

ACTS OF THE 2012 SYNOD
Second Session

of the

FREE REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

ARMADALE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
22-24 April 2013

Acts of Synod Armadale 2012 - Second Session
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EVENING SESSION
Monday 22 April 2013

Article 131 - Re-opening of Synod.

The synod is reconvened in the Armadale church building. The Chairman of Synod, Rev A van Delden invites all present to sing Psalm 122:1, 2 & 3 and reads Colossians 3:1-17. He then delivers an opening address (see Appendix 4) after which he leads in prayer.

The Chairman prays to God for His blessing over the synod. He declares the synod re-convened.

A welcome is extended to all present including Br K Wezeman and Br JH de Jong as representatives of the BBK of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The rules of Synod with the privileges for the seating of delegates from sister churches is read.

Letter of greeting received from Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches is read.

FRC Armadale is thanked for setting up Synod again.

Article 132 - Letter to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN)
(Refer Articles 116, 136, 140)

I. Material:

Draft letter of admonition to the RCN as prepared by synodical advisory committee.

II. Introduction to the letter:

1. Proposal to delete the words: “We find it sad that these concerns do not seem to be recognized by your churches. It is becoming evident to us that this direction is leading you into conflict with God’s

Word as it is confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and maintained in faithful Reformed churches. This direction is causing strain and tension in our relationship with you.”

DEFEATED

2. Proposal to accept introduction.

ADOPTED

III. Statement of Concern 1:

1. To leave out item 1c Ground: the point is unsubstantiated.

DEFEATED

2. To leave out item 1d and 1e Ground: items appear to challenge the freedom of exegesis.

DEFEATED

Article 133 - Closing

Rev S 't Hart invites all to sing Psalm 19:1 and then leads in prayer.

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Article 134 - Reopening

Br G Spyker invites all to sing Psalm 78:1 & 3 and then reads from Deut 6:1-9. He leads in prayer.

Article 135 - Adoption of the Acts

Articles 125 - 130 of the Acts are adopted.

**Article 136 - Letter to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN)
(Refer Articles 116, 132, 140)**

I. Material:

Draft letter of admonition to the RCN as prepared by synodical advisory committee.

II. Statement of Concern 1:

1. Append to the Statement of Concern 1 the first sentence of point 3 and include BC Art 7 as footnote and then delete point 3.

ADOPTED

2. Proposal to adopt Statement of Concern 1 (without 1c for which an amendment is to be presented after lunch).

ADOPTED

III. Statement of Concern 2:

1. Append to the Statement of Concern 2 the first sentence of point 3 and include BC Art 7 as footnote and then delete point 3.

ADOPTED

2. Proposal to delete Statement of Concern 2, and include with Statement of Concern 3.

Ground:

Statement of Concern 2 and 3 are focused on the same aspect.

DEFEATED

3. Proposal that we combine statements of Concern 2 & 3.

Ground:

They both deal with the same issue, the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. The issue of marriage and divorce is simply a concrete example of the concern expressed in Statement of Concern 2.

DEFEATED

4. Proposal to accept Statement of Concern 2.

ADOPTED

IV. Statement of Concern 3:

1. To change the phrase ‘a subjective approach’ into ‘an unscriptural approach’

Grounds:

1. every approach can be called ‘a subjective approach’ and is not necessarily wrong
2. our objection is that the RCN come with an unscriptural approach and therefore with unscriptural applications.

DEFEATED

2. Change Elaboration 3 from ‘leaves room for a subjective approach’ to ‘encourages an unscriptural approach’, and change ‘tends towards a subjective hermeneutic’ to ‘leads towards an unscriptural hermeneutic.’

Grounds:

The expressions ‘leaves room for’ and ‘tends towards’ are not specific enough; our objection against the decisions of the synod of the RCN resulted in an unscriptural approach re the application of marriage and divorce.

DEFEATED

3. Amend Elaboration 4 and include Scripture references as follows:

While the Holy Spirit does give the church guidance in applying the norms of Scripture in ethics (eg. Heb 3: 7; Eph 6: 17; 1Thes 1: 5-6), He always does this in accordance with what has been revealed in Scripture (eg. Heb 4: 12; Heb 12: 25; 1Pet 1: 23-25; Acts 7: 51; 16: 14.15; 2Cor 3:8). The starting point of ethics must always be the Word of God, and the church must not come to subjective conclusions that are beyond or contrary to what is revealed in Scripture. It is only by listening carefully to the objective revealed Word of God that the Holy Spirit guides us to draw the right conclusions about God's will (eg. 1Cor 2: 12; Eph 1: 17.18).

Grounds:

1. The existing formulation leaves room for the guidance of the Holy Spirit apart from the Word of God.
2. In the existing formulation the emphasis is on the Word of God as 'starting point' but it is necessary to formulate more clearly that also the conclusion has to be in accordance with Scripture.

ADOPTED

Synod adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Tuesday 23 April 2013

Article 136 - Continued

After singing Ps 78:2 synod continues its work.

V. Statement of Concern 1:

1. To replace elaboration 1c and add foot note.

Dr J Douma has written in favour of the framework hypothesis for the creation week, a view which essentially denies the historical account of creation in Genesis 1 and which leaves room for the theory of evolution.

Reference Foot Note:

The conclusion given here is borrowed and quoted from the Canadian Subcommittee Report (Section 1C. Electronic edition Page 37: FRCA Deputies Report Appendix 6 Interim report of the CanRC subcommittee regarding the RCN Section 1, p 78 - 79.

In his book Genesis Dr J Douma (Kok 2004) writes: “De kader waarin Genesis 1 over God als Schepper bericht – de scheppingsweek – is schematisch. De boodschap die binnen dat kader gebracht wordt, is voor alle tijden en alle mensen, wetenschapper of niet, van fundamenteel belang. Het zal altijd moeilijk blijven Genesis 1 op een manier uit te leggen die alle gelovigen kan overtuigen. De kaderopvatting van Genesis 1, die ik hier volg, is zeker ook voor kritiek vatbaar. Maar zij is in mijn ogen de meest bevredigende opvatting en heeft oude papieren. ... Ik noemde het scheppingswerk van God planmatig. Dat sluit evolutie niet uit. Maar het is dan evolutie op de bodem van Gods creatie, in Gods scheppend werk zelf. Ook zij die bepaalde evolutietheorien niet aanvaarden, weten van de overeenkomsten in anatomie, fysiologie en psychologie tussen mens en dier.”

(Translated) The framework in which Genesis 1 reveals about God as Creator – the creation-week

– is schematic. The message which is brought within that framework, is for all times and all men, scientists or not, of fundamental importance. It will always remain difficult to explain Genesis 1 in a way that convinces all believers. The framework theory of Genesis 1, which I follow here, is certainly also open for criticism. But, in my opinion, it is the most satisfying understanding and has been around for a long time. ... (p. 42). I refer to God's creation work as a framework. That does not exclude evolution. But then it is evolution on the foundation of God's creation as part of God's creating work itself. Also those who do not accept particular evolution theories as such, know of various parallels such as in anatomy, physiology and psychology between man and animal (p. 47).

DEFEATED

2. Proposal:

To delete elaboration 1c of the elaboration of Statement of Concern 1 and to delete the words "of Dr. J. Douma" from section 2B.

Grounds:

1. Since elaboration 1c was given without substantiation by the committee and the statement of concern does not stand or fall on this point, it would be wise to leave this point out.
2. If we remove point 1c, we also need to remove subsequent reference to it.

ADOPTED

VI. Statement of Concern 3

1. Proposal to add to the Statement of Concern 3:

It remains our concern that such an approach has not been explicitly excluded by your synods.

Ground:

This clearly fits in with the concerns expressed by Synod West Kelmscott and Synod Legana.

ADOPTED

2. Proposal to adopt Statement 3.

ADOPTED

VII. Statement of Concern 4

1. Proposal to delete the statement of concern 4 from the Advisory Committee's Draft namely that "Decisions of the RCN about the Lord's Day do not sufficiently affirm that Sunday is a day of rest commanded by God".

Ground:

Synod 2006 decided that our concerns were largely allayed.

ADOPTED

VIII. Statement of Concern 5

1. Proposal to delete sentence in Elaboration 1 "This mandate is based upon..."

Grounds:

1. Merely mandating a study does not necessarily assume a "new hermeneutic".
2. Merely mandating a study does not implicitly assume that Scripture is not clear on this.

ADOPTED

2. Proposal to add full text of Synod Harderwijk 2011 Art 29 Decision 2a. reference to footnote 25:

“to again appoint deputies M/F in the church with the mandate:

- a. to answer the following questions:
 1. Is it allowed on the basis of Scripture, to appoint sisters besides brothers in the office of deacon?
 2. What are the consequences of the answer to this question for the task and responsibility of the deacons?
 3. Is it allowed on the basis of Scripture, to appoint sisters besides brothers in the office of elder and of minister?

ADOPTED

3. Proposal to change Elaboration 4 to Replace the word "feminism" with "women in office".

Ground:

Women in office is in question, not feminism.

DEFEATED

4. Proposal to delete the words from elaboration 4, “and the RCN has thereby failed to reject all errors contrary to the Word of God.”

ADOPTED

5. Proposal to delete Elaboration 4

Ground:

Commissioning a study does not give evidence that Synod Harderwijk has left the matter of women taking up the special offices as an open question.

DEFEATED

6. Proposal to adopt Statement of Concern 5

ADOPTED

IX. Statement of Concern 6

1. Proposal to adopt Concern 6

ADOPTED

X. Statement of Concern 7

1. Proposal to adopt Concern 7

ADOPTED

XI. Statement of Concern 8

1. Proposal to delete Statement of Concern 8 from the Advisory Committee's Draft namely "The administration of both sacraments for military personnel goes beyond the common consent of the Church Order and leads to the danger of interdenominational administration of sacraments."

Ground:

While this may be a concern this is not a weighty matter for a letter of admonition.

ADOPTED

Synod adjourned for dinner.

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday 23 April 2013

Article 136 - Continued

After singing Ps 96:1 & 2 synod continues its work.

XII. Statement of Concern 10

1. Proposal to delete the words ‘...a proliferation of hymns as well as..’ from Statement of Concern #10, as well as Elaboration 1.

Grounds:

1. Our first concern is the acceptance of hymns that are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.
2. The increase in the number of hymns itself is not a reason to admonish the RCN.

DEFEATED

2. Proposal to modify the Statement of concern to read “The RCN has accepted a proliferation of hymns many of which are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.”

Ground:

This places a stronger emphasis on the lack of a Reformed character to many hymns being sung in the RCN.

ADOPTED

3. Proposal to adopt Statement of Concern 10

ADOPTED

XIII. Statement of Concern 9

1. Delete Statement of Concern 9 from the Advisory Committee’s Draft, namely “The RCN does not insist on a strong and clear adherence to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order in order to counteract independentism in the churches.”

Ground:

This matter was only first identified as a concern by Synod Legana 2009, and deputies need more time to corroborate it.

ADOPTED

XIV. Conclusion of Report

1. Delete first sentence of paragraph 2.
Remove 'Return to' from final paragraph.

Ground:

"Return to" implies the RCN has left the truth.

DEFEATED

2. Delete the first sentence of paragraph 2.

Ground:

1. We are not required to express these matters.
2. It is already mentioned in the second sentence

DEFEATED

3. Add a final sentence: "This letter has been forwarded to you in response to a call by you to direct our concerns to you direct. We would therefore request you to reply direct to our next synod to be held DV July 2015 with a detailed response to this letter."

DEFEATED

4. Add sentence "We look forward to your well considered response."

ADOPTED

5. Various cosmetic changes to the entire letter were proposed and adopted.

Article 137 - Closing

Rev T van Spronsen invites all to sing Hymn 35:1, 2 & 5 and then leads in prayer.

MORNING SESSION **Wednesday 24 April 2013**

Article 138 - Opening

Rev Rupke invites all to sing Hymn 19:1,2,3. He then reads John13: 1-17 and leads in prayer.

Article 139 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 131 to Article 135 are adopted.

The original draft of the letter from the synodical sub-committee is not to be included in the Acts of Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 140 - Letter to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN) (Refer Articles 116, 132, 136)

1. Proposal to change the word ‘many’ to ‘some’ in Statement of Concern 10.

Ground:

The wording as it stands now is not supported by the elaboration. The elaboration speaks about issues and concerns remaining in “some of the hymns adopted by Synod Harderwijk 2011 or which are in the process of adoption” but the concern reads, “many of which are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.”

ADOPTED

2. Proposal made to request an amendment to the conclusion.

DEFEATED

3. A proposal is made that there be a vote on the entire letter. The Chair rules that as the individual parts of the letter have been adopted, and that Synod previously decided to send a letter that a final vote on the letter as a whole is not required. The Chairman's ruling is challenged and put to the vote.

Challenge is DEFEATED

4. The letter of admonition as adopted by synod is found in Appendix 5.

**Article 141 - Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN)
(Refer Articles 29, 40, 43, 57, 76, 94, 114, 116, 142)**

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8.b.ii – Overture from FRC Armadale re RCN.

Agenda Item 8.c.ii – Overture from FRC Mt Nasura re RCN.

Agenda Item 8.g.ii – Overture from FRC West Albany re RCN.

Agenda Item 8.h.i – Overture from FRC Darling Downs re RCN.

Agenda Item 8.i.i – Responses to FRCA deputies report from RCN deputies.

Submission from Synod advisory sub committee as prepared at last session of Synod.

II. Motions:

1. To delete decision 2.

Ground:

The introduction to the letter of admonition sufficiently expresses the deep sadness and the strain on our relationship with the RCN.

DEFEATED

2. To delete the words from decision 2: “so that our relationship is strained.”

Grounds:

1. The use of the word “strain” can lead to confusion that this is some sort of formal step.
2. This has already been put in the letter of admonition.

DEFEATED

3. To change decision 2 to “express our deep sadness at the lack of evidence that our exhortation of Synod 2009 is heeded so that our relationship is strained.”

Ground:

This reflects the deputies’ conclusion.

DEFEATED

4. Add to decision 3: “noting the matters raised within the letter of admonition”.

Ground:

This reflects what the deputies have suggested, because they recommended that the churches in receiving and issuing attestations, and opening their pulpits to ministers from the RCN, noting the matters raised within

this Deputies' report". The items raised by the deputies that need attention are reflected in the letter of admonition.

DEFEATED

5. To ask deputies to furnish synod 2015 with an evaluation J Douma's book on Genesis in relation to the reliability of the Scriptures on the book of Genesis.

Ground:

Synod decided not to include this item in the letter of admonition because it was not thoroughly evaluated by deputies yet.

DEFEATED

6. To delete from deputies mandate: "To instruct deputies, or two people delegated by them, to attend the conference on hermeneutics to be held in Hamilton Canada 2014."

Ground:

It is not the task of a synod to delegate brothers to a scholarly conference not organised by the churches.

DEFEATED

7. To delete from deputies mandate: "To instruct deputies, or two people delegated by them, to attend the conference on hermeneutics to be held in Hamilton Canada 2014."

Ground:

1. This does not come from the churches
2. Deputies are specifically appointed by Synod and deputies should not appoint delegates

DEFEATED

8. To delete from the deputies mandate a specific reference to the fourth commandment.

Ground:

There are no new developments regarding the fourth commandment for the deputies to discuss.

ADOPTED

9. To include in the deputies' mandate: To arrange for a clear and accurate Dutch translation of the letter of admonition to the RCN to accompany the official English letter of admonition.

ADOPTED

10. To add to the deputies' mandate: To include with the letter of admonition to the RCN all the material referred to in the footnotes, either in hard copy or soft copy.

Ground:

It would be impolite to require the Synod of the RCN to collect the material in the many footnotes, which also includes reports that they may not have (had) direct access to.

ADOPTED

11. To modify Ground 3 as follows: The RCN response has been such that the Deputies expressed their great disappointment of little progress in their reports to our synods. This has resulted in a strained relationship between our churches.

ADOPTED

12. To delete ground 5c

DEFEATED

13. To add the following ground for Decision 3

The relations with other churches are governed by General Synod. Within the relationship, there is the practice of issuing and accepting attestations, as well as being able to preach on each other's pulpit. The synod is not able to affirm in all things that the RCN is faithful to the word of God and the confessions. For this reason, the synod has determined that an urgent appeal be made to the RCN. In this situation, synod also has to make clear to the FRCA that because of the concerns expressed in the letter of admonition to the RCN, due care is needed with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCN.

ADOPTED

Synod adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Wednesday 23 April 2013

After singing Ps 131:1,2 & 3 synod continues its work.

Article 142 - Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN)
(Refer Articles 29, 40, 43, 57, 76, 94, 114, 116, 141)

I. Final Decision:

1. To present to the RCN an official admonition stating our concerns

This admonition will be a statement of weighty objections with respect to the doctrine and practice of the RCN in line with the rules for sister church relations.

- a. Deputies to arrange for a clear and accurate Dutch translation of the letter of admonition to the RCN to accompany the official English letter of admonition.
 - b. To include with the letter of admonition to the RCN all the material referred to in the footnotes, either in hard copy or soft copy.
2. To express our deep sadness at the lack of progress to resolve our concerns to date so that our relationship is strained.
3. To advise the consistories of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to exercise due care with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCN.
4. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing struggle for the truth within these churches.
5. To continue sister church relations with the RCN according to the established rules.
6. To discharge deputies, to thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to interact with the deputies BBK;
 - b. to report to the next synod;
 - c. to discuss with the deputies BBK the matters contained in the Letter of Admonition as well as:
 - i. concerns regarding independentism;
 - ii. the formulation of the new church order;
 - d. to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCN; and

- e. to instruct deputies, or two people delegated by them, to attend the conference on hermeneutics to be held in Hamilton Canada 2014.
7. The overtures from FRC Armadale, FRC Mt Nasura, FRC West Albany and FRC Darling Downs have been answered by these decisions.

Grounds:

1. While there are many brothers and sisters in the RCN who remain faithful to God's Word and the Confessions, there is also evidence that the RCN does not reject all errors contrary to the Word of God. The seriousness of these concerns requires an official admonition.
2. Because of the grave concerns we have for our sister in The Netherlands, the churches should bring this matter regularly in prayer before the LORD.
3. The RCN response has been such that the Deputies expressed their great disappointment of little progress in their reports to our synods. This has resulted in a strained relationship between our churches.
4. Our rules for sister church relations require mutual assistance, encouragement, exhortation, and care. Although the deputies report, as well as previous synod decisions and reports to synod, have substantiated many of our concerns it is important to go the extra mile to ensure that our concerns are accurately and properly formulated and understood, particularly when our Dutch sister churches are requesting this.

5. The RCN have clearly communicated to us that they would like communication of official concerns to be addressed directly to their synod, as is the intent for the official admonition.
6. To deal with the concerns that we have, in the most effective way, it is important to also be represented at the next synod of the RCN.
7. The relations with other churches are governed by General Synod. Within the relationship, there is the practice of issuing and accepting attestations, as well as being able to preach on each other's pulpit. The synod is not able to affirm in all things that the RCN is faithful to the word of God and the confessions. For this reason, the synod has determined that an urgent appeal be made to the RCN. In this situation, synod also has to make clear to the FRCA that because of the concerns expressed in the letter of admonition to the RCN, due care is needed with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCN.
8.
 - a. The points raised in the overture of FRC Armadale have all been addressed in this decision.
 - b. Synod cannot decide now to terminate the sister church relationship with the RCN since we first need to know what the response of the RCN will be. This answers the submissions of FRC West Albany, FRC Darling Downs and FRC Mt Nasura.
 - c. Synod cannot address all the individual churches in the bond of the RCN by letter as proposed by FRC Darling Downs because their synod is considering our admonition.

Article 143 - Publication of the Acts

Synod decides to publish the letter of admonition and the acts of this session on the internet.

Article 144 - Question Period

The delegates from the RCN were permitted to ask several questions to which the chairman responded.

It was confirmed by the Chairman that the Letter of Admonition indeed has official status of Synod even though not every decision on the contents of the letter was unanimous.

Opportunity was given for general questions.

Article 145 - Adoption of the Acts

Articles 136 – 147 of the Acts are amended and adopted.

Article 146 - Adoption of the Press Release

The press release is amended and adopted.

Article 147 - Closing

The Chairman notes with thankfulness that Christian censure is not necessary.

The Chairman speaks words of farewell to the delegates of the RCN.

Words of appreciation are expressed to the sub-committee that prepared the letter of admonition.

The RCN delegates spoke words of farewell.

The Vice Chairman thanks the Chairman for the good and brotherly way that he chaired synod. He then invites all present to sing Psalm 147:1 & 6 and then leads in closing prayer. The Chairman declares the 25th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches closed.

Appendix 4 - Opening address by Chairman at Reconvening of Synod.

“Judge not, that you be not judged!” ...“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Matt 7:1-4.

"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (John 8:7)

Texts like make it very difficult to do what we have set out to do in the remaining sessions of synod, to write a letter of admonition.

For me personally, one of the most difficult tasks in the ministry has always been to admonish and rebuke. How dare I!

How dare we as churches point the finger at our sister, when our own churches are far from faultless. We take courage to do so on the basis of the promises we made when we established sister church relations. We promised as churches to mutually assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world. We promised to mutually care for each other that we do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.

We made these promises based on the biblical pattern of pastoral care that brothers and sisters show each other in the church. Scripture repeatedly encourages us, and even commands us, to admonish our brother or sister if we see them err in doctrine or conduct.

But those warnings that I referred to a moment ago are serious warnings that we must heed. These warnings demand that we examine ourselves to ensure that we ourselves are not hypocritically doing or condoning that for which we admonish

our sister. We need to honestly evaluate our own weaknesses and shortcomings, so that we extend this admonition with great humility and meekness. We need to ensure that our admonition is based on truth. We need to ensure that our admonition is extended with love, mercy and tender kindness.

I read from Colossians 3. There we learn that we do not possess in ourselves those godly qualities. By nature we are proud and self-righteous. By nature we are inclined to falsehood. By nature we are unloving, unmerciful and unkind. But the purpose of Christ's coming was to remove from us, not just the guilt of our sin, but also the corruption of sin. He came to renew us in the image of God. And by the grace of God we may rejoice as we see the beginning of God's work in us.

But remnants of the old nature still cling to us. Paul commands us in Colossians 3 that we are to put off the old nature, like one would put off filthy rags. We are to put on the new nature. He writes in v. 12 "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering..." These are important qualities that we need also to deal in a Christ-like manner with our sister churches. And Paul gives special importance to love. He writes in v. 14 "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

Certainly no less important for us now are the words Paul has written in v. 16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another..." That's what we have decided to do—to write an official admonition to our sister churches in the Netherlands. In doing so, the Word of Christ must dwell in us richly. Our admonition must be based on God's word, and be administered in the Spirit of Christ, with tender mercy, kindness, humility, meekness and longsuffering. May the Spirit of Christ fill us, so that our

thoughts, words, decisions and our letter give evidence that Christ is in us, and that Christ may speak through us.

Appendix 5 - Letter of Admonition to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

Letter of Admonition to
Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt
(Reformed Churches of the Netherlands)

To: De Generale Synode Ede 2014

22 April 2013

Esteemed brothers:

Synod Armadale 2012 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia greets our brothers of De Generale Synode Ede 2014.

Preamble

Synod Armadale convened in July 2012 and having considered the deputies' reports and the decisions of Synod Harderwijk 2011, resolved to write an official admonition directly to your Synod, stating the weighty concerns that we have with respect to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN). This letter was endorsed and signed at the reconvening of Synod Armadale in April 2013. We address this directly to your General Synod, because Synod Harderwijk decided that your "*deputies correctly refused to hold an official meeting with various sister-churches*" to respond to the concerns raised by our churches, on the grounds that if "*a sister-church has objections against a Synod decision regarding doctrine, church government, discipline or liturgy, then it must direct these straight to the General Synod.*"¹

¹ Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 87, Decision 3 and Grounds

Sister Churches

This letter is written in accordance with our rules for sister church relations, namely, that such relations “*shall be used to mutually assist, encourage and exhort one another as well as care for each other ... not to depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity and liturgy.*” We therefore write out of deep love for the churches from which we have originated from the 1950’s onward, whose ministers we have received in our churches, and with whom we still have many personal contacts. We have received so very much from you over the years, and we recognize and gratefully acknowledge this.

We also praise God for the many positive aspects to congregational life in the churches of the RCN. We understand something of the challenges faced by your churches as they live and worship in a culture that is rapidly becoming secularized and post-modern, a society in which the principles and norms of God’s Word are increasingly marginalized and even directly opposed. We too are churches in a country that demonstrates rising secularism, and grapple with similar issues. In such a hostile context, we are compelled to rely all the more on God’s grace in preserving His church, and to be reaffirmed in our conviction to live godly and holy lives that glorify our Saviour.

We recognize that in the face of this growing ungodliness, there is also an urgent need to make the good confession of faith with one voice together with our brothers and sisters across the world, and to be united in a faithful witness of the good news of the gospel. At the same time, such unity requires a mutual commitment to the complete truth of Scripture as summarized in our confessions, and to the rich heritage that we share, as Scripture itself exhorts us, “*Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle*” (2 Thess. 2:15). Because we face similar struggles, and because we recognize that we are a very small bond of churches, we hold dear the rich blessing of being united with churches who share

with us our conviction to hold fast to the truth of God’s Word as we confess it. It is our sincere prayer that the FRCA and the RCN may stand alongside each other in resolutely and faithfully holding fast to the traditions based on God’s Word and the Reformed confessions without compromise, and that we can assist and encourage each other to be beacons of the Reformed faith in an increasingly apostate world.

Exhortation of Synod Legana 2009

Over the past years, meetings have been held and letters exchanged between the deputies of our respective churches regarding our serious concerns with the direction that we see the RCN moving as federation of churches, concerns that have been documented in deputy reports and correspondence with you. We find it sad that these concerns do not seem to be recognized by your churches. It is becoming evident to us that this direction is leading you into conflict with God’s Word as it is confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and maintained in faithful Reformed churches. This direction is causing strain and tension in our relationship with you. In view of these concerns, Synod Legana 2009 decided to “*exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics.*”²

In response to this exhortation, your Synod Harderwijk 2011 observed that “*the RCN does not recognize themselves in the image described in the Acts of Synod Legana 2009.*”³ By way of the following admonitions, Synod Armadale 2012 now seeks to give further explanation and reason for the exhortations of Synod Legana 2009. The footnotes will provide references to correspondence, reports, and decisions, where the concerns expressed here are further elaborated on.

² Acts of Synod Legana 2009, Art. 71 XI. 4, p.83.

³ Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 87 Decision 2.a. and Grounds a, cited in Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.71.

Main Concern

When reflecting on what we notice happening among you, and taking our concerns together as a whole, it is our observation that there is evidence of a liberal way of interpreting Scripture. Striving to find better ways to serve and praise God, and providing Biblical responses to the contemporary issues we face are activities that are unquestionably necessary and beneficial for the church. However, such seeking of change should not mean that you relinquish what you have fought for and have learned from the Bible in the past. The questioning that we hear in the RCN opens the door to a toleration of a hermeneutic that does not do justice to God’s full revelation, and it is our belief that this way of using Scripture underlies many of the concerns that we state in the material which follows.

We hear you ask: “How do we interpret God’s Word in today’s context?”⁴ Indeed the answer is important, but the answer must lie only in the truth of God’s Word. Whilst the times may change, the command to remain obedient to Scripture does not change. And it is here that we have serious concerns, in relation to matters that were decided on by your Synods, as well in relation to matters about which your Synods failed to affirm the clear teaching of Scripture. In the following sections we seek to explain our serious concerns.

CONCERNS REGARDING DOCTRINE

Statement of Concern #1

The RCN tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the authority and plain meaning of Scripture for

⁴ Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.58 & p.68.

exegesis.⁵ This seriously questions the ability and willingness of the RCN to fully uphold the truth of Scripture.⁶

Elaboration

1. Writings from past and present teaching staff of the Theological University in Kampen have called into question the plain meaning of Scripture.
 - a. In his dissertation *From Conquest to Coexistence: Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan*, completed and defended in March 2010, Dr. K. van Bekkum, brings Scriptural history into question in view of the premise he defends regarding archaeological findings.⁷ This dissertation was received “with honour”, and in spite of various warnings about its contents, Synod Harderwijk 2011 appointed Dr. van Bekkum as a lecturer at the Theological University.

⁵ Synod Legana 2009 exhorted the RCN “to be faithful in their *hermeneutics*”, and mandated deputies to discuss “the need for the RCN to uphold the plain meaning of Scriptures regarding Genesis 1 – 11.” cf Acts of Synod Legana 2009, Art. 71, p83-84.

⁶ In the Belgic Confession Art. 7 we clearly insist from God’s Word that no opening is to be given to human insight or norms that contradict what is revealed in God’s Word when we say that “We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures; nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all ... We therefore reject with all our heart whatever does not agree with this infallible rule...”

⁷ K. van Bekkum argues that the history revealed in Scripture arises out of the culture and historic methods used at the time it was written, and that this “*literary artistry and use of genre conventions should be studied first*” (p.33). One of the far reaching and unacceptable conclusions of this approach is that Joshua 10:12-14 is interpreted in a metaphorical way (p.250).

- b. In his dissertation *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets*,⁸ Dr. S. Paas, a lecturer appointed at the Theological University in Kampen, takes a religion-historical approach which includes the assertion that “*Israel’s creation belief has a Canaanite background and was possibly influenced by Egyptian notions*”. He considers “*creation to be a myth, along with much of Genesis 1 – 11*”.⁹
- c. In his article “*Taal en teken van trouw over Vorm en Functie van Genesis 1,*” published in 2002 in *Woord op schrift: Theologische reflecties over het gezag van de bijbel*,¹⁰ Rev. J.J.T. Doedens leaves room to interpret Genesis 1 in the context of Israelite history in such a way that from this passage we need not necessarily believe that God created heaven and earth in six days.¹¹

⁸ Oudtestamentische Studien 47, Leiden, Brill 2003.

⁹ Cited in the Interim Report of the Canadian Reformed Subcommittee for Contact with the RCN that was submitted to the BBK for discussion March 9, 2011 (found in Report of the CRCA Subcommittee for Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated (RCN) to Synod Carman West 2013, Appendix 3, p.29ff.)

¹⁰ *Woord op schrift: Theologische reflecties over het gezag van de bijbel*, edited by C. Trimp, Kok Kampen, 2002. J. Doedens’ contribution is one of several articles that bring the literal meaning of Scripture into question.

¹¹ In one of his conclusions, he writes that with his way of understanding Genesis 1, “*not all the questions about creation and its development or concerning the age of the earth are solved. But in this way room is given to be busy with these questions in an intellectually relaxed way. Genesis 1 does then not need be continually fitted into the latest creationist or evolutionist model.*” (Translation of: “*Met het op deze manier lezen van Genesis 1 zijn niet alle vragen opgelost rond schepping en ontwikkeling of rond ouderdom van de aarde. Maar op deze manier is er wel ruimte om met de vragen rustig wetenschappelijk bezig te zijn. Genesis 1 hoeft dan niet voortdurend ingepast te worden in het laatste creationistische of evolutionistische model.*” p.105)

- d. In his article “Hermeneutiek en metaforie,” published in the same book, Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne argues that there are more passages in Scripture that can or should be understood in a metaphorical way, making reference to Genesis 1.¹²
2. Although members within the bond of the RCN have raised serious hermeneutical concerns about the manner in which Scripture is interpreted in these writings, RCN General Synods have failed to deal adequately and faithfully with concerns about the integrity and doctrine of the teaching staff at the Theological University in Kampen.
 - a. In 2008 a number of statements by Dr. G. Harinck appeared in the press, which included controversial comments about his approach to Scripture regarding homosexuality. Subsequent clarifications have not been satisfactory, and it remains a concern that his public comments have not been retracted, although his position at the Theological University in Kampen continues.¹³
 - b. Various appeals to Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 raising objections to the above-mentioned writing of Dr. A.L.Th. De Bruijne, as well as to above-mentioned controversial public statements made by

¹² He writes: “*The (exegetical) space that had been rejected in Genesis 2 and 3 did exist in Genesis 1. The word ‘day’ for example, did not necessarily have to be understood as a literal day, even though many did so. To the extent that literary arguments were brought forward for this reason, these were to give Genesis 1 its own particular character distinct from Genesis 2 and 3.* (Translation of: “*De ruimte die bij Genesis 2 en 3 werd afgewezen, heeft bij Genesis 1 wel bestaan. Het woord ‘dag’ bijvoorbeeld hoefde niet per se letterlijk te worden opgevat, al deden velen dit wel. Voor zover daarvoor literaire argumenten werden aangedragen, moesten deze echter Genesis 1 een eigen en ander karakter geven dan Genesis 2 en 3.*” (p.156)

¹³ Report to Synod Legana 2009, p.57-61; Acts of Synod Legana, Art. 71, sub XI.4b & Ground 9, p.83-85.

Dr. G. Harinck, were denied because the matter had already been dealt with by the Directors of Oversight (*College van Toezicht*) of the Theological University, and because the submission was considered too late, and so Synods did not deal with the objections to these teachings.¹⁴

- c. Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 declared as “ungrounded” an appeal arguing that objections raised to the above-mentioned writings of Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne and addressed in the usual church orderly way to the local church where he is emeritus minister (Rotterdam-City) were indeed a matter for that local consistory to deal with.¹⁵
- d. Although many serious objections were raised to the dissertation and appointment of Dr. S. Paas, as well as to the dissertation and appointment of Prof. K. van Bekkum, due to regulations and timing these objections have never been dealt with by a Synod.¹⁶

¹⁴ Acts of Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008, Art. 105.

¹⁵ Acts of Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008, Art. 53. The appellants initially addressed their concerns about Dr de Bruijne’s writings to the local consistory of Rotterdam-City, and the consistory’s questioning whether this was their task was confirmed upon appeal by classis, regional synod, and eventually general synod. The grounds for Synod’s decision included that “1. *The churches, by way of the Statutes of the Theological University, have entrusted the supervision of the life and doctrine of the docents to the deputies-curators. 2. The deputies-curators have ... rejected identical objections to the opinions of dr. de Bruijne. 3. The deputies-curators have ...reported to the General Synod of Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 where their conclusion was accepted.*”

¹⁶ Regarding Dr. S. Paas, see Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 53, cf. also the English explanation provided at www.gkv.nl/styleit/10944 and quoted in Appendix 7 of Report to Synod Armadale 2012, pp. 86–88. Regarding Dr. K. van Bekkum, see his book *Conquest to Coexistence*, and also Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 66, in the explanation of Decision (Besluit) 12. See also Report to Synod Armadale 2012 p.23-24 & p.77-79.

- e. Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 also considered that it is not possible for members to submit on the basis of Article 31 of the Church Order objections to questionable teachings of ministers/docents of other congregations.¹⁷

Statement of Concern #2

The RCN tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. This approach conflicts with what we confess in Belgic Confession Art. 7 concerning the sufficiency of Holy Scripture.¹⁸

Elaboration

1. The RCN *Report of Deputies for Church Unity* that was jointly prepared with NGK deputies gives room for recognising the Holy Spirit's teachings outside of God's Word and without specific Biblical precepts. By making a distinction between "*using the gifts they have received*" and "*listening to God's Word*" as valid means of understanding God's will, the way is opened to make ethical conclusions (e.g. about grounds for divorce) that are based entirely on the leading of the Spirit, despite being contrary to Scripture.¹⁹

¹⁷ Acts of Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008, Art. 54, dealt with submission of R.W. de Graaf cs

¹⁸ In Belgic Confession Art. 7 we confess that "We believe that this Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein." We do not deny that the Holy Spirit gives the church guidance in applying the norm of Scriptures, as long as the outcome is not contrary to Scripture.

¹⁹ Cf Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 81, decision 1. The relevant text of Appendix 9 of this report is cited in Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.19-20, for example: "*Renewed by the death and resurrection of Christ, God's children may live according to the Spirit and learn to distinguish between the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit, without having specific biblical precepts for all situation and areas of life (our emphasis). Thus, together, God's children seek to understand God's will for their lives, using the gifts they have received and listening to God's Word and each other, walking in close fellowship with the living God.*"

2. An example of this approach is evident in the way in which the RCN synods have dealt with the matter of marriage and divorce (see Statement of Concern #3).²⁰

Statement of Concern #3

Decisions of the RCN about marriage and divorce leave room for a subjective approach in understanding and applying the Biblical norms. It remains our concern that such an approach has not been explicitly excluded by your synods.

Elaboration

1. Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 (Art. 57) endorsed the main lines of the report “*Marriage and Divorce*” that was prepared by deputies mandated by Synod Zuidhorn 2002. While this strongly affirmed the Scriptural teaching that divorce and subsequent remarriage are a serious evil and must be so dealt with by consistories, regrettably it gave no explicit guidance to exclude the approval of divorce for reasons beyond the Scriptural reasons of adultery and wilful desertion sanctioned by Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7.²¹
2. The report suggests that in new situations not mentioned in the Bible, a congregation guided by the Holy Spirit may establish reasons for divorce which are not based directly on explicit Scriptural grounds or analogies. Underlining this approach is a new framework in which “the style of the kingdom” is considered determinative, and ethical questions are answered with “congregational ethics”, a spiritual manner in which the congregation is guided by the Holy Spirit (“gemeente-ethiek”). This new way of doing ethics in connection with marriage and divorce was defended by Dr. A.L.Th. De Bruijne at the

²⁰ Address to Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008, found in Report to Synod Legana 2009, p.114-115; Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.19-20.

²¹ Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 94, p.61.

conference on hermeneutics at the Theological University in Kampen on 30 March 2011.²²

3. This leaves room for a subjective approach in which the church in its contemporary context adds permissible reasons for divorce to the Bible, instead of applying what is revealed in the Bible, and so tends towards a subjective hermeneutical approach where ethical decisions are not sufficiently founded on the explication and application of clearly revealed Biblical norms.²³
4. While the Holy Spirit does give the church guidance in applying the norms of Scripture in ethics (eg. Heb 3: 7; Eph 6: 17; 1 Thes 1: 5.6), He always does this in accordance with what has been revealed in Scripture (eg. Heb 4: 12; Heb 12: 25; 1Pet 1: 23-25; Acts 7: 51; 16: 14.15; 2Cor 3:8) the starting point of ethics must always be the Word of God, and the church must not come to subjective conclusions that are beyond or contrary to what is revealed in Scripture. It is only by listening carefully to the objective, revealed Word of God that the Holy Spirit guides us to draw the right conclusions about God's will (eg. 1Cor 2: 12; Eph 1: 17.18).

²² Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.60.

²³ Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 94, sub. VI.4 & Ground c, p.64-65; Address to Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005, found in Report to Synod West Kelmscott 2006, p.205; Letter of Deputies 11 February 2005, found in Report to Synod West Kelmscott 2006, p.209; Report to Synod West Kelmscott 2006, p.258-9; Address to Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008, found in Report to Synod Legana 2009, p.114-115; Letter of Deputies 3 July 2010, found in Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.34-35 & p.38; Letter of Deputies 10 November 2010, found in Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.45; Address to Synod Harderwijk 2011, found in Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.50; cf. also Report of Deputies to Synod Smithers 2007 of the Canadian Reformed Churches, p.51-55.

Statement of Concern #4

The study into whether Scripture allows for women to fill the offices of deacon, elder and minister fails to affirm the clear teaching of Scripture that the special offices within the Christian church are reserved for men.

Elaboration

1. Synod Harderwijk 2011 appointed deputies with a mandate to answer the question of whether it is permitted, on the basis of Scripture, to appoint (in addition to men) women to the office of deacon, elder and minister.²⁴
2. Belgic Confession Art. 30 teaches that the true church must be governed according to the spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word. It provides that the special offices of minister, elder and deacon are to be filled by faithful men who are chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.. (2 Timothy 2:2).
3. Scripture further teaches that a woman is not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence (1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:33-35).
4. A proper study of this topic with a mandate to defend the Biblical prohibition of women in office would help the church meet the challenges of feminism. However, by questioning whether women may fill the special offices within the church and mandating a study into this, rather than affirming the clear testimony of Scripture on this

²⁴ Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 29, Decision 2. “to again appoint deputies M/F in the church with the mandate: a. to answer the following questions: 1. Is it allowed on the basis of Scripture, to appoint sisters besides brothers in the office of deacon? 2. What are the consequences of the answer to this question for the task and responsibility of the deacons? 3. Is it allowed on the basis of Scripture, to appoint sisters besides brothers in the office of elder and of minister?”

point, Synod Harderwijk has left the matter of women taking up the special offices as an open question.

CONCERNS REGARDING ECCLESIOLOGY & CHURCH POLITY

Statement of Concern #5

The adoption of regulations that allow for the amalgamation of local RCN congregations with those of the NGK promotes a false ecumenism.

Elaboration

1. Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 adopted regulations for local contact and cooperation by RCN congregations with those from non-sister federations.²⁵
2. Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 extended this by adopting additional regulations where such contact resulted in a desire to form a unified congregation (*samenwerkings-gemeente*).²⁶
3. Subsequently, various RCN congregations have amalgamated with those of the NGK (eg. Deventer and Zaandam) to form one unified congregation.²⁷ This involves worshipping together as one congregation (see www.3gk-deventer.nl and www2.zaankerk.nl).
4. The NGK has since 2004 allowed women to be ordained to the office of minister, elder and deacon (LV Lelystad 2004²⁸, LV Zwolle 2007²⁹). The NGK has mandated a study into whether practising homosexuals may fill the

²⁵ Acts of Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005, Art. 132.

²⁶ Acts of Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008, Art. 109, Decision 5b.

²⁷ Report to Synod Armadale 2012, p.22.

²⁸ www.ngk.nl/lv2004/lv25.htm.

²⁹ www.ngk.nl/lv2007/lv25.htm.

office of elder and deacon (LV Houten 2010³⁰). The NGK practices tolerance with respect to the confessional binding of its members and office bearers, for example allowing office bearers who are against infant baptism.³¹

5. Because the local NGK congregations (Deventer and Zaandam) that have amalgamated with RCN congregations remain within a federation of churches that compromises the teaching of Scripture (cf. point 4 above), full unity with such NGK congregations also involves compromising Scripture. Thus by allowing for the amalgamation of local RCN and NGK congregations, a unity is achieved that is not based solely upon God's Word as summarised in the confessions.

Statement of Concern #6

The past and continuing participation in the National Synod/Protestant Forum promotes a false ecumenism.

Elaboration

1. In December 2010, the RCN deputies for church unity participated in the National Synod held in Dordrecht. The National Synod is founded upon a "Credo Statement" as an expression of the unity of faith between participants.³²
2. Synod Harderwijk 2011 approved deputies' participation and further mandated deputies to follow developments regarding the National Synod/Protestant Forum and to participate therein with a delegation.³³

³⁰ www.ngk.nl/lv/allebesluiten.htm under decision 09.07.01.

³¹ Report of the Committee for Church Unity to Synod Harderwijk 2011, p.12, at www.gkv.nl/english-materials-/345/

³² Lux Mundi 30/1, March 2011, p.17, available at www.bbk.gkv.nl.

³³ Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Art. 77, Decision 1.

3. Of the 52 church federations that attended the 2010 National Synod, many do not hold to the Reformed faith. Examples include those from whom the steering committee was drawn, being the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Remonstrants, and United Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches.³⁴
4. Such unity of faith as expressed within the National Synod is not a unity that is based upon Scripture as summarised in the confessions.

CONCERNS REGARDING LITURGY

Statement of Concern #7

The RCN has accepted a proliferation of hymns many of which are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.

Elaboration

1. The proliferation of hundreds of new hymns (Synod Harderwijk 2011 alone approved over 150 hymns in first and second reading) detracts from the Psalms, the Book of Praise in the Bible, and from other songs that are based directly on Scripture.³⁵
2. Many hymns in the “Liedboek voor de kerken” are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.³⁶ Many of the issues and concerns raised in correspondence with the RCN³⁷ remain in some of the hymns adopted by Synod

³⁴ www.nationalesynode.nl/stuurgroep/

³⁵ Acts of Synod West Kelmescott 2006, Art. 94, Decision III, p.61-62; cf Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Besluiten deputaten kerkmuziek 13 mei 2011.

³⁶ Acts of Synod West Kelmescott 2006, Art. 94, Decision III, p.61-62; cf Letter to RCN dated 10 July & 9th Aug 2004, found in Report to Synod West Kelmescott 2006, Appendix 6, p. 276-283.

³⁷ See the letter referenced in the previous footnote.

Harderwijk 2011 or which are in the process of adoption.³⁸

CONCLUSION

Brothers, we earnestly urge you to give the matters we have addressed in this letter of admonition careful consideration. We acknowledge that some of these matters may not have been dealt with or be fully concluded at your General Synods. However, when errors become evident and are left unchecked without an ecclesiastical assembly addressing them, they become like leaven that lives among you, and so in love for you we would be remiss not to raise them. The church of the living God is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), and so we sincerely and humbly urge your synod to stand firm in confessing that truth boldly and clearly, by sounding the clear clarion call of God’s Word to your churches and to this world, faithfully echoing God’s revelation.

We recognize that some of the things we have written may sound harsh and judgemental, and perhaps not always clearly articulated. We trust that even though this letter may have its shortcomings, that you hear in it our earnest appeal for you to be faithful to our God and His Word, and that you also see behind it the sincere love that we have for you as our sister church, and are fully assured of our brotherly affection and concern that underlies and motivates this serious admonition.

Be assured that we also write this letter with great humility, knowing well our own weakness in our struggle to hold fast the faith in a secular and postmodern culture, and recognizing our own need for the blood of Christ and the ongoing renewal of His Spirit. We also covet your prayers for us.

Finally, we also write this letter prayerfully, seeking the Lord for you to return to and hold fast the truth of His will as

³⁸ e.g. Hymn 200 “Heerlijk verschenen is de dag”; cf Report to Synod West Kelmescott 2006, p. 280; and Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011, Decision 2 of Besluiten deputaten kerkmuziek 13 mei 2011.

revealed in His Word. In ourselves we are no better than you or anyone else, and both you and we must rely on the grace of God, and be led and governed by His Word and Spirit rather than our own insights. As such it is our longing and prayer for you that you will fully embrace, faithfully confess, and heartily defend the full riches of God’s revelation and the gospel of salvation which reflects the glory of our Great God and King. Revelation 3:11 *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”*

We look forward to your well considered response.

With Christian greetings, on behalf of General Synod Armadale 2012;

Chairman

Second Clerk