.11. To reappoint br. H. Solomons as Auditor until the next General Synod.

5.12. To take note of the audited financial statements and the report of the Auditors for the previous fiscal periods, and to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods.

5.13. Not to accede to the request of the Board of Governors to appoint deputies for the Pastoral Training Program.

5.14. To approve all decisions and actions of the Board of Governors and of its committees for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 until the date of this report.

Article 54

CRCA re: the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report of CRCA re: the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK). After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 55

Closing Devotions & Adjournment

Br. J. Vanderstoep led us in closing devotions. He read 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, as well as Rev. 3:11-13, and gave a brief meditation on these passages. We sang Hymn 50:1,2,6,7 after which Br. Vanderstoep led us in prayer. The chairman adjourned Synod until the morning.

Morning Session – Wednesday, February 18, 2004

Article 56

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 3:12-4:1 and giving a meditation on this passage. He led us in prayer, after which we sang Psalm 84:3,4. The roll was called and all were present.

Welcome: Rev. L.W. Bilkes and Rev. J. Ferguson

The chairman extended a warm welcome to Rev. L.W. Bilkes, an observer from the Free Reformed Church in North America, as well as Rev. J. Ferguson, a fraternal delegate from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Adoption of the Acts

After some corrections Articles 42-56 of the *Acts* were adopted. The chairman adjourned Synod in order to give the committees time to work on their proposals.

Afternoon Session – Wednesday, February 18, 2004

Article 57

Reopening

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session. We sang Psalm 92:1,2. The roll was called and all were present.

Letter to Dr. & Mrs. J. De Jong

The second clerk read a draft of the letter to Dr. & Mrs. J. De Jong. This letter will be signed by all the delegates.

Article 58

Appeals against Article 45 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: the OPC

Committee 1 presented its proposal on these appeals. After two rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 59

CRCA re: the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report of CRCA re: the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK). After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of CRCA re: the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)
1.2. Letter from the church at Lynden
1.3. Letter from the church at Carman (West)
1.4. Letter from the church at Fergus
1.5. Letter from the church at Orangeville
1.6. Letter from the church at London
1.7. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The report and letters are admissible.

3. Observations

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

3.2. The CRCA recommends that Synod decide:

3.2.1. *To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK under the adopted rules;*

3.2.2. *To conclude that the information gathered concerning the fencing of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership is not different from what was known when Ecclesiastical Fellowship was established;*

3.2.3. *To rescind the mandate regarding the discussion of divergences;*

3.2.4. *To continue to strengthen communication with the PCK and as best as possible monitor the growth and trends in the PCK.*

3.3. The CRCA communicated with the PCK concerning the Lord's Supper, confessional membership and church polity. The PCK responded by sending a copy of Chapter 58 of the Book of Church Order. With regard to the divergences the CRCA also submitted a copy of the study reports submitted to past synods.

3.4. The PCK expressed the desire to come and visit a future synod.

3.5. The churches at Lynden, Fergus, Carman (West), Orangeville and Lincoln suggest that the divergences should be discussed with the PCK, especially since a beginning of these discussions was made. These churches feel that addressing the divergences fits within the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The churches have always recognized that there are divergences. Why then not discuss them for mutual benefit? It is also felt that as a matter of consistency these divergences should be discussed with all Presbyterian churches with which we have contact.

3.6. The church at Lincoln feels that in light of a more open Lord's Supper there is a need to continue the discussion.

3.7. The church at London requests to keep the FCS and PCK informed about the progress of our discussions with the OPC regarding the evaluation of confessional divergences.

4. Considerations

4.1. From the report it is evident that the CRCA fulfilled its mandate with regard to the PCK.

4.2. Synod acknowledges with thankfulness that the lines of communication are more open than they have been in the past. This would give opportunity to discuss the differences as outlined by Synod Neerlandia.

4.3. The CRCA is correct that Synod Neerlandia brought something new into the contact with the PCK. Synod Neerlandia did consider, however, that previous synods have consistently declared that the differences between the Westminster Confessions and the Three Forms of Unity need to be discussed within the bounds of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (see Rule #1). The Church at Carman (West) is correct that through continued discussion we may all "grow in the unity of faith" (Eph. 4:3-6, 13).

4.4. The request of the Church at London would help the churches to coordinate the discussions with the various church federations with which we have fellowship about the differences between the Westminster Confession and the Three Forms of Unity. In our relationship with the OPC we have discussed these differences for many years. It would be helpful for the churches to have a synopsis of these discussions so we can share the information for the benefit of all involved.

4.5. The e-mail of the PCK dated January 1, 2002 states that with respect to the fencing of the Lord's Supper, "they are open to every baptized Christian regardless of denomination and confession." The Form of Government speaks of "all those who profess the true religion, and are communicants in good standing in any evangelical church." Synod notes the difference between the e-mail and the Form of Government. This would warrant a further investigation as requested by church at Lincoln.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide

5.1. To thank the CRCA for the work re: the PCK.

5.2. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK under the adopted rules.

5.3. To mandate the CRCA:

5.3.1. To continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity in light of Consideration 4.3 and 4.4;

5.3.2. To pay special attention to the fencing of the Lord's Supper during these discussions;

5.3.3. To continue to strengthen communication with the PCK and as best as possible monitor the growth and trends in the PCK.

Article 60

CPEU re: the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC)

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the report of CPEU re: the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC). After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Report of the CPEU re: the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC)

2. Admissibility

The report is deemed admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The committee's mandate from Synod Neerlandia was:

3.1.1. *To represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring the possibility of federative unity;*

3.1.2. *To develop a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the OCRC;*

3.1.3. *To write a formal letter to the OCRC with a view to pursuing more official talks on the federative level;*

3.1.4. *To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the FRCNA and OCRC*.

3.2. The committee reports no progress in the fulfillment of its mandate and in the contacts with the OCRC.

3.3. Br. F. Westrik attended the General Synod Cambridge 2001 of the OCRC.

3.4. A formal letter was sent to the OCRC with a view to pursuing more official talks on the federative level. Unfortunately, the correspondence documents have been lost.

4. Consideration

Synod regrets that there is little progress toward establishing talks with the OCRC.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for its work re: the OCRC.

5.2. To give the committee the following mandate:

5.2.1. To represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring the possibility of federative unity;

5.2.2. To develop a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the OCRC;

5.2.3. To specifically address with the OCRC whether it shares the mutual desire for federative unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches;

5.2.4. To make itself available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments.

Evening Session – Wednesday, February 18, 2004

Article 61

Reopening

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session, asking everyone present to sing Hymn 41:1,2. The roll was called and all were present.

Address: Rev. J. Ferguson (OPC)

On behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Rev. J. Ferguson addressed Synod. Rev. J. De Gelder spoke some words in response. Both addresses can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*.

Article 62

CPEU re: A Common Songbook

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: a Common Songbook. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 63

Finance Committee Synod Neerlandia 2001

Committee 3 presented its proposal concerning the Finance Committee Synod Neerlandia 2001. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Finance Committee Synod Neerlandia 2001

1.2. Report of an audit from the church at Barrhead

2. Admissibility

The reports are admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The Finance Committee for Synod Neerlandia 2001 reports that the total expenses were $16,821.02. The committee itemizes this as follows:

Office supplies	$1,093.18
Miscellaneous	608.06
Rental/Leases	1,211.73
Travel/Accomodations East	6,364.38
Travel/Accomodations West	3,502.62
Postage	429.11
Kitchen	2,799.04
Bank charges	66.70
GST paid	746.21

3.2. The church at Barrhead reports that, upon auditing the books, everything was found to be in good order.

3.3. The church at Barrhead expresses its concern with respect to the lack of receipts received from delegates requesting reimbursements. Barrhead recommends “that a standardized request for reimbursement form be created that the delegates should fill out when requesting reimbursement for expenses paid. Also receipts should be required to be included with the requests.”

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod receives with thankfulness the audit report by the church at Barrhead.

4.2. Synod notes that financial reports of previous synods included the printing of the *Acts*. The report of the Finance Committee Synod Neerlandia does not include this item.

4.3. Regarding the concern of the church at Barrhead, Synod notes that Synod Neerlandia considered that the Finance Committee should assure that there is financial accountability. In light of this task, the Finance Committee should consist of at least three members.

4.4. Synod agrees with the recommendation of the church at Barrhead to make a standardized form for reimbursement. Synod also agrees with the church at Barrhead that it is important to include all possible receipts along with the request for reimbursements. Synod notes that the

church at Chatham is already using a form for reimbursements. The church at Chatham should give a copy of this sheet to the convening church of the next General Synod.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To accept the report of the Finance Committee Synod Neerlandia 2001 and thank the committee for the work done.

5.2. To accept the audit report of the church at Barrhead, and thank the church at Barrhead for the work done.

5.3. To appoint a Finance Committee for Synod Chatham 2004, consisting of the brs. Mike De Boer, J. Holsappel and R. van Middelkoop.

5.4. To charge the Finance Committee to submit a report to the next General Synod.

5.5. To appoint the church at Kerwood to audit the books of the Finance Committee of Synod 2004 and report to the next General Synod.

Article 64

CRCA re: Indonesian Churches, Reformed Church in New Zealand and General Mandate

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report of the CRCA re: the Indonesian Churches, the Reformed Church in New Zealand and General Mandate. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 65

Synodical Correspondence

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the letter from the church at Burlington-East re: synodical correspondence. After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

Material

Letter from the church at Burlington-East re: synodical correspondence

Admissibility

This letter is declared admissible.

3. Observation

The church at Burlington-East proposes to dispense with the procedure of acknowledging synodical correspondence and conveying the decision of synod with respect to it.

4. Consideration

Synod considers this practice common courtesy. It also encourages interaction from the churches with the material of the broader assemblies.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide not to accede to the proposal of the church at Burlington-East.

Article 66

Assessment for the General Fund

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the letter from the Emmanuel Church at Guelph re: Assessment for the General Fund. After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the Emmanuel Church at Guelph re: Assessment for the General Fund

2. Admissibility

This letter is declared admissible.

Observation

The church at Guelph requests that the assessment for the General Fund be approved by Synod itself (just like classical assessments are approved at Classis).

Considerations

4.1 The church at Carman (East) has always monitored the situation closely and requested regular assessments as time went on.

4.2 The increase in the number of committees due to our contact with the URCNA created a situation in which the expenses were less predictable. New committees cannot present a budget prior to commencing their work.

4.3 Classical assessments are more predictable than the expenses incurred by synodical deputies.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide not to accede to the request of the Emmanuel Church at Guelph.

Article 67

Deadlines for the Reports of Synodical Committees

Committee 1 presented its proposal on letters from various churches re: deadlines for reports of synodical committees. After a few rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Letter from the Maranatha Church at Fergus re: Deadlines for reports synodical committees

1.2. Letter from the church at Lincoln (section 2) re: the same matter

1.3. Letter from the church at Orangeville re: the same matter

1.4. Letter from the church at Yarrow re: the same matter

2. Admissibility

The material is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. Due to the fact that several reports were submitted after the deadline as stipulated in the regulations, the Council of the Maranatha Church at Fergus proposes that General Synod Chatham 2004 not deal with the content of the:

3.1.1. Report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity

3.1.2. Report of the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

3.1.3. The Addendum to the Report re: Church Order

3.1.4. The supplementary report CRCA re: the Netherlands and the CRCA Budget

3.2. The Council of the church at Fergus considers that it would be inappropriate for Synod to deal with these items, as there was simply inadequate time to study and discuss them as Council.

3.3. The church at Orangeville conveys that it was uncertain whether its Council would have sufficient time to properly discuss the recommendations of the reports that were received late and still submit a response six weeks before General Synod, as is required by the regulations. The church at Lincoln expresses the same sentiments.

3.4. In view of the late arrival of several reports, the Council of Yarrow requests “that Synod does not exercise the rules for admissibility of material as it relates to the above mentioned reports, and allow the material to be admissible for General Synod Chatham.”

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod agrees with these churches that matters submitted by these committees, as a rule, should be submitted at least six months before General Synod and that late submission causes undue difficulties to the churches.

4.2. Synod also agrees with the church at Yarrow that if there are good reasons for late arrival, such materials may still be admitted (Guidelines I.A and I.D).

4.3. In the case of these particular reports, a decision not to admit them would not be in the interest of the churches and of the work done by these committees. The latter applies especially to the Report from the Board of Governors of the Theological College, which arrived late without any reason being given.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. Not to accede to the request of the church at Fergus, but to admit the respective reports.

5.2. To remind the committees to prepare and present their reports within the timeframe, agreed upon in the "Guidelines for Synod" (*Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995*, Appendix 2, p. 103).

Article 68

Closing Devotions & Adjournment

Rev. D. Agema led us in closing devotions. He read Deut. 8:1-5, Matt. 18:1-4 as well as LD 46, and gave a brief meditation on these passages and our confession. We sang Hymn 47:1,4,9,10, after which Rev. D. Agema led us in prayer. The chairman bade farewell to Rev. J. Ferguson and adjourned Synod until the morning.

Morning Session – Thursday, February 19, 200

Article 69

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 4:2-9 and giving a meditation on this passage. We sang Psalm 92:1,2,6 after which the chairman led us in prayer. The roll was called and all were present.

Welcome: Revs. P. Vellinga, H. Zekveld and C. Schouls

The chairman extended a warm welcome to Revs. P. Vellinga and H. Zekveld, fraternal delegates from the URCNA. He also welcomed Rev. C. Schouls, an observer from the FRCNA.

Adoption of the Acts

After some corrections Articles 57-68 of the *Acts* were adopted.

Article 70

CPEU re: Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA). After two rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 71

Address: Rev. L.W. Bilkes (FRCNA)

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of North America, Rev. L.W. Bilkes addressed Synod. Br. P. Van Woudenberg spoke some words in response. Both addresses can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*.

Article 72

Committee on Bible Translation (CBT)

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). After two rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration. Next, the chairman adjourned Synod in order to allow the committees time to work on their proposals.

Afternoon Session – Thursday, February 19, 2004

Article 73

Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. We sang Psalm 133. The roll was called. All delegates were present.

Address: Rev. H. Zekveld (URCNA)

On behalf of the United Reformed Church of North America, Rev. H. Zekveld addressed Synod. Rev. W. den Hollander spoke some words in response. Both addresses can be found in the appendices of these *Acts*.

Article 74

CPEU re: General Mandate

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: General Mandate. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 75

CPEU re: the Theological Education Committee

Committee 2 again presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: the Theological Education Committee. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CPEU re: the Theological Education Committee, including its supplementary report

1.2. Letter from the church at Grand Rapids

1.3. Letter from the church at Grand Valley

1.4. Letter from the church at Burlington-East

2. Admissibility

The letters from the churches are admissible since they interact with the report of the CPEU.

3. Observations

3.1. The CPEU reports to Synod 2004 that:

3.1.1. The committee is not able as yet to supply you with a "proposal concerning theological education within the new federation."

3.1.2. The committee asks "for serious consideration to continue their mandate with the hope that we will be able to serve the next General Synod, and the churches, with a finalized report."

3.2. From the report it is noted that the United Reformed Churches have given their committee for Theological Education for Ministers the following mandate:

That this committee work together with the Canadian Reformed committee to draft proposals for theological education to our respective synods in preparation for an eventual plan of union. (Article XLV, *Acts of Synod Escondido 2001*).

3.3. The committee reports that Br. W. Smouter was unable to serve on the committee due to a large number of commitments. The committee appointed Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes and Mr. K.J. Veldkamp, a former governor, to augment the ranks of the committee. It was the opinion of the existing members that the workload warranted these additional appointments and that these brothers would strengthen the ability of the committee to do its work.

3.4. The committee of the URCNA requested information on the necessity and benefit of "a synodically-controlled seminary." The committee responded with a paper entitled: "Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?"

3.5. The committee reports on a combined meeting with the URCNA, held on January 13, 2004. In this meeting a discussion was held on two papers: "Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?" and "Theological Education in the United Reformed Churches." The following Statements of Agreement could be formulated and later accepted:

It is the task of the churches to train ministers;

Ministers of the churches must receive sound reformed theological training;

As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers;

Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education;

It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training

of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training; and

The churches, i.e., the URCNA and CanRC, should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.

3.6. The next joint meeting is scheduled to take place on June 15, 2004 in Calgary, Alberta.

3.7. The church at Grand Rapids expresses its appreciation for the committee's paper entitled: "Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?" They hope that it will demonstrate to the URCNA the "wisdom and value of having federational as opposed to independent seminaries."

3.8. The church at Grand Valley asks that the mandate for the committee be expanded to ensure that adequate instruction is also provided in the field of Reformed Homiletics.

3.9. The church at Burlington-East finds it regrettable that no face-to-face meetings were held between the committees of URCNA and CanRC. Concern is also expressed that the Theological Education committee is interpreting their mandate too restrictively.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod notes with appreciation that the committees from both federations have a similar mandate. As the mandate has not been fulfilled, the committee is encouraged to continue its work in completing this task.

4.2. Because of the committee's workload and the scope of its mandate, Synod acknowledges that, in this particular case, the committee acted prudently in appointing an additional member.

4.3. Synod is encouraged that Statements of Agreement were formulated and accepted at the January 13, 2004 meeting, and considers it good progress in the fulfillment of the committee's mandate.

4.4. Synod agrees with the church at Grand Rapids that the paper entitled: "Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?" is a valuable document in explaining the importance of having a federational theological college. This document reflects what the churches have agreed upon in Article 19 of the Church Order.

4.5. The church at Grand Valley is correct when it stresses the importance of Reformed Homiletics as "an independent branch of study for the students for the ministry of the gospel." Synod agrees that, in practical terms, Reformed Homiletics can be a key area of ecumenical concern and worthy of inclusion in the mandate.

4.6. Synod agrees with the church at Burlington-East and the Theological Education Committee that it is regrettable that face-to-face meetings could not be scheduled prior to Synod's reporting deadline. In spite of this, the committee was able to have written and verbal contact during this period and was able to meet on January 13, 2004 and have already scheduled the next meeting for June 15, 2004.

4.7. The mandate clearly states, "the new federation should retain *at least one* federational theological school" (emphasis added). This would allow for the possibility of one federational college in Canada and the USA, as stated by the committee. However, the mandate should not be solely restricted to this interpretation. This addresses the concern of the church at Burlington-East.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the Theological Education Committee for its work.

5.2. To give the Theological Education Committee the following mandate:

5.2.1. To continue working closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synods;

5.2.2. To continue the evaluation of the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and URCNA;

5.2.3. To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:

5.2.3.1. 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;

5.2.3.2. 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, as well as Reformed Homiletics;

5.2.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;

5.2.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for it to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

Article 76

CPEU re: The Church Order

Committee 2 again presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: the Church Order. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CPEU re: the church order, including its supplementary report

1.2. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The letter from the church at Lincoln is admissible since it interacts with the report of the CPEU.

3. Observations

3.1. The committee received the following mandate from Synod Neerlandia:

3.1.1. *To work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;*

3.1.2. *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;*

3.1.3. *To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort;*

3.1.4. *To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;*

3.1.5. *To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.*

(*Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Article 95, p. 107).

3.2. Over the past three years the committee was able to meet nine times as committee and four times as combined committees. Both committees could thankfully note the brotherly harmony in which they could work and that good progress could be made thus far.

3.3. Dr. J. De Jong was no longer able to fulfill his function within the committee due to health concerns, and was replaced by the committee with Dr. G. Nederveen.

3.4. The committees agreed to use Dort as a starting point for a proposed new church order and to compare it to the proposals from both sub-committees. This is reflective of the joint mandates to have a “common church order maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort.”

3.5. Agreement was reached to include an extensive introduction to the Church Order, which introduces: 1. Biblical and Confessional Basis, 2. Historical Background, 3. Foundational Principles, and 4. Broad Divisions. As to the sequence of the articles, it was agreed to determine the proper sequence at a later time.

3.6. The committee requests, for the sake of continuity, to re-appoint the committee members and to include Dr. G. Nederveen as the fourth member.

3.7. The committee requests Synod to receive the reports and its appendices as a progress report and to instruct the churches to send their concerns directly to the committee for its consideration.

3.8. The committee requests Synod to mandate the combined committees to formulate a draft proposal of synod regulations.

3.9. The church at Lincoln is not convinced of the committee’s argumentation to remove Article 8 of the Church Order, regarding Exceptional Gifts.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod is thankful for the quality and thoroughness of the work that the committee has been able to complete, thus far, and for the brotherly harmony that has been experienced.

4.2. Synod receives the report and the appendices as the progress report of the committee's work. The committee is to be commended for keeping the churches informed through the publication of its progress reports. As the committee continues to publish its activities, churches are encouraged to forward their suggestions directly to the committee for its consideration.

4.3. Synod recognizes Dr. J. De Jong for his outstanding contribution to the committee and accepts his request to be relieved of his appointment.

4.4. Synod agrees that it would be beneficial, for the sake of continuity, if the committee members remain as it currently stands.

4.5. Synod applauds the extensive introduction to the Church Order as presented by the committee, as it is beneficial for its proper understanding and significance within the church federations.

4.6. Since the functioning process of delegation to Synod is normally identified in a set of regulations of a general synod, Synod agrees that it would be prudent of the committee also to formulate a draft proposal of such synod regulations as part of its mandate.

4.7. The matter of Article 8 regarding Exceptional Gifts should be revisited prior to completion of the new church order. There may come a time in the future when, as churches, we will need to make use of such a provision in the church order. To re-introduce it at that time would be far more difficult. This addresses the concerns of the church at Lincoln.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the Church Order Committee for its work.

5.2. To express its appreciation for the valuable contributions of Dr. J. De Jong to the work of the committee for a common church order.

5.3. To give the Church Order Committee the following mandate:

5.3.1. To continue to work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synod;

5.3.2. To continue in the evaluation of 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;

5.3.3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort;

5.3.4. To formulate a draft proposal of regulations for General Synod;

5.3.5. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;

5.3.6. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

5.4. To instruct the churches to forward their suggestions and concerns directly to the committee for its consideration.

Article 77

CPEU re: the Common Songbook

Committee 2 again presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: the common songbook. After a brief round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CPEU re: the common songbook

1.2. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The letter from the church at Lincoln is admissible since it interacts with the report of the CPEU.

3. Observations

3.1. The committee received the following mandate from Synod Neerlandia:

3.1.1. *To work closely with the committee re: songbook appointed by the URCNA synod;*

3.1.2. *To produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scripture and the Reformed Confessions;*

3.1.3. *To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;*

3.1.4. *To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for it to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.*

(*Acts General Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Article 95, p. 108).

3.2. The joint committees were able to adopt the following future direction:

3.2.1. The URC Psalter Hymnal Committee will propose to its next synod that initially both the *Book of Praise* as well as a Psalter Hymnal be recommended for use in the churches.

3.2.2. While the Psalter Hymnal Committee is mandated to produce a complete Psalter, it is not bound to include the 150 Anglo-Genevan psalms. Our committee, however, is bound by its mandate to include them.

3.3. The combined committees decided to:

3.3.1. Continue to work together, using the Principles and Guidelines to scrutinize and recommend suitable hymns.

3.3.2. Be gracious, open and amenable to each other's point of view, remaining cognizant of each other's mandates while striving towards unanimity.

3.3.3. Concentrate our efforts on the hymns.

3.3.4. Use the divisions of the Apostles' Creed as a general guide to organizing the hymns.

3.3.5. Maintain close contact between our committees, reporting to each other on our progress re: hymns every other month starting May 1, 2003.

3.3.6. Hold our next combined meeting in Jenison, MI, in March, 2004.

3.4. In addition to this, our committee decided that in our contact with the URC Psalter Hymnal Committee we would restrict our discussion to the psalm and hymn sections of the proposed combined songbook.

3.5. Over the past three years the committee was able to meet two times as combined committees. Both committees could thankfully note the brotherly harmony in which they could work and that good progress could be made thus far.

3.6. The church at Lincoln is thankful that both federations make psalm singing a priority. However, it is concerned that the URC committee appears less keen to include the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod receives the report as the progress report of the committee's work. As the committee continues to publish its activities, churches are encouraged to forward their suggestions directly to the committee for its consideration.

4.2. Synod can endorse the 'future direction' of the committee report as it provides a clear direction toward the fulfillment of its mandate given by Synod Neerlandia 2001.

4.3. The church at Lincoln fails to consider that it is not in the mandate of the URC committee to include the 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms; however, at the next URC synod, the committee will propose that, "initially both the *Book of Praise* as well as a Psalter Hymnal be recommended for use in the churches."

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for the common songbook for its work.

5.2. To give the committee the following mandate:

5.2.1. To continue working closely with the committee re: songbook appointed by the URCNA synod;

5.2.2. To continue to produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter

and other suitable metrical versions of the Psalms, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions;

5.2.3. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;

5.2.4. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for it to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

Article 78

Committee on Bible Translation

Committee 3 again presented its proposal on the report of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). After a round of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT)

1.2. Letter from the church at Fergus

1.3. Letter from the church at Carman (West)

1.4. Letter from the church at Winnipeg (Grace)

1.5. Letter from the church at Yarrow

1.6. Letter from the church at Orangeville

2. Admissibility

The report and the letters are admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The Report of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), which is included as an appendix in the *Acts*, serves as Observations.

3.2. CBT recommends that Synod decide to:

3.2.1. *Reappoint a CBT with the same mandate as given by Synod 2001;*

3.2.2. *Appoint a replacement for Rev. J. Louwerse whose term is over*.

3.3. The church at Fergus requests Synod to mandate the CBT to investigate the suitability of the English Standard Version (ESV) for use in the worship service, in light of the fact that a few churches in the federation cannot find themselves to implement either the NIV, or the NKJV, or the NASB for use in their worship services.

3.4. The church at Carman (West) is aware of the fact that monitoring developments in the field of Bible translation can become quite a burden for a committee if this mandate is interpreted broadly. Nevertheless, in Carman's opinion, the mandate to "monitor developments" involves more than focusing almost exclusively on the NIV. Since the committee seems to be of the opinion that doing this would extend beyond its mandate, perhaps the wording of the mandate needs to be reconsidered.

3.5. The church at Winnipeg (Grace) writes that the CBT should have served the churches with general information about the ESV, which should have been followed by a recommendation to investigate the ESV, either yes or no. Winnipeg (Grace) points out that the Preface of the ESV mentions that this translation wants to continue the legacy of Bible translation since the Reformation, and that this Bible version wants "to be as literal as possible while maintaining clarity of expression and literary excellence." Winnipeg (Grace) requests Synod to mandate the CBT to investigate the ESV.

3.6. The church at Yarrow considers:

3.6.1. That Synod Abbotsford 1995 stated that the churches need "the most faithful and understandable translation available";

3.6.2. That Synod Neerlandia 2001 stated that "it would be beneficial for the churches to be aware of general developments in the field of Bible translation";

3.6.3. That the ESV merits careful consideration by our churches.

The church at Yarrow requests to mandate the CBT specifically to do a full investigation of the ESV as well as a comparison with the NIV, and provide Synod 2007 with a comprehensive report of the ESV translation.

3.7. The church at Orangeville finds fault with the mandate given to the CBT. It feels that it is incorrect that a committee is mandated to scrutinize comments received from churches and/or members of the churches, and to pass judgment on the validity of these concerns, thereby bypassing General Synod. Orangeville feels that it makes a committee a permanent body. Orangeville asks Synod that in this regard the mandate for the CBT be reconsidered.

4. Considerations

4.1. From this report it is clear that the CBT has fulfilled its mandate.

4.2. The mandate of General Synod Neerlandia 2001 "to monitor developments in the field of Bible translation" includes informing the churches about new Bible translations and whether they are worthy of investigation. Synod realizes that in view of our limited resources, the CBT cannot investigate every possible translation. With regard to the field of Bible translation the CBT could solicit input from churches with which we have contact.

4.3. Synod agrees with the churches at Winnipeg (Grace), Fergus and Yarrow, which suggest that the ESV merits consideration by our churches. The CBT could benefit from input by the churches in this regard. As a result, it may be necessary to increase the number of deputies CBT.

4.4. The mandate to the CBT to receive, scrutinize and pass on valid concerns is in line with current practices of synodical deputies. These deputies are mandated to speak, write or act on behalf of the churches in accordance with their mandate but will submit a report of their words, letters and actions to the churches to be judged by the next general synod. There is no need to reconsider the mandate of the CBT as Orangeville requests.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the Committee on Bible Translation for the work done.

5.2. To mandate the Committee on Bible Translation:

5.2.1. To do a preliminary investigation of the ESV, and provide Synod 2007 with a report on the ESV translation, using also the input solicited from the churches;

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

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

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

5.2.5. To report and make recommendations regarding new Bible translations, whether they are worthy of investigation;

5.2.6. 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 79

Adjournment

The chairman adjourned Synod in order to allow the committees time to work on their proposals.

Evening Session – Thursday, February 19, 2004

Article 80

Reopening

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session, asking everyone present to sing Psalm 98:1,4. The roll was called and all were present.

Article 81

Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the

Book of Praise (SCBP). After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 82

Advisors at General Synod

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the overture from Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003 re: Advisors at General Synod. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **defeated**:

1. **Material**

   Overture from Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003 re: Advisors at General Synod

2. **Admissibility**

   This overture is declared admissible.

3. **Observations**

   3.1. General Synods in the past have appointed the minister of the convening church, or the counselor, to serve as advisor.

   3.2. Regional Synod November 12, 2003 overtures General Synod 2004 to add the following as Article I.G. of the Guidelines for General Synod: "Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed."

   3.3. Regional Synod gives the following reasons for its recommendation:

   3.3.1. The convening church does not send a delegate to general synod, rather delegates to general synod are sent by the regional synods.

   3.3.2. To preclude the seating of advisors does not mean that general synod cannot call upon others for advice on particular matters. Article III.A.9 of the regulations states that "If anyone has been requested to advise Synod on any matter, he shall address Synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chair" (cf. *Acts of Synod 1989* Art. 16, Considerations 1-3).

4. **Consideration**

   Synod agrees with the recommendation of Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003, as well as the reasons given for the recommendation.

5. **Recommendation**

   Synod decide to add the following as article I.G. of the Guidelines for General Synod: "Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not be appointed."

This overture, then, is taken back to committee.

Article 83

Closing Devotions and Adjournment

Br. P. Van Woudenberg led us in closing devotions. He read 1 Peter 2:1-12 and gave a brief meditation on this passage. We sang Psalm 118:1,6,8. Br. P. Van Woudenberg led us in prayer. The chairman adjourned Synod until the morning.

Morning Session – Friday, February 20, 2004

Article 84

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 4:10-20 and giving a meditation on this passage. We sang Psalm 71:11,12,13 after which the chairman led us in prayer. The roll was called and all were present.

Adoption of the Acts

After some corrections Articles 70-83 of the *Acts* were adopted.

Article 85

CPEU re: The Free Reformed Church of North America (FRCNA)

Committee 2 again presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: the Free Reformed Church of North America (FRCNA). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CPEU, including a supplementary report re: the Free Reformed Church of North America (FRCNA)

1.2. Letter from the church at London

2. Admissibility

The letter from the church at London is admissible since it interacts with the report of the CPEU.

3. Observations

3.1. The CPEU recommends that Synod 2004 decide:

3.1.1. *To continue meeting with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path;*

3.1.2. *To attend each other's Synods and send copies of Acts of Synod to each other;*

3.1.3. *To appoint Dr. J. Visscher to the committee.*

3.2. The church at London recommends "General Synod to encourage that the FRNCA be invited to meetings of Canadian Reformed Classes and Regional Synods."

3.3. The deputies attended the three annual FRCNA Synods and also met three times with the FRCNA sub-committee.

3.4. The FRCNA maintain "Limited Contact" with the Canadian Reformed Churches. This type of preliminary contact does not necessarily require moving towards the next level of contact. The FRCNA is not yet ready to consider moving towards federative or organic unity, which is the goal of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

3.5. The combined sub-committees were able to express appreciation for each other's sermons. However, in the report to their synod, the FRCNA committee stated that they continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be. Though this statement was to be corrected on the floor of the last FRCNA Synod, this was not done.

3.6. Our committee is concerned whether the FRCNA fully appreciates the Lord's demand for unity; to what extent "distinctives" keep us separate and how serious they are about meaningful fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. In light of this, our committee considers that there is a need to discuss with the FRCNA the scriptural requirement for federative unity.

4. Considerations

4.1. Our deputies have been diligent in meeting with the FRCNA committee to promote Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and they have been well received by the FRCNA.

4.2. Appreciation is expressed for the relationship of "Limited Contact" given by the FRCNA. While this level of relationship *may not* necessarily lead to federative unity, at the same time, it *may* well be a step toward federative unity. Therefore, the "Limited Contact" relationship with the FRCNA should be received positively in our discussion toward Ecclesiastical Fellowship and federative unity.

4.3. While mutual appreciation has been expressed for each other's sermons, the matter of experiential preaching continues to receive attention. Statements of mutual agreement made at the committee level still need to be corrected at the FRCNA synod level.

4.4. From the beginning of our contacts with the FRCNA, the Canadian Reformed Churches have maintained the scriptural requirement for federative unity and consider this the goal of our discussion with the FRCNA. It would be helpful for the committee to discuss the matter of federative unity, using the document entitled "Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government," as used in the unity discussion with the URCNA, as a working document to further explore this matter together (cf. Appendix B of the CPEU report in the appendices of these *Acts*).

4.5. The committee requests the appointment of Dr. J. Visscher to fill the vacancy left by the expiration of Rev. R. Aasman's term. Currently, Dr. J. Visscher serves in the Theological

Education Committee, which is a sub-committee of the CPEU.

4.6. The request of the church at London to invite the FRCNA to our broader assemblies has merit as it could increase the mutual contact and understanding at a more local level. As the Canadian Reformed Churches pursue a deeper relationship with the FRCNA on a federative level, it should be stimulated and complemented by meaningful interactions and discussions with the churches at the local level.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for its work.

5.2. To give the CPEU the following mandate:

5.2.1. To continue meeting with the FRCNA with a view to pursuing Ecclesiastical Fellowship, while at the same time promoting and maintaining the desire for federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path;

5.2.2. To explore and discuss the matter of federative unity with the FRCNA using as a basis, for example, the document entitled "Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government";

5.2.3. To encourage that the FRCNA be invited to meetings of Canadian Reformed classes and synods, and to send copies of the *Acts* of Synod to each other with the purpose of pursuing meaningful interactions and discussions with the churches at the local level.

Article 86

Appeals against Art. 45 of Synod Neerlandia re: the OPC

Committee 1 again presented its proposal on various appeals against Art. 45 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: the OPC. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. An appeal from the church at Attercliffe re: Article 45 of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*

1.2. An appeal from the church at Abbotsford re: the same

1.3. An appeal from the church at Grand Rapids re: the same

1.4. An appeal from the church at Owen Sound re: the same

1.5. An appeal from the church at Blue Bell re: the same

1.6. An appeal from br. W. de Haan re: the same

2. Admissibility

The appeals of the churches are admissible (Art. 31 C.O.). The appeal of br. W. de Haan is inadmissible (see Article 20 in these *Acts*).

3. Observations

3.1. The church at Attercliffe requests Synod:

3.1.1. To decide that Synod Neerlandia erred in the decision to come to Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC by deleting the words agreed upon by Synod Fergus and doing so without scriptural grounds.

3.1.2. To charge the Committee for Contact with the OPC (CCOPC) to as yet fulfill Synod Fergus' mandate, namely, "To adopt the proposed agreement as amended… as the basis for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, and to instruct the CCOPC to pass it on to the CEIR for adoption by the General Assembly."

3.2. The church at Abbotsford requests further consideration of Art. 45 of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* on the basis that it failed to consider decisions of previous General Synods and that it conflicts with the Word of God and the Church Order. Abbotsford asks that Synod:

3.2.1. Judge that Synod 2001 should have interacted with (a) the reasons provided by Synod 1998 for amending the Proposed Agreement, and (b) the reasons provided by the CCCA to maintain the amendments to the Proposed Agreement.

3.2.2. Propose to the OPC that we return to the Proposed Agreement as amended by Synod 1998, consistent with the guidelines established by Synod 1992 and maintained by

Synod 1995, as the basis for ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC.

3.2.3. Maintain the present relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, pending a response by the OPC to the above proposal and documentation, and pending consideration of this response by the next General Synod.

3.3. The church at Grand Rapids requests Synod Chatham to:

3.3.1. Judge that Synod Neerlandia 2001 erred in undoing the decision of Synod Fergus 1998 regarding the OPC and the outstanding divergences on the fencing of the table, and confessional membership, since no new grounds were brought forward to overturn that decision.

3.3.2. Rescind the decision to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC.

3.3.3. Instruct the CCOPC to as yet fulfill Synod Fergus' Article 130, Recommendations F, G, H, I, J.

3.3.4. Judge that Synod Neerlandia erred in creating a false dilemma between practice and theory in the OPC as that pertains to guests at the table.

3.3.5. Judge that Synod Neerlandia erred in its decision to reject unambiguously a general disqualification of office bearers in the OPC as ' false shepherds' on the grounds that

3.3.5.1. The Canadian Reformed Churches have never made such a general disqualification;

3.3.5.2. Elders who knowingly grant access to the table to those who are not permitted are in that particular aspect of their office guilty of false shepherding.

3.4. The church at Owen Sound requests Synod to decide:

3.4.1. That Synod Neerlandia 2001 erred in the manner in which it entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship by simply deleting from the proposed agreement the phrase, "This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient, and that a profession of the Reformed faith and a confirmation of a godly life is required" without indicating why these words cannot be maintained.

3.4.2. That Synod Neerlandia 2001 erred because it did not show why the arguments used by Synod Fergus for changing the proposed agreement were a violation of any scriptural principle, or were making any unreasonable demands upon the OPC.

3.4.3. To reaffirm unambiguously that our churches as yet maintain what was stated by Synod Lincoln 1992, "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 noted, 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."

3.4.4. To declare that the present formulation of the agreement sidesteps what has been the main issue, which is not *that* the Lord's Supper must be supervised, but *how* this must be done.

3.5. In their overture, the church at Blue Bell states that Synod Neerlandia 2001 overlooked the failure of the CCOPC to fulfill its mandate and instead decided to revert back to the weaker and incomplete proposal that Synod 1998 had amended, without giving explicit grounds or rationale. In the remaining part of its overture Bluebell submits to General Synod a review of many matters pertaining to our contact with the OPC as they have served at Synods since 1977. The church at Blue Bell requests that Synod submit the review and the appended documents to the CCOPC for renewed evaluation of all these matters.

4. Considerations

4.1. These appeals bring forward common arguments:

4.1.1. All letters express opposition to the fact that Synod Neerlandia 2001 did not give scriptural grounds or adequate reasons for deleting the amendments inserted into the agreement by Synod Fergus 1998.

4.1.2. All letters request Synod to return to the proposed agreement as amended by Synod 1998, and as yet to charge the CCCOPC to fulfill the mandate of Synod Fergus 1998, i.e. "To adopt the proposed agreement as amended… as the basis for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, and to instruct the CCOPC to pass it on to the CEIR for

adoption by the General Assembly."

4.2. *Re: The lack of reasons given by Synod Neerlandia 2001.* The appellants are correct that Synod Neerlandia did not give sufficient explanation as to why it undid the amended agreement of Synod Fergus and returned to the original agreement concerning supervision of the Lord's Table and confessional membership. The only explicit reason Synod Neerlandia gave was that "Synod Fergus failed to recognize sufficiently the progress made by the CCOPC and the CEIR." Moreover, Synod Neerlandia did not specifically interact with the grounds that Synod Fergus gave for amending the proposed agreement. Especially considering the importance of the decision, Synod Neerlandia should have done that.

4.3. At the same time, this present Synod takes note of the report that Synod Neerlandia had received from the CCOPC. In that report the CCOPC recommended a return to the original agreement because that agreement was "based on the Reformed Confessions." At the same time the report considered that "the amendment inserted by Synod Fergus goes beyond the wording found in the Reformed Confessions." Therefore, the concern of Synod Neerlandia was that our agreement with the OPC on the fencing of the Lord's Supper ought to be based on the Reformed *confessions*, both the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity. It is noteworthy that Synod Fergus also referred to the Westminster Standards as part of its reason for amending the proposed agreement. Therefore, on this point Synod Fergus and Synod Neerlandia were in agreement, namely, that our discussion with the OPC on the Lord's Supper must be based, in the first place, on the confessions.

4.4. Concerning the Reformed confessions, Synod Neerlandia brought an important point to light, namely, that both the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity state that the Lord's Table must be guarded with *two* keys of the kingdom: the preaching of God's Word and church discipline exercised by the elders (Westminster Confession, Chapter 29, Section 8; Larger Catechism Q & A 173; Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 82).

4.4.1. *Re: the first key.* Although not identical in practice, both the OPC and the CanRC use the first key to supervise the Lord's Table. Within the CanRC this is done with the Form for the Lord's Supper, which summarizes God's Word, in particular the sections on "Self-Examination" and "Invitation/Admonition." Also, in the OPC this is generally done with a Form for the Lord's Supper, as well as a more extemporaneous general verbal warning. Thus, regarding the use of the first key there is no concern.

4.4.2. *Re: the second key.* Synod thankfully notes that in both federations, church discipline is exercised by the elders over the members of the local congregation. The pertinent question, though, is: *how* is the second key exercised in connection with guests at the Lord's Table? In the CanRC this is done via a travel attestation from the elders of the guest's home congregation. In many OPC congregations the elders will interview the guests beforehand (cf. the speech of Rev. J.J. Peterson in the *Acts of Synod Fergus 1998*, p. 207, as well as the speech of Rev. G.I. Williamson in the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, p. 122). However, in some OPC congregations there is only a general verbal warning. Therefore, *concerning those guests*, the second key is not being exercised consistently. That was the concern of Synod Neerlandia and this Synod shares that concern.

4.5. The church at Abbotsford alleges that, "Synod 2001 maintains a double standard by requiring less from the OPC than it does from ourselves under Article 61 of the Church Order" (Consideration 3). In this statement the church at Abbotsford does not give enough attention to the character of the Church Order, especially vis-à-vis the confessions. Based on scriptural and confessional principles, a federation of churches agrees to a certain church order so everything can be done decently and in order. The OPC and the CanRC are not one federation, and therefore, they do not have one and the same church order. This is not a double standard. Rather, this simply indicates the reality of the present situation: we are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC; we have not merged into one federation.

4.6. Yet this present Synod agrees that the OPC should become more consistent in how it supervises the Lord's Table. In light of what we mutually confess concerning the two keys of the kingdom, it is to be hoped that the OPC and the CanRC can as yet come to not only greater understanding in principle, but also more consistency in practice concerning how the Lord's Table is – or should be – supervised, especially concerning guests. The remaining question is: how can we best do this at this point in time?

4.7. *Re: Returning to the Amended Agreement of Synod Fergus 1998*. Synod Lincoln 1992 decided that before entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, the two federations should agree 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" (*Acts*, Art. 72 IV.A.1.e). Synod Abbotsford 1995 continued this line when it mandated the CCOPC to work towards establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship "using the statement of Synod Lincoln… as a guideline" (*Acts*, Art. 106 VI.D.1). At the same time, however, Synod Abbotsford 1995 also considered that *how* the OPC supervises guests at the Lord's Table "cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (*Acts*, Art. 106 V.B.3). Synod Fergus 1998 brought the statement of Synod Lincoln 1992 into the agreement. However, following up on the consideration of Synod Abbotsford 1995, Synod Neerlandia 2001 did not make the matter of the general verbal warning a condition for entering Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This present Synod considers that it is not helpful at this point in time to engage in a protracted discussion about the developments from one synod to the next. The important point is that we continue to engage in a brotherly and forthright discussion with the OPC concerning *how* the Lord's Table ought to be supervised, along with the matter of confessional membership.

4.8. It is to be regretted that Synod Fergus 1998 did not send its proposed amendments back to the CCOPC so that the CCOPC could work together with the CEIR and come to a mutually agreed upon and improved agreement. Although Synod Fergus had the prerogative to change the agreement, changing it unilaterally did not help to foster a spirit of brotherly harmony between our two federations. It is also regrettable that Synod Neerlandia itself did not send the matter back to the CCOPC even though it considered it "advisable" that Synod Fergus should have done so (*Acts*, Art. 45, Consideration 4.6).

4.9. Nevertheless, especially in light of the fact that Synod Abbotsford 1995 stated that the practices within the OPC cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Synod Neerlandia did not err when it decided to establish a sister church relationship with the OPC. Therefore, this Synod also considers that there are no valid grounds for rescinding the decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001. Rather, now that we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, there ought to be ample opportunity to continue discussing the matters of the supervision of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership. In fact, a letter from the CEIR indicates that there was an understanding between the CCOPC and the CEIR that these matters could be discussed further in the context of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (cf. *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, p. 169). Based on the Reformed confessions concerning the two keys of the kingdom, it remains crucial that the OPC and the CanRC can indeed agree that a general verbal warning alone is not sufficient. The speech of Rev. G.I. Williamson to Synod Neerlandia 2001 also indicates that the OPC is striving to improve the manner in which it supervises the Lord's Table (*Acts*, p. 122).

4.10. The church at Grand Rapids also brings up the matter of Rev. Hofford's use of the term "false shepherds" in connection with office bearers in the OPC. The church at Grand Rapids interprets Rev. Hofford's statement to mean that, "elders who knowingly grant access to the table to those who are not permitted are in that particular aspect of their office guilty of false shepherding." However, this is not what Rev. Hofford himself said, and Grand Rapids' interpretation is open to question. The issue for the OPC is the fact that Rev. Hofford was received into our federation without retracting his statement. Therefore, Synod Neerlandia made it abundantly clear that our churches do not take any responsibility for such allegations. Furthermore, the church at Grand Rapids does not bring forward any new grounds on this subject which have not been considered already by Synod Neerlandia 2001 (cf. Art. 33 C.O.).

4.11. Although the church at Blue Bell presents an extensive review of many matters pertaining to our contact with the OPC since 1977, they do not bring forward any new material (cf. Art. 33 C.O.). Nevertheless, this review should be given to the CCCA to use at its own discretion in preparing a synopsis of the discussion with OPC thus far.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. That Synod Neerlandia 2001 did not err when it took the decision to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC; however, it should have interacted more specifically with the grounds that Synod Fergus gave for amending the agreement.

5.2. Not to accede to the appeals of the churches at Attercliffe, Abbotsford, Grand Rapids, Owen Sound and Blue Bell.

5.3. To state that the Considerations 4.1-4.10 serve as an answer to the appeals of these churches.

Article 87

The Appointment of Dr. A.J. de Visser

At this point the chairman informed the assembly that he had received a phone call from the chairman of the Board of Governors of the Theological College, announcing that Dr. A.J. de Visser had accepted his appointment as Professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology. This news was received with sincere thankfulness.

Article 88

CCCA re: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the report of the CCCA re: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CCCA, including appendices, re: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

1.2. Letter from the church at Fergus

1.3. Letter from the church at London

1.4. Letter from the church at Winnipeg (Grace)

1.5. Letter from the church at Lynden

1.6. Letter from the church at Brampton

1.7. Letter form the church at Yarrow

1.8. Letter from the church at Lincoln

2. Admissibility

The letters from the churches are admissible since the letters interact with the report of the CCCA.

3. Observations

3.1. The committee represented our churches at the 68th, 69th and 70th General Assemblies of the OPC. In a letter to the Canadian Reformed Churches, the 68th General Assembly expressed gratitude and humility at the acceptance of the Ecclesiastical Fellowship established between our two churches. The General Assembly also asked the CCCA to arrange meetings in which to discuss the divergences. The CCCA recommended that the discussion would focus on the two points of the joint agreement re: supervision of the Lord's Table and confessional membership.

3.2. The only meeting between the CEIR and the CCCA took place on April 15, 2003. At that meeting the two points of the joint agreement were discussed. Although the committee states that a report of this meeting is appended, it was not included. The committee believes that there is no point in just a general discussion on divergences or differences. Many of the issues have been discussed. Many position papers have been written and presented to the CEIR. The committee recommends that the discussions should focus first of all on the two points of the joint agreement. Besides, the committee suggests that it might be helpful and clarifying to entertain a discussion as to how these principles are put into practice, or should be put into practice. The committee also suggests promoting this discussion through articles in each other's magazines, attending office bearers' conferences and co-operation in mission and home mission. The CEIR has a rotating schedule of meeting annually with one of the churches in North America, with which the OPC is in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. This policy is part of the reason for there being only one meeting. However, the OPC brothers suggested that meetings beyond that minimum are feasible, as often as deemed necessary and beneficial.

3.3. The churches that interact with this report express disappointment at the fact that only one meeting with the CEIR was held, and recommend that General Synod Chatham 2004 be

specific in the mandate given to the CCCA, regarding goals and items for discussion.

4. Considerations

4.1. The committee may be correct in observing that over the past twenty years or so, many of the issues have been discussed and many position papers have been written and presented to the CEIR, yet in their letters the churches express a lack of knowledge about the discussions and papers. Past CCOPCs have not reported much regarding these discussions, beyond the summaries included in the *Acts of Synod Burlington 1986*. It would be beneficial for the churches to receive the evidence of these discussions and their outcome.

4.2. Both the committee and the churches are asking that a more specific goal be articulated for our discussions with the OPC. Synod Neerlandia 2001 also considered that the "existing differences do warrant continued discussion to grow in the unity of faith (Eph 4:3-6, 13)" (Article 45, Consideration 4.13). Concretely, the goal of these discussions should be to determine whether this unity of the faith regarding the church, the covenant and the sacraments is adequately and faithfully expressed in our confessional standards, as already implied in Article 45, Consideration 4.11 of the *Acts Synod Neerlandia 2001*.

4.3. The focus of the discussions should be two-fold: on the one hand, the scriptural faithfulness in the confessions and, on the other hand, the actual application in the reality of church-life, i.e. how the principles are put into practice, or should be put into practice.

4.4. With a view to the concerns expressed by the churches, the following matters remain crucial and should receive priority in the discussions with the OPC:

4.4.1. The two points of the joint agreement, namely, the supervision of the Lord's Table and confessional membership, as amended by Synod Fergus 1998;

4.4.2. The way in which the doctrine regarding covenant and church relate to these matters.

4.5. Since more frequent meetings between the CCCA and the CEIR are feasible, the CCCA should attempt to arrange a meeting at least once a year.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the CCCA for its work in our contact with the OPC.

5.2. To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC under the adopted rules.

5.3. To continue the contact with the OPC by the CCCA with the mandate to continue the discussions on the existing differences in confession and church polity as noted in the Considerations 4.2-4.4.

5.4. To endeavour to meet with the CEIR at least once a year.

5.5. To publish a synopsis of the discussions on the various issues and of the position papers which have been written over the past twenty years.

Article 89

Advisors at General Synod

The committee presented its proposal on the overture from Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003 re: Advisors at General Synod. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Overture from Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003 re: Advisors at General Synod

2. Admissibility

This overture is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. In the past, general synods have appointed the minister of the convening church or the counselor to serve as advisor.

3.2. Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003 overtures General Synod 2004 to add the following as Article I.G. of the Guidelines for General Synod: "Although advice can be requested in particular matters, advisory members shall not appointed."

3.3. Regional Synod gives the following reasons for its recommendation:

3.3.1. The convening church does not send a delegate to general synod, rather delegates to general synod are sent by the regional synods.

3.3.2. To preclude the seating of advisors does not mean that general synod cannot call upon others for advice on particular matters. Article III.A.9 of the regulations states that, "If anyone has been requested to advise Synod on any matter, he shall address Synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chair" (cf. *Acts of Synod 1989* Art. 16, Considerations 1-3).

4. Consideration

4.1. Regional Synod is correct when it says that "delegates to general synod are sent by the regional synods and not by the convening church," but this does not say anything about advisors.

4.2. Advisors may be called upon for advice by Synod but, unlike delegates, advisors cannot vote on any matters before Synod.

4.3. The fact that general synod can call upon others for advice on any matter at any time does not preclude the seating of advisors.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide not to accede to the request of Regional Synod East, November 12, 2003.

Article 90

Acronyms

Committee 1 presented its proposal on the letter from the church at Chatham re: Acronyms. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the church at Chatham re: Acronyms

2. Admissibility

This letter is declared admissible.

3. Observations

The church at Chatham requests General Synod to instruct committees reporting to Synod to include a list defining the different acronyms in reports.

4. Consideration

The practice of including the acronym in brackets the first time a name is mentioned is a better system to note the meaning of the acronym. However, if it is also helpful for the reader of the reports to include a glossary of the different acronyms, Synod could recommend it.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to accede to the request of the church at Chatham.

Article 91

Appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional West 2003 re: Grape Juice

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Grape Juice. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 92

Appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Art. 31 C.O.

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Art. 31 C.O. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 93

Appeal of brs. T. Hoogsteen and C. Van Andel against Art. 67 of Synod Fergus

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the appeal of brs. T. Hoogsteen and C. Van Andel against Art. 67 of Synod Fergus 1998. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 94

Appeal of br. T.J.C. Kingma against Arts. 45, 59, 73 of Synod Neerlandia and Art. 91 of Synod Coaldale

Committee 4 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. T.J.C. Kingma against Arts. 45, 59, 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 and Art. 91 of Synod Coaldale 1977. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for further consideration.

Farewell: br. G.B. Veenendaal

At this point the chairman bade farewell to br. G.B. Veenendaal, the fraternal delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The chairman adjourned Synod until the afternoon session.

Afternoon Session – Friday, February 20, 2004

Article 95

Reopening

Synod reopened in plenary session. We sang Psalm 107:1,2. The roll was called. All delegates were present.

Article 96

Appeal of the church at Chatham against Art. 73 of Synod Neerlandia re: Phase Two

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the appeal from the church at Chatham against Art. 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: Phase Two. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. **Material**

   Appeal from the church at Chatham against Art. 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: Phase Two

2. **Admissibility**

   The appeal from the church at Chatham is admissible since it appeals a decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001.

3. **Observations**

   3.1. The church at Chatham appeals Article 67, Considerations 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 as well as Article 73, Considerations 4.6.3 and 4.6.4. These considerations represent two components of implementing Phase Two on the way towards federative unity with the URCNA, and read as follows:

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

   3.1.2. *The churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rule of the respective churches.*

   3.2. The church at Chatham considers it wrong "'to accept each other's attestations, admitting such to the Lord's Table' and 'open the pulpits to each other's ministers' when Sister Church or Ecclesiastical Fellowship has not yet been proclaimed.'" However, the church at Chatham does not have objections to the other parts of Phase Two.

   3.3. The church at Chatham claims that "by Synod Neerlandia not defining Phase 2 in terms of Ecclesiastical Fellowship or Sister Churches it has left the churches confused. Is it Ecclesiastical Fellowship or is it not?" The fact that calling each other's ministers is excluded from the list of what is involved in Phase Two, brings the church at Chatham to the conclusion that Phase Two is not to be considered an Ecclesiastical Fellowship/sister church relationship.

3.4. The church at Chatham believes that Synod Neerlandia erred when it implemented Phase Two of the relationship with the URCNA, while not clearly defining the nature of the relationship as Ecclesiastical Fellowship/sister church relationship.

3.5. The church at Chatham requests to "reverse the recommendation to 'accept each other's attestations, admitting such members to the Lord's Table' and 'open the pulpits to each other's ministers' until Ecclesiastical Fellowship/Sister Church relationship or full Church Union has been declared."

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod agrees with the church at Chatham that Synod Neerlandia did not explicitly define the relationship with the URCNA in terms of Ecclesiastical Fellowship/sister church relationship.

4.2. Synod acknowledges that the lack of clarity as to the nature of the relationship with the URCNA has the potential of creating confusion within the church community. It would have been prudent of Synod Neerlandia to make clear that the Phase Two relationship with the URCNA is equivalent to Ecclesiastical Fellowship and, therefore, the rules of Ecclesiastical Fellowship would apply.

4.3. Synod Neerlandia did, for the sake of clarity, provide an outline of what Phase Two comprised (cf. *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Article 73, Consideration 4.6, pg. 83). Phase Two is terminology that originates from the URCNA, and its criteria are consistent with the CanRC's rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (cf. *Acts of Synod Lincoln 1992*, Article 50, IV.B.1-7).

4.4. In Article 73, Consideration 4.6, Synod Neerlandia refers to "Appendix 3" of the report of the CPEU. Unfortunately, this was not appended to the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*. In this appendix, entitled "Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity of the URCNA," Phase Two of the relationship is called "Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship." This document is now added as an appendix to the *Acts of Synod Chatham 2004*. However, the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001* do not indicate the reason why the terminology of Ecclesiastical Fellowship or sister church relationship was not used in the description of our relationship with the URCNA.

4.5. Synod believes that it would be beneficial to the churches and for the implementation of our relationship with the URCNA to provide clarity with regard to the exact nature of the relationship with the URCNA during this second phase.

4.6. Although the practice of Ecclesiastical Fellowship allows for the calling of each other's ministers, it is not specified as one of the adopted rules. Likewise, Phase Two (i.e. Ecclesiastical Fellowship) does not prevent the churches from calling ministers from each other's federation.

4.7. The argument of the church of Chatham is based solely on the question of definition or declaration. If Synod Neerlandia had offered the URCNA a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship/sister church relationship, then the concerns of the church at Chatham would no longer hold.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To deny the appeal of the church at Chatham.

5.2. To declare that Phase Two is the equivalent of Ecclesiastical Fellowship as it is maintained under the adopted rules (*Acts of Synod Lincoln 1992*, Article 50, IV.B.1-7). At the same time, Phase Two clearly includes the purpose that the churches involved move forward from Phase Two (Ecclesiastical Fellowship) to Phase Three (federative union).

Article 97

Appeal of the church at Grand Rapids against Art. 73 of Synod Neerlandia re: Phase Two

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the appeal from the church at Grand Rapids against Art. 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: Phase Two. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeal from the church at Grand Rapids against Art. 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 re: Phase Two

2. Admissibility

The appeal from the church at Grand Rapids is admissible since it appeals a decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001.

3. Observations

3.1. The church at Grand Rapids is appealing the decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001, Article 73, regarding the relations with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA).

3.2. The church at Grand Rapids does understand the high biblical call to pursue diligently the unity of the body of Christ.

3.3. The church at Grand Rapids has been busy on a local level interacting with three URCNA consistories, but they deliberately abstain from implementing the elements of the Phase Two relationship established between the two federations, as they do not agree with the way in which unity between these two federations of churches is being pursued.

3.4. The church at Grand Rapids reflects on how the matter of relations with the OPC was dealt with from Synod Coaldale 1977 until Ecclesiastical Fellowship was declared at Synod Neerlandia 2001. The church at Grand Rapids feels that the differences in supervision of the Lord's table, church government and confessional membership were ignored by Synod Neerlandia in its decision. They believe that this method of ignoring differences in coming to a relationship has influenced the decision of Synod Neerlandia with respect to its decision regarding the URCNA.

3.5. The church at Grand Rapids contends that guests can be admitted to the Lord's table in URCNA churches on the basis of self-attestation or the attestation of church members. Grand Rapids believes that this method of supervision of the Lord's table in the URCNA is contrary *in principle* to the historical understanding of Article 61 C.O. of the CanRC. They contend that by proceeding with Phase Two, Synod Neerlandia has gone beyond this article of the Church Order.

3.6. Grand Rapids remarks that the description of the current practices of admitting guests to the Lord's table in the URCNA, and the CPEU's implied agreement with it in the "Statement of Agreement" is vague and confusing. They feel that the phrase "as much as possible" leaves the manner of supervising the Lord's table open to subjective interpretation.

3.7. The church at Grand Rapids states that the term "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" is foreign to our Church Order. The Church Order knows no other relationship than that of "sister-church" (cf. Articles 4,5,61,62). Therefore, as they state, Synod Neerlandia "went beyond the Church Order (C.O.) in creating an interim stepping-stone type of relationship with the URCs…." They argue that the relationship created with the URCNA is not the same as a sister-church relationship, because Synod Neerlandia did not include in its description of Phase Two the possibility of calling each other's ministers.

3.8. They also assert that it is presumptive and even wrong to give each other the full rights and privileges of a sister church relationship before we have come to federative unity.

3.9. Grand Rapids believes that Synod Neerlandia was being inconsistent in the requirements for guests at the Lord's table in the URCNA, when it remarked concerning the decision of Synod Leusden in our Dutch sister churches about the administration of the Lord's Supper by army chaplains: "It is important that our sister churches maintain Article 60 and 61 of their Church Order, and not ignore the Scriptural teaching about the Lord's Supper as summarized in the Reformed Confessions."

3.10. Grand Rapids recommends that Synod:

3.10.1. *Judge that Synod Neerlandia's decision to establish EF with the URCNA contradicts Article 61 of the Church Order;*

3.10.2. *Rescind on the basis of the above the decision to recognize the URCNA as true churches and move to Phase Two;*

3.10.3. *Establish a relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the URCNA equivalent to Phase One.*

3.10.4. *Instruct the CPEU to communicate this decision to the CERCU.*

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod appreciates that the church at Grand Rapids, in line with the biblical requirement for

church unity, is pursuing local interaction with United Reformed Churches.

4.2. The conclusion that the manner in which the CanRC has dealt with the OPC has influenced the decision of Neerlandia concerning the Phase Two relationship with the URCNA may be true but cannot be substantiated.

4.3. The phrase "as much as possible" in the "Statement of Agreement" stands in the context of the elders' interview with persons requesting admission to the Lord's Supper as a guest, or when making inquiry about individuals with others. In those instances elders are to acquire information about a person's faith and life. It is also not correct to judge the practices of other churches only in the light of our own "historical understanding" of Article 61.

4.4. The church at Grand Rapids is arguing about old and new terms. Even though the term "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" is not used in the Church Order, it is equivalent to the term "sister-church" relations. Since Synod Lincoln 1992 both terms have been used interchangeably. This means that the relationship created with the URCNA is the same as a sister church relationship. The argument that Phase Two does not include the possibility of calling each other's ministers does not have any bearing on this. The rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (*Acts of Synod Lincoln 1992*, Art. 50, IV.B.1-7) do not specify that the churches can call each other's ministers, but this does not mean that this may not take place. After all, this is a sister church relationship and the calling of ministers is governed by Article 4 of the Church Order.

4.5. In response to its assertion that the full rights and privileges of a sister church relationship can only be exercised when there is federative unity with the URCNA, the church at Grand Rapids should take note of the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia*, where synod replied to a similar concern from the church at London. "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" (Article 67, Consideration 4.11, pg. 71).

4.6. In Article 73, Consideration 4.6, Synod Neerlandia refers to "Appendix 3" of the report of the CPEU. Unfortunately this was not appended to the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*. In this appendix, entitled "Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity of the URCNA," Phase Two of the relationship is called "Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship." This document is now added as an appendix to the *Acts of Synod Chatham 2004*.

4.7. The matter of administration of the Lord's Supper by army chaplains in our Dutch sister churches is a completely different matter, as it deals with exceptional circumstances and is a matter which is presently under study. The key concern of Synod Neerlandia is that the Lord's Supper be celebrated in a worship service and under the supervision of the elders (*Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 80, Consideration 4.11, p. 94).

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to deny the appeal of the church at Grand Rapids.

Article 98

CPEU re: General Mandate

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the report of the CPEU re: General Mandate. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CPEU re: General Mandate

1.2. Letter from the church at Willoughby Heights

2. Admissibility

The letter from the church at Willoughby Heights is admissible since it interacts with the report of the CPEU.

3. Observations

3.1. Synod Escondido 2001 committed itself to working towards federative unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and appointed ad-hoc committees to work with their counterparts of the CanRC on the church order, theological education and a common songbook.

3.2. In the ratification process that followed the decision of Synod Escondido 2001, the majority of the United Reformed Churches supported this decision.

3.3. The CPEU and the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA (CERCU) only met once, since most of the work for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity was done by the sub-committees, in co-operation with their counterparts of the URCNA.

3.4. The report highlights the various activities and interactions between the CanRC and the URCNA at the local level, including pulpit exchanges and combined meetings to promote a greater understanding of the respective federations.

3.5. The various sub-committees within the CPEU provided their respective reports; however, there was no apparent interaction by the CPEU with them.

3.6. Synod Neerlandia 2001 mandated the CPEU 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 have been prepared jointly with the CERCU of the URCNA. It was to readdress the matter of a definite timeframe for federative unity, with 2007 as a possible target date.

3.7. The CPEU recommends that General Synod Chatham 2004 reiterate the respective mandates of the sub-committees, the mandate of the CPEU for the pursuit of ecclesiastical unity with the URCNA, the mandate to continue dialogue with the FRCNA, and the mandate to explore possibilities of federative unity with the OCRC.

3.8. The church at Willoughby Heights is concerned that URCNA ministers have defended the so-called "Framework Hypothesis," as reported in the *Christian Renewal* of February 26, 2001.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod is thankful for the work that the various committees have been able to complete thus far, and for the brotherly harmony and co-operation that has been experienced during the meetings.

4.2. Synod thankfully acknowledges the ratification of the Synod Escondido 2001 decision by the majority of United Reformed Churches.

4.3. Synod thankfully takes note of the various activities and interactions between the CanRC and the URCNA at the local level. It is through these means that our relationship can be further expressed and strengthened.

4.4. While the various sub-committees have had numerous meeting with their URCNA counterparts, the CPEU committee only met once with the CERCU of the URCNA. As a result they were unable to come to Synod Chatham 2004 with a single comprehensive report, or a recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity.

4.5. Synod agrees with the CPEU to reiterate that the committees, including the sub-committees, continue in the fulfillment of their respective mandates and submit their reports on a timely basis.

4.6. Since the "Framework Hypothesis" has been a matter of discussion in the unity talks between various Reformed church federations and URCNA, it would be beneficial that the CPEU also investigate this matter in our relationship with the URCNA.

4.7. In Article 73, Consideration 4.6, Synod Neerlandia refers to "Appendix 3" of the report of the CPEU. Unfortunately, this was not appended to the *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*. In this appendix, entitled "Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity of the URCNA," Phase Two of the relationship is called "Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship." This document is now added as an appendix to the *Acts of Synod Chatham 2004*.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee and its various sub-committees for their work.

RE: URCNA

5.2. To maintain the rules of Phase Two (Ecclesiastical Fellowship), so far as it concerns the churches in common (see *Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Article 73, Considerations 4.5 and 4.6).

5.3. To pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the URCNA with a view towards entering the final

phase of federative unity.

5.4. To work closely with the sub-committees of the CPEU re: church order, theological education and a common songbook, consulting with them concerning the progress made.

5.5. To present a single comprehensive report, that has been prepared jointly with the CERCU of the URCNA to the next Synod, including a recommendation for a definite timeframe for federative unity.

5.6. To provide information to the churches at regular intervals.

5.7. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments with the URCNA.

5.8. To work closely with the CERCU of the URCNA.

5.9. To commence discussion concerning the "Framework Hypothesis" and the support this theory has within the URCNA, and serve the next synod with information concerning this matter.

5.10. To give the CPEU sub-committees the following specific mandate:

Re: Church Order

5.11. To express its appreciation for the valued contributions of Dr. J. De Jong to the work of the committee for a common church order.

5.12. To thank the Church Order Committee for its work.

5.13. To give the Church Order Committee the following mandate:

5.13.1. To continue to work closely with the committee re: church order appointed by the URCNA synods;

5.13.2. To continue in the evaluation of 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;

5.13.3. To propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort;

5.13.4. To formulate a draft proposal of regulations for General Synod;

5.13.5. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;

5.13.6. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

5.14. To instruct the churches to forward their suggestions and concerns directly to the committee for its consideration.

Re: Theological Education Committee

5.15. To thank the Theological Education Committee for its work.

5.16. To give the Theological Education Committee the following mandate:

5.16.1. To continue working closely with the committee re: theological education appointed by the URCNA synods;

5.16.2. To continue the evaluation of the current situation as to theological education within the CanRC and the URCNA;

5.16.3. To develop a proposal concerning theological education within the new federation keeping in mind that:

5.16.3.1. 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;

5.16.3.2. 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, as well as Reformed Homiletics.

5.16.4. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;

5.16.5. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

Re: Common Songbook

5.17. To thank the committee for the common songbook for its work.

5.18. To give the committee the following mandate:

5.18.1. To continue working closely with the committee re: songbook appointed by the URCNA synods;

5.18.2. To continue to produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions of the Psalms, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions;

5.18.3. To keep the CPEU updated on the progress;

5.18.4. To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for them to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion.

RE: OCRC

5.19. To give the committee the following mandate:

5.19.1. To represent the Canadian Reformed Churches (when invited) at meetings of the OCRC, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring the possibility of federative unity;

5.19.2. To develop a more concrete proposal toward establishing talks with the OCRC;

5.19.3. To specifically address with the OCRC whether it shares the mutual desire for federative unity with the CanRC;

5.19.4. To make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments.

RE: FRCNA

5.20. To give the committee the following mandate:

5.20.1. To continue meeting with the FRCNA with a view to promoting federative unity, discussing whatever obstacles there may be on this path.

5.20.2. To specifically address with the FRCNA whether it shares the mutual goal of federative unity with the CanRC.

5.20.3. To encourage that the FRNCA be invited to meetings of Canadian Reformed classes and regional synods and to send copies of the *Acts* of Synod to each other with the purpose of pursuing meaningful interactions and discussions with the churches at the local level.

Article 99

Appeal of the church at Grand Rapids against Arts. 22, 34, 36, 45 of Synod Neerlandia

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of the church at Grand Rapids against Articles 22, 34, 36, 45 of Synod Neerlandia 2001. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeal of the church at Grand Rapids against Articles 22, 34, 36, 45 of Synod Neerlandia 2001

2. Admissibility

This appeal is admissible since it appeals a decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001.

3. Observations

3.1. The church at Grand Rapids requests Synod to judge that:

3.1.1. *Synod Neerlandia 2001 erred in its "consideration" of Articles 22, 34, 36 and 45 that the differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity (particularly with respect to the doctrinal points listed in the "Evaluation of Divergences") may "express the catholicity of the Church of God and enrich the body of Christ …."*

3.1.2. *The same "consideration" also jeopardizes the pure preaching of the gospel in the Canadian and American Churches (Article 29 of the Belgic Confession).*

3.2. The church at Grand Rapids states that some formulations in the Westminster Standards are not in agreement with the Three Forms of Unity, "and therefore should be reckoned as divergences that must be resolved outside the bounds of Ecclesiastical Fellowship." The church at Grand Rapids gives the doctrine of the covenant as an example. It feels that Synod Neerlandia has opened the door to false preaching on the covenant, similar to the

preaching which the churches rejected in connection with the Protestant Reformed Church.

4. Considerations

4.1. The church at Grand Rapids' appeal is, in fact, an appeal against Synod Lincoln 1992, Art. 72, Recommendation B.

4.2. Both Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 106, pg. 69) and Synod Fergus 1998 (Art. 130) denied appeals concerning the same matter. The church at Grand Rapids does not interact with these decisions.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to deny the appeal of the church at Grand Rapids.

Article 100

CRCA re: Indonesian Churches, Reformed Church in New Zealand and General Mandate

Committee 3 again presented its proposal on the report of the CRCA re: Indonesian Churches, Reformed Church in New Zealand and General Mandate. After a few rounds of discussion, the following amendment was **adopted**:

To add to Consideration 4.5:

The fact, however, remains that in order to foster a meaningful relationship, creating a greater awareness of our federation, every effort should be made to encourage face-to-face meetings with the church federations in question. However, this should be done within the CRCA's existing budget.

Then the main proposal was put to a vote. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the CRCA re: other matters, namely, Indonesian Churches, Reformed Church in New Zealand and General Mandate

1.2. Supplementary Report CRCA

1.3. Letter from the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer)

1.4. Letter from the church at Carman (West)

1.5. Letter from the church at Guelph

1.6. Letter from the church at Grand Rapids

1.7. Letter from the church at Elora

1.8. Letter from the church at Aldergrove

2. Admissibility

The report and the letters are admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the CRCA under the heading "Other Matters," which is included as an appendix in the *Acts*, serves as Observations.

3.2. The CRCA recommends that Synod decide:

3.2.1. *With respect to the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis in East Nusa Tengarra (GGRC-NTT):*

3.2.1.1. *Not to enter in Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time but to give the contact with the church at Smithville an opportunity to develop;*

3.2.1.2. *To recommend to the churches in the federation to receive visitors from the GGRC-NTT in the knowledge that these churches adhere to the Three Forms of Unity;*

3.2.2. *To approve the proposed budget of $14,500 for the period 2004-2007;*

3.2.3. *To give the CRCA the following general mandate:*

3.2.3.1. *To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship outside the Americas;*

3.2.3.2. *To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches outside the Americas;*

3.2.3.3. *To serve Synod 2007 with a report with suitable Recommendations, to be sent to the churches six months prior to the next General Synod.*

3.2.4. *To appoint one new member to serve on the CRCA for a nine year term (till 2013).*

3.3. In the Supplementary Report, the CRCA:

3.3.1. Reports that it has received a request about establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship from the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-NTT). The GGRI-NTT is a result of the missionary activities of our Dutch sister churches. Currently the GKN and the FRCA have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GGRI-NTT. The CRCA also received a request from the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ). The CRCA feels that with the information available it is premature to recommend entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with these churches. Synod needs to be provided with more comprehensive information. This information should also be available to the churches.

3.3.2. Notes that the GGRC-NTT is a younger federation which only recently adopted the Three Forms of Unity and the Reformed Church Order.

3.3.3. Requests to increase the budget by $6,000.00 to allow two members of the committee to visit Indonesia and New Zealand, enabling the committee to make appropriate recommendations to the next General Synod.

3.4. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) questions the validity of the distinction made by the CRCA regarding the GGRC-NTT. "The CRCA does not recommend that we enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GGRC and yet recommend that as churches we receive visitors from the GGRC." The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) is of the view that the observations of the CRCA should lead to the Canadian Reformed Churches extending Ecclesiastical Fellowship to the GGRC-NTT.

3.5. The Church at Carman (West) suggests that the information given by the CRCA in its supplementary report warrants the conclusion that there should be no impediments to the GGRI-NTT being accepted as sister churches. Carman West would like to see the contacts with the GGRI-NTT formalized.

3.6. The churches at Guelph, Grand Rapids, Elora and Aldergrove are opposed to the request of the CRCA for a $6,000.00 increase. The church at Guelph refers to the *Acts of Synod Fergus*, Art. 72, consideration B, namely, "The CRCA is correct when it suggests that it would seem more realistic and responsible for our sister churches to concentrate their efforts on establishing relations with faithful Reformed churches in their parts of the world and for the Canadian Reformed Churches to do the same in North and South America." The church at Aldergrove "would like General Synod to consider encouraging the CRCA to find avenues to continue the dialogue with these churches other than a personal visit of two members and thus to maintain the current budget of the committee." The church at Grand Rapids suggests asking the FRCA to introduce our churches to the churches in Indonesia and New Zealand.

3.7. Synod West Albany 2000 of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia decided to continue its sister relationship with the GGRI with a view to supporting them in a "well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches." Synod West Albany found that the GGRI give evidence of continuing "faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order." With regard to the GGRC Synod West Albany considered that it "needs to be stabilized before recommendations regarding sister church relationships can be considered."

3.8. Synod Rockingham 2003 of the FRCA (*Acts*, Art. 73) decided "to continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules" and "to continue contacts with the GGRC." Rockingham also mandated the FRCA deputies to "monitor and report developments on the unity of the GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognize." With regard to the RCNZ, Synod Rockingham 2003 decided to recognize that "the only remaining difficulty with entering into a relationship with the RCNZ is the relationship of the RCNZ with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia" (*Acts*, Art. 72).

3.9. The GGRI-NTT is part of the GGRI.

4. Considerations

4.1. *Re: the GGRI*. Since both the FRCA and the GKN have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the

GGRI it would be good to have a similar relation with the GGRI as well, especially in light of the fact that these churches are the result of missionary work by the GKN and also our churches. At the same time, Synod agrees with the CRCA that at this time not enough information is available to all the churches. This makes it difficult for Synod to make a decision at this time. Synod also agrees with the churches that suggest that this information can be gathered in other ways than a visit by two members of the CRCA. Especially the work of the FRCA deputies should be used by the CRCA. The churches at Smithville and Toronto, which are involved in missionary work in Indonesia, can be of great help to the CRCA as well.

4.2. *Re: The GGRC-NTT.* Synod agrees with the recommendation of the CRCA not to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time. The CRCA is to provide more information to the churches, making use of the work of the deputies of the FRCA and the church at Smithville.

4.3. Synod cannot deal with the recommendation of the CRCA regarding visitors from GGRC-NTT since the CRCA does not substantiate this recommendation. Synod cannot deal with the suggestion of the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) either.

4.4. *Re: the RCNZ.* Synod notes the decision of Synod Rockingham 2003 and agrees with the CRCA that more information should be made available to the churches regarding the RCNZ. This should be done in consultation with the work of the FRCA, GKN and via the ICRC.

4.5. Synod agrees with the churches that oppose the increase in budget. There are other ways available to gather the necessary information. The fact, however, remains that in order to foster a meaningful relationship, creating a greater awareness of our federation, every effort should be made to encourage face-to-face meetings with the church federations in question. However, this should be done within the CRCA's existing budget.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the CRCA for the work done.

5.2. To accept the budget of $14,500.

5.3. To mandate the CRCA:

5.3.1. with respect to the GGRI, to continue the contact and diligently correspond with the GGRI, to make more information available to the churches and to report to the next Synod, in the hope that Ecclesiastical Fellowship can be established;

5.3.2. with respect to the GGRC-NTT, to continue the contact and investigate further the GGRC-NTT, also in light of the discussions of the FRCA with the GGRC-NTT and make the information available to the churches;

5.3.3. with respect to the RCNZ, not to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time.

5.4. To give the CRCA the following general mandate:

5.4.1. To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into ecclesiastical fellowship outside the Americas;

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

5.4.3. To serve Synod 2007 with a report with suitable recommendations, to be sent to the churches six months prior to the next General Synod.

The chairman then adjourned Synod to allow the committees time to work on their proposals.

Evening Session – Friday, February 20, 2004

Article 101

Reopening

The chairman reopened Synod in plenary session, asking everyone present to sing Hymn 49:1,2. The roll was called and all were present.

Article 102

Appeal of brs. T. Hoogsteen and C. Van Andel against Art. 67 of Synod Fergus

The committee again presented its proposal on the appeal of brs. T. Hoogsteen and C. Van Andel against Art. 67 of Synod Fergus 1998. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

An appeal from brs. T. Hoogsteen and C. Van Andel against Article 67 of Synod Fergus 1998.

2. Admissibility

The appeal is declared inadmissible because the appellants do not interact with the actual decision of Synod Fergus 1998 and because no new grounds have been provided since Synod Fergus (cf. Articles 31, 33 C.O.).

Article 103

Appeal of br. T.J.C. Kingma against Arts. 45, 59, 73 of Synod Neerlandia and Art. 91 of Synod Coaldale

The committee again presented its proposal on the appeal of br. T.J.C. Kingma against Arts. 45, 59, 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001 and Art. 91 of Synod Coaldale 1977. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

An appeal from br. T.J.C. Kingma against Articles 45, 59 and 73 of Synod Neerlandia 2001, as well as Article 91 of Synod Coaldale 1977

2. Admissibility

The appeal is declared inadmissible since this brother has not presented this appeal to classis and regional synod (cf. Article 31 C.O.). As he himself states in his appeal: "because all discussion with his local consistory is finished concerning the point at issue in this appeal, the undersigned believes it best to send this appeal directly to Synod '04." (cf. Article 20, *Acts of General Synod Chatham 2004*).

Article 104

Committee for Official Website

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report of the Committee for Official Website. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. Report of the Committee for Official Website

1.2. Letter from the church at Abbotsford

2. Admissibility

The report and the letter from the church at Abbotsford are declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report of the Committee for Official Website, which is included as an appendix to the *Acts*, serves as Observations.

3.2. The committee recommends that Synod give the committee the following mandate:

3.2.1. *To maintain the existing hardware and associated technical functions of the website, purchasing new hardware only if necessary to meet the ongoing needs of the website and if financially responsible;*

3.2.2. *To maintain the existing content of the website, revising this content whenever necessary, in particular ensuring that the text of the Book of Praise is the same as that most recently adopted and revised by General Synod;*

3.2.3. *To add new content to the website as recommended by the committee in section 4.1 of this report, including the text of sermons, press releases of broader assemblies, and the Acts of past general synods where feasible;*

3.2.4. *To provide web-services and email-services to the churches such as those recommended by the committee in section 4.2 of this report;*

3.2.5. *To serve Synod 2007 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to*

the beginning of Synod, including a financial statement and proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding new content to be added to the website.

3.3. From the report Synod takes note of the following:

3.3.1. The committee held three meetings with the members from Ontario present in person, while the other members participated by means of a telephone conference call. Most of the communications between members were carried out by e-mail.

3.3.2. The website makes use of the Internet Service Provider "BBS42" in Guelph and our website is registered with the domain name: www.canrc.org. The committee serves all the ministers of the federation by providing e-mail addresses to them.

3.3.3. The online content (Introduction to the Churches; Online Resources; Church Directory; Church News; Theological College) is regularly updated where necessary.

3.3.4. For determining new content, the committee sent a survey to all the churches. From the feedback of the churches the committee distilled two foundational principles:

3.3.4.1. Co-operation of local churches within the federation by pooling common information about our church federation, as well as providing some basic information about local churches.

3.3.4.2. Autonomy of the local church within a federation. Local church websites should not be replaced by the website www.canrc.org.

3.3.5. The average costs of maintaining the website amounted to an average of just over $1/month per church.

3.3.6. The website enjoys many visitors. Results from the survey indicate a clear consensus that the current website is easy to use and navigate. The committee keeps working at improving the website, bringing it in line with the latest web technology and programming. An internal procedure was developed to ensure that questions from visitors were dealt with promptly.

3.4. From the feedback of the survey, the committee makes the following recommendations to Synod regarding new content for the website and its associated technical functions:

3.4.1. More information regarding each local church, but limited – only basic information should be posted such as church contact information, church address, and directions.

3.4.2. Links to other websites, but limited – the churches want only links to websites from organizations and churches which have a clear and official relationship with our churches.

3.4.3. Posting of sermons – the committee recommends that the website host a repository of sermons, to be submitted voluntarily by ministers of the churches.

3.4.4. Posting of Press Releases of broader assemblies.

3.4.5. Posting the *Acts* of General Synods only. The committee does not favour including the *Acts* of Classes and Regional Synods, since these concern a limited number of churches; they are generally not publicly available; they could contain sensitive matters; they publish their own press releases.

3.4.6. Similar domain names for local church websites e.g. www.london.canrc.org . The committee's finding is that this may not be technically possible. The committee recommends that if it is possible, this service could be offered to the churches for their use if desired, as a pointer to their local church website.

3.4.7. Provide a mailing list for consistory clerks, e.g. clerks@canrc.org; and a mailing list for synodical committees.

3.5. The Church at Abbotsford recommends that the press releases of the broader assemblies be posted. One "reason for this recommendation is that it will enable interested church members to learn what is happening in the other parts of the country much sooner as is the case at present." Press releases do not stay on the website for years.

4. Considerations

4.1. Synod agrees with the committee that the internet is a powerful and popular medium of communication in our world. Our website serves to enhance the disseminating of material relating to what the churches have in common, as well as to point visitors to the websites of

local churches.

4.2. Synod agrees with the committee that the composition of the committee should be maintained, consisting of three members with advanced technical abilities, as well as the librarian of the Theological College, and one minister.

4.3. Synod agrees with the committee to add to the website the items mentioned in Observations 3.4.

4.4. Synod agrees with the committee that it should have an annual budget of approximately $500.00.

4.5. The suggestion by the church at Abbotsford is already part of the recommendation by the Committee for Official Website.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the committee for the well-researched report, all the work done and the excellent service this committee provided for the churches.

5.2. To continue the Committee for Official Website with the following mandate:

5.2.1. To maintain the existing hardware and associated technical functions of the website, purchasing new hardware only if necessary to meet the ongoing needs of the website and if financially responsible;

5.2.2. To maintain the existing content of the website, revising this content whenever necessary, in particular ensuring that the text of the *Book of Praise* is the same as that most recently adopted and revised by General Synod;

5.2.3. To add new content to the website as listed in Observations 3.4.1-3.4.5;

5.2.4. To provide web services and e-mail services to the churches such as listed in Observations 3.4.6-3.4.7;

5.2.5. To approve the annual budget of $500.00;

5.2.6. To serve Synod 2007 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod, including a financial statement and a proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding new content to be added to the website.

Article 105

General Fund

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the financial report of the General Fund. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Financial Report for General Fund from Feb.14, 2001 - Dec. 11, 2003

2. Admissibility

This report is declared admissible.

3. Observations

3.1. The report, which is added as an appendix to the *Acts*, serves as Observations.

3.2. The church at Carman (East) was appointed by Synod Neerlandia 2001 to administer the General Fund and to collect funds as required from the churches.

3.3. The church at Carman (East) reports that the books have been audited and found to be in good order.

3.4. The churches were assessed in 2002 at $4 per confessing member and in 2003 at $3 per confessing member.

4. Consideration

Synod receives this report with thankfulness for the work done by the church at Carman (East) in regard to the General Fund.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide:

5.1. To express gratitude to the church at Carman (East) for the administration of the General Fund, to the office bearers who audited the books and to br. G. Vandersluis for bookkeeping.

5.2. To authorize the church at Carman (East) to collect funds from the churches as required.

5.3. To discharge the church at Carman (East) for the duties completed during the period of February 14, 2001 to December 11, 2003 and to reappoint the church at Carman (East) for the General Fund.

Article 106

Archives Synod Neerlandia 2001

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report re: the archives of Synod Neerlandia 2001. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Letter from the church at Burlington-Waterdown re: inspection of the General Archives

2. Admissibility

This letter is declared admissible.

3. Observation

The church at Burlington-Waterdown informs Synod that the archives of Synod Neerlandia 2001, housed by the church at Burlington-East, and kept by br. G. Denbok, were duly inspected by two members of their consistory and found to be in good order

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

4.1. To thank the church at Burlington-Waterdown for examining the archives and reporting to Synod;

4.2. To thank the archive keeping church at Burlington-East;

4.3. To thank br. G. Denbok.

Article 107

Address Church

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the report of the Address Church for the Canadian Reformed Churches. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Report from the Address Church for the Canadian Reformed Churches, namely, the church at Burlington-East

2. Admissibility

This report is declared admissible.

3. Observation

The report, which is added as an appendix to the *Acts*, serves as Observations.

4. Consideration

From the report it is clear that the church at Burlington-East fulfilled its mandate.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To thank the church at Burlington-East for the work done as address church;

5.2. To reappoint the church at Burlington-East as Address Church for the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Article 108

Appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Art. 31 C.O.

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Art. 31 C.O. After several rounds of discussion, the committee took back its proposal for

further consideration.

Article 109

Appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Grape Juice

Committee 3 again presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Grape Juice. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeal of br. and sr. M. Vantil against Art. 4 of the *Acts* of Regional Synod West 2003

2. Admissibility

The appeal of br. and sr. Vantil is admissible since it is an appeal against Regional Synod West, November 18, 2003.

3. Observations

3.1. In February 1998 the council of the church at Aldergrove decided to suggest to the congregation that it is, in principle, compelled to abolish alcohol from the communion table because of pastoral concerns regarding a brother's addiction.

3.2. On March 27, 2000, br. and sr. Vantil questioned why the council changed to grape juice when the Lord has instituted wine. The council answered that the word "wine" can refer to fermented and unfermented grape juice. The Bible speaks of "the fruit of the vine."

3.3. In the letter of October 22, 2001, br. and sr. VanTil indicate that they appeal the decision of council, also in light of Art. 70 of Synod Neerlandia 2001. The council replied that Synod 2001 makes no judgment with regard to the fact that grape juice is an acceptable substitute for wine (cf. a letter from the council dated November 26, 2001).

3.4. Br. and sr. Vantil appealed this to Classis Pacific East of August 17, 2002. Classis agreed with their appeal and considered that although Synod Neerlandia 2001 did not make a judgment to the effect that grape juice is an unacceptable substitute, it did clearly state that wine is the norm. Classis also considered that it is up to the consistory to find a suitable solution for those members who cannot have wine.

3.5. The council of the church at Aldergrove appealed this decision to Regional Synod West 2003. Regional Synod judged that the church at Aldergrove was wronged by Classis Pacific East in its decision that wine should be made available at the celebration of the Lord's Supper "without regard for local circumstances." While maintaining that wine is the "norm," the use of grape juice as an exception – should circumstances warrant it – is a matter that belongs to the jurisdiction of the local consistory of the church at Aldergrove.

3.6. Regional Synod considered that Classis Pacific East did not address the real issue at stake in this appeal. According to Regional Synod the issue is: does the church at Aldergrove's practice of using grape juice only conflict with the decision of General Synod 2001? According to Regional Synod the word "norm" is not used by General Synod 2001 in an absolute sense, thus leaving room for exceptions. Only the local consistory can determine what qualifies as an exception.

3.7. Br. and sr. Vantil appeal this decision of Regional Synod West 2003. They request General Synod to make the following determinations:

3.7.1. *Regional Synod West on November 18, 2003 should not have dealt with Aldergrove's appeal, since Aldergrove presented new information that was not previously available to either the original appellants or to Classis. Under article 30 of the Church Order Regional Synod West should have declared Aldergrove's appeal inadmissible, as a major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly.*

3.7.2. *By making only grape juice available, Aldergrove consistory has made grape juice the norm rather than the exception.*

3.7.3. *Aldergrove consistory should uphold Article 35 of the Belgic Confession and the decisions of Synod Neerlandia, and make wine available at its Lord's Supper celebrations.*

3.7.4. *Some individuals may require special treatment, and can be given grape juice instead of*

wine, but only where their problems cannot be resolved in any other way.

4. Considerations

4.1. It is true that the council of the church at Aldergrove submitted new information to Regional Synod West 2003. This information pertained to the special circumstances which led to the consistory's decision to abolish alcohol from the communion table. However, this new information did not influence the judgment of Regional Synod West 2003 because it refrained from determining what qualifies special circumstances. This was left to the jurisdiction of the local consistory.

4.2. Synod Neerlandia judged that "the clear and consistent language of our confessions" indicate "that the norm is to use wine at the Lord's Supper" (*Acts*, Art. 70). This judgment by Synod Neerlandia shows that it used the word "norm" in connection with the confessions. Since the confessions are normative in the churches, Synod considers that wine should be used at the Lord's Supper. "Wine makes an important contribution to the meaning of the Lord's Supper. This alcoholic drink, therefore, should be maintained in the celebration of this sacrament." (Dr. N.H. Gootjes, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper" in *Koinonia*, vol.xiv, 1993 no. 1, p. 33. See also Dr. N.H. Gootjes "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper" in *Clarion*, Vol. 41, nos. 5-10.) This does not exclude the possibility of making an exception. Allowing for an exception demonstrates Christian love and compassion for those with difficulties.

4.3. Regional Synod West 2003 erred in judging that Classis Pacific East wronged the church at Aldergrove. Synod agrees with the appellants that the consistory of the church at Aldergrove should make wine available at its Lord's Supper celebration.

4.4. Regional Synod West 2003 was correct in its judgment that it belongs to the local consistory to determine what constitutes an individual exception.

5. Recommendations

Synod decide:

5.1. To deny the first request of the appellants (Observation 3.7.1 above), since Regional Synod West 2003 was not wrong in dealing with the appeal of the church at Aldergrove.

5.2. To grant the second, third and fourth requests of the appellants (Observations 3.7.2-3.7.4 above), since Regional Synod West 2003 erred in its judgment that Classis Pacific East wronged the church at Aldergrove.

Article 110

Appeal of br. and sr. VandeBurgt against various assemblies re: the Lord's Supper

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. B. Vandeburgt against various assemblies re Lord's Supper. The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeal of br. and sr. B. Vandeburgt against various assemblies re: the Lord's Supper

2. Admissibility

Br. and sr. Vandeburgt ask General Synod to judge that they, as well as the churches of the federation, have been wronged by the assemblies' method of interpreting Scriptures. Synod declares this part of the appeal inadmissible since it is not the task of General Synod to judge the validity of various exegetical statements (*Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001*, Art. 70, Recommendation 5.1).

Synod declares the second part of the appeal admissible, since it is an appeal against a decision of Regional Synod West, November 18, 2003.

3. Observations

3.1. Br. and sr. Vandeburgt request Synod to judge that:

> *On the basis of our confessions, the definition to the word 'norm' in General Synod Neerlandia 2001's decision is 'an authoritative standard' and therefore normative, since Christ instituted wine as a sacrament of His blood and because the true church maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them.*

The appellants feel that Regional Synod wronged the churches by defining "norm" to mean "usual" for this interpretation undermines what we confess.

3.2. According to Art. 5 in the *Acts* of Regional Synod West 2003, the word "norm" is not used by General Synod 2001 in an absolute sense, thus leaving room for exceptions.

4. Considerations

4.1. It is not clear from the decisions of Regional Synod West 2003 that it defines "norm" to mean "usual."

4.2. Synod Neerlandia 2001 judged that "the clear and consistent language of our confessions" indicate "that the norm is to use wine at the Lord's Supper" (*Acts*, Art. 70). This judgment by Synod Neerlandia shows that it used the word "norm" in connection with the confessions. Since the confessions are normative in the churches, Synod considers that wine should be used at the Lord's Supper. "Wine makes an important contribution to the meaning of the Lord's Supper. This alcoholic drink, therefore, should be maintained in the celebration of this sacrament". (Dr. N.H. Gootjes, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper" in *Koinonia*, vol.xiv, 1993 #1, p. 33. See also Dr. N.H. Gootjes "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper" in *Clarion*, Vol. 41, nos. 5-10.) This does not exclude the possibility of making an exception. Allowing for an exception demonstrates Christian love and compassion for those with difficulties.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to send the above considerations as a response to brother and sister Vandeburgt.

Article 111

Appeal of the church at Calgary against Regional Synod West 2002 re: the status of Rev. R.F. Boersema

Committee 2 presented its proposal on the appeal from the church at Calgary against Art. 12 of Regional Synod West 2002 re: the status of Rev. R.F. Boersema. After several rounds of discussion, the proposal was put to a vote. The delegates from the church at Surrey abstained (Art. 32 C.O.). The following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeal from the church at Calgary against Art. 12 of Regional Synod West 2002 re: the status of Rev. R.F. Boersema

2. Admissibility

The appeal from the church at Calgary is admissible since it appeals a decision of Regional Synod West 2002.

3. Observations

3.1. The church at Calgary claims that its appeal is technical in nature, dealing with the issue of whether a minister can be a minister in good standing in the CanRC federation, if his membership is held with another federation with whom we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

3.2. The church at Calgary makes clear that, in this appeal, they do not have the "desire to change the status of Rev. Boersema in any way."

3.3. The church at Calgary asks General Synod to judge that:

> *because the Canadian Reformed Churches did not have ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC in the year 2000;*
>
> *because Rev. Boersema became a member of the OPC in the year 2000;*
>
> *the Council of the Church at Surrey erred when it decided to maintain his status as a retired minister in good standing.*

3.4. The church at Calgary commenced correspondence with the church at Surrey on August 7, 2000, after receiving a letter from the council of the church at Surrey (dated June 20) informing the churches that Rev. Boersema and his family had joined the OPC in Bristol, Tennessee, USA.

3.5. In its response to the church at Calgary, the church at Surrey indicated that Rev. Boersema had moved to the USA for personal family circumstances.

3.6. The church at Calgary was not convinced by the church at Surrey's arguments that Rev. Boersema is still a minister in good standing in the Canadian Reformed Churches. They brought the matter before Classis Pacific West (October 2, 2001) and Regional Synod West

2002.

3.7. Regional Synod West 2002 considered that Classis Pacific West "should not have used the distinction between 'consideration' and 'judgment' to respond to the arguments by the Church at Calgary."

4. Considerations

4.1. When Regional Synod West 2002 expressed that Classis Pacific West October 2, 2001 did not provide a clear judgment to the church at Calgary, Regional Synod also refrained from judging the matter. In both cases the technical arguments brought forward by the church at Calgary were ignored.

4.2. The church at Calgary's arguments are clearly technical in nature, and do not sufficiently acknowledge the lack of clarity in the relationship between the CanRC and the OPC during the time period involved.

4.3. The church at Calgary is technically correct that a minister cannot maintain his official status as a minister in good standing with a church in one federation, while being a member of a church with which the CanRC have no ecclesiastical fellowship.

4.4. While the church at Calgary is correct in its position, the church at Surrey sufficiently considered that Rev. Boersema's special circumstances were exceptional. In addition to this, by joining the OPC in 2000, Rev. Boersema joined a church which had been recognized as a true and faithful church by Synod Coaldale 1977.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide that while the church at Calgary is technically correct in its appeal, the church at Surrey was justified in providing an exception in Rev. Boersema's case.

Article 112

Closing devotions

Rev. J. Van Vliet led us in closing devotions by reading Rom. 8:18-30 and giving a brief meditation on that passage. We sang Psalm 138:1,4. The chairman adjourned the meeting until the morning.

Morning Session – Saturday, February 21, 2004

Article 113

Opening Devotions

The chairman reopened Synod by reading Phil. 4:21-23 and giving a meditation on this passage. We sang Psalm 121:1,4 after which the chairman led us in prayer. The roll was called and all were present.

Adoption of Acts

After some corrections Articles 84-100 of the *Acts* were adopted.

Article 114

Appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Art. 31 C.O.

Committee 3 presented its proposal on the appeal of br. and sr. Vantil against Regional Synod West 2003 re: Art. 31 C.O. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

Appeal by br. and sr. M. Vantil against Art. 5 of the *Acts* of Regional West 2003

2. Admissibility

This appeal is admissible since br. and sr. Vantil are appealing a decision of Regional Synod West 2003.

3. Observations

The appellants request that General Synod make the following determinations:

3.1. *Aldergrove consistory should have either implemented the September 27, 2002 classis decision or proved that this classis decision is in conflict with the Word of God or the Church*

Order.

3.2. *Both Classis Pacific East and Regional Synod West were wrong to conclude that Aldergrove consistory retains the right to maintain the current practice until its appeal to regional synod has been dealt with.*

3.3. *Both Classis Pacific East and Regional Synod West should have recognized that Aldergrove consistory had to either implement the September 27, 2002 classis decision or prove that this classis decision is in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order*.

4. Considerations

4.1. The appellants do not deny that the consistory has the right to appeal according to Art. 31 C.O. They also do not deny that, pending the outcome of an appeal, a decision does not have to be executed. Their concern is that the consistory of the church at Aldergrove does not give to the congregation and thus to the appellants, the proof concerning why it appeals the decision of Classis. This was their appeal to Regional Synod West 2003. "While various members of the consistory have orally explained their personal reasons for appealing, the points remains: Aldergrove consistory has not proven how the September 27, 2002 classis decision is contrary to the Word of God or the Church Order" (cf. the appeal of the appellants to Regional Synod). The appellants are correct that Regional Synod did not deal with this point.

4.2. Article 31 C.O. states "whatever may be agreed upon by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order." The question is: does the consistory need to give justification for not implementing the decision of classis? The appeal to Article 31 C.O. by the appellants does not provide sufficient grounds to demand proof. At the same time, the consistory would have helped the appellants in providing them with the proof. While this is not explicitly required in Art. 31 C.O., it is a matter of pastoral wisdom and care.

5. Recommendation

Synod decide to deny the appeal of br. and sr. Vantil.

Article 115

Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*

Committee 4 again presented its proposal on the report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP). After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Material

1.1. The report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) dated June 2003

1.2. Letter from the church at Langley

1.3. Letter from the church at Aldergrove

1.4. Letter from the church at Grand Rapids

1.5. Letter from the church at Guelph

1.6. Letter from the church at Orangeville

1.7. Letter from the church at Willoughby Heights

1.8. Letter from the church at London

1.9. Letter from the church at Carman West

1.10. Letter from the church at Abbotsford

1.11. Letter from the church at Fergus

1.12. Letter from the church at Chatham

1.13. Letter from the church at Winnipeg (Redeemer)

1.14. Letter from the church at Grand Valley

1.15. Overture from Regional Synod East November 12, 2003

2. Admissibility

The materials received are declared admissible.

3. General Matters

3.1. Observations

3.1.1. Synod thankfully receives this report, its appendices and the letters from the churches.

3.1.2. Synod notes that the committee resubmits the report not dealt with at Synod Neerlandia 2001 because of its late arrival. This material is now included for us to deal with.

3.1.3. No new printing of the *Book of Praise* was authorized.

3.1.4. At the present time the committee operates under a contractual relationship with Premier Printing Ltd, Winnipeg, MB. This contract is due for review in the year 2006.

3.1.5. The committee has maintained its corporate status.

3.1.6. The committee notes that international interest has been expressed in the *Book of Praise*.

3.1.7. The committee notes that copyright continues to rest with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise.*

3.1.8. The committee desires to keep its membership at six members.

3.1.9. The committee notes that Rev. C. Bosch has requested to be released from his appointment and that sr. C. Van Halen-Faber is due to retire in 2004. The committee requests an additional member and submits the name of br. John Smith of Hamilton, ON.

3.1.10. The committee seeks direction from Synod regarding input from the Australian sister churches.

3.1.11. The committee urges Synod to consider the potential implications as it articulates the next mandate for the SCBP with a view to our contact with the URCNA.

3.1.12. The church at Carman (West) requests General Synod to consider the implications for the Book of Praise with a view to our contact with the URCNA.

3.1.13. The church at Carman (West) requests Synod to give the committee the mandate to request input from the deputies of our Australian sister churches.

3.2. Considerations

3.2.1. The contract for the publication of the *Book of Praise* needs to be renewed in 2006.

3.2.2. Synod notes with thankfulness that international interest has been expressed in the *Book of Praise.*

3.2.3. Synod agrees that the committee membership should be maintained at six members.

3.2.4. Synod agrees with the request that Rev. C. Bosch be released from his appointment, that sr. C. Van Halen-Faber be re-nominated for another three year term and that br. John Smith serve as an additional member.

3.2.5. Synod encourages input from the Australian sister churches since the *Book of Praise* is in common use in those churches.

3.2.6. Synod notes that the corporate status of the committee ought to be maintained.

3.2.7. Synod notes that there are implications for the mandate of the SCBP flowing from the current discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA.

3.3. Recommendations

Synod decide:

3.3.1. To authorize the committee to renew the contract for the printing of the *Book of Praise* in 2006.

3.3.2. To authorize the committee to continue to foster an increased awareness of the existence of the *Book of Praise* and to promote its availability.

3.3.3. To express gratitude for the work done by Rev. C. Bosch.

3.3.4. To reappoint sr. C. Van Halen-Faber for another three year term and to appoint br. John Smith as an additional member to fill the vacancy.

3.3.5. To encourage the committee to welcome input from the Australian sister churches.

3.3.6. To maintain the corporate status of the committee.

3.3.7. To continue to have the committee as the address to which any correspondence regarding the *Book of Praise* can be directed.

4. Forms

4.1. **Baptismal forms**

4.1.1. **Observations**

4.1.1.1. Regional Synod East November 12, 2003 endorses the proposal from Classis Ontario-West September 10, 2003 and Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church Hamilton, to insert into the baptismal forms after the prayer for baptism on page 586 and 590 in the *Book of Praise,* the words: "Let us now profess our Catholic undoubted Christian faith (The Apostles' Creed may be recited by the minister, said in unison or sung by the congregation)."

4.1.1.2. Regional Synod East 2003 recommends that General Synod 2004 instruct the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* to take a careful look at how the insertion of the Apostles' Creed would fit into the flow of thought of the baptismal forms, so that it would be clear to the congregation why we are professing our faith at this point.

4.1.1.3. The reasons given for this proposal are fourfold. This insertion would be:

A renewal of the catholic connection of baptism and the Apostles' Creed.

A return to the original Form of Baptism as found in the Church Order of Heidelberg 1563.

A restoration of parallelism with the Form for the Lord's Supper.

The use of the Apostles' Creed at baptism in the early Christian Church and in the Middle Ages is well known and generally documented.

4.1.2. **Considerations**

4.1.2.1. Synod concludes that the grounds provided by the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church, as supported by Classis Ontario-West September 10, 2003, and Regional Synod East 2003 are valid.

4.1.2.2. Synod agrees that the SCBP ought to consider the most suitable place in the forms for this insertion, keeping in mind that the structure of the Form for the Baptism of Adults is different from the Form for the Baptism of Infants.

4.1.3. **Recommendation**

Synod decide to mandate the SCBP to present a proposal with the inclusion of the Apostles' Creed in the baptismal forms to the next General Synod.

4.2. **Subscription Forms**

4.2.1. **Observations**

4.2.1.1. The SCBP has submitted three Forms of Subscription, one for elders and deacons, one for ministers in the local congregations, and one for ministers at classis.

4.2.1.2. The churches at Aldergrove, Willoughby Heights, Abbotsford, Chatham and Winnipeg (Redeemer) suggest that there should be one form for elders, deacons and ministers in the local congregations. They give various grounds stating that there is no need to differentiate between the offices of minister, elder and deacon in the Form of Subscription.

4.2.1.3. The churches at Aldergrove, Orangeville, Willoughby Heights, Abbotsford, Chatham and Winnipeg (Redeemer) interact with the formulation of the suggested Form of Subscription.

4.2.1.4. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) also asks whether it is the intent of these new forms to be compulsory for every congregation, or whether this will be left in the freedom of the local congregations.

4.2.2. **Considerations**

4.2.2.1. Although the SCBP gives an explanation for suggesting a separate form for elders and deacons, Synod agrees with the churches which suggest that there should be one form for use in the local congregations and one form for classis.

4.2.2.2. The suggestion of the churches should be forwarded to the SCBP for consideration so that the SCBP can come to the next General Synod with a final proposal.

4.2.2.3. When Synod adopts a Form of Subscription it is to be considered binding upon the churches.

4.2.3. **Recommendation**

Synod decide to mandate the SCBP to submit a final proposal for a Form of Subscription, one for the local congregations and one for Classis, to the next General Synod.

5. Bible translation in the *Book of Praise*

5.1. **Observations**

5.1.1. The SCBP seeks direction from Synod as to the implications of the recommendation to use the NIV for the rhyming of the Psalms.

5.1.2. The church at Aldergrove urges Synod to consider instructing the SCBP to make preparations to review and revise the rhyming of the Psalms and the hymns to reflect the language of the NIV.

5.1.3. The church at Aldergrove also requests Synod to instruct the SCBP to use the NIV translation in the prose section of the *Book of Praise.*

5.1.4. The church at Grand Rapids would not like to see the rhyming of the Psalms change, for two reasons:

There are five translations being used in the federation;

The personal pronouns "Thee," "Thou" and "Thine" used in poetry are neither archaic nor strange.

5.1.5. The church at London recommends that the SCBP not be advised to revise the rhyming of the Psalms for the following reasons:

There are five translations being used in the federation;

The considerable expense of a new "*Book of Praise"*;

The impact this may have on other churches that use the "*Book of Praise"*;

It is premature in light of the unity talks with the URCNA.

5.1.6. The church at Fergus proposes that Synod instructs the SCBP that no substantial changes, which would drastically alter either the structure and/or the content, should be permitted. Such changes would be detrimental to all those who have memorized the Psalms.

5.1.7. The church at Guelph requests that Synod does not proceed with changes to the metrical rhyming of the Psalms and the hymns at this time. It states that the NIV is not the only Bible translation used in the federation and in the Australian churches, that we have had the NIV for only for a few years, and that the Psalms have been memorized by many.

5.1.8. The church at Grand Valley resists the reviewing and revising of the metrical rhyming of the Psalms. It gave as grounds that no need has been demonstrated that this request for such a change is felt among the churches; poetic language resists change; archaic forms are acceptable in poetry; the language is not yet outdated; it would be poor stewardship to devote great energy to such a revision.

5.1.9. The church at Chatham requests Synod to decide that all pronouns referring to God in all of the *Book of Praise* remain capitalized. "Council believes that honouring God with the use of capital letters takes precedence over a striving for consistency."

5.2. **Considerations**

5.2.1. Synod notes that Synod Fergus 1998 mandated the committee to "prepare the prose section of the *Book of Praise* with the NIV Bible references and to present this revision to the next General Synod." Synod concurs that the adaptation of the prose section is more urgent than the rhyming of the Psalm and hymn sections, the latter being poetry.

5.2.2. Synod Fergus also mandated "the committee not to proceed with the changes to the Psalms and Hymns" (Art. 140 IV.C.1,2 p. 176). Synod concurs with this

recommendation of Synod Fergus.

5.2.3. Synod notes that it would be a major undertaking to review and revise the Psalms and the hymns to reflect the language of the NIV.

5.2.4. Synod considers it unwise to proceed with such an undertaking with a view to the unity talks with the URCNA.

5.2.5. Synod is not convinced that the use of various Bible translations is an inhibiting factor, since most of the translations in use have already converted the archaic pronouns to those in common use today.

5.2.6. Synod realizes that a new rhyming would mean a loss with a view to the memorization of the present rhyming, but does not consider it a determining factor.

5.2.7. Synod acknowledges that the church at Chatham may have a valid point; however, Synod is of the opinion that it should send this request to the SCBP.

5.3. **Recommendations**

Synod decide:

5.3.1. To continue the mandate of Synod Fergus to prepare the prose section of the *Book of Praise* with the NIV Bible references.

5.3.2. Not to proceed with the requested changes to the Psalm and hymn sections at this time.

6. Hymn Section

6.1. **Observations**

6.1.1. The SCBP intends to deal with submissions re: the hymn section in a manner that seeks to:

Maintain the current structure of our hymn section.

Identify and correct deficiencies and/or weaknesses in the existing hymn section and come with a proposal for change, addition or improvement.

Select suitable hymns using the *Guidelines and Principles* agreed upon by the committee together with the Psalter Hymnal Committee of the URCNA.

Set the limit at 100 hymns since Psalms have a predominant place in the liturgy of the Reformed churches.

Publish a revised hymn section proposed for testing by the churches.

6.1.2. The church at Aldergrove wants to adopt the five points mentioned above including the *Guidelines and Principles* as agreed upon by the SCBP and the Psalter Committee of the URCNA.

6.1.3. The church at Langley requests that serious consideration be given to the creation of a *Book of Praise* supplement, and to authorize the committee to publish a revised hymn section (supplement) during the year following Synod Chatham 2004 in order to facilitate testing by the churches and possible approval by Synod 2007.

6.1.4. The church at Winnipeg (Redeemer) encourages Synod to limit the number of hymns to 100.

6.1.5. The church at Abbotsford objects to the fact that the committee rejected its submission of 62 hymns because no scriptural grounds were provided for this selection. It is of the opinion that the committee exceeded its mandate.

6.2. **Considerations**

6.2.1. Synod agrees with the manner in which the SCBP intends to deal with submissions re: the hymn section as outlined in Observation 6.1.1.

6.2.2. Synod notes that the time frame proposed by the church at Langley is unrealistic for the amount of work involved.

6.2.3. Synod considers that it would be better if the proposal for a revised hymn section is first presented to the next General Synod before being given to the churches for testing.

6.2.4. Synod considers that in view of the ongoing discussions with the URCNA, the committee should take care that unnecessary duplication of work and efforts be avoided.

6.2.5. Synod considers that the committee went beyond its mandate in requiring scriptural grounds for the hymns submitted by the church at Abbotsford. Synod Neerlandia instructed the SCBP "to 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…." This should be taken to mean that the individual churches should provide reasons for their suitability, but the committee should evaluate them according to the requirements.

6.3. **Recommendation**

Synod decide to mandate the SCBP to deal with the submissions re: the hymn section as outlined in Observation 6.1.1 and to present a proposal to the next General Synod.

7. Musical Notation and Harmony

7.1. **Observations**

7.1.1. The SCBP points to the various harmonizations and organ editions of the Psalms and hymns which are available.

7.1.2. The SCBP has instructed Premier Printing Ltd. to prepare the overleaf notation for all the Psalms and hymns. A sampling is provided and it observes that such a notation would add about 100 pages to the *Book of Praise;* the cost would increase from approximately $19 to $28 per copy.

7.1.3. The church at Langley requests the SCBP to prepare and publish a four part setting, including guitar chords, of the *Book of Praise* "to foster and stimulate the coming generation to joyfully 'strum the chords' and 'play the keyboard' as we lift our voices in praise."

7.1.4. The church at Aldergrove asks Synod to consider instructing the SCBP to pursue a typesetting of music similar to that in the Psalter Hymnal. This would encourage usage of the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter* beyond the worship services.

7.2. **Considerations**

7.2.1. Synod notes that Synod Fergus mandated the SCBP to prepare the *Book of Praise* with an Overleaf Musical Notation and to present this revision to the next General Synod.

7.2.2. Synod notes that this task has not been completed and is of the opinion that the committee should proceed with the printing of the Overleaf Notation edition.

7.2.3. Synod notes that although the harmonizations would be helpful, this would not be the appropriate time to do so, seeing the above-mentioned considerations as well as our ongoing discussion with the URCNA.

7.3. **Recommendations**

Synod decide:

7.3.1. To recommend that the SCBP proceed with the Overleaf Musical Notation Edition.

7.3.2. Not to accede to the requests of the churches at Langley and Aldergrove.

8. Mandate

Synod decide to instruct the SCBP to implement the recommendations found in sections 3-7 above.

Article 116

Appointments

The moderamen presented its proposal re: Appointments. After several rounds of discussion, the following was **adopted**:

1. Board of Governors

1.1. Academic Committee

1.1.1. From Western Canada: J. Moesker (2007), R. Schouten (2010), W.B. Slomp (2013) (alternates: E.J. Tiggelaar, E. Kampen and C.J. Vandervelde in that order)

1.1.2. From Eastern Canada: G. Nederveen (2010), Cl. Stam (2010), J. Van Woudenberg (2013) (alternates: G.Ph. Van Popta and W. den Hollander in that order)

1.2. Finance and Property Committee: L. Jagt (2013), G.J. Nordeman (2010), W. Oostdyk (2007), W. Smouter (2007), K. Veldkamp (2013)

2. Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)

H.E. Hoogstra (2007), J. Huijgen (2010), H. Leyenhorst (2010), W. Pleiter (2010), C.J. Vandervelde (convener) (2010), Wm. Wielenga (2013)

3. Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA)

P.G. Feenstra (convener) (2007), K. Jonker (2007), J. Jonker (Owen Sound) (2010), Jacob Kuik (2013), A.J. Pol (2010), A. Poppe (2007), R.E. Pot (2013), A. Schutten (2013)

4. Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU)

4.1. From Eastern Canada: J. de Gelder (convener) (2010), J. Louwerse (2013), F. Westrik (2007)

4.2. From Western Canada: R. Aasman (2007), Wm. Slomp (2010), J. Vanderstoep (2013)

Subcommittees:

4.3. Church Order Subcommittee: G. Nederveen, G.J. Nordeman, J. Vanwoudenberg (convener), A. Witten

4.4. Theological Education Subcommittee: N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam, C. Van Dam (convener), K.J. Veldkamp, J. Visscher

4.5. Common Songbook Subcommittee: Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*

5. Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)

D.G.J. Agema (2010), N.H. Gootjes (2010), C.J. Nobels (2010), J. Smith (2013), C. vanHalen-Faber (2007), G.Ph. van Popta (convener) (2010)

6. Committee on Bible Translations (CBT)

P. Holtvlüwer (2010), M. Jagt (2013), J. Ludwig (convener) (2007), M. Van Luik (2013)

7. Committee for Official Website

T. Flach (2007), J. Hoogerdijk (2007), A. Van den Hoven (2010), A. Souman (2013), M. VanderVelde (convener) (2010)

8. Churches for Days of Prayer ad Article 54 C.O.

The churches at Burlington-Waterdown and Edmonton-Providence

9. General Fund

The church at Carman (East)

10. Archive Church

The church at Burlington-East

11. Archive Inspection

The church at Burlington-Waterdown

12. Audit Finances of Synod Chatham 2004

The church at Kerwood

13. Address Church

The church at Burlington-East

14. Committee for Printing of the Acts

Clerks of Synod Chatham 2004

15. Convening Church for next Synod

The church at Smithers (May 2007)

Article 117

Concluding Matters

Censure

Opportunity was given for censure ad. Art. 34 C.O. The chairman noted with gratitude that the

meeting could take place in good harmony.

Publishing of the Acts

The first and second clerks of Synod Chatham 2004 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 (*Guidelines for General Synod* III.B). He was also instructed to ask all committees to send four copies to the Theological College.

Financial Matters

There were no additional financial matters reported.

Preparation for the next General Synod

In accordance with Article 15 of these *Acts*, the following motion was made and **adopted**:

> *To change the* Guidelines for General Synod *I.A to read: "All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in thirty copies) no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod…."*

The church at Smithers was appointed to convene the next General Synod in May 2007.

Acts of Synod

The assembly agrees that the moderamen will scrutinize and adopt the last few articles of the *Acts*.

Press Release

The assembly also agrees that the moderamen will approve the press release for publication.

Article 118

Closing

The chairman spoke some words of appreciation for the good harmony enjoyed at this assembly. He also thanked the convening church for all its work. This speech is included in the appendices of these *Acts*. On behalf of Synod, the vice-chairman expressed our gratitude to the hosting church at Chatham by presenting gifts to Rev. H. Versteeg, the local pastor, and sr. Teresa Bergsma, the coordinator of housing and meals. The vice-chairman also spoke a few words of appreciation for the work of the chairman, who led the assembly in a dedicated and efficient manner. Next we sang Psalm 63:2,3. The vice-chairman led us in closing prayer. The chairman declared Synod Chatham 2004 closed.

Finis

APPENDICES

SPEECHES

1. Opening speech on behalf of the convening church at Chatham by Rev. H. Versteeg

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

What does one say in an opening speech? Well, why not begin with what the heart is full of? And that is that our hearts here in Chatham are overwhelmed to be the hosts of a synod of our federation of churches. Why? Not only because it is such a special occasion, one that only takes place once every three years, and one which has such an impact on the churches, but also because many in Chatham feel quite alone, out in the sticks, so to speak. I and my family cannot feel that way so much for we have been privileged to serve the LORD truly out in the sticks, which we did with much pleasure. We still have many wonderful memories of the many who came to faith in Jesus Christ through the faithful preaching and administration of the gospel in Irian Jaya, now called Papua. Yet, understandably, our brothers and sisters in Chatham feel as if they are out in the sticks, for so often they are expected to drive to the Niagara / Hamilton / Burlington area for meetings, as if it is no distance at all, yet when others are asked to come to Chatham for a meeting, then all of a sudden it is too far.

But it is Synod Neerlandia who graciously put us on the map, so that not only may we host a synod at this time but also, in three years since the last synod, we could be the hosts of two meetings of classis and also a Women's League Day. None of us ever expected that we would be privileged to host the next synod of our churches. And what a great privilege it is! We receive this with much thankfulness! We here in Chatham in return want to show the churches our appreciation for this opportunity to serve them in this way, by also taking this hosting very seriously. Very early we began with the preparations and I may say, as minister of this convening church, that we had, and have, a wonderful team of brothers and sisters in place, who have done a tremendous job in putting it all together and will try to be available for you and at your service to help you do the work you have been called to do.

Having prepared all that you see before you, I may, on behalf of the council and congregation of EbenEzer Canadian Reformed Church at Chatham, welcome you, brothers, and also the fraternal delegates to Chatham. We sincerely hope that all the preparations will help to you to do your work expediently, efficiently, and above all faithfully.

You should perhaps know something about us. Although we are the most western church in Ontario, it appears that you will hardly find a church east of us that does not have one or more families who started off in Chatham. If all those who told me that they started in Chatham had remained in Chatham, we would probably have had a half a dozen churches in Chatham by now. As it is, although many started off here through immigration, many also have moved on for various jobs elsewhere. However, that does indicate that the church at Chatham is also one of the oldest churches. You know that we, like the church at Hamilton, began as a Protestant Reformed Church. It is through faithfulness to the Scriptures and how the Spirit of the LORD moved us to understand God's covenant with man, that we reformed ourselves, went back to the Scriptures, to become what we are today, a faithful Canadian Reformed Church. But we realize that we cannot be an independent church on our own. We rely on one another. We need each other. The LORD our God not only gives us His Holy Word and His Spirit, who works in our hearts through His Holy Word, but also each other to help each other to stay on the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

In this day and age we need each other all the more. There are so many influences on us as church, and on us as individuals. The growing immorality in the world does not leave our churches untouched. There is a growing disdain for the LORD's commandments. Even among reformed churches, a traditional understanding of the Ten Commandments is being questioned. There is also an increasing atmosphere in today's world of getting together, of working together. You see that in the Muslim world, but also in the Christian world. We need to stand together, they say. Yes, we do. But let that never be at the cost of the purity and the truth of the Word of God.

Because of these trends and moods, it is so important that we search the Scriptures together and that we come before the LORD in prayer. We did that last night and we will do that again, and we implore you to do that constantly, committing each issue before the LORD, as you undoubtedly will. For only when His will is done according to the Scriptures will we enjoy His blessings. And only then may we be assured of peace in our congregations.

You, brothers, have a great responsibility on your shoulders. Synod Fergus was cautious. Granted, you can sometimes be too cautious, for the LORD also requires us to move forward and seek unity with all the faithful in our here-and-now situation. But you can also be too progressive, which can do irreparable damage, for seldom can you slow the process down or turn it back. Synod Neerlandia has made great leaps in church contacts. Whether that was too hasty or not, you will now have to

judge and respond to this as the many letters from the churches indicate.

No one may be opposed to unity. Yet, also no one may take it ill that, when seeking to be faithful churches of our LORD, we need more time, we need to discuss the issue more thoroughly, and we need then also to be so very careful that our brotherly feelings for one another do not overshadow seeking true unity on the Word of God. Also in this let us remember the words of the apostles, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29)

Now, you may have wondered why I chose to read from Psalm 123 this morning as the meditation for opening Synod 2004, for Psalm 123 is a pilgrim song. It is a Psalm of Ascents. The pilgrims probably sang it as they journeyed to one of several feast days in Jerusalem. In this particular psalm the pilgrims looked to the LORD for mercy, for they had endured much contempt. And that contempt came from those who were proud and arrogant. Proud and arrogant people are those who think they know it all, and no one is going to tell them what to do or how things should be. Proud and arrogant people live by their own wits and strength. They do not make good use of the talents that the LORD has given to them. They do not serve Him but serve themselves, and thereby set themselves up for destruction, taking many others along. Proud and arrogant people have little regard for the lowly, for the common people. Brothers, be assured, I do not in any way implicate you, or the past Synod, when speaking here of the proud and arrogant. Nevertheless, given our inclination to evil and given our fallen nature, we too, and in particular each of you during this Synod, must be very careful about what you do, how you deliberate and how you decide. You undoubtedly feel the weight of that on your shoulders. I only ask you to hear the cry in the churches. There are indeed those who say, “move forward, next step,” but there are also many who have very serious concerns. Don’t we deplore the split in our sister churches in the Netherlands? Watch what you do. We are not invulnerable. It never hurts to move a little slower. Every new relationship affects one another. You have that in marriages. A husband or wife is never totally the same after some years of marriage, but each has been affected by the other, hopefully for the good. Let that also be so in our contacts with other church federations. It will affect us. May it be pleasing to the LORD and work for the unity of faithful churches of our Lord, founded on the truth of His one infallible Word.

Then we should note that, while being proud and arrogant is not from the LORD and will not do us any good, humility is of the LORD. He who comes with humility before the LORD will prosper in a rich way for himself and for his loved ones, the church. The pilgrims, quite the opposite from the arrogant and the proud who assaulted them, turned to the LORD in humility. And then these pilgrims do not just look up to the hills of Psalm 121, but beyond that. They lift up their eyes to the heavens, where the LORD our God is enthroned in majesty and glory. They are totally dependent on the LORD. Their eyes look to Him as a slave looks to the hand of his master, or as a maid to the hand of her mistress. Then those are eyes that are not proud but eyes that hardly dare to look up, for they are but slaves and maids. Yet, they know that from their master alone, from their mistress alone, they can find what they stand in need of. This is the kind of heart with which we pray that you have come to this synod. You have read all the material. There was quite a bit of reading to do. May you be able to lay aside your own agenda, thoughts, opinions and feelings, which so easily stand in the way of man, and in humility look to the LORD as humble servants, sensing the weight of what you are being called to do, and therefore, imploring of Him the guidance, direction, wisdom and ability to make decisions, to give direction to the churches that will indeed be pleasing to Him, and be in line with the faithful Church of all ages. When you come before the LORD with such humble hearts, open to His direction, open then also to a totally different direction from what you may have expected, guided by the Spirit of the LORD and moved by His Word, then you will not have such a burden on your shoulders. Then you may go home afterwards knowing that you have done your LORD well. You have done your churches well, Christ’s church which He is gathering also in this age. We all, and many throughout the federation, are also praying with you and for you. You may be sure of that. May our merciful God graciously grant you His wisdom and power, to His glory and to the upbuilding of His churches!

2. Address of Rev. R.C. Janssen on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN)

Esteemed brothers, assembled on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches in synod, and dear brothers and sisters,

What is ‘Reformed’? Last year a Call to Reformation was issued in The Netherlands to the churches which br. Wezeman and I represent here at your synod. As the call largely went unheeded, a relatively small number of persons is giving this reformation form by seceding from our churches.

What is ‘Reformed’? In the pages of *Clarion*, a magazine widely read in your churches, the claim has been made that the Reformed character of our churches is – quote - almost unrecognizable – end of quote.

What is ‘Reformed’? I trust that with ‘Reformed’ we do not mean a local or time-bound variant of the Christian church, but we mean the truly catholic Christian identity which cannot be relinquished without falling away from the gospel, which was once entrusted to the apostles. The identity which is determined by the calling which applies to all those who would be gathered, defended and preserved by Christ, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith.

What is ‘Reformed’? Certainly, within our own shared (Dutch) tradition, we have a rich history from which to answer that question. Anyone who knows his church history praises God for His work during the time of the Great Reformation. After a period of great deformation, Christ’s Church re-formed itself all over the Netherlands. The move away from Roman hierarchy and heresy was an immense and radical step, taking place in various ways and leading to various results. However, in the Netherlands the churches from the various regions, and even abroad, were able to recognize each other as truly Reformed on the basis of a common, scriptural confession. Within a few decades the foundations of Reformed church life in the Low Countries were established. Not on a basis of uniformity. Nor on a basis of complete unanimity in all things. But in a unity of faith, in the course of time expressed in what became known as the Three Forms of Unity. By the Lord’s blessing, the churches returned, again and again, to that basis, no more and no less, in order to maintain the privilege of being truly ‘Reformed’.

There have been times that church political developments were the catalyst sparking a renewed search for those roots. There were times when the introduction of new hymns and unfamiliar worship practices did so. There were times when differences in theological opinion encouraged renewed reflection on our origins. However, it was never change or innovation or debate or diversity as such, which determined the degree of Reformedness of the churches. Indeed not. It was the extent to which these interacted with the foundation: the scriptural truth confessed and maintained in the Three Forms of Unity. One need only be reminded of the groundbreaking work of Schilder and his fellows, who dared to expose the limitations of prevailing opinion, time-hallowed as these were in his day.

Brothers, we will be pleased – as we should be – to answer questions concerning developments in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. We would ask, however, that any judgments you make not be based on information gathered from here and there, nor on personal statements of teachers from past or present. These would seem at times to be quoted with a predisposition to condemn. Or they are taken out of context and explained contrary to their meaning. Rather, we ask you to judge on the basis of the public actions of these churches themselves, and from the declared statements of these churches as they met in general synod in Zuidhorn in 2002. To facilitate this we have distributed to the members of synod documentation we believe relevant, and we have with us, in digital form, the *Acts* of Synods 1993, 1996, 1999 and 2002.

Why do we ask this with such emphasis? Because the so-called ‘Call to Reformation’ is not truly Reformed. It is not fair. It does not testify to righteous conduct. Discussion with those who are concerned is impossible. The pages of *Reformanda*, the magazine from which the Call originated, are closed to those who wish to defend the honour and reputation of the GKN(v). The so-called ‘new liberation’, the secession from our churches, has little following. As far as we are aware, to date only one ordained minister has followed up on this call. Other office-bearers who initially supported this call have now withdrawn their support. Not even 500 people have thus far seceded from our churches; we point out that our churches have a membership exceeding 125,000. Of those who have left, some have explicitly refused to call our churches a false church, indicating only that they no longer felt at home in our churches.

Brothers, there is another concern in our churches. For every person that leaves our churches to the ‘right’ there are twice, maybe three times that number that leave our churches to the ‘left’, joining the Nederlands Gereformeerden, or congregations which go under the name of Bible-believing evangelical churches. The concerns of those who leave us ‘to the left’ focus primarily on matters of worship and the rational, intellectualist sphere in our churches. On this point we are confronted by our own confession which reads, “we reject all human inventions and laws introduced into the worship of God which bind and compel the consciences in any way. We accept only what is proper to preserve and promote harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God.” We are thus confronted with the question: are the restrictions in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands not undue limitations binding the conscience? As Rev. Kampen, your delegate to General Synod Leusden, pointed out at Leusden in 1999: the Dutch tradition is more regulated and much stricter than the Canadian.

Because we recognise those who leave us, those who leave us to the 'right' but also those who leave to the 'left', as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we have begun asking ourselves whether the church walls we have built with respect to matters of worship are indeed the walls of Christ's fold. Or are they improper dividing pens within the fold? We are aware of Christ's prayer for the unity of the church. We hear the Spirit's explicit command in the letter to the Ephesians that the body of Christ is to be one. We believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that all and everyone are obliged to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church. We confess that all must submit themselves to the instruction and discipline of the church, must bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters, according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body. We acknowledge that all who draw away from the church or fail to join it act contrary to the will of God.

It is the endeavour to hold fast this confession that underlies discussions in our circles.

There is more. Church boundaries are disappearing and in our churches there is an increasing lack of awareness of what it means to be church. In a densely populated nation like ours, there is a plethora of churches and especially young people shop around to see what suits them best. Personal squabbles are solved by switching churches or creating your own. Moreover, secularisation, materialism, consumerism, relativism and individualism threaten our churches – and no less your own – and it is to these matters that our churches are seeking biblical responses.

Do not misunderstand us. We make no pretences about being the perfect church. We continue to be sinful people, a federation of churches threatened by the devil, the world and the desires of our own flesh. However, we wholeheartedly submit ourselves to God's will. We continue to do battle for the honour of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit strive to be faithful to the Word of God, which we confess in the Ecumenical Creeds and the Reformed Confessions. Thus we earnestly and heartily seek to live up to the standards which our Holy Father expects of us.

We reiterate: the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands do not consider themselves *Ecclesia Reformata*. We are *Ecclesia Reformanda*. Not the Church which has been Reformed and is now Perfect, but the Church which is to be Re-formed, and be so continually, *semper reformanda*. We have not lost our identity: our confessional documents stand unaltered. We are not afraid to be a church with exclusive truths. Allow me to illustrate this. Contrary to what the CRCA report states, upon the request and warning of the FRCSA (VGKSA) we did *not* enter into a sister church relation with the RCSA (GKSA). In our own country we continue to insist upon clear confessional subscription before proceeding with ecclesiastical unity with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken. What we are afraid of is that we are sifting out gnats while we are swallowing camels. It is that fear which causes us to rediscover, not our identity, but the richness of our identity, the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of the grace of God, by which alone we are saved.

As churches, you in North America and we in The Netherlands, stand shoulder to shoulder in the battle against the forces of our time, against the god of this age. It is our fervent prayer that God will bless us as we search out His will and work out this will in our lives.

Brothers, we're sorry that so much of this speech must be taken up with a defence of our name as Reformed churches. We are convinced the honour and reputation of your sister-churches is highly respected by you. But we are not entirely convinced that our name is safe in the hands of your deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad. For this reason we now turn briefly to the recommendations of your deputies.

With respect to recommendation 5.5.3, to instruct the CRCA to suggest to the next Synod of the GKN that the proportion of Psalms and hymns in the Gereformeerd Kerkboek should reflect the importance – and even the priority – of the psalms, we point out that Synod Zuidhorn emphatically declared that the psalms should continue to have priority in the worship services. We believe the recommendation as it now stands brings no new material to light for our churches.

With respect to recommendation 5.5.4, to instruct the CRCA to convey to the next Synod of the Dutch sister churches that the decisions of Leusden and Zuidhorn about the fourth commandment are based on unconvincing argumentation, we point out that Leusden and Zuidhorn took no decisions about the fourth commandment. They merely decided whether a certain opinion related to an aspect of the fourth commandment could be expressed from the pulpit. With respect to the underlying issue of the relationship between the fourth commandment and the Sunday a deputyship has been appointed, due to report to General Synod 2005. We believe this recommendation jumps the gun. The deputies appointed by GS Zuidhorn have indicated their willingness to receive input also from your churches.

With respect to recommendation 5.5.5, to instruct the CRCA to adress the next Synod of the Dutch sister churches to the effect that their recent decisions pertaining to the Marriage Form weaken the Scriptural teaching about marriage, we have made sure that you as delegates all have an accurate translation of this form so that you can judge the matter for yourselves. We also note that the objections raised by your deputies were tabled at synod, albeit in hindsight not quite as your deputies had intended it. The point is, however, the matters raised by deputies have been discussed already by our churches.

With respect to recommendation 5.5.6, to instruct the CRCA to explore what, if any, implications flow from the changed role of the Dutch deputies both in relation to their Synods as well as in relation to the deputies of the CRCA, we as deputies are not aware of any changed role from our side. With all due respect, we wonder whether your deputies are fully aware of what their position and task and privileges are. Rev. van Oene writes in his Church Order Commentary concerning deputies of foreign churches:

> *Delegates are mutually received in an advisory capacity. They usually attend each other's synods for a few days or weeks only. However, when they are there, they are not just figureheads whose only privilege is that they may give a nice speech, but they may attend all sessions or committee meetings and serve the assemblies with their advice.*

We are puzzled by what your deputies write on page 25 of their report: "Your committee has been unable to develop meaningful correspondence with its counterparts, while at the same time learning after the fact that it was invited to partake in the discussions at Synod [Zuidhorn]."

Brothers, this last point brings us to the official report of your deputies published in *Clarion* and appended to the report to the churches assembled in Synod. That we as deputies Relations with Foreign Churches were upset by this report and rose to attention in order to defend the honour and reputation of the Dutch churches undoubtedly has not escaped your notice. Your deputies questioned our right to do so. We ask: is the accused to remain silent? Concerning this matter we read in the Supplementary report "We see no need for interaction with the article of the Dutch Deputies. We consider the matter finished. As for our Report on the Dutch Churches, we maintain the evaluation and recommendations." The matter is considered finished! Finished! When the accusation has not been substantiated with hard, impartial evidence. Brothers, it is *not* finished. It has been publicly declared by your deputies that we, the Dutch churches, are afraid to be identified as a type of church with exclusive truths, that our Reformed character is almost unrecognizable. This grieves us severely and continues to be a burden in our mutual contact. There is a hurt which needs to be set right and we are convinced that this problem can indeed be resolved in a brotherly way.

We are hurt where it concerns ourselves. But, brothers, we rejoice with you as we see the catholicity of Christ's church manifest itself increasingly. As churches we are convinced that, in the face of the world and what falsely calls itself Christ's church, we must present a united front. For that reason our policy with respect to North America is not to impede your reaching out to other faithful Reformed churches but to follow in your wake. Your judgment is important to us and we are gladdened to see how you are making headway in your contacts.

Thus it is with much joy we have seen how you and the OPC have put into practice a full sister church relationship. It was the signal our churches have been waiting for since the mid nineties when the OPC requested that we enter into some form of fellowship with them. As you may know, GS Zuidhorn decided to not only accept this offer but to invite the OPC into a full sister church relationship. It is our hope and prayer that this will materialize this year.

We are also gladdened by the progress that has been made in the organizational unification of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches. On this score you have made more progress in the past six years than we have in many more years in seeking unification with the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands. It is also refreshing to see how you are reforming your church order in true Reformed style and we thank the united committees of the URCNA and CanRC for the opportunity to become acquainted with the results of this study. We hasten to add that we hope to visit the URCNA synod later this year and invite them to our synod next year, and to explore the possibilities of a sister church relationship.

Your troubles with the Free Reformed Churches remind us of the hurdles that have been or still have to be taken in The Netherlands with respect to the CGKN. We'd like to draw your attention to a publication by the last General Synod of the CGKN in which a statement is issued on the unity of the

church. There is also much material available in The Netherlands on the issues addressed in the report of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. We think especially of discussion papers written by professors of Kampen and Apeldoorn on topics such as the Church, the Covenant, and Experiential Preaching.

Brothers of the synod, brothers and sisters in the public, we have expressed our pain and shared our joy with you. We look forward to discussing such matters as seem significant to your and our churches. It is a true privilege to be received so warmly, and to experience the bond of faith in a very practical way. On behalf of your sister churches in The Netherlands, we offer you our very sincere greetings and well-wishes. May our Lord continue to grant you His indispensable wisdom in discussing and deciding on the issues that are before you. And may your deliberations and decisions serve the Lord's cause in a world which is increasingly inhospitable to those who faithfully serve His anointed King. We also cordially invite your representatives to attend our upcoming general synod in May and June of next year, in particular during its 'international' week, the last week in May of 2005.

Br. Chairman, brothers assembled in synod, thank you for the opportunity to address your churches. May the Lord bless you.

3. Response to Rev. R.C. Janssen by br. W. Pleiter

Dear Rev. R.C. Janssen and br. K. Wezeman,

It is a privilege for me to officially welcome each of you to the beautiful surrounding of Chatham and to greet you on behalf of General Synod Chatham 2004. Indeed, we express our heartfelt gratitude for the strong representation we have received from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (liberated) in the persons of Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen and br. Klaas Wezeman. We are thankful that you were both able to arrive safely earlier this week and that we could have your presence and participation in the various synod committees.

From a personal perspective, I am delighted to be reacquainted with an old friend – well, both of us could hardly be accused of being old – but it is great to meet up with "me mate" from Australia. You see, Rev. Karlo Janssen and I share a similar background, having both experienced our teenage years in Australia, as members of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. You should know that Rev. Karlo Janssen is not only an academic but also a great athlete, at least when it came to the game of soccer. So it is that, I can confirm to you, the passion which he demonstrated in tonight's speech was also displayed on the soccer field!

When you consider our common background in Australia, and acknowledge that Rev. Karlo Janssen is here as a delegate from our Dutch sister churches, and that I am able to respond as a member of synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, we are confronted with a vivid expression of the unity we share as sister churches. Here we can experience the living expression of the faith we confess, the faith we share in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At the same time I do wish to inform the brothers of General Synod that there is no truth to Rev. Moesker's rumours that the Aussies are taking over.

Rev. Karlo Janssen has also left his mark here on Canadian soil. He undertook his theological studies at our college in Hamilton, as a student supported by our Australian sister churches, before continuing his studies in Kampen. So it is wonderful to hear that you are able to give back to the Canadians, so to speak, at the Theological College in Hamilton, where I believe you are going to give a lecture on the historical survey and evaluation of confessional subscription in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

It is also a pleasure to meet br. Klaas Wezeman. While it is the first time I met this brother, he is however, well known among the brothers of Synod. Many have expressed appreciation for the discussion they could share with you. So thanks also for joining us here at Synod Chatham.

Brothers, once again in your speech you have passionately reminded us of the bond we share in our Lord Jesus Christ. You have spoken clearly about the importance of being Reformed and the urgent need to faithfully live out of our Reformed Confessions. So it is through our close bonds as sister churches that we may be mutually reminded of our common history and commitment to the Reformed traditions. This bond is a special one, one to be valued, and not to be taken for granted. How beautiful it is be united through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

You could also say this bond has a strong family feeling to it as well. So it should be no surprise that when our families become larger and more established we face new challenges, challenges that will require us to search the Scriptures for direction and understanding. You have expressed pain

about the split, the so-called 'new liberation' that has occurred in the churches. Despite the fact the numbers may be small in proportion to the overall size of your federation, I am sure the break creates much pain. May this split not only give you reason for self reflection, but a conviction that you have done all you can to address this matter in a church orderly way. Therefore we commend this matter in prayer before our Almighty God and ask that He may graciously grant healing and reconciliation where possible.

You have also spoken about several matters that come out of the report from the Committee with Relations with Churches Abroad. Is it fair to say that there is a little conflict amongst sisters? This need not be the case if we can give each other the benefit of the doubt and talk about the areas of concern. I am confident that Synod will fairly deal with these matters raised by the CRCA and give appropriate direction to this committee. However, please be assured that the churches and their reputations are in safe hands - I say this from a personal perspective, as a member of that committee – and that there is no presupposition to speak ill of the Dutch churches. Please do not question our intent. The desire is not to resort to hurtful expressions, but rather to openly and forthrightly discuss matters of concern – a heartfelt concern for the well being of our dear sister. Families may have their feuds but we cannot leave them unresolved. Rather let us commit to continuing down the road of discussion - let us seek to clearly understand each other, without being accusative or reactionary, but in a brotherly way that seeks the good of the other. Over the past few days we have been able to do so, and I pray that the lines of communication and discussion will continue to increase, so that we can truly demonstrate what it means to be sisters of the Lord.

We rejoice with you in the positive developments that are happening within your church federation. Indeed, we can witness the Lord's gathering work throughout the world. May the Lord continue to guide and bless your work as you seek the way of faith and obedience, following Jesus Christ, our glorified King.

Thank you brothers, Rev. Karlo Janssen and br Klaas Wezeman, for your warm greeting, and we ask that you also convey our sincere greeting to our Dutch sister churches, which are so near and dear to our hearts. Thank you for spending quality time amongst us, participating in our discussions and deliberations, and we wish you the infinite blessings of our heavenly Father as you travel back to Holland. Thank you!

3. Address of Rev. G. Syms on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

Esteemed Brethren,

Psalm 133:1
Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!

It is a special privilege for me to address you on behalf of the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States and to bring you greetings in the Lord from our churches. My colleague, the Rev. Mr. Tom Mayville of Willows, CA, and I, give you hearty thanks for the hospitality afforded us in your midst on this occasion. We are also grateful for the excellent hospitality given to us by our host families here in Chatham. We have indeed been blessed in the communion of the saints. I do want to mention our gratitude for the work of the sisters of the Chatham congregation, whose service of love has been quite evident in providing excellent meals for us each day. The kind assistance of Rev. Versteeg in making our arrangements is most appreciated. Since this is the third time I have been able to attend a general synod in the past six years, I can say that it has been good to be with you again.

Since the year 2001, we have enjoyed with you what we in the RCUS call 'fraternal relations,' and what I believe in your terminology is a 'sister-church relationship.' Our bond is based on a common belief in the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. In a day when distinctions concerning the truth are frowned upon by many, it is a great encouragement to us that the Canadian Reformed churches still desire to "contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints." We share this desire to be faithful to our covenant God. The mutual edification that has ensued is a reason for gratitude to the Lord. You have spoken frankly with us about our faith and practice, and always in a brotherly manner. When we have differed in our thinking and practice, you have made every effort to understand our rationale. What has become obvious is that many of our scriptural principles are exactly the same, yet because of history, culture, and other factors, the implementation may be somewhat different. We are glad to have found each other on the same road in following the Lord, and that these differences have not kept us apart.

We continue to appreciate the relationship that we have in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Our interaction with one another is not merely formal, nor is it superficial, but is substantial in nature; it has been fruitful. Events which have underlined this aspect of our relationship include our meeting at Flat Rock, North Carolina, in November, 2002. Not only did the sub-committees of our respective churches discuss issues of mutual concern, we also took pleasure in a memorable Lord's Day and fellowship of the highest order.

We handled at that time questions mandated by Synod Neerlandia through the CCCA, which expressed a desire for ongoing discussions "about different practices relative to the observance of the Lord's Day in the RCUS," administering the Lord's Supper to shut-ins, as well as the confessional language of our paper on Church Unity. We can report that the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) brought two recommendations to the RCUS Synod that were the result of these discussions with our Canadian Reformed counterparts. The first was a recommendation to form a special committee "to study and report on the application of Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 103, i.e., the Lord's Day and how it should be observed in our churches." The proposal, however, was defeated. The second recommendation, which Synod passed, was to bring the language used in the RCUS position paper entitled, "Biblical Principles of Church Unity," which was adopted in 1999, in line with the language of the Three Forms of Unity. The current writing reflects more the language of the Westminster Standards. We are still discussing the matter regarding shut-ins and the Lord's Supper.

It was during this same time frame that the representatives of the Canadian Reformed Churches first observed the meeting of NAPARC (the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). We cannot begin to tell you how delighted we were when Rev. Klaas Jonker delivered his introduction to the Canadian Reformed Churches to the Council. It was also an encouragement to have the Canadian Reformed brothers present as observers again in 2003 for the NAPARC meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

We are convinced that your membership in this organization would strengthen its Reformed character and enhance the influence from the continental perspective on member churches. It would also be helpful to the churches with which you have Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and other member churches, such as the newly received Reformed Church of Quebec. Presently, the RCUS is the only member church confessing The Three Forms of Unity.

It is in our fraternal relationship that we have the confidence to speak to you of our concerns about the North American church scene. One of these is what we presently perceive as confusion on the doctrine of justification. We are somewhat alarmed at the number of formerly Protestant ministers presently going over to Rome. The problem seems to be the difficulty in making proper distinctions between the teachings of Paul and James. This is an area on which we must be absolutely clear. If our works have anything to do with our justification, except as the inevitable and grateful result of the same, then the gospel has been compromised. We would certainly be interested in pursuing consultation on this most important aspect of the biblical faith as we seek to be faithful to the Word of the Lord, and The Three Forms of Unity. The message we preach must be like a trumpet with a clear sound, because "the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Holy Gospel" in the church-gathering work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Several items may be of interest from the last Synod of the RCUS which was convened in Eureka, SD, in May, 2003. We were encouraged by the addition of three new ministers, and one new church. This brings the total number of RCUS churches to forty-two and the number of mission churches to seven, for a total of forty-nine.

A committee of Synod continues its mandate "To examine the feasibility, procedures, and criteria necessary to the establishment of an RCUS seminary, giving particular attention to Heidelberg Theological Seminary which petitioned the Synod to serve as the denomination's seminary." There is a growing desire in our churches for a seminary which will train men for pastoral ministry in RCUS churches in particular. It is also proper for the seminary to be accountable to the Synod, something which is not possible with independent seminaries. We have received a report from the Canadian Reformed brothers at this meeting that will be an invaluable aid in studying this matter.

Several Deaf Reformed Churches working together, with RCUS financial assistance, have been able to vigorously prosecute the work of holding conferences around the United States to introduce the Reformed faith to deaf people. The churches of Synod supported the French language "Reformed Faith and Life" radio broadcast produced in South Africa, two ministers in Lubumbashi, one in Mbuji-

Mayi, seven congregations and their elders in the Congo, as well as two pastoral-elders and other elders in Kenya. These are just a few of the opportunities the Lord has given to us in recent years.

Synod voted as well to "recommend to the churches the desirability of fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, via pulpit exchange, visiting the Canadian Reformed Churches and invitations to youth camps/conferences held by the various Classes." We trust that opportunities and plans for these things will continue to multiply in our churches.

In the prayer service held before Synod was convened, we were exhorted by Rev. Stam from the Word of God to conduct ourselves in humility depending on the Lord. The conduct of your meetings, whether in committee or plenary session, have exhibited this humility. Then again, last evening, Rev. De Gelder reminded us from Ephesians 4 that the conduct of God's people among themselves is to be "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Thank you for receiving us into your midst, for treating us in a brotherly manner once again.

Please continue to pray for the Reformed Church in the United States, even as we pray for the Canadian Reformed Churches. In our countries, which share a common border, we face similar challenges in culture and society. We are always aware of our dependency on our Sovereign Lord for strength to persevere in the redemption he has given to us. It is a source of encouragement that we share a common vision to glorify God in every aspect of life. May the Lord be pleased to bless your churches in the preaching of his covenant Word and use you mightily in the church-gathering work of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you proclaim the gospel of grace at home and abroad.

Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
But to Your name give glory
Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.
Psalm 115:1

4. Response to Rev. G. Syms by Rev. K. Jonker

Thank you, Rev. Syms, for your kind words to us. We feel honoured that, on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States, you and your fellow delegate, Rev. Tom Mayville, are attending our Synod. We are happy that you feel at home with us and that you enjoy the hospitality of the Chatham congregation.

Your presence and participation in our Synod shows that we have an active bond with one another. Indeed, our relationship is not only a matter of correspondence. As you stated, you have attended many of our general synods. In addition to these visits you have been involved in many joint committee meetings with us. As a result of these official contacts, visits and meetings, we have come to know each other as people of the Lord who walk together on the same way of salvation.

Yes, with us you are standing firm on the foundation of the same truth. This unity is expressed by our adherence to the same confessional standards. We know that especially the Heidelberg Catechism is dear to you. For years the RCUS had only the beloved Heidelberg as its confession. Your federation is especially fond of referring to this standard of faith. Although some years ago you have (re-)adopted the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort as your official standards, some of your churches still refer to the Heidelberg Catechism on your church bulletins as the standard of faith.

We can witness your faithfulness to the Reformed standards, for example, when we are present at your synods. As we already heard at this Synod, your synods are different from ours. Around 75 delegates are in attendance. Your synods also have a full agenda, yet they are always finished within one week! You don't even rush through all the agenda items. The RCUS even gives much attention to mid-day devotions in which especially newly ordained ministers are involved. On the Wednesday evening of the Synod week a worship service is held under the oversight of the host congregation. In that service a minister delegate of Synod preaches the sermon. All this gives evidence of the true Reformed spirituality among you. You want to be fully devoted to Him and His service. You want to be obedient to Christ, the Lord, and entrust yourself fully to Him.

In our contacts and visits we have expressed the need for a living contact. As said above, a relationship of correspondence will not suffice. Now we add that attending each other's assemblies is not the fulfillment of our relationship either. We also need to actively support and encourage each other in other areas of our church life. You mentioned your Synod Eureka 2003 decision to have pulpit exchanges, etc., with one another. A quick peek at our synodical committee report, which will be discussed tonight, shows that Synod Chatham most likely will decide the same!

Here I would like to mention how the churches in Manitoba are planning to organize closer contacts with the RCUS. The last Sunday of April 2004 one of the Manitoban churches will have a pulpit exchange with the RCUS congregation in Minot, North Dakota. On a Sunday in September or October 2004 a Manitoban church will have a pulpit exchange with the RCUS congregation in Mitchell, South Dakota.

We fully agree with you, Rev. Syms, that we should support each other in the defence of the Reformed faith. You mentioned your concerns about the North American scene in respect to the attack on the Reformed faith by the so-called "new perspective on Paul." You are seeking our support in maintaining the sound Reformed doctrine in this respect. We certainly won't shy away from doing that. We would be more than pleased to dwell on our rich heritage of the truth as we confess this, for example, in the Heidelberg Catechism, LD 23 and 24, with the cross references to the Belgic Confession, Articles 21-23. In the light of these clear summaries of the Church in regard to justification, I don't think it is necessary to make a dogmatic/systematic position paper on this subject. Let's leave that to the experts. But let us support each other in maintaining the faith once delivered to our fathers.

We commend you and your churches to the care of the Lord and assure you that we will continue to pray for the RCUS. May the Lord, the Head of the Church, establish you in the unity of true faith together with us, so that we may continue to express our joy with Psalm 133 to the praise and glory of our covenant God!

5. Address of br. G.B. Veenendaal on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

Esteemed chairman and brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a great privilege for me to be here in your midst. In the first place, I was the alternate delegate (you know, the one that usually gets put on the waiting list but nothing comes of it?) but, Rev Huizinga as primary delegate was unfortunately unable to attend because of his pastoral commitments. Secondly, there is a law of gravity that says, "what goes up, must come down", or as we who are "down-under" might say "what goes down must come up". Yes, these ex-Canadians seem to rebound back once in a while. If it's not the one, then it is the other. And this time it is my privilege to rebound back on Canadian soil. Yes, it is good to be back here, although I must say it requires a dramatic climatic readjustment of over 50 degrees! I left Perth last week Thursday at 39 degrees Celsius!

I would first of all like to extend, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, our sincere and heartfelt greetings. We would like to thank you for the invitation and opportunity to be here. The hospitality that you have shown is no less than excellent. We pray that the Lord will guide and bless your endeavours at this meeting of synod and among the churches when the decisions are studied and implemented.

It is true that the Canadian soil and Australian soil have much in common. We have similarities in the founding and establishment of our churches as immigrants after the events of Europe in the middle of the last century. We have had many common joys and struggles as the churches grew and schools were established. We share a similar language and culture. We have a common heritage and confessions. Many of our church members and even students and Ministers of the Word have moved between Australia and Canada/America over the years. Yes, we continue to face many of the same issues and challenges in our church and daily life today. That is what makes a bond between church federations so important, so valuable, and yes, even necessary. Our last synod, Synod Rockingham 2003, recognized this as part of its decision regarding our relations with you, by saying: "*We value our bond with our American/Canadian Sister Churches; we can learn from each other; and should keep in good contact with them. Personal contact at synodical level reinforces this.*" Hence our decision to send a delegate to your synod here.

Let me first fill you in on where our bond of churches is at. We are presently a bond of 12 churches comprising over 3500 members. This represents a 20% growth in the number of churches in just a few years, with Bunbury being instituted in November 2001 and Darling Downs in July 2003. Since our Synod West Albany 2000, we operate as two Classes: Classis North comprising three churches in the Perth metropolitan area, together with the two churches some 4000 km away to the east in Tasmania, and Classis South comprising four churches of the metropolitan area, together with Bunbury, 150 km south and two churches in Albany, 400 km south. A result is that our synod now meets once every three years instead of every two years.

At the moment, we have three vacant churches: Launceston, Albany and Darling Downs. These churches have made a number of calls to Ministers of the Word, including several Canadian ones, but so far we have not been able to lure any away from the cold and snowy Canadian climate to the warm and rugged sub-Mediterranean climate of the southern coast of Australia. Bunbury has recently been blessed with the arrival of a new minister, Rev Rupke, from Holland (in fact, he arrived two weeks ago!). His *colloquium doctum* will be held, the Lord willing, next week.

We continue to support and make use of your Theological College in Hamilton for the training of our students for the ministry. We are thankful for the opportunities that the Lord has provided through your college. Our last synod has instructed deputies to keep in contact with your college and to continue investigating possible avenues for training, as well as for establishing our own theological library. We have further benefited from your college by the recent visit of Professor and Mrs. Geertsema in our midst, which we very much appreciated. This gave us an opportunity to hear more of your work and to bring it closer to home for us. We hope to continue to invite guest lecturers from your college on a regular basis.

As a bond of churches, we continue to exercise sister church relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) churches in Indonesia. We have contacts with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines, the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC) churches in Indonesia, and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Because your deputies enquired specifically about our contacts with the churches in Indonesia and New Zealand, I will mention some more details about them. In particular, I will quote from our Synod Rockingham 2003 decisions. With regards to the churches in Indonesia, our synod decided:

> *To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules,*
>
> *To continue contacts with the GGRC, and*
>
> *To thank deputies for their work and to appoint new deputies and give them the following mandate:*
>
> *a. To continue to visit the conference/synods of the GGRI and the GGRC subject to available finance;*
>
> *b. To support the GGRI and GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available.*
>
> *c. To financially support br Pila Njuka (along with his family) to complete his studies at Hamilton, monitor his progress, and prepare for his return to Indonesia. To invite him to Australia on his way back to Indonesia. To ask the Indonesian churches how he could best be utilised in their midst, and to support him in the mean time. Where necessary to support his reintegration into Indonesia and among the churches.*
>
> *d. To monitor and determine the best possibilities to train Indonesian theological students – by either supporting and helping in setting up a college for theological training (for eg., in Kupang) or sending another student overseas to study.*
>
> *e. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise.*
>
> *f. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.*
>
> *g. To financially support Rev Yawan Bunda of the GGRC and in a different year Rev Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study English for three months in Australia. In the case of Rev Yan Pariamalinya his is subject to an expected request from the GGRI deputies. Both requests are subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to the availability of funding from the churches.*
>
> *h. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in c,d,f, and g above.*
>
> *[Article 73, Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003]*

With regards to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the synod decided:

> *Not to proceed with the decision in principle to offer fraternal relations*

To confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and the implications of an offer of sister relations with them, and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy,

To recognize that the only remaining difficulty with entering into a relationship with the RCNZ is the relationship of the RCNZ with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia,

To assess the situation with respect to this relation at an upcoming synod to see if this remains a difficulty to entering into full sister-church relations or not, and

To appoint deputies with the following mandate:

a. *To convey these decisions to the RCNZ*
b. *To assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod*
c. *To intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits, if the synodical budget allows*
d. *To invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCNZ*
e. *To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature and visits*

[Article 72, Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003]

Further information is available in the *Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003*. The printed acts are still in press and your deputies for sister church relations only recently received the electronic version of the *Acts.* The synod did require two sessions to complete its work, one in July and the other in October. The last session was necessary in order to do justice to a number of appeals from churches and individuals. Thankfully, synod could complete its task in good harmony.

A glance over the agenda of your synod shows that you too have many items to deal with: relations with churches at home and abroad, Bible translations, hymns and liturgy, procedures for appeals, the Theological College, etc. In all of that, you too want to be faithful to God's Word and the Confessions and that is evident in the way you conduct your deliberations and business here at synod.

Last week you made an announcement regarding the appointment of Dr A. De Visser as professor for your theological college. On behalf of the Australian churches, I would like to congratulate you as churches with this appointment! We pray that Dr De Visser may see his way clear to take up the appointment in your midst. May the college receive in this new appointment, the blessings and guidance of our Heavenly Father in preparing men who are able to lead and teach the flock of Christ. We pray that your churches, as well as ours, may continue to benefit from the teaching and guidance of those at the college, who have been entrusted with this beautiful task.

At the same time, we are reminded of and saddened by the deterioration of the health of Professor DeJong. As I already mentioned, as churches we have greatly benefited from the college, and this includes the writings and support of Professor De Jong. The Lord has given us many riches through this servant of His, in the unveiling of the mysteries of His Word. May He continue to bless that work both here in Canada and beyond. We also trust that the way for our brother is the Lord's path and that he is safe in God's hands. We have the comfort of Lord's Day 1 of our Heidelberg Catechism, that we belong to Christ our Saviour. May our Heavenly Father surround br. De Jong and his family with His steadfast love and care, and may that comfort of Lord's Day 1 continue to give us all hope and joy.

May the Lord also guide you in your relations and contacts with other bonds of churches. You have a number of relatively new, in addition to the continuing, sister church relations that are occupying some of your time and concerns. May you continue to develop and nurture these relationships so that Christ's church may continue to be gathered, defended and preserved in this country. With regards to the sister churches in the Netherlands, we share some of the same concerns as you. May you be given God's wisdom and understanding to deal with these issues in a brotherly and caring, yet forthright manner that pleases the Lord and that may be used to encourage and direct your sister churches in the paths of righteousness.

Continue to be guided by God's Word and Spirit and stand fast in the faith. Continue to be vigilant and withstand the attacks of Satan on the church. Continue to work with joy in the unity of the faith that has been entrusted to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. When we view it in that light, then the awesome work which the Lord places before us becomes a beautiful work, that praises and honors our Heavenly Creator and the Head of the Church.

As your sister churches in Australia, we wish you God's indispensable blessing on your deliberations here at synod, and on your bond of churches in the struggle of faith. May our mutual contacts be used to edify each other to God's honour and glory. May I end with the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-16:

> "*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our Gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work*."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Thank you.

6. Response to br. G.B. Veenendaal by Rev. D. Agema

Brother Veenendaal,

On behalf of General Synod I may respond to your words. You have conveyed to us the "sincere and heartfelt greetings" of our sister churches in Australia, and we thank you for your words. When we hear your report about the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, then we thank the LORD for His work of gathering His church in Australia. We are also thankful to have you, brother Veenendaal, in our midst. We have come to know you, and you have come to know us. As your Synod Rockingham said, personal contact at synodical level reinforces our bond as sister churches.

The report of the CRCA on the churches in Australia is rather short. The same goes for the report of the advisory committee to this Synod. This does not mean in any way that our relationship is superficial. On the contrary, we have many and deep ties. The shortness of the report reflects that our relationship is well established and that we have much in common. It also shows a trust in each other and a mutual recognition of the willingness to be bound to God's Word and the Reformed Confessions.

Indeed, though many miles and hours separate us, and though the outside temperatures may differ, we have many things in common. We confess in Art. 27 of the Belgic Confession that the holy church is not confined or limited to one particular place or person. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith." Between our churches there is this unity, namely, unity in one and the same Spirit and by the power of faith. And for this we are thankful. We see this unity expressed in many ways, not only in official contact between synodical deputies, but also in students who come to Canada to study at our Theological College and ministers from Canada that serve in Australia.

Each Synod expresses gratitude for the continued support of the Theological College by the Australian churches; this synod is no exception. But be assured that this expressing of gratitude is not a formality. As Canadian Reformed Churches we sincerely want to thank you for this continued support. We know that your support is more than financial contributions, it is also in supporting the College with your prayers. We thank the Lord for this cooperation.

The CRCA recommended to this Synod to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. We may continue our relationship and do this with deep gratitude to the Lord for what He gives to us in our relationship. For behind this recommendation is so much. There is not just the work of deputies, though we appreciate their work, nor the decisions of synods, though they too are important, but first and foremost the work of our God in Jesus Christ. He gave His Son for sinners. He, the Son, was willing to die for sinners. In His good pleasure the Lord gathers His people in Australia, here in Canada, and from all nations. The Church is founded on this blood and the gates of hell will not be able to stop this. United in Christ we serve our God in this world: you in Australia, we here in Canada. We need each other, to assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith, in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy, while being watchful for deviations. We thank the Lord that you are willing to do this towards us.

Brother Veenendaal, we thank you for your visit and your words. We want to assure you that the sister churches in Australia are in our prayers. As you return home, take along the greetings of the brothers and sisters in Canada. May the Lord give us the strength follow the Lamb as He leads us to His future.

7. Address of Rev. J. Ferguson on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Fathers and Brothers,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the Church! May I begin by saying that I consider it a great honour to be among my brothers of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches as a representative of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Please do not take me to be the typical OP minister, any more than you would Texas Jack Peterson or G.I. Williamson! I leave it to your imagination to decide what the average Orthodox Presbyterian is really like.

This is my first opportunity to address your General Synod and I hope that it will not be my last. Nevertheless, I must say that I am not a stranger to some of you, as over the past several years I have been to a number of Classis meetings and several of the Ministers' Conferences held at your Theological Hall in Hamilton. It has also been my privilege to preach the Word in Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Kerwood on two occasions.

The Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario, of which I am a member, has received two fraternal visits from Canadian Reformed ministers since your last General Synod. As the chairman of my Presbytery's Ecumenicity Committee, I am happy to report that the greetings brought by both those men were greatly appreciated. All contact of this nature helps the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches to get to know and understand each other more. I trust that as we become better acquainted, our love for each other will increase in proportion to our growing desire to prove ourselves faithful to our God.

In my mind, the greatest cause to rejoice as our relationship deepens has come to pass this very month. Over the last year Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto and the OPC have been working together to establish a mission to the Portuguese-speaking community of Toronto. This is because in the good providence of our Lord, a Brazilian Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Jorge Barros was brought into your midst. His zeal for a faithful Reformed and Presbyterian church for his family and fellow countrymen is now beginning to take shape. The event which took place earlier this month was the culmination of much effort on the part of the Barros family, Bethel Church, the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario, and on a smaller scale my own congregation, Covenant OPC of London.

Last year my Presbytery's Candidates and Credentials Committee examined Mr. Barros and received his credentials from the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. As a result, last September the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario received him as member pending a call to serve in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. On January 17, 2004 our Presbytery met for the first stated meeting ever to be held in Ontario. On this historic occasion one of the items to be considered was the call from Covenant to Rev. Jorge Barros as an Evangelist. Presbytery found that call in order and approved its terms. At this point let me make it abundantly clear that this was possible only because of an agreement between Bethel Church and the OPC to share the financial responsibility. Although we have made progress convincing others that OPC does not stand for "Only Perfect Church" it may now take a little longer to lose the notion that it stands for "Other People's Cash"!

On February 6, 2004, the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario held a special meeting at Credo Christian School in Woodbridge, near Toronto. That meeting was called solely to install Mr. Barros as an Evangelist to the Portuguese-speaking immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area. The Presbytery was thrilled to have so many visitors from the Canadian Reformed Churches. It was with joy that we received the ministry of the Word from our brother Rev. den Hollander.

That night was truly an ecumenical event. We had two ministers from the United Reformed Churches of North America with us. The Rev. Tony Zekveld and Rev. Eric Pennings, both serving as missionaries to the Sikh community in Toronto, graciously welcomed our brother to the field. We also heard a letter of greeting from Rev. Allan MacLeod, pastor of the Free Church of Scotland congregation in Toronto. Rev. Berends of the Brampton Canadian Reformed Church spoke of the mysterious providence of God, which brought a man from Brazil, a country where the Canadian Reformed Churches have been engaged in mission work, to Canada to preach the gospel.

My brothers, in my humble opinion this is a real cause for celebration. Yet at the same time it is only the beginning! Jesus Christ has much work for us to do in this world. And who may guess what may be in store for all of us? What role may our Lord give us and our congregations to fulfill in his

Kingdom? My desire as an OP minister is to work with my fellow labourers in the Canadian Reformed Churches as closely as possible.

To be sure there are real differences between us, and these cannot be trivialized. But let us never forget that the common ground of our confessional faith which, while distinct, is not unique since both our confessions are faithful to Scripture and rooted in the theology of the Reformation. This along with our acceptance of one another as the Church of Christ should enable us to overcome any lesser obstacles. In Christ that which brings us together is of far greater importance than anything which could possibly keep us apart.

At this point let me give you a brief synopsis of our progress since Rev. Williamson reported to General Synod Neerlandia. Our denominational statistician asks all OP congregations and mission works to submit their annual report by February 15. Therefore, because of the timing of this Synod I have only the statistics from 2002 to show that once again the Lord has been gracious to us and added to his Church.

- The membership of the OPC at the close of 2002 had increased to 26,873.
- The number of ministers was 425.
- The number of local churches at the end of 2002 rose to 237.
- The number of home mission works was 58.

Numbers alone are not the measure of the Church's well being. It is my observation that by God's grace the OPC has remained faithful to his Word and to the Westminster Standards, and therefore we have seen spiritual growth which cannot be so easily quantified. This is not to say that all is well and we have arrived. We are a pilgrim people and our home is not this world.

There are many challenges ahead for the OPC. We face concerns in our Church about the nature of preaching, the doctrine of creation, and revisions to our Directory for Public Worship, to name just a few. These are big issues for our General Assembly to face but we do not face them alone. The God who has established us as part of Christ's body on earth will continue to guide us by his Word and Spirit. And even from an earthly perspective we do not walk alone. I have been encouraged and edified by my contact with the men of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. I can only hope that many others in the OPC will share my experiences. I know that some already have, and I pray that number will increase. My hope is that in return the OPC and her members have been and will continue to be a blessing to you and your congregations as well.

Psalm 133, verse one is often quoted at times like this, not simply because it is an appropriate text but because it is so true: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" I believe that the best way for us to know this is by our own experience. May the Lord our God make this truth apparent to all who observe the relationship between our churches. Thank you most kindly for the opportunity to speak to you this evening.

8. Response to Rev. J. Ferguson by Rev. J. De Gelder

Rev. Ferguson,

It is my privilege on behalf of this General Synod to respond to your words and brotherly greetings as representative of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. And I do so with great joy. It is good to see you and to hear you in our midst as fraternal delegate of a sister church, which is so close by here in North America. We thank you for your presence among us, and for telling us about the developments in the OPC. We thank you for your kind and encouraging words.

Things have changed over the last few years. For more than twenty years delegates of the OPC have been present at our synods, and they have observed our internal struggles with the relationship with the OPC. But at our previous synod, held in Neerlandia in 2001, the Rev. G.I. Williamson came as an observer, but he left as a fraternal delegate of a sister church. It was a significant step after many years of studies, discussions and slow developments. We are thankful that your General Assembly in 2001 has also welcomed this new step in the relationship, and we appreciate the letter written by the Stated Clerk to confirm this.

My personal observation at that same General Assembly was also that many of the brothers welcomed the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches with joy and anticipation. I vividly remember the enthusiasm of the Rev. Tom Tyson when he said that now finally two of the most faithful churches in North America walk together.

Br. Ferguson, having a long and at times perhaps somewhat tumultuous courtship has a lot of drawbacks. There is no doubt about that. But perhaps it has also at least one advantage: you have the time to get to know each other quite well. And that is what happened. In spite of the differences and what we like to call the 'divergences' between our churches, we recognize with thankfulness - as we have done for a long time - the deep desire of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to remain faithful to the Word of God, the gospel of salvation by grace alone, the gospel of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Challenges for the Reformed faith and attacks on the Reformed life are everywhere in our western society. We appreciate the stubborn unwillingness of the OPC to give in to modern theological trends and to water down the true gospel of grace. And it is our sincere prayer that you may continue on this way, holding on to the Word of life. May this Word be your guide, also when you, for instance, will study and discuss the forthcoming report on the days of creation and the interpretation of Genesis 1. We are looking forward to the results.

In the meantime, there is work for us to do as well. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches both acknowledge that the Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship that has many implications. One of these implications is that we make ourselves accountable; that we accept responsibility for helping each other and supporting one another as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, to remain faithful in doctrine and life. It means that we share the good things the Lord has blessed us with; and that we show the willingness to confront each other, so that we may build each other up and grow together in the unity of the true faith, to the glory of the Head of the church - our wonderful and living Saviour, Jesus Christ. As iron sharpens iron, we should not shy away from such a brotherly confrontation and discussion.

I remember the words of the well-respected and most senior pastor in the OPC, the Rev. John P. Galbraith, when he said at the 2001 General Assembly that too often Ecclesiastical Fellowship becomes a formality, but that this desire for ongoing discussions on differences and on matters that divide churches - that this is what Ecclesiastical Fellowship is really all about.

We could not agree more, and it is the sincere hope and prayer of this Synod that these discussions will take off somewhat more vigorously than was done in the past few years. Thankfully, Synod Chatham will be able to give the committee some more pointed instructions as to the purpose and structure of future discussions.

At the same time, as I said, let us not forget that Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship with many implications; implications that will and must come out on different levels. And actually, the fact that you are present here today, Rev. Ferguson, shows another important implication. You are a pastor in London , Ontario. That highlights directly an important challenge that comes with being sister churches.

See, having sister churches far away, in a different country, where people speak a different language and have different traditions is not so difficult. But sister churches next door confronts us with the unavoidable question: 'What does it really mean, this Ecclesiastical Fellowship? Is it more than just a word? But how then do we put this relationship into practice when we meet each other in our cities and towns? Do we have the desire to do that and to make it work?' Ecclesiastical Fellowship provides a wonderful framework in which we can learn from each other. Now, it would be somewhat presumptuous to tell you what you could learn from us. But over the years I have had the opportunity to learn a lot about the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and I am convinced that we can learn from you in the OPC, particularly in the area of Home Mission, Evangelism and Church Planting.

We are delighted and praise God when we hear your report on the close cooperation of your Presbytery and Congregation with the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Toronto. What a wonderful opportunity to send an urban missionary to proclaim the Word in the Portuguese community in Toronto.

Another noteworthy event is that about two years ago, the Rev Tom Tyson, Regional Home Missionary in the OPC Presbytery of Philadelphia came to Flamborough, ON, to speak to a large audience about 'Being a missionary Church'. It is good to see in our churches a growing interest in these matters, and a desire to be involved. And I am sure that we can benefit from the expertise and zeal for this ministry in the OPC.

Br. Ferguson, whether or not we can speak here about 'the two most faithful churches in North America walking together' - I will not judge that. But we do believe that in this increasingly hostile world, in a society where the powers that attack the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are so strong - we do believe that in this world faithful churches need each other. And that they will need each other more

and more! We need to encourage and support each other, so that we may continue to proclaim with courage and boldness the gospel of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. We need to encourage and support each other, so that more and more the unity of faith may become visible, to the honour and glory of the Name of the triune God in our world.

Br. Ferguson, again - we thank you for being with us. Please pass on our brotherly greetings to the brothers in the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations in the OPC, and convey our appreciation for the words you have spoken. It is our prayer that the Lord may continue to bless the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and its various ministries, so that you may hold on to the truth. Thank you.

9. Address of Rev. L.W. Bilkes on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

Brothers delegated to General Synod Chatham,

Allow me first of all to say how great a treat is for me personally to be again in your midst as I was three years ago in Neerlandia. And I have indeed the privilege, particularly in British Columbia, to have had a very loving relationship with my Canadian Reformed colleagues, as well as many of the Canadian Reformed brothers and sisters whom I have come to know. I bring you greetings on behalf of our churches. And our greetings to you, as well as my presence here, surely is evidence of the fact that we may think more highly of the relationship that we have than you have given us credit for. Allow me to say that. We have already come a great distance. Are we on the road to federative unity? I noticed in your report to General Synod Chatham 2004 on pg. 33 that participation in the ICRC is a reminder of the catholicity of the church, as Lord gathers people from all tongues, tribes and nations.

I wonder whether in our discussions we could take our starting point in that catholicity. That may be helpful in exploring what you mean by federative unity and the way we look at this. I took your *Book of Praise* and I selected Articles 27, 28 & 29. I thought maybe those articles have something to say about this as well. Article 27: "We believe and profess one catholic or universal church, which is a holy congregation, an assembly of true Christian believers, who expect that their entire salvation is Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit." Some of you have made a reference to that by saying our unity is a unity in Christ. Spiritual unity was mentioned as well. At the end of Article 27 you have that "this holy Church is not confined or limited to one particular or certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. However it is joined and united with heart and will in one and the same, spirit by the power of faith." This is our confession; it is your confession. In this we are one.

If you go on to the next Article 28 about everyone's duty to join the church, then the emphasis is that everyone is obliged to join and unite, maintaining the unity of the church. That's us, brothers! We have committed our hearts and our lives to that. That's also your desire. So in that regard we are very close. However, what exactly is this unity? How is to be expressed? Allow me to ask: is there such a thing as Scriptural requirement for *federative* unity? I always held to that position, but today I am less positive in that regard.

That is not the final word, but allow me to say that this federative unity is something that arose in the course of church history. It was not a problem in the early churches because there they did seek one another and supported one another, particularly in their time of persecution. They needed one another.

But how is that meant *now*? I think our and your understanding of federative unity comes from the development in the 1500's, particularly, I think, in the French situation. In the French churches there was a powerful work of the Lord, a discovery of gospel of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of grace. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was preached, but the French government tried to stop it. And there was that blood-bath in 1572. So, in that situation of persecution , the local congregations that were being established sought one another and supported one another and, to the extent they could, they formed classis type meetings. But the context was the blood of martyrs and their need for each other.

I move ahead to 2004. We have come to era where we don't need one another anymore *in that sense*. We still need one another but that context of persecution is gone. While our Lord Jesus Christ did say, "you shall have many tribulations," we don't have lot of tribulation here. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "I send you disciples as sheep among wolves." We don't have that kind of situation, as least not in the way that it was understood at that time. So, I'm trying to say that what has

happened to federative unity is that it has become something with overtones of “do we need one another”?

If I may, I would like to go back to 1944. If your understanding of federative unity is a correct one then the liberated churches in the Netherlands should have joined the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands. Now you might raise the question, “Would the Christelijke Gereformeerde have accepted us?” I cannot answer that. But I think that if you had tried that back in 1944, then you have a good ground for saying what you are saying today.

And yet I think of the scriptures which speak of *one* church of the Lord Jesus Christ, not two. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. And if you read our confessions, we have the same line: one church, one faith, one baptism. And if you take our church order, then over the years we have come to accept, in part, the reality of pluriformity of churches. To be sure, that is not Free Reformed or Canadian Reformed thinking, but in reality we have to accept a little bit of it.

So, where do we go from here? I think we need to understand what we are doing with the limited contact that we have. Is a stepping stone toward federative unity? This is our goal, and I desire that. Do I still desire it? Is it a goal? I think we need to explore the whole notion of federative unity in the light of church history. But church history shouldn’t be our only a guideline. Should it not be a biblical understanding?

Also, about our distinctives. We seem to emphasize our distinctiveness, and you don’t do that. I would argue that this is legitimate because our emphasis on our distinctiveness is none other than that which comes from the confessions and from the church order. Are we entirely correct? We could stand to be corrected in every effort.

I heard you speak several times of fencing of Lord’s Table. Our fencing starts earlier than yours does. Our fencing starts with a view of congregation that seems to emphasize things differently. We emphasize that fencing already at the time of profession of faith. We emphasize that confession of faith is not merely an historical thing. And therefore, our distinctiveness is in the way in which we view the congregation and the way in which we emphasize a personal knowledge of Lord.

Federative unity is often pursued at a synodical level. But should that unity not be first of all at the local level? In my experience in the West I have come to appreciate the Canadian Reformed Churches especially when I met with those who were ill or in Bible study. Then we will see our need for one another on the basis of our confessions. Reformed church polity emphasizes the local church because in the local church God’s Word is preached, the sacraments are administered and Christian discipline is exercised. And then, as we recognize our need for another at the local level, this will also help the discussions at classical level, regional synod, and general synod.

We need to go back to the grass root level. And we need some more time. If we put down the demand, “Do this in less than 3 years,” there may be difficult angles down the road. Also, we should emphasize more contact in the Eastern part of Canada because if do not move the discussion toward the East, then we will have difficulty sitting down with our own brothers because they have stereotypes.

It is good to be with you and I commend you to Lord. I have picked up a love and loyalty to Lord that we share. And let our gauge always be the Word of God, the Reformed confessions and the church order. Thank you.

10. Response to Rev. L.W. Bilkes by br. P. Van Woudenberg

Mr. Chairman, delegates to General Synod Chatham, brothers and sisters, and particularly Rev. Bilkes and Rev. Schouls,

Since I served on the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, and since my term for this has come to an end, I was glad to be asked to give a response on behalf of synod to your address. We were delighted that the first official step towards federative unity was made by the Free Reformed Church of North America, in May 2000 in Hamilton, Ontario. Great appreciation was expressed for that at our combined meetings. These meetings were usually held in the Free Reformed Church in Abbotsford where we always received a warm welcome and enjoyed the delicious sandwiches and the soup prepared by sr. Jane Bilkes.

Not only will I sr. Bilkes’ soup, but I will also miss the warm brotherly contact we had with each other. I call it "warm brotherly contact" because none of us hesitated to accept each other as brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ. We readily recognized that we both want to stand on the same solid

foundation, God's holy Word and the confessions of His Church. Isn't it amazing that this is always what makes us feel at home and at ease with each other!

We have had quite a few meetings together. Many more are still needed to remove all the hurdles for moving on to the next step. As committee we felt that our contact should go further than only discussing all different kinds of topics, sending each other *Acts* of General Synods, and visiting each other's broader assemblies.

If we ask ourselves the question, "Were our meetings beneficial?" then we answer "Absolutely!" They contributed greatly to our understanding of each other. We exchanged a number of sermons with each other: every delegate from both federations opined that these sermons were suitable for the pulpits in both federations. (Perhaps that was because none of my sermons were passed on).

Brothers, we all know that if two brothers want to get along with each other they have to be honest with each other. For that reason, it has to be said that the delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches were shocked and also disappointed to learn that the delegates from the Free Reformed Churches reported to their synod in Hamilton that "...we continue to sense a lack of understanding of what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be. This is especially evidenced in the preaching."

Dear brothers from the FRCNA, honesty requires that we make this known to you. I hope that the dialogue will continue. We don't want to fast-track the unity process, but from the reporting to your last synod we feel obliged to ask the question, "Will the FRCNA, though prepared to talk about unity, insist on maintaining its own identity?" If we go as far as saying we are one in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we have to work towards federative unity. According to God's Word and the confessions we may not be satisfied with "just living beside each other."

As delegates from the Canadian Reformed Church federation we have no hesitation to call you our brothers. We both love the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as our only Saviour and want to direct our course of action in harmony with His will and Word. Brothers of the FRCNA, please pass on the sincere greetings from our churches. Let us continue to work together to reach the goal that is set before us in God's Word, namely that we become one. We need each other in this world where the deviation from God and His Word is getting worse all the time. Let's work together in standing firm "in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

11. Address of Rev. H. Zekveld on behalf of the United Reformed Church of North America (URCNA)

Esteemed Brothers in Christ, ministers and elders of the Canadian Reformed Churches,

Thank you for inviting us to witness and address your synod. We are happy to be among you as brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ and fellow members of His Body. I bring you greetings on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America. Although we have visited your synods in the past, for the first time we are able to be with you as delegates of churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship. For this we give thanks to our Saviour, who in spite of our many sins and weaknesses – yes, even the shortcomings of our imperfect ecumenical plan – has graciously allowed this spirit of unity to develop between us.

Following the vote of both synods and the ratification by the consistories of the United Reformed Churches in North America in January 2002, it was only two short years ago that the relationship we call *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* became a reality between the Canadian Reformed and the United Reformed. We thank you for welcoming us warmly as true and faithful churches of Jesus Christ.

We also embrace you as true and faithful churches of Christ and pray that our official reception of one another in this way will bear much fruit in Christ's work of building the Church. As we make progress in Ecclesiastical Fellowship with one another, our desire is not to build a monument to ourselves, but to witness to the oneness of Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. We trust that this is also your desire. Under Christ we recognize that our existence as federations is not about protecting or esteeming the United Reformed name (or, for that matter, the Canadian Reformed name). May both our names perish as long as the Only Name, the Name of Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible and confessed in The Three Forms of Unity, is advanced.

In Phase I (Corresponding Relations) our Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity did much work to produce statements of agreement for our churches to consider. Now, during Phase II, it is a joy to witness our unity in Christ being worked out in the congregations. There is a growing relationship between congregations as we learn to love one another as siblings in the family of God.

Brothers, it may be that our welcome to you is not as warm and wholehearted as yours. You know very well that the ratification vote among our consistories was far from unanimous. We might suggest some reasons for this – we are very young and still uneasy about our own identity, many if not most in our 80 congregations have never met someone who belongs to a Canadian Reformed Church, offences and misconceptions have created barriers, other issues vie for our attention – but the fact remains the same: there is some opposition within our churches and the pathway of fellowship will have to be traveled slowly.

Brothers, we thank you for your holding before us the goal of the unity of the Body of Christ. At times Christ refers to the Church as His Bride. In Ephesians 4:13 He presents a different image of the unity of the Church. Speaking not of individual Christians but of the whole Church, Christ has set before us the goal of *a perfect* or mature *man* (Ephesians 4:13), a well-conditioned, fully-coordinated, completely-equipped, single-minded, Christ-focused man. This perfect man is coordinated by the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. He has no ear for corrupting doctrine, but abounds with the truth of Christ in the love of Christ. He is fully adept at protecting himself (*no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine*) and projecting himself (*speaking the truth in love*). As limbs and joints of this perfect man, every believer and every congregation lovingly contributes its full share and causes the body to build itself up. In Christ, through faith, the Church is a self-building body as each part does its share.

May the Lord Jesus enable us faithfully to pursue this goal in our own generation. What will it take for us to move toward this goal? Paul goes on to say that it will require from each one of us *putting off the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*, and *putting on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness***.** We see in ourselves that this goal demands radical sanctification.

We ask for your patience and understanding in this matter. It is our hope that under God's blessing, ecumenism that is given time to develop organically, will build greater trust between our churches and develop a stronger, lasting bond. Even as we look ahead to the goal of ever-increasing unity, may the Lord Jesus give us grace to be grateful for and enjoy the fellowship we have already attained between the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches.

At the same time we remember with gratitude that it has been only *two* years, and in this short time many encouraging things have happened between our churches: information meetings in Canada and the United States; pulpit exchanges; meetings between consistories and councils; membership transfers; and progress in developing a common Church Order, in coming to an agreement in the area of theological education, and in compiling a new songbook. Much has happened, and we pray that the Lord will bless these activities and grant that each attainment, even if it is very small, will pave the way to new ones.

Given our youth and historical-theological backgrounds as United Reformed Churches, there is not the same uniformity of mind and practice among our churches as there is among you. We in the URCNA have commitments to differing principles and attachments to various institutions when it comes to theological education. Our liturgy and use of songbooks demonstrate some diversity as well. In the URCNA we have differing conceptions of God's covenant and creation, which produce some tension within our churches. While diversity on some of these things is acceptable, we may need to spend considerable time and energy in the future coming to grips with these differences that live among us. The net result may be that we are less prepared than you to come soon to an agreement on the practical matters that separate us.

Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties we are united in the same confession of Christ and called by Him to make every effort to demonstrate visibly that our congregations belong to the same holy assembly of believers. He calls us to work together to become a mature man.

By what means may we expect to advance toward this mature man? We confess that the unity of the Church does not lie in the power of man. It cannot be accomplished by intrigue. Nor will it be produced by committees, guidelines, or ecumenical will, useful as these can be in carrying out the Lord's mandate. We are powerless to create this Perfect Man of Christ. Yet, when He ascended on high, Christ gave precious gifts to the Church by which this impossible goal might be reached. He gave to us the divine power of His Word and Spirit, and because of these gifts this perfect man is not an ideal to be dreamed of, but a reality to pursue. *And He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man…*

Here Christ says that it is the faithful teaching ministry of the Church that will make us a perfect man. The faithful proclamation of the Scriptures is the only pathway to true unity between the United Reformed and Canadian/American Reformed Churches – the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word to our congregations from the pulpit, in the classrooms, and in the homes. The enemies of doctrinal complacency and worldly lusts are poised to invade our churches and corrupt our unity. The entertainment empire threatens our holiness. Prosperity tempts us to value riches and comforts above Christ. But as we faithfully explain and apply God's Word in the congregations, we may expect the Word of Christ, by the power of His Spirit, to humble us before the Lord, break down our sins, and build us up in sound doctrine and holy living. It is in these fruits of the gospel – humility, repentance, seeking the Lord, doctrinal growth, and personal holiness – that we will find ourselves being attracted to one another more and more. As Christ Himself is formed within us more and more through the ministry of the Word, so will our readiness to obey the ecumenical imperative.

Brothers, we are thankful for what we have already attained and hope by God's grace to continue steadfastly in the direction that has been set. It is our prayer that the Lord Jesus will richly bless the work of your Synod.

12. Response to Rev. H. Zekveld by Rev. W. den Hollander

Thank you so much brothers, fraternal delegates of the United Reformed Churches in North America, for your warm greetings and encouraging words. We sincerely appreciate your presence at our General Synod, taking the time and giving your attention to the affairs of our federation of churches. We share in your gratitude for the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. It's striking, however, that Synod Neerlandia 2001 did not use that term for our relationship. The reason for that, I surmise, is the fact that we are heading for federative union with you. However much we appreciate and cherish our various ecclesiastical relationships with other federations, our relationship with you is richer and our goal with you is greater!

For the past twelve years I have been a member of the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity, and I have witnessed the growth that you are speaking about, br. Zekveld. Thankfully I may add that we have grown with you; our federation had to mature to the level of ecclesiastical unity as well. This process of maturing is an inner growth in love and obedience to the Lord and each other; it, also, is a growing in understanding, patience, and humility. As we heard in our devotions last night, the more we see the awesome works of our Lord in our lives and in our churches, the more humble we become about our own accomplishments and our abilities in entertaining this ecclesiastical process. How true it is that the Lord must build the house, the church, or the labourers labour in vain!

Also at this Synod we may use some time for reflection on this process of growth. From Synod to Synod we receive a progress report. In the past twelve years we have seen you develop from the Alliance of Independent Reformed Churches to your present federation of United Reformed Churches in North America. Yes, we're on our way to grow toward full federative union, the Lord willing! In 2001 there was the anticipation and, allow me the honesty, also the anxiety regarding the reception of the Statements of Agreement and the subsequent recommendations to move on to Phase 2. What will the churches say? How will they react? Synod Neerlandia corrected the terminology that was used in our midst, reminding us of the fact that the basis for our progression to Phase 2 was not these Statements of Agreement, but God's Word and the Confessions! We knew it; yet, it was a good reminder! It's not our statements but God's command that moves us, motivates us. Our respective General Synods spoke and the churches endorsed the direction. Even if the majority in your midst was small, according to the principle expressed in article 31 of our Church Order "to hold [this decision] for settled and binding" this majority implies that *all* the churches of both federations entered into Phase 2! There may have been local differences, yet together we moved on, progressing in the process of growing together!

Brothers, it's in the opening of the pulpit, the participation in the Lord's Supper, and in the acceptance of attestations, that we manifest the marks of the true churches. It is through the preaching that the congregations can judge for themselves that the unity observed is a reality. It is in the preaching that the members recognize the voice of Christ, the one faith, and the unity in the sacraments, which we acknowledged in the respective decisions of our broader assemblies. Generally speaking, there has been much positive feedback! We are growing together, and together we are growing up into Christ in the unity of the one body! Progress like that cannot be measured easily, yet

from the eagerness to continue our engagement (no metaphor intended!) in Phase 2 we conclude that the longing for union increases as well!

Since 2001 our sub-committees have worked together. Both federations heard the reports, shared in the experiences of the members, and were encouraged by the testimonies of unity, harmony, and brotherly love. These testimonies were not just a matter of words but even more an experience in deeds! Of course, we may have had expectations about the pace of the progress and the outcome of the meetings. In the providence of the Lord we accept the pace, rejoice in the outcome, and trust in the blessings that He gives when we work together in humble submission to His will.

Concretely, we have heard the songbook committee sing from the same page as it established principles and set out guidelines for the compilation of a book of praise, containing Psalms and hymns. The Church Order Committee has succeeded so far in working together in brotherly harmony, which is essential for a committee that aims for order in the prospective united federation. Order in the church is required to ensure peace among the churches. The sub-committee has found this order in the principles contained in the one Book of Government, the Bible. Their labours show a unity of spirit and a harmony in resolve to work out these principles in accordance with our common history, heritage, and understanding of Dort! Also the committee dealing with the matter of theological education has gone out of its way to hear each other, to learn from each other, and to understand one another. Understandably, the experiences with Calvin Seminary, the existence of independent institutions of training, and the experience of years of diverse schools of training, have formed the thinking among the United Reformed Churches. Our churches, on the other hand, have enjoyed some 35 years of unified education, united training, and growing appreciation for a Theological College that progressed to a highly respectable and erudite institution. Again, what our committee has done, however, is not boasting in this reality, but sharing its scriptural underpinnings, its confessional roots, and its historical developments, which have been the basis for these blessings in our Theological College. To God belongs the glory! The members of our sub-committee then shared with your members these blessings of God, the gifts enjoyed, and the calling we see for the future. If union is our goal and unity our pursuit, it will be very important for all the churches of the United and Canadian Reformed Churches to find each other in these scriptural principles and this confessional basis for our future theological education! We are thankful that we have much to offer, and we humbly pray that you will be eager to share with us in these gifts from God!

Indeed, brothers, it has only been two years plus, yet what many blessings and gifts we may observe today in this progress report! Our Synod has received the reports of the committees in that understanding: the committees' work is in progress and we won't interfere. We appreciate the openness of the committees for feedback and evaluation. We know that our people are impressed. It is our prayer that the Spirit may work among you too, a growing confidence and an increased amazement for the great work our Saviour is working in the hearts and minds of His people and among the churches of our respective federations. It is a good and wise thing that it's taking time! Yet, at the same time we continue to set target dates such as 2007 for the final comprehensive report and perhaps 2010 for the consummation of the union!

The Lord willing, I add! I may illustrate how true that is, brothers, by the fact that I have had the privilege of working together with Dr. De Jong in harmony and unity over the past 12 years. Together we plodded along, we planned our meetings, and we proposed our strategies. Yet, the Head of the church has shown that Dr. DeJ ong's contributions are finished. He used him to lay the basis according to the scriptural principles of Eph. 2, 4, John 10, 17, etc. and to work this out in practical steps and concrete strategies. Dr. De Jong won't see the outcome of our meetings, discussions, and unified efforts, but our Lord Jesus Christ continues the work, pursues the process, and blesses the fruits of his labours in the midst of our respective federations. At this time too, I want to acknowledge the great wisdom, deep love, and faithful labour Dr. De Jong has brought into the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. His works will follow him! They also will come along with us as we proceed to the goal of church unity, here in principle and practice, and on the new earth in perfect reality! May the foretaste we have enjoyed during Phase 2 in our common celebration of the Lord's Supper, be an incentive for our continued pursuit and promotion of unity; that also in our unity and united worship in obedient submission to our Head Jesus Christ, we may enjoy the foretaste of that eternal unity!

Brothers we thank you heartily for taking the time to be with us today! We thank you for the good cooperation in our umbrella committee and in the sub-committees. We pray that God's blessing may rest on all our labours, and that the outcome may be pleasing to our God and for the edification of His churches! Thank you!

13. Closing Speech by the chairman, Rev. C. Van Spronsen

Dear Brothers,

We have finished the matters the churches have laid before us. The agenda is done and thereby this Synod Chatham 2004 is dissolved. It is no more. All that will be left of it will be a book like one of these, likely with a cover of a slightly different color to distinguish it from previous synods. The churches will weigh what we have done, and perhaps also label this Synod as to how our work here is evaluated. I won't try to evaluate what we have done but we have done it in service of the Lord, prayerfully asking Him for His guidance every day, in all deliberations and decisions. After all, wisdom, love and patience is not something that comes up from us, but comes from above as fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord be merciful and use what we have done to the honour and glory of His most holy name and may it serve the gathering of His Church and the coming of His Kingdom.

It is striking to see how much of our agenda is taken up by our relations with other churches of the Lord here on this continent as well as abroad, as compared to the first decades our churches found themselves here on this continent. This is a good and positive development, showing that it pleases the Lord to allow us to be a part in the gathering of His catholic Church from all the corners of the earth. We have dealt with churches on every continent! It may very well be that the Lord is bringing us together to be able to stand firm and support one another as the darkness in our nation and the world deepens more and more, a world which is becoming more and more hostile and anti-Christian. The devil knows his time is short. But we know that in Christ we are one and victorious. May the Lord continue to be with His churches here on earth and prepare them for the difficult times that may be upon us.

One of the highlights was certainly that we could unanimously appoint Dr. A. J. de Visser as professor in diaconiology and ecclesiology and that we could with thankfulness receive the news that he accepted this appointment. All thanks be to God! At the same time there was also sadness, because of the need for this appointment due to the illness of Dr. J. De Jong. May the Lord be with him, his wife and family.

When at the beginning you chose me as chairman, I accepted this with some trepidation, somewhat knowing my own limits and realizing that this was quite a responsibility. I expressed my trust in you to be my fellow-workers, and the expectation that we would work together as a team. Having come to the conclusion of nine and one-half days of meetings, I want to express my thankfulness to all of you for being such understanding and helpful teammates: all 15 of you, but in particular those at my right and left hand at this table. Thank you all for your support and cooperation, for the good harmony and atmosphere in which we could do our work, and have fellowship with each other between working sessions. It was good to be here, to work, laugh, learn and serve.

On behalf of all, I also wish to express our deep and sincere appreciation and thankfulness for the excellent care you as congregation of Chatham have provided to us. Much work had already taken place before we ever arrived here. The binders with all the materials that were sent to us were well organized. The set up and arrangements in your facilities here were excellent and what shall we say about all the excellent and varied meals we received? Wonderful! You did all you could to make us comfortable and kept us well-fed. Every day again there was the team of ladies in the kitchen, there were the men looking after the technical end of things in the computer room, those who assisted in all the office work involved. We think of our photographers, of all the host families who opened their homes to us. It is difficult to single anyone out, because there were so many of you and so much was done behind the scenes, but I think we may mention in particular sr. Teresa Bergsma, the organizing force behind much of it all. We also want to mention in particular the local pastor, Rev. H. Versteeg, who has done a great deal of work before and during the Synod, faithfully assisted by his wife. Thanks to both of you as well! All in all, we made many new friends here, and Chatham in Ontario has received a different meaning and place in our hearts, now that we have met many of you and experienced your love and care.

We wish all those who will be traveling a safe journey home. May the Lord bless and keep you as you take up your tasks in your local congregations again. Congratulations on your completed tasks and may your works follow you. May the Lord keep us humble, living out of His grace alone. Till we meet again, whenever and wherever it pleases the Lord, whether it be in this life or the life to come. God be with you! "The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report from
The Board of Governors of the Theological College

[insert from Premier Printing files.
NB only include main report, pages 77-83*]*

Report from
The Standing Committee
for the Publication of the *Book of Praise* (SCBP)

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB only include main report pp. 74-82 plus appendix 2b pp. 118-119. The rest of the appendices can be left out.]

Report from
The Committee on Bible Translation (CBT)

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB include entire report*]*

Report from
The Committee for Official Website

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB only include main report pp. 120-131*]*

General Fund Report

Carman East Canadian Reformed Church
P.O. Box 164, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0

Dec. 11, 2003

General Synod 2004, Chatham, Ontario

Re: Financial Report for General Fund from Feb. 14, 2001 to Dec. 11, 2003

Esteemed brothers,
The church of Carman East was appointed by Synod Neerlandia (2001), Article 64.4.3, to administer the General Fund and to collect funds as required from the churches, Article 64.4.4. The council of Carman East had previously appointed br. G. Vandersluis as treasurer for this fund and he continues in this capacity. Two office bearers were appointed as auditors for these books. The books were audited on Dec. 11, 2003 and found to be in good order. To administer these books the churches were assessed the following amounts since the last General Synod: $4 per confessing member in 2002, $3 per confessing member in 2003 and $3 per confessing member for the year 2004.

Income:	
Balance February 14, 2001	$ 3,862.91
Assessment from the churches	44,089.91
Refund (Committee OPC)	697.29
TOTAL	$ 48,650.11

Disbursements:	
Committees	
Contact with OPC	$ 1,000.00
Relations with churches abroad	9,344.37
Contact with churches in U.S.	7,514.52
Ecclesiastical Unity	21,868.73
Book of Praise	1,885.34
Web site	2,947.09
Premier Printing (print reports for synod 2004)	4,545.87
Premier Printing (print reports for synod 2004)	3,289.18
Bank charges	4.52
TOTAL	$ 52,399.62
Balance Dec.11, 2003	($ 3,749.51)

With brotherly greetings,
On behalf of council,

K. Vanderveen (chairman) and G. van Dijk (corresponding clerk)

Report on the Finances of Synod Neerlandia

See Article 63 of these Acts *for the details of the financial report. Below is the audit letter.*

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Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead

July 14, 2003

General Synod 2004 of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Esteemed Brothers,
As per our appointment by Synod Neerlandia 2001, we audited the finances of Synod 2001. Please find attached a copy of the record of deposits and payouts as well as a financial statement of the Synod. In our audit we found all of the funds accounted for and proper accounting for funds was in place. Bank statements provided reconciled to funds received and expenses paid out. All cheques were included in the package that we received from Synod Neerlandia.

The only matter that might be of concern is the lack of receipts received from delegates requesting reimbursement. We found that a good percentage of expenses were paid without receipts being presented. We are not sure if GST paid out is to be claimed back or if the records of Synods are subject to Revenue Canada audits; in either case we are certain that the records would be found lacking. We recommend that a standardized request for reimbursement form be created, which delegates should fill out when requesting reimbursement for expenses paid. Also, receipts should be required to be included with these requests.

In His service,
Br. Melvin Hoeksema, Vice- Chairman
Br. John Dykstra, Clerk

Report from the Address Church

From the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church

To the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches
To be convened on February 10, 2004, in Chatham Ontario

Esteemed brothers:
As address church for the Canadian Reformed Churches, we have received and responded to the following correspondence.

The Hekman Library of Calvin College in Grand Rapids Michigan requested copies of the *Acts* of General Synods from 1950 on. Synod Neerlandia 2001 had approved this request if the copies were available. We were able to supply copies from 1980 to the present. For the rest of the copies we advised them to put an advertisement in *Clarion*.

The Christian Information Society located in Langley, British Columbia, requested our website address, which we forwarded to them by letter.

The Clerk of the United Reformed Churches in North America informed us of the ratification of the decision of Synod Escondido 2001 to enter into Phase II of the ecclesiastical relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. We sent letters to all of the Canadian Reformed Churches informing them of the results.

The J. William Horsey Library of Tyndale College and Seminary, in Toronto, Ontario, requested copies of our Yearbooks from 1998 to the present. They also requested that they be put on the regular mailing list. We asked Premier Printing Ltd. to comply with this request.

Reformed Online from the Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek in Emden, Germany, sent us a questionnaire to update their data base on world wide reformed churches. We filled in the questionnaire and returned it.

David Salthangvunga, Church Relation Officer of the Reformed Evangelical Church in Myanmar, sent an e-mail seeking a recommendation for joining the ICRC. We were unable to comply because we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them. We advised him to contact our Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad. We also forwarded his letter to Rev. Van Spronsen who is the corresponding secretary of the ICRC.

With brotherly greetings,
On behalf of the council,
K.J. Spithoof, clerk

Report from
The Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU)

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB only include main report pp. 1-8 and appendices 5&6 pp. 17-22; *other appendices can be left out]*

Church Order Subcommittee of CPEU

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB only include main report pp. 22-27 plus Appendix A pp. 28-30; *Appendix B can be left out]*

Addendum to the Report of the Church Order Subcommittee

In its earlier report to you, in section B "*the Committee and its activities*", it was stated that a fourth combined meeting with the URCNA committee had been scheduled D.V for November 4-6, 2003. The Committee can now confirm that this meeting took place on those dates at the United Reformed Church at Dutton, MI, and that under the Lord's blessing, further progress could be made in the work of proposing a common church order, maintaining the principles, structure and essential provisions of the Church Order of Dort. A copy of the press release of this meeting has been attached hereto as Appendix A.

At this point the combined committee has nearly completed its initial review of the articles dealing with *The Offices* and *The Assemblies*. A copy of the draft articles completed thus far has been attached hereto as Appendix B. Again we request that Synod receive this report and its appendices as a progress report, and that the details of our proposed common church order not be opened for discussion or debate at this time, but that all concerns from the churches be sent in writing to the Committee for its consideration.

The matter of the number and choosing of delegates to general synod was once more discussed. It is very apparent that different practices exist in the two church federations. In the Canadian Reformed Churches the two Regional Synods delegate four ministers and four elders each , for a total of sixteen men. In the United Reformed Churches each consistory delegates two of its members and consequently the total will currently exceed 150 men. Since broader assemblies ought to be deliberative in nature, the general consensus of the Combined Committee is that delegation from each consistory will result in numbers that would make this deliberative functioning impractical, if not impossible. However, it was also noted that in the Canadian Reformed Churches in the recent past, overtures have been made to broader assemblies to increase the number of men delegated to general synods.

It became clear that arriving at an appropriate formulation of an article dealing with delegation to a general synod depends in great measure on understanding the nature and functioning of a general synod. Since this functioning process is normally identified in a set of regulations for general synod, it was decided to approach the 2004 synods of the respective churches for a mandate for the Combined Committee to also formulate a draft proposal of such synod regulations. This document, although not part of the church order, will guide the Combined Committee in drafting an article with an appropriate formula for delegation to general synod, and it will provide the churches with the underlying reasoning and basis for that proposed formulation.

Conclusion and recommendation:

The Committee recommends that Synod Chatham 2004 further mandate the Committee to formulate a draft proposal of regulations for general synod. In order to perform the task given to us by Synod Neerlandia 2001 the Committee incurred a total of $5,745.53 in expenses.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Nederveen
G.J. Nordeman
A. Witten
J. Van Woudenberg

Appendix B of the Addendum Report of the Church Order Subcommittee

A record of the work thus far accomplished on the new Church Order – as per November, 2003 in addition to the sections: *Introduction*, *Historical Background* and *Foundational Principles* as recorded in the Committee's earlier report:

Broad Divisions

Since we desire to honour the apostolic command that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in good order (I Corinthians 14:40), we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:

Offices (Articles 1-)

Assemblies (Articles -)

Worship, Sacraments and Ceremonies (Articles -)

Discipline (Articles -)

Article 1 JCO: Purpose of the Church Order

For the purpose of maintaining good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary that there be: Offices; Assemblies; Supervision of Doctrine, Worship, Sacraments and Ceremonies; and Christian Discipline.

I. ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICES

Article 2 JCO: The Three Offices

Christ has instituted three distinct offices in the church: the minister of the Word, the elder and the deacon. No one shall exercise an office without having been lawfully called to it.

The Minister of the Word

Article re: The Duties of the Minister

The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, watching over his fellow office bearers, and finally, together with the elders shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.

Article re: The Calling of an Ordained Minister Within the Federation

A minister already ordained within the federation, who is called to another congregation shall be called in the lawful manner by the council. The classis shall ensure the good order of the calling process, including the issuance of written testimonies of his good standing and of his release from the church and classis he last served.

Upon receipt of these documents, the church shall install him with the use of the appropriate liturgical form and he shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.

The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

Article re: An Ordained Minister Without a Congregation Entering the Federation

A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation, shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after an adequate period of consistorial supervision and only after sustaining an examination conducted to the satisfaction of classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation, whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.

Article re: Bound to a Particular Church

No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of the congregation or as one charged with some other ministerial task. All ministers shall remain subject to the Church Order.

Article re: Bound for Life

A minister of the Word once lawfully called is bound to the service of the churches for life and shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation. He may leave this vocation only for weighty reasons, upon the approval of his council and with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod.

Article re: The Support and Emeritation of Ministers

Each church shall provide adequately for the minister of the Word and his family while he is serving that church, and shall contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his surviving dependents.

A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness or otherwise, shall retain the honour and title of a minister, and shall retain his official bond with the church which he served last, which shall provide honourably for his support.

The emeritation of a minister shall take place with the approval of the council, and with the concurring advice of classis and of the deputies of regional synod.

Article re: The Calling of a Candidate

The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of:

First, the election by the council of one who has been declared a candidate according to the regulations prescribed herein, after having prayed and having received the advice of the congregation and of the counselor appointed by classis.

Second, the examination necessary for ordination, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the classis to which the calling church belongs, in accordance with the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix "X".

Finally, the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with proper instructions, admonitions, prayers and subscription to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, followed by the laying on of hands by the ministers who are present and by the elders of the congregation, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.

Article re: Preparation for the Ministry

Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, which shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church shall see to it that his financial needs are met.

Anyone aspiring to the ministry shall seek licensure to exhort in the churches. Such licensure shall be granted only after the student has completed at least one year of theological education, and has sustained a licensure examination conducted by his classis as required by Appendix "X". Classis shall give license only to one who is preparing for the ministry, and only for the duration of his theological training. All the work of the licentiate shall be conducted under consistorial supervision.

At the conclusion of his training, a student shall ask his consistory to request classis to conduct a candidacy examination, as required in Appendix "X". Upon sustaining this examination, the classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall declare him eligible for call among the churches of the federation.

Article re: Exceptional Release of a Minister

When for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, a minister may be released from his duties in the congregation only under the following conditions:

A. This release shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;

This release shall take place only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;

This release shall occur only with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, which approval shall include provisions for the proper support of the minister and his family for up to two years.

The council from whose service he has been released shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, where after he shall be honourably discharged from office.

The Offices of Elder and Deacon

Article re: Nomination and Eligibility for Office

The council shall provide adequate preparation of elders and deacons by means of instruction and training regarding the duties of each office. The procedure for the lawful calling of elders and deacons shall consist of the following:

First, the council shall nominate only male communicant members who meet the biblical requirements for office, and who indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription. Prior to nominating, the council may invite the congregation to direct attention to suitable men. The number of nominees shall be at least equal to, or at most twice the number of vacancies.

Second, after public prayer, elders and deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the regulations adopted for that purpose to a term specified by the consistory.

Third, the council shall appoint the elders and deacons, and shall announce their names to the congregation two weeks prior to entering office, in order that the congregation may have opportunity to bring lawful objections to the attention of the consistory. They shall be publicly ordained or installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form, and shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.

Article re: Term and Installation of Elders and Deacons

Elders and deacons, having been elected in accordance with local regulations to a term specified by the consistory, and having been appointed by the council, shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, and shall be ordained or installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form before entering upon their work.

Article re: The Duties of Elders

The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of shepherding and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, persist in praying for the congregation, assist in catechizing the youth in the congregation, and promote confessionally Reformed schooling at all levels. Moreover, they shall visit the members of the congregation according to need, engage in family visiting, preserve and promote concord and unity among the members and between the congregation and its office bearers, exercise discipline in the congregation, promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order.

II. ASSEMBLIES

Article re: Ecclesiastical Assemblies

Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod and the general synod. The terms classis and *synod* designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings.

Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body as required in Appendix “X”, thereby receiving authorization to deliberate and decide upon all the matters properly placed before them.

In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All such matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod.

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer. In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman’s duty to state and explain clearly the business to be transacted, to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed, and to ensure that every member observes due order and decorum. In all broader assemblies these functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.

In every assembly a clerk shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings. Regulations for broader assemblies shall delineate the function of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the convening churches.

At the close of broader assemblies, admonition shall be given to those who demonstrated unworthy behaviour, either during the meeting or regarding a decision of a narrower assembly.

Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.

Article re: The Classis

A classis shall consist of neighbouring churches whose consistories shall delegate two members, ordinarily a minister and an elder, with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis. Ordinarily a classis shall consist of between eight and twelve churches.

A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

The churches shall take turns providing a chairman from their delegation, and convening classis. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession.

The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistory, council and diaconal meetings are regularly held, the Word of God is purely preached, the sacraments are faithfully administered, church discipline is diligently exercised, the poor are adequately cared for and confessionally Reformed schooling is wholeheartedly promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honoured.

Each classis shall appoint a convening church and determine the time and place of the next classis.

The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod. If the regional synod consists of three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. If the regional synod consists of four or more classes, each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders.

The second last classis before general synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

Article re: Church Visitors

Every two years classis shall appoint a number of its most experienced and competent men to visit all the churches of the classis once during that period. At each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister.

These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers perform their duties in harmony with the Word of God, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the Church Order, and properly promote, by word and deed, the edification of the whole congregation. Moreover, they shall fraternally encourage the office-bearers to fulfil their offices faithfully, that by their advice and assistance the visitors may help direct all things unto the peace, edification and profit of the churches.

The church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the next classis.

Article re: Archives

The consistories and the broader assemblies shall ensure the proper care of their archives.

Article re: Counselors

The consistory of a vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counselor the minister it requests. His task is to assist the consistory in maintaining good order, particularly in the matter of calling a minister. Along with the council members, he also shall sign the letter of call.

Article re: The Regional Synod

A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall ordinarily meet once per year. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis.

The regional synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes and with lawful appeals of decisions of a classis.

The chairman, vice chairman and clerk shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

In addition to hearing and acting on the reports of its deputies, it shall determine the time and place for the next regional synod, and designate a convening church.

Article re: Deputies of Regional Synod

Each regional synod shall appoint two deputies, along with an alternate, who shall assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order. Upon the request of the classes, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

The regional deputies shall keep a proper record of their actions. They shall submit a written report of their actions to the regional synod and, if so required, they shall further explain those actions. The deputies shall serve until they are discharged from their duties by their regional synod.

Article re: The General Synod

A general synod shall consist of delegates chosen by the classes. A general synod shall meet at least once every three years at a time and place set by the previous synod, which shall also designate a convening church. If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.

The chairman, vice chairman and clerk(s) shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

In addition to acting on reports that were mandated by the previous synod, a general synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes and the regional synods.

Theological Education SubCommittee of CPEU

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB only include main report pp. 43-46 plus Appendices 3&4 pp. 57-69; *Appendices 1&2 can be left out]*

Addendum to the Report Of The Theological Education Subcommittee

Esteemed Brothers,
In our Report we stated that there had not been a joint meeting of our respective committees and we added, "should that happen we will send you a supplementary report." Thankfully, we may inform you that on Tuesday, January 13, 2004, such a meeting was held at the Theological College in Hamilton, Ontario. (Please find attached for your information a copy of the Notes of this joint meeting.)

Present at this meeting were: for the URCNA – the Revs. Bradd Nymeyer, Cal Tuininga and the Rev. Prof. Mark Vander Hart; for the CanRC – the Profs. Nicolaas Gootjes and Cornelis Van Dam, the Rev. James Visscher and Mr. Karl J. Veldkamp.

After the opening exercises and the introductions, the secretaries gave an update of the activities of their respective committees. This was followed by a lengthy discussion on the working documents, "Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?" and "Theological Education in the United Reformed Churches."

Towards the end of the lengthy meeting the following Statements of Agreement were formulated:

It is the task of the churches to train ministers;
Ministers of the churches must receive sound reformed theological training;
As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers;
Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education;
It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training, and
The churches, i.e., the URCNA and CanRC, should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.

Seeing that neither committee was fully represented, it was decided that these Statements would circulate among all of the members of the respective committees for their input and approval. On January 23, 2004, we were informed that the URCNA Committee had voted to approve the six statements. As for the CanRC Committee, no dissent was received from the one member not present at the meeting. The result is that both committees have accepted the six Statements of Agreement.

It was decided to meet again on June 15, 2004, in Calgary, Alberta. Such a time and place was deemed to be the best opportunity to meet with the entire URCNA Committee. At that occasion further discussion will take place on the basis of the agreed upon Statements.

Brothers, we are thankful for the work that could be done and the progress that could be made thus far. We do not underestimate the magnitude of the task that faces us; however, in humble dependence on the Lord our God, we shall continue to work towards our goal, namely an agreement on theological education in keeping with the mandate that you have given us. May our gracious God bless your assembly.

For the Committee, the Rev. Dr. James Visscher, Secretary

Common Songbook Sub-Committee of the CPEU

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NB only include main report pp. 69-75]

Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity

United Reformed Churches in North America

Editorial Note: This appendix was intended for inclusion in the Acts of Synod Neerlandia 2001. *Since it is an important document in regards to the relationship of our churches with the URCNA, it is now included in these* Acts.

Phase One – Corresponding Relations

The first phase of ecumenicity is one of exploration, with the intent that by correspondence and dialogue, mutual understanding and appreciation may develop in the following areas of the two churches' lives:

- view and place of the Holy Scriptures
- creeds and confessions
- formula of subscription to the confessions
- significant factors in the two federations' history, theology and ecclesiology
- church order and polity
- liturgy and liturgical forms
- preaching, sacraments and discipline
- theological education for ministers

Ecumenical observers are to be invited to all broader assemblies with a regular exchange of the minutes of these assemblies and of other publications that may facilitate ecumenical relations.

Phase Two – Ecclesiastical Fellowship

The second phase of ecumenicity is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus, and in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

- the churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defense, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity and discipline
- the churches shall consult each other when entering into ecumenical relations with other federations
- the churches shall accept each other's certificates of membership, admitting such members to the Lord's table
- the churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rules of the respective churches
- the churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government or liturgy are adopted
- the churches shall invite and receive each other's ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies as much as regulations permit

Entering this phrase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in the Church Order, Art. 36

Phase Three – Church Union

The third phase of ecumenicity is one of integration with the intent that the two federations, *being united in true faith*, and where contiguous geography permits, shall proceed to complete church unity, that is, ecclesiastical union. This final phase shall only be embarked upon when the broadest assemblies of both federations give their endorsement and approval to a plan of union which shall outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the following:

- the broader assemblies
- the liturgies and liturgical forms
- the translations of the Bible and the confessions
- the songbooks for worship
- the church polity and order
- the missions abroad

Report from
The Committee on Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA)

[insert from Premier Printing files
NB include the entire main report]

Report from
The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA)

[insert from Premier Printing files
***include only the main report pp 4-39**; all the appendices can be left out]*

Addendum to the Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad Re: The Netherlands and CRCA Budget

Esteemed Brothers:

Since the Report on our activities, as mandated by Synod Neerlandia 2001 was sent to the printer in June 2003, a number of items have come to our attention that warrants a brief supplement. This supplement contains both some further information as well as a request.

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN) Report pages 21-31.

Firstly, we wish to update you on the developments in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands where a number of people "liberated" themselves. Rather than rely on the press, we inquired from the Dutch deputies about the situation. They responded as follows:

> *Earlier this year an organized group of members within the GKN(v) issued a 'Call to Reformation' via an open letter in the daily, Nederlands Dagblad. The concerned brothers and sisters objected to several decisions taken by the GKN(v) assembled in general synod at Zuidhorn 2002. In the months thereafter the official acts of GS Zuidhorn were available via internet and could be ratified by the local churches. In the course of this process some of those who objected to the decisions and saw the church councils of the churches where they are members ratify the synod decisions chose to liberate from the GKN(v). For that purpose an 'Act of Liberation' has been drawn up. To date such seceding has taken place in a handful of local churches concentrated especially around Rotterdam and Zwolle. At this stage the number of people thus leaving the GKN(v) is roughly one hundred. To our knowledge there are no ministers involved with the exception of the emeritus Rev. P. van Gurp. In general, church leaders argue that the 'liberation' is premature if indeed it should ever be necessary, for the decisions of GS Zuidhorn 2002 do not mark the end of the agreed upon path of appeal.*

Please be assured that we will continue to monitor the situation. At this time, we do not see a need to make additional recommendations with respect to our Report (p. 31).

Secondly, the Dutch deputies took issue with the the Report on the visit made to Synod Zuidhorn by Rev. J. Huijgen and Rev. C.J. Vandervelde (see Report 44-48), and submitted a rebuttal for publication in *Clarion* (see *Clarion*, July 18, 2003, p. 357-359). When made aware of this situation, we requested *Clarion* to publish the following statement:

> *The CRCA was informed only after the article had been submitted to Clarion and accepted for publication. The CRCA regrets that the Dutch deputies took this course of action. First, it does not reckon with the fact that the report on the visit was not submitted under personal title but on behalf of the CRCA. Second, committees appointed by their respective Church federations conduct their discussion not in the public press but by directly addressing each other.*

There has been some communication with the Dutch deputies about their approach. We see no need for interaction with the article of the Dutch deputies. We consider the matter finished. As for our Report on the Dutch Churches, we maintain the evaluation and recommendations.

Inquiries Regarding Ecclesiastical Fellowship

The CRCA has received two new inquiries from churches in the southern hemisphere about establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The first comes from the Reformed Churches in Indonesia {Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia) in the Province of Nusa Tengarra Timur (GGRI-NTT). The GGRI-NTT, established through the missionary activities of our Dutch sister churches, is to be distinguished from the Calvinist Reformed Churches (Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis) in East Nusa Tengarra (GGRC- NTT), a younger federation, which only recently adopted the Three Forms of Unity and the Reformed Church Order. The GGRI-NTT at present has Ecclesiastical Fellowship with both the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKN).

The second request comes from the Reformed Churches in New Zealand. Synod Zuidhorn 2002 decided to accept the invitation of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to enter into Ecclesiastical

Fellowship. While the Free Reformed Churches of Australia at present do not have formal relations with the RCNZ, they did not object to the Dutch churches entering into such a relationship.

With the information available to us at this time, the Committee feels it is premature to recommend entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod needs to be provided with more comprehensive information. This information should also be available to the churches.

Request

If we are to be able to fulfill our task as Committee and make informed and proper recommendations, it would be best not to rely merely on correspondence, but to evaluate the situation through personal contact. A formal visit should be made by two Committee members. The itinerary would incorporate meeting representatives of the GGRC-NTT, which has sought contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches for some time (see CRCA report to Synod Chatham, p. 35 (7.4.1) and p. 37 (7.5.1), as well as visiting New Zealand, to interact with members of the RCNZ. Such a visit, however, is not possible within the funds as recommended in our Report (see p. 38). It should be noted that $9000.00 of that budget has to do with the ICRC, and only $5500.00 has been allotted for all other expenses.

The Committee therefore requests Synod to increase the budget of the CRCA by $6000.00, to allow two members of the Committee to visit Indonesia and New Zealand, enabling the Committee to make appropriate recommendations to the next General Synod.

On behalf of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, Rev. Eric Kampen (convener)

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