

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD

Esteemed brothers,
As librarian for the archives and library of Synod I submit my report:

1. INSPECTION

Today representatives of the Church of Byford inspected the archives of synod and found them in order. In accordance with recommendations adopted by Synod 1990 the documents were placed in large appropriately labeled envelopes and sealed by the Byford representatives who also signed the seals. This should facilitate speedier inspection of the archives in future since only the contents of those envelopes which have been opened since the previous inspection will need to be checked.

2. MICROFILM

Also in accordance with Synod 1990 decision, I have investigated the cost of putting the archives' documents onto microfilm and have been quoted a cost of five cents per A4 sheet of paper. At a rough estimate I'd say that, including the documents expected for 1992 synod, we would have between 1500 and 2000 sheets. This would incur a cost of up to \$1000. A secondhand microfiche projector is available for \$100. The reason for investigating the cost of microfilm was twofold: first, some documents were becoming tattered, flimsy and barely legible; second, microfilm would provide us with a backup in case of fire, vandalism or theft. This second concern has diminished now that a fireproof filing cabinet has been purchased for the archives. If synod finds the cost of microfilm prohibitive, the faint and flimsy documents could be photocopied or, where necessary, rewritten.

3. INDEX

Also in accordance with instructions, a subject index of the archives' contents has been compiled.

4. LOANS

Various items from the archives and library have been borrowed by synod deputies. Some are still outstanding. All are accounted for.

5. PURCHASE OF ACTS

Since the previous synod the following Acts of Synod have been added to the library: Acts of Synod Leeuwarden 1990, Acts of Synod Winnipeg 1989, Acts of Synod Armadale 1990 (2 copies)

6. STORAGE

All archives are now stored in the fireproof filing cabinet housed in the storeroom of the Bedfordale Church building. A spare set of keys, and instructions for the combination lock, are kept by br A Hordyk, the synod treasurer.

I enclose herewith a list of the items from Synod 1992 passed on to me for the archives by br A Slobe.

With brotherly greetings,
J Numan
11 February 1992

List of items from Synod 1990, placed in the Archives.

- 90.1 Attendance List
- 90.2 Meeting times of Synod
- 90.3 Credentials - FRC of Albany
- 90.4 Credentials - FRC of Armadale
- 90.5 Credentials - FRC of Bedfordale
- 90.6 Credentials - FRC of Byford
- 90.7 Credentials - FRC of Kelmscott
- 90.8 Credentials - FRC of Launceston
- 90.9 Credentials - FRC of West Tamar
- 90.10 Provisional aenda
- 90.11 Welcome and opening address
- Incoming Correspondence**
- 90.12 Bedfordale-appeal against Art.82 of the 1987 Synod
- 90.13 Bedfordale-proposal re rules of Synod
- 90.14 Launceston-proposal for a study re classis
- 90.15 Launceston-appeal against Art.41 of the 1987 Acts of Synod
- 90.16 Albany-concerns re costs of Synod and overseas travel
- 90.17 Launceston-letter re costs of travel for 1 church visitor
- 90.18 Reformed Church of PNG-greetings and request for a sister-relation
- 90.19 Byford-re costs of Synod
- 90.20 Kelmscott-appeal against Art.100 of 1987 Synod (re: word 'Christian')
- 90.21 Kelmscott-request re rules for Colloquium Doctum
- 90.22 Bedfordale -proposals re contact with other churches
- 90.23 Rev.G.v.Rongen-request re use of Acts
- 90.24 Bedfordale-proposal re costs of Synod
- 90.25 P.'tHart -re Bible Translation
- 90.26 M. Berkelaar-re Bible Translation
- 90.27 Albany-re Bible Translation
- 90.28 W.L.Dekker-re contact with churches within the ICRC
- 90.29 J.Eikelboom & L.v Burgel-re report about ICRC
- 90.30 Albany-proposal for deputies re study-debt of dutch candi dates
- 90.31 Bedfordale-appeal against Art.99 of 1987 Synod(re'deleted hymns')
- 90.32 Bedfordale-re Tasmanian church visitation
- 90.33 Armadale-re PCEA report
- 90.34 J. Byl-re contact FCS and PCEA
- 90.35 Bedfordale-appeal & requests re decisions contact with foreign and/or Presbyterian churches
- 90.36 Byford-re deciding date of Synod

- 90.37 J.Numan - re contact with Presbyterian churches
- 90.38 Byford-re RPCI
- 90.39 P.W.Dekker-re Churches abroad
- 90.40 Armadale-re Synod cost allocation
- 90.41 Armadale-re Churches abroad
- 90.42 RCA
- 90.43 Byford-re meeting of Synod
- 90.44 L.Hart, A.H.Terpstra, B.Vermeulen-re ICRC
- 90.45 A.Amoraal-re ICRC
- 90.46 J.Byl-re PCEA
- 90.47 J.Eikelboom-re PCEA
- 90.48 K.Wieske-re appeal of Bedfordale re hymns
- 90.49 L.v Burgel-re Supplementary Report of DpRCA
- 90.50 M & T v.Dongen-re Bible translation
- 90.51 M & T v.Dongen-re Art.82, 1987 Acts of Synod
- 90.52 H.Ballast-re ICRC
- 90.53 A.M.Hidding-re appeal Classis decision
- 90.54 Launceston-re contact RCA
- Reports to Synod 1990**
- 90.55 Synod Treasurers' Report
- 90.56 Audit of the books of the treasurers of Synod
- 90.57 PCEA and EPCA
- 90.58 Supervision of Archives and Library
- 90.59 Relations for Churches Abroad - letter
- 90.60 Pulpit Exchanges
- 90.61 Supplementary report Deputies PCEA
- 90.62 Supplementary report Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad-Minority report
- 1990 Closed sessions - church visitations reports**
- 1. Albany Dec. 1987
- 2. Albany Dec. 1988
- 3. Albany Sep. 1989
- 4. Armadale Nov. 1987
- 5. Armadale 1988
- 6. Armadale Oct. 1989
- 7. Bedfordale Nov. 1988
- 8. Bedfordale Oct. 1989
- 9. Byford Nov. 1987
- 10. Byford 1988
- 11. Byford Oct. 1989
- 12. Kelmscott Nov. 1987
- 13. Kelmscott Nov. 1988
- 14. Kelmscott Nov. 1989
- 15. Launceston 1987
- 16. Launceston Oct. 1988
- 17. Launceston Nov. 1989
- 18. West Tamar Dec. 1989

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

1. General

A. Mandate

Synod 1990 gave Deputies the following mandate:

- 6a. to explore, in consultation with (in the first instance) the sister churches, the feasibility of the churches themselves undertaking the task of translating the Bible;*
- b. as regards the NASB, NKJV and NIV translations, to supplement the 1989 report and:*
 - 1. to further study in line with considerations 4c and 4d the suitability of the NASB and the NKJV to replace the RSV;*
 - 2. to further evaluate the NIV in line with considerations 4e and 6, in respect of its method of translation;*
 - 3. to make use of previous Deputies reports including those of our Canadian sister churches;*
 - 4. to monitor developments in these translations;*
 - 5. to send relevant suggestions and improvements to the Committees on Bible translation concerned, and await and evaluate any replies on these;*
 - 6. to invite comments from the churches on these translations;*
 - 7. to consult with the Canadian Reformed Churches to see whether a common approach can be reached.*
- c. to report to the churches on progress and findings;*
- d. to report, and if possible make recommendations, to next Synod.*

B. Activities

Deputies held nine meetings over a period of sixteen months. Due to this limited time span, they found it difficult to do justice to their mandate.

Contacts were established with:

- 1) the Committee on Bible translations of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
 - 2) Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen of Kampen, The Netherlands.
- Deputies also forwarded the Recommendations of Synod 1990 and relevant sections of the 1989 Report to the translation committees of the NIV and the NKJV.

2. Feasibility of the churches giving a mandate for a new translation.

First of all, the feasibility of the churches themselves issuing a mandate for a new Bible translation was explored.

The Committee on Bible translations of the Canadian Reformed Churches advised they had no mandate enabling them to deal with the matter. Their previous Synods, however, had never called for a translation from within their churches.

Upon our request for advice, Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen wrote that for a project of this nature the essential ingredients are:

- 1. availability of people with specific linguistic abilities in the receptor language, with expansive knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, and with a proper theological education;
- 2. the financial means to back the translation project plus the production of a publication which will remain affordable;
- 3. a sufficiently broad base for acceptance in the future."

At the same time, Prof. van Bruggen queried the wisdom of a small group of churches entering the market with its own separate translation. Alienation from the mainstream of Christianity could exacerbate problems in contacts with others, e.g. in evangelism. Much to be preferred would be a course of action in which the Australian churches "would nominate one or two reasonably good translations now current, as much as possible in unison with the English speaking sister churches (Canada). One could even draw up a list of the most serious flaws in those translations (in particular in the prophetic texts) and publish that list in a handy size to fit inside your bible. In bible study and in discussion with other people it can be very helpful, and it will not produce the alienating effect of a translation of your own ...

Further consideration of this matter led Deputies to the conclusion that a new Bible translation arranged by the churches does not present itself as a feasible option. They accept that the resources defined by Prof. van Bruggen in the above quotation are not available to us. Nor would the option be a desirable one. Deputies agree with Prof. van Bruggen that it might place the churches in a situation of unnecessary isolation, comparable with that of the Jehovah's Witnesses. A separate translation would negatively affect our discussions with the enemy in the gate.

3. Summary of submissions received.

In response to Deputies' request for submissions from the churches (Una Sancta 8/12/90) some letters were received from church members. A brief summary follows.

Br. G. J. Bosveld's letter begins with the biblical proof of Rev.22:18,19, that the Bible, as we have always had it, must not be tampered with. If, according to Br. Bosveld, we use a different Bible translation, based on a different manuscript, we sin against our confession and against God. We, he goes on, must not add or detract from the Word as we have always known it. Other manuscripts, different to the one used for the KJV, are dangerous and jeopardize our confession and doctrine. The brother feels that the RSV and the NIV contain many substitutions and deletions which lead to major doctrinal differences. He quotes 48 examples from the Gospels where the KJV has more words, and claims that the omissions detected in the RSV and the NIV affect the reliability and infallibility of God's Word. According to Br. Bosveld, the method of translation is important, but the choice of manuscript is more crucial. Finally, he feels that Synod 1990's attitude 'put all manuscripts on one heap' and that it is 'now up to us to carefully start selecting which of these manuscripts would get preference over others....' 'This means', he writes, 'that the church really never had a trustworthy Bible which was based on faithful manuscripts..'

M. and T. VanDongen, in their contribution, recommend a translation based on the Textus Receptus, as 'no unreliability has ever been proven against the TR'. In their opinion, 'the use of multiple translations based on different original texts sows confusion and doubt within the churches, and a potential irreverence for the Word of God as the only source of the Truth'.

H. and A. Bosveld submitted a list of 36 differences between the NIV and the NKJV, detected in sections of 1 Tim.1-6.

P. 't Hart's letter to Deputies, of March 1991, partly deals with the matter of original text and partly with the NIV. He strongly renounces the eclectic text and therefore objects to translations such as the RSV, the NIV and the NASB which are based on this text. These translations, he claims, reject the Textus Receptus as evidence. Eclecticism, according to br.'t Hart, opens the gate to arbitrary changes to the original text of God's Word. 'The NIV', he claims, 'is totally unacceptable, because of its reliance on the critical eclectic text'.

The NIV, the writer continues, uses a Dynamic Equivalent method of translation which

is too interpretive, too free, too popular, slick, undignified. Furthermore, he dislikes the use of 'you' where hitherto other translations had rendered 'Thee' or 'Thou'. However, br.'t Hart continues, the NKJV is readable, clear, possesses style and dignity. He finds it acceptable, despite some vintage word usage and its use of 'you'. The NKJV has two major points in its favour, he contends: the right choice of text and the adoption of the Formal Equivalent method of translation.

The submission of D. and C. VanderDool features a list of 5 pages with 'major differences' between the NIV and the NKJV, and a 7- page list with 'minor differences'. Some of the major differences listed are: In Acts 3:21, the NIV speaks about 'long ago', whereas the NKJV renders 'since the world began'. Also elements found in Acts 9:5,6 in the NKJV are omitted in the NIV. Br. and Sr. VanderDool ask that, if we cannot return to the KJV, the Deputies recommend to Synod that the NKJV be adopted.

In his letter of June 4, 1991, Br. A. Plug expresses his disagreement with Synod 1990's decision to declare the NASB and NKJV better translations than the RSV. He claims that the advantages of the NASB are marginal and its drawbacks substantial. With regards to the NKJV, he contends, Synod undervalued the importance of style, clarity and readability. According to br. Plug, it was also inconsistent in embracing a careful eclectic text idea, while at the same time promoting a translation which disregards all textual work done since the publication of the KJV. Synod, he states, did not have before it a clear definition of 'reliability'. It was assumed to be roughly synonymous with 'fidelity to original text'. According to br. Plug, the reliability of a translation depends as much on clarity and readability as on fidelity to the original text.

Further, the writer debunks the 'translation vs. interpretation' idea by claiming, with J. Skilton, that all translation is interpretation. In his opinion, caricature-making of the DE method, used in the NIV, is unwarranted. We, he argues, who are largely from families in which English is a second language, should in this respect take advice from linguistic experts.

Br. Plug also states that Wisselink, in his recently published thesis, seems to promote the use of a cautious eclectic text. Finally, Br. Plug contends that the availability of copies of a translation (and of concordances and teaching aids which are based on this translation) should be an important criterion for either adopting or rejecting it. The NIV, he concludes, is readily available and, also, has a place already in many of our families.

4. The New American Standard Bible

A. Mandate

Synod 1990 declared that it deemed the NASB a better translation than the RSV (Recommendation 4) on the grounds that it "tends to be more cautious in its use of the ancient versions of the Old Testament and conjectural emendations, and in the New Testament is marginally more likely to take up readings from the Majority Text." It observed that "its aim of staying close to the Greek and Hebrew provides the attentive student (whether theologian or 'layman') with a wealth of information about original languages, and a useful check on other idiomatic translations such as the RSV or the NIV. This is where its strength lies" (Observation 7).

Synod also considered (Cons. 4c.) that "it appears overall the NASB is a more reliable translation than the RSV."

Despite these arguments in its favour, neither the previous Deputies nor Synod 1990 were able to give NASB sufficient support to recommend it to the churches as a replacement for the AV and the RSV, because of its

"wooden style, lack of clarity and poor readability." For this reason they rejected it, recommending it instead as a valuable aid to Bible study. Nevertheless, Synod 1990

instructed the new Deputies to further study the suitability of the NASB to replace the RSV (Recom. 6b1).

B. General

Since the NASB's advantages in the matters of text and readability have already been established, present Deputies have concentrated on the stylistic and linguistic features of the NASB, and have tried to determine whether its deficiencies in these areas are sufficiently serious to disqualify it from further consideration as a replacement for the RSV.

A detailed linguistic examination of random samples of Old and New Testament passages overwhelmingly confirmed the findings of previous Deputies. None of the samples studied gave a clear, fresh rendition in contemporary English of the passages in question. On the contrary, word usage and vocabulary were often found to be outdated and unnecessarily esoteric, sentence structure frequently convoluted and sometimes grammatically incorrect, style generally awkward and inelegant, and punctuation occasionally incorrect according to accepted modern standards. The introduction of tenses not known or used in the English language may be a valuable aid in Bible study, but tends to detract further from the literary quality of this version. On the whole, the NASB's principle of rendering the original text as exactly as possible too often causes it to obscure the meaning of Scripture, as previous Deputies also pointed out.

C. Word Usage and Vocabulary in the NASB

The NASB contains many words, terms and expressions no longer in current use. Most of them may sound familiar to our church people through long-term association with the AV and the RSV, through knowledge of the Dutch equivalent or from long years of instruction at home, catechism class, school and from the pulpit, but it would be interesting to ascertain what exactly the average reader understands by such outmoded expressions as:

"bring a reviling judgment against them" (1 Pet. 2:11)

"lift up the light of Thy countenance" (Ps. 4:8)

"their inward part is destruction itself" (Ps. 5:9)

"all the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36)

or words such as: travail, forth, seed (i.e. descendants), pate, scribe (i.e. teacher of the law), shafts (arrows), flesh, abide.

Most of the difficulties with NASB's language, however, arise not from its use of antiquated words and expressions, but from its overly-literal approach. It may use common and current vocabulary, but in seeking to render the Hebrew and Greek as precisely as possible it is forced to use English words and expressions in such a way as often to make their meaning unclear, ambiguous or even completely unintelligible. The following examples may illustrate this:

Isa. 1:5 "Where will you be stricken again?" (NIV: Why should you be beaten any more?)

Isa. 1: 6 "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil." (NIV: From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness - only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil).

Isa. 1:11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" (NIV: The multitude of your sacrifices....)

Acts 3:11 "... the so-called portico of Solomon..." In current English, "so-called" means wrongly, unjustifiably, falsely, called. (NIV ...called Solomon's Colonnade...)

Ps. 5:10 "Hold them guilty, O God;" (NIV: Declare them guilty, O God!)

Ps. 4:2 "O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?" (NKJV: How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?)

Ps. 5:3 "In the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch." (NIV: ...morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.)

Ps. 6:6 "Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with tears." (NIV: ...all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.)

Luke 1:43 "And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (NIV: But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?)

Furthermore, the NASB is replete with unnecessary Hebraisms (e.g. the ubiquitous "and" at sentence beginnings).

D. Sentence structure and style in the NASB

The chief linguistic deficiency of the NASB is its frequently convoluted and sometimes ambiguous syntax, and its awkward, inelegant style. Here again, the translation policy of the NASB Editorial Board is largely responsible. Syntax and style in the NASB are often so confusing as to form a considerable obstacle to understanding the Scriptures in most situations except concentrated Bible-study where other versions and commentaries can be consulted. Although syntax and style are usually treated as distinct and separate elements in linguistic study, they are here taken together to obviate repeating examples, as in many of them the syntactic and stylistic elements work together. Below are some of them.

Isa. 1:1 "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw..." This is ambiguous: did he see a vision or did he see Judah and Jerusalem? (NIV: The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw...)

Isa. 1:7 "Your land is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your fields - strangers are devouring them in your presence; it is desolation, as overthrown by strangers." (NIV: Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.)

Isa. 1:28 "But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, and those who forsake the LORD shall come to an end." Ambiguous: will the transgressors and sinners be crushed against each other or will they be crushed at the same time? Will people stop forsaking the LORD or will those who do come to a bad end? (NIV: But rebels and sinners will both be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD will perish.)

Isa. 1:31 "And the strong man will become tinder, his work also a spark. Thus they shall both burn together..." What does 'also' contribute? Does 'thus' mean 'this way' or 'also'? (NIV: The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark; both will burn together...)

Luke 1:54,55 "He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever." Where does "Abraham and his offspring..." belong in the sentence? (NIV: He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants for ever, even as he said to our fathers.)

Luke 1:8,9 "Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense." Where in this sentence, does "according to the custom of the priestly office" belong? (NIV: Once when's Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as a priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.)

Acts 1:21,22 "It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us - beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us - one of these should become a

witness..." This is a grammatically incorrect way of emphasizing; the sentence should read "It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us ... one should become a witness", instead of the present "It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us ... one of these should become a witness." (NIV: Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness...)

Acts 3:2 "...at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful..." Ambiguous: Beautiful temple or Beautiful gate? (NIV: the temple gate called Beautiful).

Acts 3:16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all." Very confusing. (NIV: By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.)

Practically any page of the NASB will provide similar instances of the NASB's obscure sentence structure and unattractive style.

E. Punctuation in the NASB

In the samples studied, several examples were found in which the NASB does not adhere to generally accepted conventions of punctuation. This is especially evident in the NASB's unorthodox use of commas, employed where a semicolon, a full stop or a conjunction seems called for. This practice is perhaps another consequence of the NASB's translation policy of adhering to the original at all costs, even though some violence may have to be done to the receptor language. Some examples: Isa. 1:4b,13,14; 2 Peter 2:15-16; 2 Peter 3:17-18.

F. Other observations

The NASB's use of "will" and "shall" is not always consistent with modern usage, e.g. Ex. 21:6c, 22:13,15,27.

Footnotes in the NASB are indicated only marginally smaller than the digits used to number the verses. This is sometimes confusing, as it is easy to misread a verse number for a footnote number (and vice-versa).

With respect to the NASB's inconsistent reference to Christ as You/Thou, its use of Greek verb tenses not found in English, its inconsistent use of italics to indicate words not found in the Hebrew and Greek original but added for the sake of clarifying meaning, present Deputies' findings were generally in agreement with the findings of previous Deputies, as expressed in their report to Synod 1990.

G. Conclusion

In accordance with Section 6b.1. of the mandate given by Synod 1990, your Deputies have further studied the suitability of the NASB to replace the RSV. Upon close examination of several samples from both the Old and the New Testaments, we are agreed that on the basis of its linguistic and stylistic characteristics, the NASB cannot be recommended to replace the RSV for worship services, for instruction at home and at school, and for memorization, though its advantages for private and group Bible study, cited by previous Deputies in their report to Synod 1990, make it a valuable study aid.

5. The New King James Version

A. Mandate

Synod 1990 (Acts, p.89, obs. 8) observed that previous Deputies concluded: *"regarding reliability, we appreciate the fact that the NKJV has not followed the RSV in that translation's apparent surrender to liberal influences. However, some objections, particularly about the textual choices, the submission to dispensationalist thoughts, and*

the confusing policy to capitalize pronouns referring to the Godhead, negatively affect the reliability of this translation and constitute a formidable stumbling block to our acceptance of the NKJV as a viable alternate to the RSV. Deputies record some critical notes about the method of translation, the mixed word usage, and the stilted sentence structure which together make us conclude that it can hardly be called a modern translation. Summing up, Deputies cannot recommend the New King James Version for use in church services."

It also considered (Acts, p. 93, cons. 4d):

"As to obs. 8 it must be concluded that the NKJV is a more reliable translation than the RSV. Deputies give also examples of this on p. 19. Criticism of the NKJV being inclined towards dispensationalism can also be levelled at the KJV, but that has not been a difficulty for us in using the KJV. We feel that this aspect bears further investigation. On the criterion of reliability (p. 21) it is difficult to accept Deputies' preference for the RSV with its liberal tendencies over against the NKJV which they themselves judge to be a translation that "has not followed the RSV in that translation's apparent surrender to liberal influences". Since we should not accept or reject any translation on choice of text alone (cons. 2), the NKJV should be further investigated with respect to loss of reliability as a result of text choice and method of translation."

B. Allegiance to dispensationalism?

The 1989 Report quoted "cases in which the NKJV translators have spoiled their work and betray an apparent allegiance to dispensationalism and it related chiliasm in the translation" (p. 19). A comparative reading of the texts quoted shows that in every case the word "dispensation" has followed the KJV of 1611. Darby's theology (J. N. Darby 1800-1882) and Scofield's Reference Bible (1909) belong to a different era. The 1989 allegation therefore cannot be upheld on the ground of the texts mentioned. The statement "some of the headings above passages in the Book of Revelation could also be interpreted as favouring dispensationalist thinking" (p.19) does not prove allegiance to such thinking, but merely indicates a possibility.

It would appear that hard evidence of any allegiance to dispensationalism in the translation is not available.

C. Loss of reliability as a result of text choice

For the OT the NKJV translators used the 1966-67 Stuttgart edition of Biblia Hebraica, frequent comparisons being made with the Bomberg edition of 1524-25. The Septuagint and Vulgate were consulted. In addition, the resources of relevant manuscripts from the Dead Sea Caves have been used. Deputies have been unable to check the impact these sources have made on the final result. This matter merits further investigation.

As for the NT, the Textus Receptus has been employed. For a concise description of the historical development of the Textus Receptus reference should be made to Appendix C in Robert Martin's Accuracy of Translation and the NIV (1989).

A classical example of loss of reliability as a result of text choice is the translation of 1 John 5:7 with the "Comma Johanneum", based on the Erasmus translation of a late Greek text. It is now generally accepted that this text was not trustworthy. As the footnote in the NKJV explains it: "only four or five very late Greek manuscripts contain these words." The marginal notes of the Dutch Statenvertaling curiously proclaimed "de meeste Griekse boeken..." Loss of reliability here is clearly a result of text choice.

In light of the history of the Textus Receptus there are inevitably a number of passages which deviate from the original Greek text. We are not competent to indicate those errors. However, the following should be taken into account:

- 1) A growing body of scholars has come to deem the Textus Receptus as far more reliable than it was considered some decades ago. Perhaps we would, with J. van Bruggen and W. F. Wisselink, prefer the Majority Text. However, nomination of a strictly defined autograph, rather than an eclectic text chosen by a committee

majority enlightened by a textual theory prevailing at any point of time, will make a substantial contribution to the fidelity of the translation. At the same time, it will enhance the authority of Scripture by the use of one translation over a prolonged period. Van Bruggen (in *The Future of the Bible*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1978; further references in this report under VB) observes that "nothing is more damaging to the authority of Scripture than for readers to think: 'It's only a translation, tomorrow there will be a different one' (VB, 136).

- 2) The Textus Receptus can lay claim to a historic continuity of authority as it has been prominent in the Reformed Churches through the ages.
- 3) One consequence of using the Textus Receptus is the completeness of the translation - be it an over- completeness at times. As P. 't Hart's submission indicated, the eclectic texts labour under the phenomenon of several inconsistent omissions which tend to create the feeling that "we've been robbed".
- 4) Significant variations with the Majority Text are recorded in footnotes to the NKJV. So are the variants in the Nestle 26/UBS text. Without any evaluation of such readings, they are mentioned as "NU-Text". These footnotes offer considerable assistance to the reader in identifying where the variant readings occur and what are the consequences in translation.
- 5) Finally, when we bear in mind that the loyalty to the text in the NKJV is of the same calibre as that in the Authorized Version, Van Bruggen's remark is worth recording that "the number of divergencies from the traditional Greek text is many times smaller in the AV than in all the modern translations" (VB, 124)

D. Loss of reliability as a result of method of translation of NKJV

1. Own Findings

A study of random passages of the NT showed that the NKJV suffers the drawbacks of a FE translation, be it less severely than the NASB.

The meaning of the text is often obscured due to outdated word usage or awkward sentence structure.

Examples of outdated word usage are:

Luke 1:1 'inasmuch'; Luke 1:21 'marvelled' in the sense of 'wondered'; Luke 1:34 'know a man'; Eph. 1:1 'Blessed be' used in relation to God; Rev. 2:9 'blasphemy' for 'slander'; Rev. 3:17 'miserable' for 'pitiful'.

Examples of awkward sentence structure and style are:

Luke 1:9,55 What do the clauses 'according to the custom of the priesthood' and 'to Abraham and to his seed' belong to? Eph. 1:14 'the Holy Spirit of promise' for 'the promised Holy Spirit' (genitive of description); Rev. 2:13 'my faith' for 'your faith in me'.

Apart from the above, the NKJV seems to follow the KJV rather slavishly so that the same mistakes are repeated e.g. Luke 1:3 'had perfect understanding'; Luke 1:47 'has rejoiced' (inceptive aorist); Eph. 1:10 'that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times'; Rev. 2:11, 3:5 'at all' is ignored; Rev 3:16 'I will' instead of 'I am about to';

From the above one can conclude that there is a considerable loss of reliability as a result of the method of translation. The extent and seriousness of this loss will need further investigation before definite recommendations can be made.

2. Faithfulness to the form

The accuracy of a Bible translation should reflect the translators' respect for the God-breathed character of Scripture. The NKJV indeed shows this respect. The translators have not attempted to restructure the text - a procedure which would rob the church of a reliable translation. They have meticulously followed the path mapped out by van Bruggen: "Obedience in Bible translating means a careful translation of what God caused to be written. The translator should not attempt to mediate between

God's Word and modern culture, but only render and transmit. Then God's Word itself will reach the people whom God in His grace wants to reach" (VB, 99).

Modern translators frequently neglect faithfulness to the form. The restructuring process does not respect the original form: every effort is geared to "meaning" for the receptor. Three aspects deserve our attention:

- a) The restructured translation obliterates the historical distance between prophets and apostles - the original authors - and ourselves (VB, 105).
- b) Moreover, if the translator restructures the text in terms of the receptor language, he becomes an exegete, and the reader gets locked into the translator's understanding (VB, 106);
- c) The New Testament more than once appeals to the literal words of an Old Testament text (VB, 109).

The NKJV shows evidence that the form of the original text is respected. It displays our conviction that "the form of the original text has not been brought about by the will of men, but that holy men of God have spoken as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (VB, 110).

Thus, in the NKJV there is a clearly distinguishable bias towards formal equivalence in the continuum between dynamic equivalence (DE) and formal equivalence (FE). The translators, who signed a document of subscription to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the original autographs of the Bible, speak of "complete equivalence in translation", which seeks to preserve "all of the information in the text, while preserving it in good literary form" (Preface to the 1982 edition, page iv).

3. Clarity and readability

3.1 Clarity is an important element in readability, though it has to be kept in its proper perspective.

- a) Firstly, we should be prudent in recognizing that the translator must not add to, or remove from, the "obscurity" of the original. Van Bruggen correctly draws attention to 2 Cor. 1:13, where RSV and NIV both have added the word "can": "what you can read....", making the meaning quite unclear. The receptor's perceived requirement appears to prevail over the clarity. Robert Martin (Accuracy of Translation and the NIV, Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), after stating that "sacrificing precision for simplicity is no bargain", reminds us that "inaccurate and paraphrastic translations cannot but contribute to the further erosion of the theological precision in the decades to come" (p.7). There is no requirement for, nor expectation of, a Bible translation to be read like a modern newspaper - language which dates and transforms into "garbage out" in a matter of hours. Reverence for the living Word of God will tend to produce consistently reverent language. Its grade of difficulty will be close to that of the English used in our preaching: usually clear, never trite.
- b) For the sake of clarification, the NKJV has re-introduced the practice of printing some words in italics. It is an ancient practice well known to users of the KJV and the Dutch Statenvertaling. It provides warning lights to the reader, as it were, making him aware that the original language form could not be simply retained in the translation process. It does not eliminate the risk of interpretation, as Martin demonstrates (p. 22, 23). Yet, it is a procedure rather more honest than the restructuring method which turns the translator into "an exegete who is interpreting the Bible for the church" (VB, 106).
- c) Though it is heartening to note that the NKJV translators have come to grips with the reverence due to the Word without restructuring the message in terms of the receptor language, we must understand that this may result in sacrifices having to be made in the area of readability when some of the older terms have been retained, such as justification, predestined, propitiation. These terms will have to be explained to new Bible users, as was pointed out in the 1989 Report. The ancient pronouns "thou" and "thee" are no longer there: they are "no longer

part of our language". Concurrently, the verb endings -eth and -est, which over the years have proved to be such pernicious stumbling stones to many, have been replaced by their contemporary equivalents. These changes will be felt as losses by several of our people. However, it may be considered that reverence does not inevitably flow from the retention of ancient forms. It flows from people's inner attitudes.

- d) Taking these considerations into account, it should be acknowledged that the NKJV may be regarded as a translation which generally avoids restructuring interpretations.

3.2 A comparison with the "readability" section of the 1989 Report produces the following supplementary observations:

- a) The English edition of the NKJV (Samuel Bagster & Sons Ltd.) does not show capitals, as alleged, in Mt. 26:31, Luke 2:7, 2:43, 24:49, John 4:19, 10:33, Gal. 3:6 or 2 Thess. 2:7. Thus there is no evidence that "the capitalization policy was extended to nouns, a policy leading to absurdity". We do retain our reservations concerning the capitalization of pronouns referring to the persons of the Trinity. But can they reasonably be called "a formidable stumbling block"? It should be noted that the English edition continues to be available, even though most Bible shipments these days originate in the U.S.A.
- b) The modernization of archaic language has been acceptable on the whole. Many of the words annex to doctrinal terminology may have to be explained to "outsiders", just as today they are being explained to our young people. There is nothing wrong with that, as we recognize that the Bible is primarily for God's people. Besides, we ought to remember that in Paul's days the readers were mostly illiterate, and all readers were "new" readers. Here, too, we should heed the historical perspective. To quote van Bruggen once more: "The Scriptures are easier to understand by believers, who have received the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, than for unbelievers, who remain in rebellion against God. Even a Christian understands the Bible better after he has been reading it for some time We reject the modern tendency to sacrifice faithfulness to the form to clarity for the readers, but we also reject conservative tendencies to press faithfulness to form to such an extent that the receiving language becomes distorted and unclear" (VB, 114).
- c) There may be some evidence of what has been called "a stilted sentence structure". As K. Stebbins (The Protestant Review, 14/8, p. 8) remarked, we are on subjective ground here, and we have to watch against prejudice. Perhaps there is also a link with what the 1989 Report called "the narrow minded base from which the translators have set out to do their task."
- d) Some words have no equivalent in modern English, e.g. phylacteries in Mt. 23:5, chariots in Gen. 50:9 and Acts 8:29.
- e) In John 3:16, one of the Bible's most frequently quoted parts, the phrase "only begotten Son" clearly describes the unique relationship between the Father and the Son. This is a better rendering than "only Son" in the RSV and "one and only son" in the NIV.

E. Conclusions

- 1) The NKJV is faithful to the form of the original.
- 2) This faithfulness to the form has resulted in some considerable losses in clarity in its language, though these losses are not as severe as in the NASB. Their extent merits further investigation.
- 3) The NKJV's underlying text is of significant value. The translation's fidelity gains to a major degree because it is a matter of safety to follow that long-established form of the text. Therefore it is worthy of serious consideration by the Churches.
- 4) The extent to which the NKJV has made use of the textual scholarship of the last centuries needs further examination, especially as related to the OT.

6. The New International Version

A. Mandate

Synod 1990 gave Deputies the instruction to further evaluate the NIV in line with considerations 4e and 6, in respect of its method of translation.

Consideration 4e states:

"Deputies say and quote references that the NIV uses a combination of formal and dynamic equivalent translation and consider that a point in its favour (p. 26). However, quoting Callow and Beekman again (in Translating the Word of God, p. 21) "...each translation has been produced with one or the other approach in mind". In view of Consideration 3.c this poses the question which approach has dominated in the NIV, i.e. where on the alleged 'continuum' between DE and FE the NIV translation is located. This whole matter needs also to be reconciled with other references to the effect that the NIV tends to be an interpretive rather than an accurate translation. We note here what is said in the majority report of the Committee on Bible translation of the Canadian Reformed Churches, appointed by Coaldale 1977: "although the NIV uses clear and contemporary English, the so-called DE manner of translation makes this version too free for use in the pulpit". The DE method has been an ongoing issue in our churches (1975, Article 52; 1983 Deputies' Report, p. 115-116 of the Acts; 1987, Article 109). Synod 1975 decided against the advice of Deputies: "to reject the NIV on the ground that the dynamic equivalent method of translation does not do full justice to the inscripturated, inspired Word of God" (Acts, Article 52.1).

Consideration 6 adds:

"Deputies' recommended choice (the NIV) cannot be supported without further study being undertaken as to the degree that the DE method of translation has effected the NIV's reliability."

B. Study of the NIV

1 R.Martin and the NIV

In their study of the translation in hand, Deputies found Robert Martin's book, entitled Accuracy of Translation and the NIV (1989), very helpful. For that reason Deputies include a summary of this book. As the title reveals, the author examines how accurate the NIV is as a translation. Martin defines accuracy in terms of close correspondence to the structure and wording of the original texts. Our starting point, according to Martin, should be our belief in the truth of verbal-plenary inspiration; the Bible is inspired in such a way that its very words are inspired ('verbal' inspiration); and that inspiration extends to all the words of Scripture ('plenary' inspiration). That belief would lead the translator to as much formal equivalent translation of the divinely inspired words as possible. Conversely, Martin states, the more a translator embraces the DE philosophy of translating, the less compatible his product will be with the orthodox doctrine of verbal-plenary inspiration.

The translators of the NIV, according to Martin, were heavily influenced by the DE method of translation (pp.11,12). With the supporting evidence he adduces for this, he attempts to debunk the claim, made by the governing body of the NIV project, that the NIV's language reflects that it occupies middle ground on the FE-DE continuum.

What then, according to the author, are these DE elements in the NIV and how seriously do these affect the accuracy and therefore the reliability of the NIV?

The first claim, made by Martin, is the NIV's practice of rendering an originally complex sentence (which includes a number of subordinate clauses) with a series of shorter, single sentences. In this way, subordinate clauses have become coordinate ones. Consequently, Martin claims, the interrelatedness, for example, of Paul's argument and the order of importance in which he had expressed his concerns or

thoughts are lost. Thus, the original is misrepresented and the reader is misled. Martin quotes a number of texts in support of his observation: Eph. 1:3-14; Eph. 1:15-21; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; Acts 1:1-5; 1 Cor. 5:3-5; Heb. 1:1-4. These examples clearly show, according to Martin, that in this area the NIV has more in common with the philosophy of dynamic equivalence than with the philosophy of formal equivalence.

The second characteristic of DE translation in the NIV, Martin notes, is the addition of words which are not in the original text, but are added for the sake of clarity and fluency. Martin admits that all translation work involves the adding of words which are not in the original language. However, he states, the NIV does this too often, too freely, without acknowledging, by means of brackets, or italics, that the additions have been made. At many places a translation such as the NIV does not lend itself for an appropriate use of brackets. Martin, however, is concerned with those passages in which NIV translation was literal enough to allow for specific words to be italicized or bracketed, in a bid to acknowledge that those words were not part of the original language. He presents a list of examples, such as Mark 9:24 and Matthew 13:32, in which certain additions have caused shifts in meaning or point to a favoured interpretation. Martin argues that the reader should not be presented with interpretive additions without an in-text indication that he is presented with an addition. The reader should be allowed to judge for himself (p.24).

Martin also deplores the NIV's omission of words such as 'idou' = 'Lo' or 'Behold' and 'euthus' = 'straightway' (Gospel of Mark). Furthermore, he regrets the erosion in the NIV of the Bible's technical language. He argues that, if God inspired the original writers to use some rare and difficult words - which they did -, these terms should not be translated with less precise language. The Christian faith, Martin argues, with its unique message, has a technical vocabulary like any other discipline or field of study.

As examples of the erosion of technical terms in the NIV Martin mentions the inconsistent translation of *huiothesia* ('adoption as sons') e.g. Rom 8:15; *musterion* ('mystery'), *hilasterion* ('propitiation') e.g. Rom 3:25, *homothumadon* ('with one accord'). Quite extensively Martin deals with the word 'sarx' ('flesh') which the NIV has translated as 'sinful nature' in the ethical passages, thus unwittingly offering support for the doctrinal error of the Plymouth Brethren that sin is an act of the old sinful nature and not one of the essential self.

It is better, Martin states, to teach new generations the meaning of the Bible's technical terms than to eliminate them and produce a generation of supposedly biblically literate people, who in reality are biblically and theologically illiterate because they have suffered long-term exposure to inaccurate and imprecise versions of the Bible (p. 38).

Martin continues to talk about an erosion of a different kind in the NIV where it arbitrarily engages in some 'cultural levelling', a typical DE characteristic; everything has to be made culturally relevant to the modern, western Bible reader. For example, instead of 'girding up the loins of your mind' the NIV has 'prepare your minds for action' (1 Peter 1:13).

One of Martin's major concerns regarding the accuracy of the NIV is its tendency to interpret too much. He knows that all translation work involves a certain degree of interpretation. It is sometimes unavoidable to interpret, even in FE translations. There are dilemmas such as the one in Ephesians 1:4. Does 'in love' grammatically belong to what precedes or to what follows? All translators understand these types of problems, says Martin. They are inherent in any translation work.

Martin's concern, however, is with interpretation used by choice rather than when only necessary (p.42). His concern is that translators' blunders in interpretation may misguide unsuspecting readers. According to Martin, interpretive text and/or alternative readings should be placed in the margins. The theologically (as opposed to the grammatically) ambiguous should not be solved by the offering of theological

opinion or interpretation. Martin wants this ambiguity faced, studied and, with the Lord's help, solved by the readers themselves (p.46).

So, Martin's worry is that interpretation is passed as translation (i.e., as inspired Word of God). He quotes quite a number of texts to prove his point, too many to deal with here (see pp.48-62). One example concerns Matthew 6:22; 'If your eyes are single' (KJV) compared with 'If your eyes are good' (NIV). 'Single' contains a richness, 'good' does not, says Martin. 'Good' is not consistent with other terms and imagery used in the context.

Finally, Martin argues that paraphrasing, a widespread phenomenon in the NIV, 'greatly reduces a version's usefulness as a study tool, especially for the reader who does not read Greek or Hebrew and who is thus dependent on the formal accuracy of the English translation that he is using as a study Bible' (p.66).

Taking all the above observations into consideration, Martin comes to the conclusion that the NIV is a translation which in many ways reflects an adoption of the DE philosophy of translation and which, consequently, cannot be regarded as an accurate (= reliable) translation. Quoting Sheehan, he says that accuracy has been sacrificed on the altar of simplicity. The accuracy of a translation depends on the extent to which the translators have stuck closely to the original text. When Martin applies that yardstick, the NIV is not allowed to pass that test.

2 J. W. Scott on DE and the NIV

J.W.Scott, in an article published in the Westminster Theological Journal (1986), subscribes to the view that often in the NIV substance is sacrificed to style, a style which seeks to simplify, thereby losing some of the finer points in the Bible message. Sometimes, Scott asserts, these lost details are theologically important.

Examples of places in Scripture, where such losses of detail have occurred, can be found in Acts where it speaks about baptism. Scott argues that the NIV, no doubt unintentionally, removed from these texts details that extend the scope of baptism beyond believers (especially to their children).

According to the NIV, everyone confessed their faith in the households of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16) and of Crispus (Acts 18) before baptism. The NIV renders Acts 18 as follows: "Crispus ... and his entire household believed." However, the Greek text, Scott indicates, is more complex than the NIV reader is led to believe. The Greek shows that the head of the household believed, and that his household was associated with him in faith. The statements "he believed with his whole household" (literal translation) and "he and his whole household believed" (NIV) are not identical. As infants could have been present as members of the household when the head of that household was converted, they, associated with the latter, could have been baptised as well in a whole household baptism without the prerequisite of individual faith.

The NIV, however, in its bid to simplify and clarify, has inadvertently played into the hands of those who exclude children (non-confessing members) from receiving God's sign and seal of the Covenant. Assuming, Scott writes, that their expressed bias towards 'believers' baptism' was unintentional, the NIV translators seemed to have been unaware of some of the subtleties in the original language and perhaps overly confident of their ability to grasp the full and precise meaning of God's Word (p.355).

This illustrates, according to Scott, that the "looser" a translation is, the more likely it is to convey only what the translators realize is there. When translators have a limited understanding of a text, they will ordinarily convey more of the original meaning, however awkwardly, with a more literal translation.

3 Previous Deputies' Reports

Deputies were asked to make use of previous Deputies' reports to their respective Synods, including those of our Canadian sister churches. They studied these reports and made use of the materials presented in their discussions. What follows below is

a list of observations specifically related to the NIV, compiled from three former Deputies' reports.

3a Report Deputies to Synod Albany 1975.

The NIV was considered to be a faithful version, not detrimental to Reformed doctrine. Holwerda was quoted: "A literal translation is often literal indeed, but no translation" and "A careful paraphrase is sometimes more precise than a literal translation." The NIV was deemed to be the best replacement of the other new versions under study (RSV, NASB). This version, at least the New Testament (the only part available then), was recommended to our people.

3b Report Deputies to Synod Kelmescott 1983.

Deputies considered the NIV to be a clear translation, written in fluent English with an apparent sensitivity for literary style. They stated that the NIV contained an accurate formulation of our Reformed doctrine. However, they claimed, the NIV as a translation is too free, too interpretive. Some examples are mentioned of scripture passages where the text is clear but not quite accurate:

Exodus 20:5 "punishing" vs. "visiting"

Isaiah 1:9 "Lord Almighty" vs. "Lord of Hosts"

Philip 4:17 "Dear friends" vs. "Beloved"

Isaiah 8:7 "to put my trust" vs. "to wait for"

Deputies concluded that the NIV is less suitable for use in the worship services, and that this translation would date faster than a translation in more formal English.

3c Report Deputies to Synod Burlington 1980

Deputies made an in-depth study of passages of some 15 Bible books. We take the liberty to quote from their observations:

"Among the chapters studied, Genesis 40 and 41 were most appreciated. Genesis 40:15,16 are a real improvement; 41:12 has the best rendering of the four versions: Genesis 41:21 is somewhat free but to the point. The translation of Isaiah 7:9 "if you do not stand firm in your faith, you shall not stand at all" brings out the play on words in the original. The Assyrian onslaught described in Isaiah 8:7-9 is vivid and picturesque. "Gloat over me" and "I will see her downfall" in Micah 7:8 are good modern translations. "All who live in distant places" instead of "cut corners of the hair" come close to the KJV. So does "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14. The NIV has a beauty of its own, because of its clarity and its freshness of expression.

There is, however, another side to the coin, that, namely, the translation is rather free or too free. Examples are "cleansed" in Isaiah 1:6; "field of melons" in Isaiah 1:13; "evil assemblies" of Isaiah 1:13; "impurities" instead of "dross", Isaiah 1:25; "ships of Tarshish" is rendered "every trading ship" in Isaiah 2:16. "Put my trust in Him" of Isaiah 8:7 is not the same as "to wait for" of the original.

"Spiritists" in Isaiah 8:19 is too modernistic and incorrect: "bears my name" in Jeremiah 7:10 is a loss in comparison to "which is called by my name" of the other versions.

As to the New Testament translation, the same can said of the NIV's translation. There are good and clear renderings, e.g., Romans 3:30 "through the same faith"; Romans 5:12-18 is a very transparent rendering; Philippians 1:22 is an excellent expression of the dialogue style; but there also an unnecessary freedom with the words or texts: Romans 1:16 "for the gentile" instead of "for the Greek"; Romans 2:15 "the requirement of the law" instead of "the work of the law"; Romans 3:20 ou pasa sarx (no flesh) rendered by "no one". Romans 4:11 "he received circumcision as a sign and seal" instead of "he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of." Philippians 1:18 "But what does it matter? The important thing is" as rendering of "Ti gar, Plen" is rather paraphrastic. The NIV, as a deputy remarked,

tends too much to bring out the interpretation of a word or verse in the translation of it." (Report pp.231,232)

The majority of the Canadian Deputies concluded

"Although the NIV uses clear and contemporary English, the so-called dynamic equivalent manner of translation makes the version too free for use in the pulpit. This is sometimes aggravated by a lack of footnotes."

4 Evaluation

Deputies' own study of the NIV has confirmed that the NIV certainly displays the features, and thus also the drawbacks, of a DE translation. Although Deputies do not agree with every detail of Martin's book - he does not seem to take the organic inspiration of the Bible and the demands of the receptor language into account sufficiently -, they feel that the general thrust of his book is undeniable. He has presented sufficient proof to indicate that the NIV is all too often too free and too interpretive. This certainly makes the NIV less reliable as a translation. Deputies do not call it an unreliable translation because they are conscious of the fact that no translation - not even the best FE translation - is perfectly reliable. The NIV has its value as a clear translation in contemporary English and one cannot call it un-scriptural. Yet, Deputies share the concerns expressed by Martin, Scott and previous Deputies. Deputies' main concern is that the NIV does not indicate where it is interpretive; the Bible readers are led to believe that they have God's inspired Word in front of them, whereas all too often it is the translator's interpretation of God's Word. J. W. Scott has illustrated what this can lead to. When translators have a limited understanding of the text 'freer' translations are prone to mislead the readers more than a more literal translation would. Often Bible readers are not able to trace back the original text and are thus too dependent on the understanding of the translators.

Reverence for the Word of God demands precision in passing on exactly what is written. This is vitally important, especially in this age of theological shallowness with its dislike of precise theological thinking.

5 Conclusions

- a. The NIV is a clear translation in contemporary English.
- b. The loss of reliability as a result of the method of translation makes Deputies reluctant to recommend the NIV for use in the church services.
- c. The NIV can be useful when used together with a more literal translation.

7. Comparison NKJV and NIV

In order to give an impression of the issues involved in judging a translation fairly, Deputies include a sample comparison of three scripture passages.

7.1 Luke 1

1. NKJV

The NKJV is quite a literal translation, be it less literal than the NASB. It is more flexible than the NASB in dealing with Hebrew expressions and in translating according to what the context requires e.g. vs 7 "but"; vs 11 "then"; vs 15 sentence split up; vs 17 "He will also." Additions or interpretations have usually been indicated so that one is generally able to trace back the original text.

Weaknesses are:

- a. As a result of wanting to be too literal both in word order and in translation, the NKJV is not always clear, e.g. vs 9 Where does "according to the custom of the priesthood" belong? Vs 55 Where does "to Abraham and to his seed for ever" belong? Vs 34 What does "I do not know a man" mean? Vs 66 "kept them in their hearts".

- b. Awkward sentence structures e.g. vs 33 "and of his kingdom"; vs 51 "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts"; vs 57; vs 59 "called him by the name of his father".
- c. Awkward non-contemporary words. e.g. vs 1 "inasmuch"; vs 21 "marvelled"; vs 41,44 "babe"; vs 77 "remission".
- d. Doubtful or wrong translation. e.g. vs 3 "had perfect understanding"; vs 28 "rejoice" instead of "hail" or "greetings"; vs 47 "has rejoiced"; vs 63 "marvelled".
- e. Interpretive paraphrase or addition. e.g. vs 71 "that we should be saved", literally "salvation"; vs 72 "promises".
- f. Elements lost or not adequately translated. e.g. vs 29 "was troubled" should be "was greatly troubled". "Idou" (behold) has been translated in a flexible way.

2. NIV

Luke 1 in the NIV is a clear translation, in good, fluent English. Generally the meaning of the original is captured well. Regarding the method of translation the following can be noted:

- a. Some long sentences have been split up e.g. verses 1-4; verses 24,25.
- b. Sometimes the word order has been changed e.g. vs 9,50,55,74.
- c. The active form has at times been substituted by the passive form or vice-versa e.g. vs 2b 'by those'; vs 12 'was gripped with fear' instead of 'fear gripped them'; vs 24 'remained in seclusion' instead of 'hid herself'; vs 26 'God sent the angel' instead of 'the angel was sent by God'.
- d. Hebraisms have not been translated. e.g. the frequent use of "and", "and it came about"; "answering he said" vs 19,35. Verse 60 has translated this expression perfectly with the words: "but his mother spoke up and said".
- e. Certain words have been added for clarification. e.g. vs 5 "priestly"; "also"; vs 8 "Zechariah's" instead of "his"; vs 29 "Mary" instead of "she"; vs 22 "for" not in the original text.
- f. At times a paraphrase has been given. e.g. vs 15 "even from birth" instead of "from his mother's womb"; vs 27 "pledged to be married" instead of "betrothed"; vs 10 "all the assembled worshippers" instead of "the whole multitude of the people"; vs 31 "be with child" literally "conceive in your womb"; vs 42 "the child you will bear" instead of "the fruit of your womb"; vs 43 "why am I so favoured" literally "whence is this to me"; vs 78 "the rising sun" literally "the rising" or "dawn".
- g. "Idou" (behold) has almost disappeared, vs 20,31,36,38,44,48.

Is this translation too free?

- ad a. The first sentence has indeed been split up but not at the cost of the interrelation between the parts. The "since" of vs 1 is taken up by the addition of "therefore" in vs 3. Splitting the verses 24 and 25 into two sentences has removed any sign of interrelation or subordination which is present in the original. Via the NIV you don't know that vs 25 is meant to explain Elizabeth's action of vs 24.
- ad b. The changes in verses 9 and 55 are sufficiently clear. The change in vs 50 was not necessary. The one in vs 74 renders as coordinate that which is subordinate in the original. Literally the text reads: "to give us being delivered from the hand of our enemies, to serve him without fear." The main clause is therefore: "to give us to serve him without fear".
- ad c. This occurs in every translation. e.g. NASB and NKJV vs 14 "you will have" instead of "he will be to you". It is true that this happens more frequently in the NIV. Yet the only damaging occasion in Luke 1 is vs 24. The active form "she hid herself" indicates better the link with vs 25, showing that she consciously did something for a given reason.
- ad d. This fits a translation into a different language. We do not have to create a Hebrew-English. Hebrew as such is not inspired.

- ad e. This can be legitimate for the sake of clarity. Only the additions should be indicated as additions to the original. At this point the NIV is too free at times. "For" in vs 22 is interpretive.
- ad f. This also seems a legitimate thing in the process of translation. At times it is unavoidable. Ancient terms have to be transposed into our current language. The danger is, however, that a certain interpretation is presented as Scripture. Vs 15 "even from birth" narrows down the possibilities of the original. The same applies to the interpretive translation of vs 43 and 78.
- ad g. This is a clear deficiency of the NIV.

3. Conclusion

Both translations suffer a number of losses in reliability. The one due to being too literal, the other due to being too free. In general the NIV conveys the true message of Luke 1 better than the NKJV.

7.2 Ephesians 1:3-14.

1. NKJV

The NKJV has broken up this passage into 3 sentences yet the structure has been maintained as much as possible.

Weaknesses are:

- a. not current English: "Blessed be" vs 1
- b. doubtful translation: vs 6 "has made us accepted"; vs 11 "have obtained an inheritance".
- c. doubtful interpretation: vs 13 "In him you also trusted".
- d. wrong translation: vs 10a
- e. unclear and misleading translation: vs 11 the position of "also"; vs 13 "Holy Spirit of promise".

2. NIV

The NIV is a clear translation in current English. With the aid of paraphrastic interpretation it is clearer and fresher than the older translations. Just look at the verses 6, 10, 13 and 14.

Weaknesses:

- a. The NIV has broken up the complex sentence into 8 single sentences. In doing so the relation between various elements of the text has become unclear or has been lost, e.g. the relation between the verses 3 and 4; 4 and 5; 8 and 9. In this translation it is not clear that the words "in accordance with his pleasure and will" (vs 5) as well as the words "to the praise of his glorious grace" also relate to the election mentioned in vs 4.
- b. Doubtful translation/interpretation: vs 9 "in Christ" instead of "in him"; vs 10a; vs 12 "were the first". The interpretive translation of vs 7 "of God's grace" and vs 13 "and you also were included in Christ" are most likely correct, yet there is no indication that elements have been added for the sake of clarity. In vs 5 "to himself" is weakened to "his (sons)" and "according to the good pleasure of his will" is rendered as "in accordance with his pleasure and will".

3. Conclusion:

The NKJV is not always clear or correct, yet in general it is faithful to the original form.

The NIV is generally fresh and clear. However, it is less faithful to the original form and more interpretive.

7.3 Revelation 2 and 3

1. The differences regarding the original text are insignificant. Both translations deviate from the Majority text at times.
2. Apart from being more fluent and clearer, the NIV is also more accurate at a number of points, e.g. Rev. 2:9 'slander' instead of the misleading 'blasphemy' (NKJV); 2:11, 3:5 'at all' is lost in the NKJV; 2:14,20 the colon instead of 'because'; 2:21 'sexual immorality' (NKJV) excludes the possibility of taking it in a figurative sense; 3:12 'is coming' is better than 'comes'; 3:16 'I am about to' is better than 'I will'; 3:17 'pityful' is better than 'miserable'.
The NKJV is more accurate at 2:24 'depths' instead of the misleading 'deep secrets'; 3:2,3 'be watchful' instead of 'wake up'.
3. The NKJV is unclear in places, e.g. 2:13 'my faith' for 'your faith in me'; 3:3 what does 'remember therefore how you have received and heard' mean? 3:9 'worship before your feet?'; 3:14 'the beginning of the creation'?
4. For the sake of simplicity the NIV has split up a number of sentences. At 3:7 it is detrimental. Due to this splitting up of sentences a number of additions have been made necessary, e.g. 2:2b, 2:9b, 3:8b 'I know'; 2:21 'I will make' 3:12 'I will also write on him'.
Apart from that, there are a number of other additions which are not indicated in the text as additions, e.g. 2:6 'in your favour'; 2:14 'people'; 3:21 'the right'; 2:5 'the height'.
The NIV is also freer in giving a paraphrase, e.g. 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14, 'These are the words of' for 'These things says'; 2:13 'in your city' for 'among you'; 2:13 'remain true to' for 'hold to' whereas the same word is translated as 'hold to' in 2:15; 2:19 'doing more than you did at first' is a misleading translation of 'the last (works) being more (=better) than the first'; 3:15 'I wish you were either one or the other' for 'I wish you were cold or hot'; 3:18 'clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness' for 'that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed'; 'idou' (behold) has been translated flexibly at 2:10 'I tell you' and at 3:20 'Here I am'. It is lost at 3:9.

7.4 General conclusions and considerations

1. There is no such thing as a perfect or near perfect translation. Both translations have their pros and cons.
2. The strength of the NIV is the weakness of the NKJV and vice-versa. This would make it ideal to use both translations side by side.
3. We will have to weigh the pros and cons and judge what is worse: losses through simplification or paraphrastic interpretation or losses through unclarity.
4. It is indeed important to have a clear translation in contemporary English. The people must be addressed in their own language and notice that the Bible is relevant to the world of today. Does the NKJV sufficiently cater for this?
5. On the other hand, a translation must remain a translation. Reverence for the Word of God requires precision in translating what is written. Does the NIV sufficiently fulfil that condition?

8. Recommendations

Deputies recommend to Synod 1992

1. to discharge Deputies;
2. to retain the archives;
3. to stop investigating the feasibility of the churches undertaking the task of translating the Bible;
4. to omit the NASB from further consideration for use in the church services;

5. to withhold final endorsement of a new translation until
 - a. more study has been made of the NKJV, and
 - b. a common approach with the CanRC has been effectively pursued;
6. to appoint new Deputies with the mandate
 - a. to continue studies to determine the suitability of the NKJV, in comparison with the NIV, for use in the church services;
 - b. to monitor developments in these translations;
 - c. to continue the contact with the CanRC with the aim of a common approach in mind;
 - d. to maintain the archives related to the studies;
 - e. to report on their progress and, if possible, to make recommendations to the churches and to Synod 1994.

Launceston/Legana
January 1992

Deputies for Bible translations

G. Brouwer
G. Groenewold
Rev. C. Kleyn
J. VanderRos

Book of Praise, ICRC report on Ecumenical Creeds

Esteemed brothers,

Your deputies have had some difficulty to determine the exact extent of the mandate given by Synod 1990 as found in Article 161 point 17; Article 65, recommendation 3; Article 145, recommendation 4; Article 119, recommendation 3.

Regarding our mandate re Hymn 1a.

Deputies have informed the Canadian Reformed sister Churches about their mandate. They have also passed on to them comments made on the new melody with the new text (of the apostle's creed) by D.Zwart. Deputies wish to advise that Synod should not adopt this revised melody and text for the following reasons:

1. the text has included the word '*christian*' (see decisions Synods Albany 1987, article 100, and Armadale 1990, article 109)
2. the standard of the proposed tune is considerably lower than the tune we find in our Book of Praise

To date we have not received any response from Canada.

Regarding our mandate re the Ecumenical Creeds.

Upon study of the ICET texts as provided by the Canadian Acts of Synod and the recommended new texts as printed in the proceedings of the ICRC, deputies are of the opinion that the recommended new texts of the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed and Athanasian Creed be accepted.

Two points are left for consideration:

1. In the Apostles' Creed the word '*Amen*' has been left off. Deputies are not qualified to comment.
2. The Nicene Creed begins with the word '*we*'. Deputies feel that '*I*' is more personal and appropriate. Deputies recommend that the pages 104- 161 of the ICRC report be used for reference material.

Deputies have included a '*highlighted copy*' of all proposed changes.

Regarding our mandate re Canons of Dort.

Your deputies thoroughly perused the proposed linguistic changes to the Canons of Dort. Deputies would like to comment on the proposed changes as follows:

The deletion of the words '*First (Second, etc.) Head of Doctrine*' needs further examination

Chapter 1

Article 2. The word '*begotten*' is added. It is noted that the 1987 reprint of the Book of Praise already includes this word. Deputies recommend the addition of this word

Article 7. Has added the word '*specific*'. John 17 vs. 12 and 24 seems to justify the '*specific persons*'.

Article 11. The text '— 10: 28' must be '*John 10: 28*'

Article 15. It is the opinion of Deputies that God's decree for eternal punishment cannot be displayed, but only declared. See also the next sentence '*the decree of reprobation*'

Article 16. The word '*expect*' is changed into '*await*'. Those who '*await*' do not yet clearly discern ('*expect*' is for those who clearly discern)

Article 18. The text from Job as shown does not exist and should read Job 34 vs 34 - 37 and Job 36 vs 23.

Chapter 1, rejection of errors.

Error 3, See also our comment on Art. 7, Ch.1. The words '*as well as the imperfect obedience of faith*' are added. This helps to elaborate - broaden the size and extent of the error. '*He wished to count*' also broadens the error and helps to describe it more clearly.

Refutation 4, '*By grace you have been saved.*' '*By grace*' is correct according to R.S.V. Eph. 2 vs 5 .

Refutation 7. '*Flaming darts*' is correct according to Eph. 6 vs 16

Chapter 2, rejection of errors.

Refutation 1. It is noted by deputies that the 1987 Book of Praise does not have the word *error* on the last line.

The 1984 edition does have it included. The words '*Catholic Christian*' are added. According to our synod decisions the word '*Christian*' should be deleted.

Refutation 2. The word '*conflict*' is used rather than '*militates*'. Deputies feel it is important to keep the language up to date as long as the meaning remains the same

Chapters 3 and 4 .

Article 1. Eph 4 vs 17 explains why '*futility*' was used.

Article 2. '*Perverted*' is more relevant, see also the reference texts.

Article 4. Deputies are of the opinion that the new words - '*in matters of nature and society*' should be changed back to '*in natural and civil matters*'

Article 9. The word '*receive*' has been changed into '*accept*'. Deputies think that the word '*accept*' is more appropriate, because '*accept*' is to receive with consent.

Article 12. Deputies advise that the word '*suasion*' does not replace '*persuasion*'. There is no real need for change. The same applies to '*teaching*' and '*preaching*'

Article 15. The heading should remain '*Christian attitude*'

Article 16. Deputies think that the word '*Creator*' is more appropriate than the new version's '*Maker*'

Rejection of Errors .

Error 1. '*It is improper to say*', should not be replaced by '*properly speaking*'.

Error 5. Deputies advise that the word '*efficiently*' should not be replaced by '*efficaciously*'. '*Efficiently*' is more common and more easily understood.

Error 7. Change the word '*suasion*' back to '*persuasion*' in both the Error and Refutation.

Refutation 6. Deputies suggest to add Isaiah 44 vs 3 to the quoted text.

Refutation 8. Replace the word '*efficacy*' by '*efficiency*' again.

Chapter 5.

Article 8. Deputies recommend the change from '*fall back*' to '*fall away*'.

Article 12. There is some difficulty with the first sentence in the new version. Deputies feel that the 'old version' reads better. Synod is advised to look at better wording for this sentence. .

Article 14. The word '*complete*' should be changed back to '*perfects*'.

Rejection of errors .

Refutation 3. The text '*1 John 3 vs 9*' is not correct. The word '*seed*' should be '*nature*' as per R.S.V.

Refutation 5. The text 1 John 3 vs 24 states: '*by the spirit which He has given us*'. Deputies think that the word 'whom' would be better.

CONCLUSION. *'Finally this synod exhorts all fellow ministers in the gospel', should remain 'all fellow servants'.*

It is to be noted that any Article or Rejection of Errors with changed wording or revision of some sort that is not commented on, has been deemed to have linguistic update only and not a change of meaning.

Further the Bible texts in the margin have been checked as much as possible

Deputies have also included a *'highlighted copy'* of all proposed changes to the Canons of Dort.

Regarding our mandate re liturgical forms

Deputies have not received, nor requested any information regarding changes in the liturgical forms.

Recommendations

Deputies recommend that:

- 1 Synod accept this report
- 2 Deputies be discharged

with brotherly greetings,

G. Reitsema (convener)

Joe Hidding (minutes clerk)

J.J.Hoekstra (correspondence clerk)

APPENDIX D

CONTACT WITH THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

February 1992,

Esteemed brethren,

In accordance with the mandate given to us concerning contact with the EPCA, we respectfully submit our report.

Mandate

Synod Armadale, 1989 gave us the following mandate as contained in Article 118 of the Acts of Synod:

- 1. to send our greetings and to provide them with the material requested via Rev. Jonker and also information about our stand in the faith, and how we strive to fulfil our mandate for the true ecumenicity.*
- 2. if the EPCA seeks membership in the ICRC, synod instructs deputies to investigate the EPCA.*

Report

1. In a letter date April 12, 1991, we have written to the Contact Committee EPCA. Greetings were sent, as well as information and relevant material pertaining to our stand in the faith and how we strive to fulfil our mandate for the true ecumenicity.

After the EPCA Synod, held in Launceston in April 1991, an informal meeting with four representatives of the EPCA took place. They expressed the desire to continue contact, but because of lack of resources asked it to be kept low key.

We received a letter from the clerk of Synod with the copy of a report sent to the PCEA, seeking to clear up matters raised by the PCEA as regards the history of the EPCA (Appendix i).

We further received a letter from the Officer for Contact EPCA (Appendix ii).

We replied advising them that the matters raised would be conveyed to our next Synod, due to meet in May 1992. To enhance the contact we sent two copies of Prof. J. Kamphuis' publication "An Everlasting Covenant".

2. The matter of EPCA membership of the ICRC has not arisen.

With brotherly greetings,

Deputies EPCA

Rev. C. Kleyn

S. Reitsema

Appendix i

Letter from the the Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

Dear Deputies for Contact,

Our Synod of last year received a letter from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, (PCEA), in which they raised some difficulties they had with a history of our denomination that one of our ministers had written. They felt that there were certain inaccuracies and mis-representations of their denomination in it.

Because this history had been sent to your Churches as part of our seeking to open up contact with you, and because we do not wish to cause any misunderstanding either of the PCEA or of our denomination, our Synod resolved to supply you with a copy of our letter to them in seeking to clear up the matters raised in their correspondence with us.

We do not seek to involve your Churches in matters concerning the PCEA and ourselves, however because of the contact your Churches have with the PCEA and the probability that you would have received some response, at least informally from them on the history, we thought it best to write to you, and to supply you with the enclosed material.

Please pray for the PCEA and ourselves in our relationship, that the Lord as the Head of His Church universal, would grant us the ability to express that Scriptural and Confessional unity which all true Reformed Churches should aspire to.

Various matters have preoccupied our denominations energy and time, so that we have not given any further consideration as to how to proceed with further contact with your Churches. The matter will come up at our forthcoming Synod, which is to be held in Launceston, Tasmania, from the 17th April, Lord willing.

With warm regards and Christian greetings,

Mr Mark Shand, Synod Clerk

Appendix ii

Letter from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

23 October, 1991

Dear Sir,

Warm Fraternal greetings in the name of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.

I have been directed to write to you and:

- 1) Beseech your churches that they deal with other Reformed Churches on a 'less than sister church' category and recognise them as true churches of Christ.
- 2) Seek the approval of your Synod for Officers of your church and our church to meet from time to time in Launceston, to discuss our respective Church's development and life, as well as other matters of concern.
- 3) We want to assure you that we are not sectarian, but are committed to the view and practice of the doctrine of The "Catholic" Church. This is evidenced by the number of different Reformed churches we have contact and fellowship with. (Attached is a copy of the names of some that we presently have contact with.)
- 4) Please accept a copy of the last Synod/Presbytery's Acts, with our compliments.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Noel V. Greatbatch (Elder), Officer for Contact.

CONTACT WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

A. Mandate

Synod 1990 gave to deputies the following mandate (*Acts* Art 77, Rec 5):

"5. Synod appoints new deputies with the following mandate:

...to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ

and in the light of this goal:

- a. to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987, viz, the supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant;
In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'. All this should be done in the light of God's Word giving heed to the complete doctrine of salvation;*
- b. to exchange visitors at deputy and Synodical level;*
- c. to use the current rules for sister churches in the discussions leading toward mutual recognition as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

B. Work Done

In accordance with the mandate received, deputies worked further towards being able to recognise each other as true churches of the Lord. We detail our work as follows:

Re a.

- i. re the supervision of the Lord's table and the practice of pulpit exchanges:
a position paper was prepared covering these two areas of concern (with thankful use made of the work done by previous deputies) and presented to the Deputies of the PCEA in April 1991 (see appendix i). We requested the Deputies from the PCEA to give us their considered response to this position paper.
- ii. re children in the covenant:
in as much as none of the current deputies had previously made in-depth study on this "area of concern", we researched the subject and subsequently prepared a paper with tentative questions and findings for discussion with the PCEA. This discussion paper was presented to the Deputies of the PCEA in April 1991 with the request to respond to it so that both parties to the discussion might receive a better understanding of where our differences lay. Because of the preliminary nature of the discussion paper, we have not included it as an appendix to this report. It is available from Deputies' archives if required.

Re b.

- i. Further to our mandate to "exchange visitors at deputy and Synodical level", we received an letter from the PCEA containing in part the following invitation (dated 6 November 1990):
"We believe that it would be most useful for our on-going relationship if you were able to commission one or two visitors to attend the meeting of our 1991 Synod in Taree, NSW.... There would be opportunity for your delegate to address the Synod, and I hope that we would be able to speak of various matters which mutually concern us. In this way you will be better able to gauge the actual practical outworkings of

our commitment to the Reformed faith in our church life, in the areas mentioned by your Synod."

Accordingly, Deputies sent brs C Bouwman and J Eikelboom to the PCEA Synod in April 1991. A text of what these visitors ought to say to the brethren in the PCEA was adopted by the deputies before the visitors left (see appendix ii). After their visit, brs Bouwman and Eikelboom submitted a report of their findings to the deputies (see appendix iii).

- ii We regret that we were not able to have a private formal discussion with the deputies from the PCEA. The agenda of their Synod did not provide the opportunity suggested in the letter quoted above. The brothers authorised to attend the 1992 Synod are instructed to do all possible to have a formal talk with the Deputies from the PCEA.
 - iii. We have invited delegates from the PCEA to attend our 1992 Synod.
- Re c.

The rules for sister churches would have churches i.a. "to take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline do not deviate from the Reformed confession." In accordance with this rule, we have spoken candidly and forthrightly with the PCEA about the areas of concern mentioned by Synod Armadale.

Further, we report to your assembly that we have tried to keep the FRCA membership informed of developments via *Una Sancta*. Specifically, both the address delivered in Taree as well as the report of the visitors were printed in *Una Sancta*. So too was a summary of the decision of Synod Armadale.

C. Analysis

Our efforts to continue a discussion with the PCEA on the areas of concern mentioned in our mandate have not materialised to our satisfaction. We took great pains to make clear to the PCEA why the FRCA have the concerns mentioned by Synod Armadale. (This is true specifically with regard to the matters of supervision of the Lord's table and pulpit exchange, in as much we could build on the extensive work done in these areas by previous deputies.)

Your Deputies, however, are disappointed in that there has been no official reply from the PCEA, neither on the discussion paper re position of children in the covenant, nor on the position paper re supervision of the Lord's table and the practice of pulpit exchange. We can understand that various duties keep persons occupied, but find it strange nevertheless that we hear nothing officially from the PCEA. We find this the more strange when thoughts about our communications appear in the PCEA press from the hand of individual deputies. We have been in contact with the convener of the PCEA on two occasions per telephone seeking some indication as to when a response might be forthcoming. On both occasions he indicated that something would transpire. To date we have heard nothing.

We are not keen to speculate why responses from PCEA Deputies have not been forthcoming. We do wish to draw to the attention of your assembly that our PCEA counterparts receive signals from Free Reformed circles to the effect that some in our midst are not happy with the decision of previous Synod re PCEA. We find it disturbing that, while we seek to fulfil the mandate we have received from the churches, others of the churches indicate to the PCEA that the mandate is either out of place or misinterpreted. Because of the lack of response from the PCEA, we cannot really say that we have succeeded in fulfilling the mandate "to... discuss further with the PCEA...." That in turn hinders us in coming with a recommendation in the line of the desire expressed by Synod 1990, ie, "to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ". In fact, we are not encouraged by the lack of response from the PCEA.

Recommendation

1. Synod renew the mandate as given by Synod 1990.

With brotherly greetings,

C Bosch

C Bouwman (convener)

J Bruning

J Eikelboom

PS: Just as this report was finalised, we received a reply from the PCEA to our position paper on Pulpit Exchange and the Fencing of the Lord's Table. As we do not have opportunity to analyse the response before the summer recess (and hence include that response in a report submitted to Synod by Feb 4, 1992), we submit this Report with the expressed intent of following it with a Supplementary Report.

Appendix i

POSITION PAPER RE PULPIT EXCHANGE AND FENCING OF THE LORD'S TABLE

A. Preamble

1. Statement of Circumstances

- a. The term "pulpit exchange" refers to the practice in the PCEA to allow ministers from churches with whom the PCEA has no formal relations to preach to PCEA congregations.
- b. The phrase "fencing of the Lord's Table" denotes the practice in the PCEA to allow persons from churches with whom the PCEA has no formal relations to attend the Lord's Supper celebration in the PCEA. It is understood that non-PCEA persons requesting admission to the table in the PCEA must make a credible profession of the faith and be members of some evangelical church.

2. Position of the FRCA

In their 1990 Synod, the FRCA stated the following:

"The PCEA's practice of allowing for "pulpit exchanges" with ministers of other (evangelical) churches as well as allowing guests of other non-affiliated churches to partake of the Lord's Supper is of considerable concern to us and must continue to be discussed" (Art 77, Cons 15).

In light of this Consideration, Synod gave to Deputies the mandate (a.o.)

"a. to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987 viz, the supervision of the Lord's Table, the practice of pulpit exchanges ...;

"In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible un scriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'. All this should be done in the light of God's Word giving heed to the complete doctrine of salvation."

3. Plan

In this position paper, we first query whether the practices re pulpit exchange and fencing as current in the PCEA are in fact congruent with their own confessions. We then proceed to a discussion of what we see as the underlying problem, the doctrine of the church.

B. Pulpit Exchange

Ch 21.5 of the Westminster Confession states that the "ordinary religious worship of God" includes i.a. "the sound preaching." Ans 159 LC discusses how "the word of God is to be preached by those that are called thereunto"; "they that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season ...; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God ..."

It is most gratifying to read in the Westminster Confession these references to the need for "sound preaching" and "making known the whole counsel of God." Yet one wonders how a Reformed Baptist (1) is able to make known the whole counsel of God. Though that Reformed Baptist may be 'reformed' in that he rejects the error of Arminius, it remains fact that his entire dogmatic system does not reflect "the whole counsel of God" (for rejection of infant baptism cannot be separated from one's entire system of doctrine). Is it then not inconsistent with Art 21 of the Westminster Confession to invite a Reformed Baptist onto the pulpit?

Similarly, according to Ch 1.2, all the books of Old and New Testament alike "are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life." To these Scriptures "nothing at any time is to be added ..." (Ch 1.6; cf also A 3, LC), and, surely, none taken away (Rev 22). Again, we rejoice at finding such Scriptural truths echoed in the Westminster Standards. But the Reformed Baptist will insist on a discontinuity between Old and New Testaments such that the New is far more "the rule of faith and life" than is the Old. Does permitting a Reformed Baptist onto the pulpit then not undermine the seriousness of the truth confessed in Art 1 of the Westminster Confession?

C. Fencing of the Lord's Table

Ch 21.5 of the Westminster Confession states that "the ordinary worship of God" includes i.a. "the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ." The point of "worthy receiving" receives further elaboration in A 171 LC where is confessed that "they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren ..." Yet it is not so that any and all who have thus examined themselves may come to the table without any more. According to "The Directory for the Public Worship of God," the minister shall exhort his hearers as to who are entitled to come to the table and who are not (cf Ch 30.4 WC). With that, it is established that the offices of the church have the right to close the table to certain persons.

We are pleased to read these things. Yet how is it then possible that officebearers - themselves subscribers to the Westminster Standards - allow to the table persons who - according to these same Westminster Standards - do not embrace the full truth of the Gospel? Does allowing such persons to the table not hollow out the need for "worthy receiving"? And does it not relativize the "truth" mentioned in A 171? Further, do elders, when they open the table to such believers, not allow them to live in their error, yes, even give them the impression - per A 171 - that their error is tolerable? And do these elders, by allowing such guests to come to the table, not suggest to their own members that they would themselves not greatly err if they were to embrace these other teachings themselves?

Further, Ch 30.0, stipulates that "church censures are necessary in Old and New Testaments ... for deterring of others from ... offences; for purging out the leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel ..." If it is necessary that errors within the church be purged out so that the whole lump might not be infected, how can one tolerate at the table persons from elsewhere who maintain doctrines that, according to the Westminster Standards themselves, are erroneous? Does such a practice not undermine efforts to deter others from such an offence? Does it not take away from the obligation of the church to

vindicate the honour of Christ? Or does Christ say one thing about baptism to one person, and another to the other?

D. The Doctrine of the Church

1. Position of the PCEA

The practices of pulpit exchange and fencing of the Lord's Table as defined above have their roots in a particular understanding of what the church is (2). In the PCEA the prevalent concept of church appears to be this: the church includes any denomination that holds the Bible's central truth of Jesus Christ crucified (even though that church may stray on various other points). Any such denomination is 'church', and is more or less pure depending on the extent to which it holds correctly to the various other dogmas revealed in Scripture. Each such church is in effect a manifestation of the one church of Jesus Christ.

Amongst these various churches there is the inherent unity of faith in Jesus Christ. That inherent unity can receive expression by pulpit exchanges and receiving Christians (ie., members in good standing) from other evangelical churches to one's Lord's Supper Table.

So the question is in place: is the PCEA understanding of "church" agreeable to the Scriptures? We think not, and here refer to the "Excursus on the Church" (3) which deals with data from Scripture (the relevant part is attached to this Position Paper as Appendix 1).

2. Westminster Standards

One may also query whether the Westminster Standards themselves teach such an understanding of what the church is. From a historical point of view, the answer is negative. The large majority of Westminster Divines held to a single national church of which all professors of the true religion were members. When the notion of a plurality of churches was floated at the Westminster Assembly, the Divines trounced the thought totally and radically, labelling it "schism" (4). From a historical perspective, then, the "visible church" of Art 25 of the Westminster Confession refers not to various denominations, but to one church, "the visible church".

As to whether the Westminster Standards allow for the particular understanding of church that has found acceptance in the PCEA, one could answer the question both positively and negatively.

As to a negative answer: we note that the Westminster Standards do not speak of 'churches' (plural), but rather of 'church' (singular) (5). The "visible church" (singular) is even characterised in the Westminster Confession as consisting of "all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children" (Ch 25.2; cf LC A 62). The fact that the one church (singular) is made up of "all" professors of the true faith does not leave room for a plurality of churches (denominations).

As to a positive answer: Art 25.2 says that "the visible church ... consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children" (A 62 of the LC is very similar). A statement as this, coupled as it is in Art 25.1 about the invisible church, could, in an environment of denominationalism, be understood to teach that there are a plurality of (visible) churches (ie denominations) which together make up the church.

Footnotes

1. *We mention the Reformed Baptists because consideration of their distinctive view on baptism and the covenant helps clarify our argument.*
2. *cf "Summary of PCEA position as presented in Byford/Armada, November 1988. This Summary was approved as accurate by all delegates present. It was included in Deputies' Report to Synod 1990 and is printed in the Acts.*
3. *Prepared by previous Deputies and included by them in their report to Synod 1990.*

4. cf James Walker, *Theology and Theologians of Scotland*, 98;; JR Dewitt, *Jus Divinum*, 163.
5. Art 25.4, the exception, speaks of "particular churches, which are members thereof", ie. of "this catholic (visible) church".

Note: this position paper was approved by Deputies in March 1991

Appendix ii

TEXT OF THE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DEPUTIES FROM THE FRCA AT THE SYNOD OF THE PCEA, APRIL 1991

Esteemed Moderator, brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

We thank you sincerely for the kind invitation extended by the convener of your Inter-Church Relations Committee to us to attend your Synod in Taree. We interpret this invitation as an indication of how you view us; you see the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as a church with which you wish to affiliate closely. For our part, we wish to assure you, brothers, that we wish also to be affiliated very closely with you; we would be most pleased to be one with you, one in the unity of the true faith. Such, in fact, is what our last Synod (held in May 1990) indicated; after expressing its "thankfulness to the Lord that the PCEA continues to give evidence of desiring to serve the Lord according to His Word," Synod instructed deputies "to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yet, brothers in the Lord, it is exactly this desire for unity that gives us in the Free Reformed Churches concern. We desire unity with you, but see in your midst practices that stand in the way of true unity. These practices stand in the way of true unity specifically because we would ourselves—once we join together as one church—implicitly condone such practices and as such become responsible for them.

Accordingly, our Synod mandated us as Deputies

"to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987 viz, the supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant."

Synod added:

"In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'."

We would like to use the opportunity we have here today to explain to you why two of the areas mentioned—viz, supervision of the Lord's table and the practice of pulpit exchanges—are areas of concern to us. We leave the matter of children in the covenant for now because we have not yet spent adequate time in studying and discussing the matter with your deputies. Mean while, we may say that we have prepared a discussion paper on the subject of children in the covenant, to which we hope your deputies will respond.

Before we go to the details of our concerns about your practices surrounding the supervision of the Lord's table and pulpit exchanges, we wish to press upon you that these matters are of no small concern to us. They are of considerable concern to us not because we may or may not enjoy theological hair-splitting, nor because we wish to preserve somehow our 'Dutch look', nor because we look for excuses to frustrate moves

toward unity on fear of losing our youth. What motivates us is simply and plainly our desire to serve God only as He has revealed in His Word. Our regard for the holiness of God forbids anything else. We are convinced that the practices mentioned—as we understand them—are not in agreement with the Word of God. Indeed, we see these practices as disagreeing with the Word of God, and will—if unchecked—lead ultimately to the blatant acceptance of relativism in your churches, the acceptance of the thought that ‘truth’ comes in various shades of colour.

These, we realise, are most serious statements. Yet we plead with you, brothers, to weigh carefully what we lay before you. Please: do not hear in our observations and analyses a spirit of arrogance or smugness. We realise that there are with us many weaknesses and sins; “no man is able...perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed” (LC 149); that’s true of the Church also. Because of our respect for God, as well as our love for you as brothers in Jesus Christ, do we feel bound to speak with you openly about what we see. Even as we do so, we trust that you will also say to us, candidly and honestly, what needs to be said for our benefit. And we pray that we will receive the grace needed to listen to and consider carefully what is said to us.

Areas of Concern

Why, now, are the subjects mentioned “areas of concern” to us? Allow us to explain the two areas in turn. As we do so, it will be necessary to pay some attention also to the matter of the church.

a. Supervision of the Lord’s table

We understand that you in the PCEA, by means of your elders, permit as guests at your Lord’s supper celebrations members from various evangelical churches who have made a credible profession of the faith. That practice of allowing persons from outside your churches to your Table concerns us. Why it concerns us? As we see it, such a practice permits relativism in doctrine. After all, different churches believe different things. Think only of the differences between yourselves in the PCEA and the Reformed Baptists. A 171 of the Larger Catechism states that “they that receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren....” This, undoubtedly, holds true for all who come to your Table, irrespective of whether or not they are members of your church. Yet there are distinct differences between churches, and so different persons will come to different conclusions about whether the knowledge and faith they possess is true, Scriptural. If now you allow to your table persons who have a different understanding of what is true, do you not in fact relativise the “truth” mentioned in A 171? Further, do elders, when they open the table to such believers, not allow these visiting believers to live in their error, yes, even give them the impression—per A 171—that their error is tolerable, their knowledge and faith is true? And do these elders, by allowing such guests to come to the table, not suggest to their own members that they would themselves not greatly err if they would one day embrace these other teachings?

Further, Westminster Confession Ch 30.3 stipulates that “church censures are necessary...for deterring of others from...offences; for purging out the leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel....” If it is necessary that errors within the church be purged out so that the whole lump might not be infected, how can one tolerate at the table persons from elsewhere who maintain doctrines that, according the Westminster Standards themselves, are erroneous? Does such a practice not undermine efforts to deter others from such an offence? Does it not take away from the obligation of the church to vindicate the honour of Christ? For surely Christ does not reveal different

things about Himself to different persons. And God will not be mocked; He will have His people believe what He has revealed, not what they think He has revealed.

b. Pulpit Exchange

In the second place, we understand that there is in the PCEA the practice of allowing ministers onto PCEA pulpits who are in fact not members of the PCEA but of other (evangelical) churches. This matter of accepting on your pulpits ministers from other churches is of equal concern to us. Why? Churches believe—in practice—different things. We ask you to think again of the Reformed Baptist.

We very much question, esteemed brothers, whether a minister with a theological slant differing from that professed in the Westminster Standards is in fact able to bring the Word of God in agreement with the doctrine of the Westminster Standards, let alone in agreement with the norms mentioned in these Standards for how the Word of God is to be preached. Ch 21.5 of the Westminster Confession states that the “ordinary religious worship of God” includes i.a. “the sound preaching.” A 159 Larger Catechism discusses how “the word of God is to be preached by those that are called thereunto”; it stipulates that “they that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season...; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God...” Yet how, brothers, can a preacher of the gospel who is known to disagree with you on what the whole counsel of God is, be asked to preach that whole counsel faithfully, in season and out of season? Does inviting such a preacher onto your pulpits not at bottom relativise the truth confessed in Chap 1 of your Westminster Confession, that “nothing at any time is to be added” to (and surely none taken from) God’s holy and divine Word? (Ch 1.6; cf also A 3, LC). Further, does inviting a preacher from another church onto your pulpits not suggest to your people that it is acceptable to believe something other than what the Lord has revealed? If it be so that we as a church are convinced that God has revealed certain truths, that conviction on our part means that all God’s people (yea, all men) are obliged to believe even as we do. That fact disallows any room for the notion that another may believe what he finds acceptable.

Church

Where might this willingness on your part to accept members of other (evangelical) churches at your Lord’s Supper table and on your pulpit come from? From the discussion our deputies have had in the past with your deputies, it appears that this willingness is rooted in your distinctive understanding of what the church is. We understand your concept of church to be this: the church includes any denomination that holds the Bible’s central truth of Jesus Christ crucified (even though that denomination may stray on various other points). Any such denomination is ‘church’, and is more or less pure depending on the extent to which it holds correctly to the various other dogmas revealed in Scripture. Each such church is in effect a manifestation of the one church of Jesus Christ. Although unity amongst these various (true) churches must be pursued, the imperfections we suffer in this broken world results in division from other true Christians. Nevertheless there is, despite this evident brokenness, an inherent unity of faith in Jesus Christ amongst these various churches. While organic unity with other churches is (and must be) pursued and awaited, the inherent unity between these churches can receive expression by pulpit exchanges and receiving Christians (ie, members in good standing) from other evangelical churches to your own Lord’s Supper table.

From our side, we would agree with you that there are children of God in various denominations (to use that unhappy word for the moment). Yet we draw your attention to the fact that the presence of true believers in a church does not make that denomination a ‘church’ in the Scriptural sense of the word. Nor does the fact that Christ Jesus is preached make any given denomination a ‘church’ in the Scriptural sense. The ecclesia (that being the Greek word for church) of Korah, Dathan and Abiram in Numbers 16

undoubtedly included believers, as did also the assembly of Jeroboam in I Kings 13. Yet with neither of them was God pleased, neither of them were legitimate assemblies, legitimate ecclesiae. Those Scriptural givens must prompt us to caution as we consider whether the various evangelical churches are in fact true churches, churches in the Scriptural sense of the word.

We realise that Scriptures speak about the church in a general way and in a more specific way. There is on the one hand the general aspect of Christ's work of gathering all those whom the Father has given to Him and whom He regenerates. This gathering work of Jesus Christ is broader than the local, true churches. As such, it is fully in line with Scripture to speak about election and regeneration when one considers the holy, catholic church of Christ. Calvin calls this the church as God sees it (cf Eph 1; 5:32; Col 1:10,24; Rev 14). This general aspect of Christ's church gathering work we are obliged to confess and believe; we believe, though we may not see it, that Jesus Christ is gathering those whom the Father has given to Him. But —and here is where our responsibility enters the picture— there is also the more specific aspect of the holy, catholic church as it is gathered locally by Christ in true churches, in the unity of the true faith, according to the norms to which we are bound for the gathering of the church. Although Scriptures place the church-gathering work of Christ on the foundation of God's decree of election (of which regeneration is a fruit), this does not mean that election and regeneration (as God's invisible work) are now the concepts by which we must define the church (Dt 29:29). As far as human responsibility goes, it is for us to work not with God's election (His secret will), but rather with God's norms (His revealed will). And God's revealed will leaves us with clear instructions to gather at that address where Christ calls His people together. What makes an organisation a church is Christ's gathering work; He gathers (some of) His people into local visible churches, legitimate gatherings of those who seek their salvation in the blood of Jesus Christ alone. Historically, the so-called "three marks of the true church" have served as the means by which one could identify where the Lord calls His people together; it is to these norms of Scripture, as captured in these marks, that the believer is bound. As such, God's people are not allowed to join the church of their own preference; they are called to join the church where the Saviour wants them. To do anything less is disobedience to the norm God revealed in His word, and as such is sin. The holiness of God is such that He cannot tolerate sin, including this sin of joining a church which does not do all things in full agreement with the Word of God; we remind you of God's response to the assemblies of the three rebels of Numbers 16 and of King Jeroboam in I Kings 13. Because God cannot tolerate such action, are His people neither to commit such action nor tolerate such action in others. Yet do you not officially tolerate precisely this sin when you allow onto your pulpits and at your Lord's Supper table persons who have joined a church where everything is not done according to the Word of God? It is this implicit toleration found among you that prompts us to conclude that the error of the 'pluriformity of the church' is —sadly— alive and well in your midst.

Even as we say these things, we acknowledge that there was a time when our fathers in the Netherlands in practice embraced an understanding of church akin to that which we today see among you. Yet it has pleased the Lord God in grace to grant insight into His Word —specifically in the struggle of the 1940's— so that there might come a renewed understanding and appreciation for His promises and demands on the subject of the church. It is this richness which we wish to share also with you; God wishes His people to be together in true unity, with no room for relativism.

Brothers, we have travelled far to come here. We have not done so to find out whether you serve the Lord and love Him; had we not already known that we would not have come to Taree. But exactly because we know you love the Lord and want to serve Him have we felt it necessary —and we felt free— to say these things to you. Please receive

our words in the spirit of love in which they were intended. And we plead with you to consider these matters seriously, for the glory of our common Lord and Saviour, and the well-being of His one catholic Church. We would dearly love to talk of these things further; we need each other. And it remains our prayer—we say this emphatically—it remains our prayer that we may one day be one in the unity of the true faith.

Brothers, we have taken more than enough of your time. We take the opportunity yet to pass on greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we greet you, and wish you God's blessing, both in your work at Synod and in the various congregations.

Appendix iii

REPORT OF THE VISIT TO THE SYNOD OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA, APRIL 1991

MANDATE

Deputies for contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, appointed by Synod 1990, received the following mandate from the said Synod:

"...to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the light of this goal:

a. "to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987 viz, the supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant;

"In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'. All this should be done in the light of God's Word giving due heed to the complete doctrine of salvation.

b. to exchange visitors at deputy and Synodical level."

After this decision was communicated to the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee, we received from the convener of this committee a letter containing the following invitation (dated 6 Nov 1990):

"We believe that it would be most useful for our on-going relationship if you were able to commission one or two visitors to attend the meeting of our 1991 Synod in Taree, NSW.... There would be opportunity for your delegate to address the Synod, and I hope that we would be able to arrange a time of informal open discussion, during which we would be able to speak of various matters which mutually concern us. In this way you will be better able to gauge the actual outworkings of our commitment to the Reformed faith in our church life, in the areas mentioned by your Synod."

Accordingly, deputies for contact with the PCEA delegated two of their number, brs C Bouwman and J Eikelboom, to attend the Synod in Taree. These two brothers had as their mandate to

- i. present a prepared address to the Synod in which the specific concerns of the FRCA on supervision of the Lord's table and pulpit exchanges would be outlined.
- ii. present to the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee a position paper on the Supervision of the Lord's table and pulpit exchanges, as well as a discussion paper on the position of children in the covenant.
- iii. discuss, if possible, with the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee the matters of concern expressed by Synod 1990.
- iv. get to know the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia better.

REPORT

A. General

We note first of all that more transpired at this Synod than is recorded in this report. For details and decisions on these further matters, we refer you to the Minutes of the Synod (together with the Reports of Standing Committees submitted to this Synod). Our report includes what it does because of the mandate we had received.

We attended the entire Synod (held from Tuesday 2 April till Friday 5 April), with the exception of one hour on Wednesday morning and the closing moments of Synod (we had to catch the train). It should be noted that the Agenda of the Synod was such that there was no opportunity at all to meet with the Inter-Church Relations Committee for discussions. We did present to the Committee our Position Paper on the Supervision of the Lord's table and pulpit exchanges, as well as our Discussion Paper on the position of children in the covenant. We asked the Inter-Church Relations Committee to respond to these two papers.

It should be mentioned too that a draft of this report was submitted to the Convener of the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee. We received a reply from one of its members. That reply stated in part that "your report suffers somewhat from lack of familiarity with the way we do things and the particular style and personality strengths and weaknesses of our commissioners." In so far as this reply corrects factual errors in our draft, we have incorporated necessary changes for this finalised report. Nevertheless, what follows remains our own observations and conclusions.

B. Areas of Concern

- 1 We were slotted to address the Synod at the time when inter-church relations were to be discussed, ie, Thursday afternoon. In order to allow for more opportunity to discuss the contents of our address, we requested to be allowed to speak on Wednesday. Accordingly, the moderator graciously permitted us to address the assembly Wednesday after lunch. Before the address was delivered, the speaker (Rev Bouwman) led the Synod in prayer, asking the Lord to bless the contact between the FRCA and the PCEA such that true unity might one day be realised.

In the course of the following days, it became evident that the address was, on the whole, well received. The Synod members—understandably—needed time to digest what we had said. Various of them approached us during breaks with questions they had about our concerns, thus indicating that they were thinking about what we had said. Indeed, numerous of the brothers present at the Synod gave every indication of taking us seriously. In our one-to-one discussions with the various Synod members, we encouraged further study of the matters raised. Friday morning the Moderator invited br Bouwman to entertain questions from the floor of Synod about the address. The opportunity (15 minutes were allowed) was gratefully used. At the end of this short question and answer session, the Moderator thanked us—on behalf of Synod—for our frankness.

After the address was delivered, we laid out a table of literature from our circle, including a number of copies of the address. The copies of the address, as well as the literature in general, were snapped up quickly.

It should be noted that the PCEA Synod resolved to "send fraternal greetings to the brethren of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia Synod, and instruct the ICR Committee to continue diligently to maintain contact with the FRCA." Further, Synod endorsed "the Committee's action of inviting representatives of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to attend Synod," and directed "that a similar invitation be extended to our brethren for Synod 1992."

- 2 The concept of church as described in our address conveys rather accurately what the PCEA in fact thinks about the church. We heard no dissent from our characterisation, and received no correction. In fact, as we listened to the discussions taking place at Synod, we came to the conclusion that this notion of the pluriformity of the

church is pervasive in the PCEA. We mention a number of examples which point up how pervasive this notion is.

- a. In an effort to formulate a missions policy for the PCEA, the Missions Committee proposed that Synod adopt a policy statement to the effect that the PCEA would “work with sister churches or directly to establish congregations of Christ’s church loyal to the Biblical faith as confessed in our subordinate standards, and accordingly our resources [be] directed principally to the development and support of reformed churches” (see Standing Committee Reports, pg 32). This proposal was put to Synod because the Missions Committee occasionally received requests from non- reformed persons for support and sponsorship on the Mission field. Since the PCEA had no guidelines as to who should be supported in the mission field, the Committee sought such a guideline. In the discussion on the proposal (there was very strong opposition), it was said that adopting such a policy would narrow the mission work of the PCEA, would be sectarian, would allow support only for their own people and other reformed bodies, to the exclusion of such organisations as, eg, Prison Fellowship. More, it was argued—and none countered the argument—that giving money only to those who held the particular theological views of the PCEA was mismanagement of the funds God gives. What helped to sink the proposal was the argument that this proposed policy would mean that monies which had been collected in the PCEA for any mission field could—if the proposal were accepted— be used only for missionaries who were themselves members of the PCEA. The Missions Committee hopes to present a better worded effort to the next Synod.
- b. In India there is a particular mission worker involved in agriculture. Although the man belongs neither to the PCEA nor to any of its sister churches (his ecclesiastical affiliation was not mentioned), Synod agreed—with no dissent—to send him money toward his support in the coming year.
- c. The Church and Nation Committee, which (among other things) supervises the PCEA’s official publication entitled *The Presbyterian Barner*, told Synod that it felt that “articles exposing or criticising the weaknesses of other Christian Churches are not edifying.... Open exposure of the weaknesses and criticism of fellow Christians is detrimental to the well being of Christ’s Church” (Standing Committee Reports, pg 37). Although this report was not adopted by Synod as its own, the above-mentioned instruction did receive some attention on the floor of Synod. In the discussion on this policy, it was defended that this statement did not forbid criticism of, eg, the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States (this church permits the ordination of lesbian priests; cf pg 37 of the Standing Committee Reports) because—the convener of the Committee said— this denomination is not a Christian church. Churches as the Presbyterian Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Churches, etc, ought not to be criticised in the press. This answer satisfied the members of Synod.
- d. Finding enough ministers remains an ongoing concern in the PCEA. Currently, two congregations are receiving regular pulpit assistance from men who were not members of the PCEA. The question was raised whether these two men could possibly be encouraged to become ministers in the PCEA. In answer it was noted that the one man had just joined the PCEA while the other was about to shift to New Zealand.
- e. Conversations with various individuals indicated that young people from the country congregations tend to migrate to the cities for employment and education. Although there are PCEA congregations in the major centres of the east coast, the youth in general do not stay with the PCEA but content themselves with joining other churches.

There could be a number of explanations for this trend. The member of the ICR Committee who responded to our draft wrote this: “your report hardly allows adequately for the context of our church as a remnant body until recent years based

in rural areas.... Retention has not been as adequate as it should have been due to failure to extend in the cities until recent times, and some areas remain poor, but not all." Although there may be truth in this argument from history, we draw to your attention what the Convener of the Youth and Fellowship Committee wrote in the PCEA youth magazine Fellowship. He printed this advice to PCEA youth who were about to leave home for study in the cities: "You must seek out a Church, consisting of like minded folk, and make them your Christian family. Do not forsake the assembly of believers" (Sept-Oct, 1989, pg 12). Conversations with persons at Synod bear out that the sentiment expressed in Fellowship is not the isolated thinking of one person.

The failure of officebearers in the PCEA to instruct their children that they are bound before God to join themselves to the sister congregation in the city is evidence again of the pervasiveness of the pluriformity concept in the PCEA.

- 3 In their report to the Synod, the Inter-Church Relations Committee had devoted quite some attention to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. They write, i.e., the following:

"We regard the 'anti-pluriformity' position as tending to the schismatic."

Further:

"...we do not embrace 'pluriformity' as a biblical concept, if by this is meant that the church exists in the world in a static way, distributed among the many 'impure' churches. The call of Christ to be visibly one is a call we must continually hear and obey. Yet in the mean time, while we are learning more perfectly to obey, we suffer imperfection in our church lives, one consequence and mark of which is our division from other true Christians. Churches which are not perfect may therefore indeed exist side by side until greater perfection comes. We do not find it necessary immediately to unite with other true (though imperfect) churches, nor do we find it necessary to settle for some static concept of 'pluriformity,' as if we did not care about Christ's call to be holy, and whole with all his people" (pg 77f).

While introducing this part of their report to the Synod, the Convener of the ICR Committee mentioned that he felt much happier with the recent decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), that "it is possible that in certain countries more than one ecclesiastical federation may exist which ought to be recognised as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ." In fact, the Convener indicated that he considered it possible that the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands might recognise two true churches in Australia.... Neither the Committee's report nor the comments of the convener generated any discussion at all on the floor of Synod.

- 4 During the opportunity given by the Moderator for Synod members to ask questions concerning our address, three questions were asked.
 - a. The Dutch sister churches had recognised the Free Church of Scotland as a true church and so established sister relations with this church. Did this not generate a tension between ourselves and our Dutch sister churches such that we ought to break off our relation with the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands?
In our answer we noted that we had ourselves recognised the FCS in 1983 already. We added that this could indeed be seen to be an inconsistency on the part of the FRCA in that we did not recognise (yet) the PCEA.
 - b. The second question related to how it was possible that the concerns we had now with the PCEA did not prohibit recognising the FCS in 1983. In answer we noted that more data and greater understanding of the Presbyterian world had developed since 1983.
 - c. The third questioner queried whether we understood the Holy Supper table to be the Table of the Lord. If yes, whence did we derive the right to close the Table to believers from other churches?

In answer, we agreed that the Table indeed belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ,

however, is pleased to guard the table by means of officebearers. If it should be that an officebearer in the PCEA would know that a brother in the congregation was guilty of sin against the eighth commandment, he would surely forbid this brother access to the Table until there was repentance. The matter of where one goes to church is at bottom a matter of obedience to the second commandment; in His Word God has commanded that we are not to worship Him in any manner other than that revealed in Scriptures. If God's people nevertheless choose to serve Him according to their tastes in a multitude of churches, these children of God transgress the second commandment. As there is no difference in severity between sin against the second or the eighth commandment, both sins ought to be treated the same when it comes to attendance at the Lord's table.

C. Other observations

- 1 It struck us that a large amount of time was taken up by matters financial. (We were assured that the recent appointment of a new treasurer contributed to the fact that the treasurer's report took as much time as it did.) Although the PCEA is a small church (according to the numbers presented to Synod there are a total of 613 communicant members), the church has a large amount of capital. Land purchased 150 years ago is now of great value in downtown areas. Some has been sold, the money invested, and the interest used primarily for support of mission workers (though some is used also to assist in the support of their dozen or so ministers; by and large the ministers are supported by the voluntary contributions of their congregation members). Further, estates have been bequeathed to the church. These financial holdings (while on the one hand a boon to a small church) bring their own demands for the church. In various ways the PCEA has become a business venture, is caught up in financial law, and must spend (proportionately) great amounts of time at Synod determining what ought to be done with the properties to realise the best returns. This does not really agree with the stipulation of our Church Order: Synods "shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters..." (Art 30). It is, however, practice that Presbyterian churches hold church property denominationally instead of congregationally.
- 2 Mission —be it foreign or home— featured as an element of great importance at this Synod. Time and again reference was made in various ways to the need for unbelievers to come to faith in Jesus Christ. We were grateful for this concern for the eternal well-being of the neighbour. What we missed, though, was a balance of equal concern for the flock of God over which these brothers had been made shepherds. Mission was heavily emphasised, while the aging face of the PCEA was mentioned but little, and the disappearance of their youth even less. To our minds this was tacit commentary on what the brothers in the PCEA actually believe about the covenant God has established with their children.
- 3 In the course of the Synod, we heard a number of prayers from various brothers. In general it may be said that these prayers implored God please to come among them and revive them. They differed from our manner of praying in that our prayers are—in general— rooted in God's covenant promises and as such contain a greater assurance that God is present among us and answers our requests. In this also we felt a lack of appreciation for what the covenant means in practice.
- 4 The aging character of the PCEA was illustrated to us by the fact that we saw no young people in the course of our days in Taree. While we acknowledge that Synods are not necessarily the most stimulating of meetings, we did find it disappointing that neither such an important event in the life of a church—Synod—nor the mission evening held on Wednesday attracted any youth. We add that one brother in his mid 20's from Sydney attended the first day of Synod.

In conclusion

Our Synods have twice indicated the conviction of the FRCA that there is in the PCEA a “desire to serve God according to His Word” (Synod 1987, 1990). After spending some time as observers in their midst, we thankfully conclude that such is indeed the desire of the brethren in the PCEA.

At the same time, we have come to the conclusion that the PCEA as a church is in fact sick with the ailment of pluriformity. One would be justified to ask what right the various members have before God of being PCEA. Given their understanding of church, why keep separate from the PCA, or the RPC, or the EPC, or the RCA or even the FRCA?

In our address to the brothers of the PCEA, we endeavoured to persuade these brothers that God is not pleased with the teaching of pluriformity found in their midst. It seems to us that the PCEA will now be obliged to search the Scriptures themselves —as we trust they will— to see whether the matter is indeed so. We shall do well to be patient as they study the matter, for their perception of ‘church’ has deep roots in their church history and is pervasive throughout the western ecclesiastical world.

Respectfully submitted,
C Bouwman
J Eikelboom

CONTACT WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA - SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

March 17, 1992

Further to our Report to Synod, we inform your assembly that we have analysed the reply we recently received from the PCEA to our position paper on Pulpit Exchange and the Fencing of the Lord's Table. We were disappointed in this reply, in as much as the brothers in the PCEA did not interact with the substance of what we wrote. We have communicated our disappointment to the deputies in the PCEA, as well as taken the opportunity to urge them to treat our position paper seriously. To this Supplementary Report we have appended both the PCEA's letter to us (Appendix iv) and our response to them (Appendix v).

The nature of the response from the PCEA strengthens us in our conviction that we need a face-to-face discussion with the PCEA deputies. We intend to do our utmost to have discussions with their deputies when they visit our Synod (if indeed they are able to accept our invitation). In the event that none of their deputies can attend our Synod, we plan to invite them to WA later in the year.

In the light of the letter we recently received, deputies repeat their recommendation to Synod as contained in our Report, ie, that “Synod renew the mandate as given by Synod 1990.”

With brotherly greetings,
Deputies for contact with the PCEA,
C Bosch
C Bouwman (convener)
J Bruning
J Eikelboom

Appendix iv

Letter from deputies of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
10.12.91

Dear Brothers,

We greet you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This letter is in response to your Position Paper on Pulpit Exchange and the Fencing of the Lord's Table, which you provided to us at the time of our Synod meeting in April this year.

1. Pulpit Exchange

Your paper seeks to show that the present practice of the PCEA in inviting into our pulpits ministers of other than 'sister' churches is in fact inconsistent with the PCEA's main subordinate standard, the Westminster Confession of Faith as approved by the Church of Scotland in 1647, as well as our other subordinate standards.

You argue that to allow, say, a 'Reformed Baptist' to preach is to permit preaching which is not in accord with the whole counsel of God, since he would have an incorrect understanding of some important aspects of God's truth.

Of course this argument would also exclude from our pulpits ministers of churches who did not agree with the Westminster doctrine of the Sabbath, also contained in WCF ch. 21. It might also exclude those who believe that the use of other than the 150 Psalms, with instrumental accompaniment, is proper in public worship (although the PCEA's position on this latter point is not at the same level as her commitment to the whole doctrine of the WCF).

Our response to the point being made is quite simple: at no time does our admission of other than PCEA ministers to our pulpits necessarily mean an endorsement of their entire system of theology. In our polity, the pulpit is under the minister's control (not the Session's), and he is answerable not to the local elders but to his Presbytery. When a minister invites a guest preacher he is not declaring the Church's position, but wisely (we expect) exercising his liberty, and what is more important, our people understand this to be the case. We try to teach our people to be discriminating in their hearing of the Word, as Scripture commands in 1Thes.5:19-22, and do not cultivate in them any tendency to believe what a preachers says simply because he says it!

Furthermore, those guest preachers who occupy our pulpits in this occasional way also understand that this is a privilege not to be abused. If a man were to abuse it, he would not be invited back.

There is therefore no explicit or implicit recognition of a man's church affiliation when one of our ministers invites him to preach. Rather the point is that a man has been found faithful, gifted and a man of God endowed with the Holy Spirit, and thus allowed to preach in spite of his church affiliation.

In this way, I, for instance, we would love to invite any of the ministers of the FRCA to preach to our congregation here, knowing that your commitment to God's Word would ensure their edification. It is a matter for regret that the view of pulpit exchange expounded in your Position Paper would presently forbid your accepting this invitation.

2. Fencing of the Lord's Table

Your Paper suggests that the PCEA's practice of inviting those who reject our Confession's teachings on some subjects to partake as guests at the Lord's Table is to undermine church discipline.

Once again, the implication seems to be that only those who subscribe to the Confession

should be admitted, since it is only they of whom we may have good reason to assume that they 'embrace the full truth of the Gospel'.

We would say to you that such an extreme position on admission has never characterised those churches which adhere to the Westminster Standards; and as we have pointed out to you on a number of occasions, it has also not been the position of the 'continental' Reformed churches. (Here may we once again refer you to our comments in our letter dated 31.01.89, citing Heppe and De Jong who "provide ample evidence that the general position of the Reformed was to recognise the Lutherans, to the extent of permitting them access to the Lord's Supper even without transfer of membership, since they agreed with the Reformed in "the fundamental points of true religion, and because there was neither superstition or idolatry in their worship' (Synod of Charenton, France, 1631). And this despite the Reformed's regarding the Lutheran Church as schismatic, ie. preserving faith's foundation but departing from some doctrine."

In our polity, church membership does not entail subscription to our subordinate standards, as a perusal of our Church Practice will reveal (see ch. 2.12-21). We do not require of our own folk a subscription to every doctrine of the Confession so it should be easier to understand why we would not impose such a condition on guests!

Fencing of the Table involves pointing out the qualifications required of those who would partake, and in the case of guests, the twin focus is upon a person's being a Christian, and a member in good standing of another evangelical church (see Practice 2.18).

Once again, the admission of a guest to the Lord's Table does not imply a 'recognition' of their church affiliation, or an endorsement of matters in which they may differ from us. This is understood by our members. However, it seeks to do justice to the biblical teaching on the communion of the saints, as expressed in our Confession (ch.20). If Christ accepts people who believe in him, then they cannot be refused in spite of which church they attend.

3. The Doctrine of the Church

Your Paper in this sections wants to brand us with the so-called 'pluriformity view of the church,' a view which we do not endorse if by this expression is implied an indiscriminating acceptance of all the errors of other denominations. Your opinion that the PCEA is 'sick with the ailment of pluriformity' is not one which we share, rather wondering if there is in your own position an unhealthy tendency to the schismatic.

May we once and for all reject the label of pluriformity? It seems to function in the FRCA as a slogan or catch-cry, rather than as a carefully defined theological concept. Surely our desire is for accuracy of understanding and this term with its church political overtones hardly contributes to this.

The PCEA continues to exist because of our commitment to the biblical truth expressed in our subordinate standards. We do not see other 'evangelical' churches who profess the same truths with the same tenacity, and so we remain a separate denomination for the time being. We will continue to maintain our positive witness, and when called upon, or when appropriate will express our criticisms of other churches (as a reading of The Presbyterian Banner will show). However, we will resist any tendency to the schismatic, and refrain from branding other evangelical churches as false or synagogues of Satan, even while we point out and denounce their errors.

As far as your "Excursus on the Church" is concerned, our own position is set out in our Confession. While our office-bearers may have various emphases which differ from one another, these emphases are not binding on all. The nexus is the Confession. Likewise, your "Excursus" states an interesting - if unbalanced - view of the biblical data, and it may be interesting to discuss it some time. However, since it (presumably) does not constitute a formal declaration by the FRCA of its interpretation of the Three Forms of Unity, we do not propose to analyse its detail at this juncture.

We hope that our response to your Position Paper may assist you in fulfilling your remit from Synod. You will understand, of course, that these comments are those of the PCEA Inter-church Relations Committee, and have not been adopted by the Synod.

With brotherly greetings,

Yours in Christ's service,

W.Peter Gadsby

Appendix v

Letter to deputies of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Dear brothers,

Greetings in the name of our sovereign Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This letter is in reply to your writing dated 10.12.91 in which you gave your reply to our Position Paper on Pulpit Exchange and the Fencing of the Lord's Table. We thank you for your response and would ask you to carefully consider this reply.

Brothers, we are disappointed if not dismayed at your response to our Position Paper. While we tried to convince you with Scriptural and confessional arguments you appear to have by-passed these. You leave us guessing why this is so. If we are truly desirous of heeding Christ's prayer for the unity of His church must we not weigh each other's arguments carefully and in good faith? Could it be that you consider us to have been unfair or judgmental in our appraisal of your position? If so please point out our error. We asked you in all seriousness if the practice of allowing a Reformed Baptist on one of your pulpits is not in conflict with the truth expressed in art. 1 of the Westminster Confession. In reply you appear to place a denial of infant baptism in the same category as an understanding of the fourth commandment which is nuanced from that expressed in WCF ch 21. Surely you ought to be more discerning here. While the first is a matter of substance involving an error or deviation from the truth the latter is a difference of approach. While the stress of WCF ch 21 may be somewhat different than that (e.g.) of HC LD 38, yet these confessional statements cannot be said to be in conflict. May the same be said of a Reformed Baptist's view of the covenant and that stated in (e.g.), WCF ch 28 (4) or HC LD 27?

The point we have tried to make is that we are afraid that you leave room for confusion and for relativising the truth by failing to insist that a preacher must be committed to the whole counsel of God. We agree that a congregation ought not to believe what the preacher says "simply because he says it". Yet the congregation has a right to expect that the minister's confession is in wholehearted conformity with the truth!

We believe that you are on slippery ground in suggesting that a man may be found "faithful, gifted ..a man of God endowed with the Holy Spirit" even if he is committed to a deviation from the true and complete doctrine of salvation. In this reasoning we detect a lack of discernment between a concrete, confessional commitment to the whole of God's revelation and what amounts to personal piety and a godly walk of life. No one will deny that there are many sincere Christians in other denominations. Yet we would maintain that there is an inherent conflict between what you confess in ch 21.5 of the WC on the one hand and your stand on pulpit exchange on the other.

Brothers surely the doctrine of the covenant may not be divorced from the whole counsel of God? Surely this may not be left up to one's private opinion? We are aware that when you invite a Reformed baptist to your pulpit there is an understanding that this is a "privilege not to be abused." Yet it is conceivable that a pious and godly priest of Rome might be found as obliging. Where do you draw the line? Is there then a hierarchy of doctrines that would make some more, some less expendable?

We live in a climate of false ecumenism in which we see more and more deviation from the truth. How are God's people to be protected if you blur the distinction between truth

and error? God's Holy Word calls us to be faithful watchmen who must "hold fast" the good confession. (Heb.4:14) Are we being judgemental or sectarian here? Brothers be assured we do not judge the individual but we are surely called to evaluate and judge the truth. We are not fighting for a viewpoint but for the maintenance of the norms of God's Word.

We continue to have similar difficulty with your position regarding the fencing of the Lord's Table. You suggest that our position (requiring a wholehearted, confessional commitment to the full doctrine of salvation) is "an extreme position" and one which is not characteristic of those churches which adhere to the Westminster Standards. Once again you make reference to Hepp and De Jong whose review of history indicates that such an "extreme position" was not taken by the Reformed many years ago.

Brothers we have pointed out that history may never be the norm for our actions and positions today. Though history can be instructive, God's Word is our only directive. Recently Rev. G. Van Rongen has shown (*Una Sancta* vol.39,# 10) that synods of continental Reformed churches in the late 16th and early 17th centuries consistently required agreement with the confessions as a pre-requisite for attending the Lord's Table. You state that, "If Christ accepts people who believe in him, then they cannot be refused in spite of which church they attend." Yet Christ does not accept people irrespective of their confession. The same Christ who opened His arms to repentant sinners expects His people not to deviate from the truth. (John 8:31,32; Eph. 4:14; II Tim. 3:14) The warnings issued to the churches in Asia minor (Rev.2&3) bear testimony of the unfathomable love of Christ, a love and care which includes His solemn insistence on purity of doctrine and conduct.

Brothers we are disappointed in that you appear to devalue a person's "church affiliation". Though we are aware that Christ knows those who are His are we not to be obedient to God's concrete demand that His children "depart from evil and do good" and "touch no unclean thing"? (Ps. 34:14; Isa.52:11) We are thankful that you do "point out and denounce" the errors of other churches from time to time. If then through errors God's people are often led astray ought you not to insist that those who sit down at the Lord's table break with such errors? If you do not do so we fear you leave the impression that Christ's body is divided and that truth and error do in fact mix.

Concerning the Doctrine of the Church we are sorry that you see us as the villain out to "brand" you with the 'iron' of pluriformity. It is not our intention to brand or label you at all. If the term "pluriformity" is offensive to you and we have failed to define it accurately the fault may be ours and we will seek to correct it. We do not want to use the term as a "slogan or catch-cry" at all. We understand it to indicate that view of the church-gathering work of Christ which does not do sufficient justice to Christ's call for true unity in faith and doctrine. (Eph.4)

Please remember that in discussing those areas which were of concern to Synod Armadale 1990 we were mandated to address the "confession of the doctrine of the church...when applicable". In this connection Synod stated that

Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'. (*Acts*, Article 77, Rec.5a)

By using this expression we do not at all imply that amongst you there is an "undiscriminating acceptance of all the errors of other denominations." We do question however, whether in your view of the church you pay sufficient heed to Christ's concrete call for faithfulness to the "true and complete doctrine of salvation". (Form For The Baptism Of Infants, *Book Of Praise*, p.587)

You consider our stated position re. the church to be "an interesting -if unbalanced view of the biblical data." May we ask you as yet to serve us with what you may consider to be a more balanced view? If we are to "work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ" do we not owe it to each other to discuss this

crucial matter as soon as possible. Why do you desire a “formal declaration by the FRCA of its interpretation of the Three Forms”? Does this not betray a lack of trust in us? Let us address the issues in a forthright, biblical manner. We do not say that we have the last word on these things but we will make no progress unless you respond with substance. Brothers in closing, please be assured that we desire to sit down with you so that we may discuss these matters face to face. Though we are unable to visit you at this time we hope you will be able to answer our recent invitation to you in a positive manner.

With brotherly greetings;
faithfully yours
C Bouwman
J Eikelboom

DIALOGUE WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Esteemed Brothers;

The 1990 Synod Armadale decided (Acts, Art. 102)

"to appoint deputies with the mandate to engage in dialogue as stipulated in Considerations 2,4,5"

These Considerations read as follows:

Consideration 2

One matter that pleads for a reconsideration for personal contact concerns new developments within the RCA. In the 1983 Acts, (Articles 102, 103) a proposal to organise a meeting with the RCA was defeated. Judging by the points raised in the discussion which led to this decision, Synod 1983 considered that the relationship which the RCA has with the GKN Synodical, (hereafter GKN(S)) had changed but was not broken, and that the change reflected uncertainty rather than reformation. This stance needs updating. In their report about the RCNZ our deputies have summarised what has happened in the RCA. We quote:

The Reformed Churches of Australia have meanwhile terminated its sister-relationship with the GKN(S). In 1982 it decided "on account of the divergence of theological thought it is no longer true to speak of a sister-church relationship between them and our churches" (1982 Acts, III-173) and therefore terminated it. Instead it wished to "maintain a close correspondence relationship with the GKN(S) to continue the discussion on issues which have caused the GKN(S) and our churches to part ways." (1982 Acts, III-173). When in 1985 the type of relations were changed to "Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (CEF) it was stated that "the situation in the GKN(S) does not warrant a change in our relationship in terms of our new CEF" (1985 Acts, I-30). So though the 1982 decision to terminate sister- relations was subject to review, the Reformed Churches of Australia did not revert to sister- relations with them, but only kept corresponding about those issues of concern. We have learned that the 1989 Synod of the RCA decided to terminate its membership in the REC if the GKN(S) were allowed to remain as member at the next REC.

Consideration 4

The agenda for such dialogue should be pre-set in accordance with past decisions of the FRCA Synods. The impediments toward unity between the FRCA and the RCA have been clearly spelled out by past synods (cf. the 1959 and 1962 Synods which approved letters to the RCA, letters which are appended to the Acts of those synods). The 1962 RCA Synod authorised its deputies to answer the correspondence. In the latter they themselves spell out the FRCA's conditions 'sine qua non' for reunion:

- a. "the recognition from our side (RCA) of the Liberation as an unmistakable work of God." and
- b. "the breaking of all correspondence (i.e. sister- relations) with the GKN(S) (quoted from the 1964 Acts, p.23; translation is ours).

Consideration 5

The present generation ought to be made aware of past (sinful) decisions taken by their synods. It is a scriptural principle that "the Lord visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" and that as much as possible the past should be undone by not maintaining the past wrongs and by steering a new course in their relations.

A. Meetings.

Deputies held eight joint meetings, all of them at the home of br. J. VanDyk whose hospitality is hereby gratefully acknowledged. Responsibility for chairing these meetings was alternated between the conveners of the respective deputies. The meetings were held in an excellent christian atmosphere.

The meetings were served with accurate and copious minutes by br.V.Eikelboom of the RCA who recorded all the proceedings. Deputies for the RCA included: Rev.S.Bajema (RCA convener), Rev. P.H. Pelicaan who was replaced by Rev. P.Abetz after the second meeting, elder V.Eikelboom and br.N.Heemelaar.

Your deputies also held a number of separate meetings for organisational purposes and in order to be better equipped to carry out our mandate.

B. Execution of Mandate.

The "Deputies' Report 1" published in *Una Sancta* (31 Aug.1991) summarised the modus operandi as follows

"... the topics have centred on the past, historical impediment which blockaded union between the FRCA & RCA, namely, the sister- relations which the RCA undertook with the GKN (S) This action preempted the possibility of the FRCA joining the bond of the RCA. Also, it demonstrated a lack of recognition of the Liberation of 1944 as an act of God. This last impediment is the focus of the dialogue, since the RCA (at its 1982 Synod) has definitely broken all official ties with the GKN-syn (except that they exchange letters with them on matters of concern. Initially there was some discussion about what the 1990 Synod of Armadale considered, in stating, "It is a scriptural principle that "the LORD visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," and that as much as possible the past should be undone by not maintaining the past wrongs and by steering a new course in their relations."

During our initial discussions one of the RCA deputies vigorously questioned the legitimacy of applying this "principle," to the present generation of the RCA. Other RCA deputies were in agreement with this and repeated reference was made to Ezek.18 (espec.vv 19,20) in support of the contention that the "new covenant does not hold that the children have to suffer for the sins of the fathers."

Your deputies stressed that although the "principle" to which Synod 1990 referred might have been enlarged upon in the Acts, it must be read in the context. We pointed to the fact that sin always has consequences and the Lord of justice consequently demands that we honour His demand for truth and justice in all our dealings. We may not live and act in an a-historical manner as if past decisions have no bearing on present situations.

An understanding was reached, i.e., that if children take over the sins of their parents then they are surely liable to punishment.

C. Documents Studied.

In order to do justice to a discussion concerning the Liberation it was initially agreed to obtain the relevant documents and decisions pertaining to it. It was decided as well to make available the relevant correspondence between RCA and FRCA concentrating on that which took place during the 1950's and early '60s.

The fact that little of this information was readily available in the English language gave deputies considerable work. It was decided to translate from Dutch into English a number of relevant documents relating to the Liberation of 1944, as well as the correspondence of the 1950's.

For the translation of the documents surrounding the Liberation of 1944 we are indebted to Rev. W.W.J Van Oene who supplied us with the following: the doctrinal pronouncements of the 1939- 1942 Synod of Sneek-Utrecht; the "Explanatory Memorandum" (Toelichting) of the same synod; the "Declaration of Sentiments" (a

document containing a number of scripture- based objections to synod Utrecht's (1943) decisions; a "Gravamen" of the late prof. dr. S. Greijdanus objecting to the same, as well as the "Act of Liberation or Return."

Besides these deputies also examined the so-called "Pacification Formula" of 1905 as well as the relevant church-political decisions which had a bearing on matters which led to the Liberation.

Some 20 pieces of correspondence between the RCA and FRCA were translated and tabled in order that deputies might gain an accurate understanding of the position(s) taken by these churches at the time.

A document comprising all these church-historical documents will be added as an Appendix to this report. (40 copies will be given for distribution to the *primi* and *secundi* delegates, archives, etc.). It will be available to all others from Pro- Ecclesia Printers.

Deputies also published two Press Reviews in *Una Sancta* which gave both an update of your deputies' activities as well as an analysis of some of the decisions of the 1991 synod of the RCA.

D. Progress in the Discussions/Dialogue

While waiting for the translated correspondence to be made available considerable attention was given to the ecclesiastical 'watershed-issues' of the late thirties and early forties. These included, i.a., questions concerning covenant and election, presumptive regeneration and common grace . The binding nature of the pronouncements of the synod(s) in question received attention as well.

Primary consideration was given to the correspondence of the 1950's. This correspondence "...concerned the debated question whether it was right (for the RCA) to offer sister-relations to both bonds of churches, the GKN-synodical and the GKN -liberated, and whether the Liberation must be recognised as a legitimate reformation of the church so that the one bond of churches, the GKN -liberated, should have been recognised.

While the RCA disassociated themselves from the synodical bindings of 1942-'43 they tried to adopt a 'neutral' position regarding the Liberation. At the same time the RCA entered into a corresponding relationship with the GKN(S). The FRCA repeatedly objected to the RCA's acceptance of the synodical churches, pointing out that correspondence as sister-churches involves the recognition of each other as true and faithful churches of Christ. The obligation to give mutual heed that there is no deviation from the truth is contained in such relationships

The FRCA was convinced that by its decisions the GKN (synodical) had ceased being true and faithful churches. In their letters the FRCA repeatedly pointed out that for those who would honour the demands of the Lord, neutrality with respect to the work of the Lord is impossible

E. Conclusions

Deputies report with thankfulness that RCA deputies were found most willing to study the matters seriously. A good understanding regarding the legitimacy of the Liberation developed. RCA deputies were convinced that the synodical/doctrinal pronouncements of 1942 binding all office bearers to the one point of view, as opposed to the two views of 1905, were ill conceived. They agree that the content of these bindings cannot be proved from Scripture and that these in fact went beyond Scripture and the confessions. They are also convinced that in the suspension and deposition of office bearers and the summary dismissal of appeals, synod(s) acted in an hierarchical manner and thus violated the Reformed Church Order. In setting its own agenda, as well as extending its 'life' beyond what was allowed by the accepted rules, the synod acted unlawfully.

RCA deputies are also of the opinion that past synods of their churches should have acted

in a more consequential manner. While they, on principle, did not take over the synodical bindings, they entered into a full sister-church relationship with the GKN(S) while that federation maintained those bindings.

RCA deputies agree that thus there was an inherent conflict in the RCA's decision to offer a sister-relation to both the GKN(S) as well as the GKN(L). Rules governing a sister-relation demanded that there be mutual heed that the true doctrine is maintained and the Church Order is properly exercised. Yet by its un-church- orderly acts considerable injustice had been done by the GKN(S), with the result that no less than 100,000 members left the GKN(S) on principle. Justice required that before the RCA offered a sister-church relationship to the GKN(S) they should have addressed the matter of the liberation in a judicial manner. They did not, with the result that a serious obstacle to the way of union with the FRCA remained.

Your deputies note that on the other hand, the FRCA may also not adopt an a-historical position. We must be grateful that in 1982 the RCA have completely terminated all relations with the GKN(S), breaking the sister-church relationship which they had. Although they continue to exchange letters with the GKN(S) they use their "correspondence" (which is meant and used literally and not in our technical sense of an official relationship) in order to make appeals to them from time to time. In recent years they have consistently urged the GKN(S) to return from an unscriptural, anti-confessional path. They have given a biblical and confessional critique of the (synodical) reports "God with Us" as well as its "Sequel" and they have voiced their strong disapproval of the GKN(S)'s stand on homosexuality.

F. Recommendations.

Your deputies have fulfilled their mandate and thus ask to be discharged.

They recommend that synod appoint new deputies to continue the contact with the RCA in order to discuss relevant issues (e.g. the RCA's 1991 "Word and Spirit" decision) that are of concern to us today.

Grounds:

1. the dialogue we have had has proved to be fruitful
2. deputies RCA have accepted the conclusions as stated (above)
3. there is thus good reason to continue the contact for the FRCA must be ready to assist those who desire to be truly reformed. As long as the door is open we must use the opportunity confessional ecumenicity.

Respectfully submitted

C.Bosch

W.Huizinga (convener)

J.VanDyk

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

A. MANDATE

1. Rules for permanent relations

To consult with sister churches abroad regarding proposed changes to rules for ecclesiastical relations and present to the churches a final proposal as soon as possible. (Acts Art. 90, Rec. 2b)

2. Rules for temporary relations

To continue the study of the rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact in consultation with sister churches, keeping in mind Art 74.II, Acts 1985. (Acts Art. 90, Rec. 2c)

- Synod amended the rules of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact as follows:

to invite delegates to each other's assembly/synods and to accord such delegates the privilege of the floor to convey greetings and allow them to briefly address the assembly/synod (Acts. Art. 139, Rec. 4)

3. Relations with sister churches

To continue the relations as sister churches under the adopted rules with

- the Canadian Reformed Churches (Acts Art. 119, Rec. 2)
- the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands(Lib) (Acts Art. 111, Rec. 2)
- the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Acts Art. 110, Rec. 2.2)
- to intensify efforts to improve the exchange of information between our churches (Rec. 2.1)
- die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (Acts Art. 112, Rec. 2)
- the Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu/Timor (Acts Art. 114, Rec. 2a)
- to continue this contact by correspondence and, where possible, visits (Rec. 2b)
- to seek contact with the Gereja Mahesi Musyafir Church of Kupang, on Timor (Rec. 2c)
- to gather information about the progress of the Reformed activities of the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia (Rec. d)

4. Relations with other churches

4.1 The Reformed Churches of New Zealand

- to maintain the contact at the present level, in order that the FRCA may be a hand and a foot in the struggle by the RCNZ to preserve the Reformed faith in their churches, to address the obstacles that kept us apart in the past and to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties with whom we do not have any official relations, specifically, to encourage them to break the ties with overseas churches such as the Reformed Churches of Australia, the Christian Reformed Churches of North America and the contacts with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, since if these continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ (Acts Art. 53, Rec. 5)

- to have more direct contacts with the RCNZ, and to permit the deputies to visit the RCNZ in order clearly to address the impediments in Recommendation 5 (Rec. 6)

- to consult with Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts (Rec. 7)

- to keep the churches informed about any progress (Rec. 8)

4.2 The Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

- a renewed mandate to investigate thoroughly this church to ascertain whether it is a true and faithful church, according to our confessions (Acts Art. 107, Rec. 2)

- to continue to discuss with them their sister-relations with the PRCA, and many other relations/contacts with other third parties (Rec. 3)
- to prepare for the ERCS a paper on how we see the “covenant and election” together with the offer to discuss this with them (Rec. 4)
- to be prepared to develop the contacts by visits, and whatever other help requested so that the ERCS is encouraged to be and to remain Reformed (Rec. 5)
- to discuss with the ERCS their views on coming to sister- relations, or possibly, a type of working-relation in which we accommodate our rules for sister-relations to their situation (Rec. 6)
- to issue periodic updates about the ERCS (Rec. 7)
- 4.3 The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
 - to express thankfulness to the EPCI for their acceptance of the relationship of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact (Acts Art. 147, Rec. b i)
 - to use this contact to continue discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other (Rec. b ii)
- 4.4 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
 - to study all the material received and the reports from our sister churches in the Netherlands. If necessary to ask the RPCI for more information in order to commence investigation to see whether the RPCI may be recognised as true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts Art. 124, Rec. 2)
- 4.5 Free Church of Scotland
 - to seek clarification whether or not our offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, as well as the associated rules, have in fact been accepted by the FCS and to ask the FCS to clarify their understanding of “fraternal association” (Acts Art. 139, Rec. 3a)
 - to use the Rules for temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to discuss issues of concern as mentioned in the report of deputies (Rec. 2b)
 - to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS while giving due heed to the concerns outstanding (Rec. 2c)
- 4.6 Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
 - since the Dutch deputies are investigating these churches as well as the division between the presbyteries synod decided to consult with Dutch deputies and to await their report (Acts Art. 135, Rec. 2)
 - to try to re-establish exchange of letters with the RPCT (Rec. 3)
- 4.7 Presbyterian Church of Uganda/Reformed Church of Japan
 - synod decided to cease further contact with both churches (Acts Art. 120, 121)
 - as to the decision re RCJ deputies are to inform the PCK of this decision (Acts Art. 121, Rec. 2)
- 4.8 International Conference of Reformed Churches
 - to study the concerns signalled by synod (see Acts Art. 145, Cons. 14, 15, 18, 19) these concerns can be summarised as follows:
 - a) how can the unity of faith expressed in Art. 1 of the Constitution of the Conference be reconciled with the fact that in the Conference we also meet with churches we have not yet recognised as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ; (Consideration 14a and 15)
 - b) the practical implications of the difference in emphasis surrounding the doctrine of the church between churches of Reformed and Presbyterian background; (Cons. 14b)
 - c) since membership in the ICRC obliges the FRCA to seek the “fullest ecclesiastical fellowship” with other member churches (Const. Art. III.2), what does this imply if sister relations prove impossible; (Cons. 18)
 - d) what is the (continuing) calling of the FRCA with respect to the ICRC. (Cons. 19)
 - to consult with the sister churches regarding the above mentioned concerns (Rec. 2b)

- to publish the results of the study mentioned in Rec. 2a for the interest of the churches (Rec. 2c)
- to serve the following synod with a report and recommendations (Rec. 2d)

B. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. Declarations

Deputies were requested to supply letters for Revs. Koelewijn, Veldman, Jonker and Bosch. No incoming declarations were sighted by deputies.

2. Rules for Sister Relations

2.1 Mandate:

Synod, Armadale, 1990 gave deputies the following mandate:

a) consult with sister churches abroad regarding proposed changes to the rules for ecclesiastical relations and present to the churches final proposal as soon as possible;
 b) continue the study of the rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact in consultation with sister churches, keeping in mind article 74.II, Acts 1985.

2.2. The Report of deputies to Synod Albany 1987 (p4) reprinted the rules for correspondence with sister churches currently accepted by the FRCA. These were adopted by Synod Launceston, 1970 (Acts, Art 26). For ease of reference during our discussion they are repeated here:

RULES FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH SISTER CHURCHES ABROAD:

a) to take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline, do not deviate from the Reformed confession;

b) to send each other the Agendum and Decisions (Acts) of the General Synods and the receiving of subsequent delegates from these other churches as advisers;

c) to consult each other previous to making any amendments or additions to confessional standards, church orders or liturgical forms;

d) to accept each other's attestations and admit each other's ministers of the Word to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, applying what was determined at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1619, in Article 165, which was further detailed at the Synod of Groningen in 1792 in Article 161 (which includes the closer definition made in Amsterdam in 1836, Article 122, decision I,4);

e) to be responsible to each other concerning correspondence with third parties.

2.3 Deputies of the sister churches in the Netherlands have grappled with the problem of making the rules for correspondence more understandable (and acceptable) to their growing contacts with churches of the presbyterian tradition.

2.4 Their various drafts have been studied and commented on by our deputies as can be found in the reports of deputies to the 1987 and 1990 Synods.

2.5. Synod Leeuwarden 1990 adopted new rules for relations with sister churches. Synod Leeuwarden instructed deputies to send these rules to sister churches "with the request that the sister churches agree to continue the sister church relationship on the basis of the newly formed rules." To date nothing official has been received from the Dutch deputies.

2.6. Deputies nevertheless have studied the new rules adopted by Synod, Leeuwarden, 1990. The Dutch deputies have prepared an english translation which the FRCA deputies were able to obtain. The rules are as follows:

RULES FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING SISTER CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

1. Content of sister-church relationship

A sister-church relationship with foreign churches comprehends, in accordance with the Reformed confession, the mutual recognition of each other as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and the corresponding exercise of ecclesiastical fellowship.

2. The establishing of sister-church relationship

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands will enter a sister-church relationship with foreign churches only after it has been ascertained, particularly by means of deputies, that such churches have not only officially recognised the Reformed Confession of the Word of God, but also actually maintain it in their ecclesiastical practice of doctrine, worship, church order and discipline.

The following must be taken into account:

a. The Lord Christ gathers His Church from out of various nations, each of which are determined by their geographical location, history, and culture, so that foreign churches may not be judged with respect to differences in minor points in the manner of confession, church order and practice;

b. In case of relations with third parties, it must be carefully investigated what these relations involve for the church in question, in order to determine the value, the sense, and in the event the procedure of entering and/or the exercising of a sisterchurch-relationship;

c. It is possible that in certain countries more than one ecclesiastical federation may exist which ought to be recognised as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the possibility of relations with more than one ecclesiastical federation in the same country cannot in itself be ruled out.

Because of Christ's command for unity, there may be no resignation towards such a situation of "dual relations" and it ought to remain a topic of discussion.

3. Rules for exercising of sister-church relationships

The sister-church relationship entered into with a church abroad they shall be exercised according to the following rules, with the goal that as reformed churches we together remain faithful to the confession of God's Word, that we assist one another, and that we encourage and exhort one another to be witnesses word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

To ensure this, the following rules shall apply as a minimum:

a. The churches shall see to each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.

b. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts but otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (where possible in translation).

c. The churches shall inform each other concerning the entering into relations with third parties.

d. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation.

e. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

In exercising these relations the churches shall strive to implement also the following:
f. In cases of changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms which are of a material confessional nature, the sisterchurches shall be especially informed of this intend, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.

g. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as this is possible.

2.7 The above Dutch rules are closer to the original rules than any of the previous drafts which deputies had been invited to comment on. We make the following remarks:

2.7.1. Deputies objected to the previous proposed set of rules because the requirement for churches to "care for each other that there is no deviation from the Reformed faith etc." was omitted. This objection has now been addressed by the reinclusion of rule a.

2.7.2. The matter of double correspondence which previous deputies had raised as a concern, still exists, however the possibility is highly qualified and as such cannot be an objection. It remains to be seen how the churches will apply this in practise.

2.7.3. Previous concerns about the possibility of "fraternal relations" with churches where sister relations is not possible has now also been satisfied. There is to be only one form of ecclesiastical relationship. In that respect the FRCA differs by having introduced the relationship of "temporary ecclesiastical contact." The Dutch sister churches have ceased offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact". In our situation we have recognised the FCS and the EPCI but there seems a reluctance to offer sister relations to them. That they have problems with the concept of sister- relations may be a reason for delaying sister-relations but as a rule we should not have problems in offering sister- relations once recognition as true churches is made by synod. thus we support the Dutch decision and recommend the same. That would mean we must become serious about what was said in "temporary ecclesiastical contact" that we use it to come to sister relations.

2.7.4. Rule c. "the churches shall inform each other concerning the entering into relations with third parties", was omitted from the first draft, reintroduced in the second draft and is also in this final set of rules, but is still weak as it stands. The preamble point 2b. does give more depth to rule c. Preferred however is the present "be responsible to each other" or better still the Canadian formulation "give account to each other."

2.7.5. Rule e. is not as specific as our current rules regarding the admission of ministers from sister churches, but considering the complexity of the present rules, the new rule is an improvement. We suggest the rule should be broadened to include the calling of each other's ministers as well as the practice of 'visiting/guest ministers.' We suggest to add "Also, the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls."

2.7.6. Rules a. to e. are to apply as **minimum rules** whilst churches will **strive to implement** rules f. and g. This distinction should be removed by deleting the sentence between rule e. and rule f. It seems to us that rule f. is of such importance that it should be part of the minimum rules. In any case there has been much discussion between the churches as to whether churches are required to notify sister churches well in advance of a decision being made to changes in the Confessions etc. This was a matter in dispute between the sister churches in the Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed Churches and remained unresolved. Seeing the difficulty our Dutch sister churches have had with their sister relations in consulting beforehand re changes to confession, church order or liturgy, it would be unwise to stipulate an absolute demand here. Synods are often not coordinated time-wise; it takes a long time to receive a response on proposed changes and some changes really do not warrant such a protracted procedure.

2.7.7. Rule g. regarding advisers to the broadest assemblies, an earlier draft limited advisers to matters concerning relations with churches abroad. Normally such delegates address synod on behalf of the sister church and as advisers speak only when asked for advice. Anyway we as deputies must still give recommendations re position and privileges of advisers and visitors. This question can be addressed then.

2.7.8. We prefer that the GOAL of sister relations be included in the rules rather than in the preamble. The first rule could read " sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world." This proposal

is made because the current first rule “to see to each other...” has dominated the exercise of sister relations. A new first rule would make sister relations more positive in outlook. 2.7.9. In general, we can be thankful that the new rules proposed by the Dutch sister churches have addressed most of our previous concerns. Other than the matter of rule f. (its content and also the placement outside of the minimum rules) the proposed rules can be adopted and only minor amendments could be suggested.

2.7.10 Deputies have also drafted a proposed set of rules for sister church relations modelled on the rules adopted by synod, Leeuwarden but incorporating some desired changes.

3. Recommendations:

3.1 Synod adopt the following rules in our relations with sister churches

RULES FOR SISTER RELATIONS:

1. Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.

2. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.

3. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or their Minutes and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible in translation).

4. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.

5. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.

6. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations. Also the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls.

7. In cases of changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms, the contents of which revisions are of a confessional nature, this intention shall be brought to the special attention of the sister churches, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.

8. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.

3.2 Synod decide to accept the proposed Dutch rules for relations between the FRCA and the Dutch sister churches but that minor amendments should still be a matter for discussion.

3.3. Synod instruct deputies to write to the Dutch deputies indicating their general approval of the new rules, but advising them of the points raised above.

3.4 Synod decide that the relationship of “temporary ecclesiastical contact” be no longer offered and that deputies be instructed to work towards the situation where sister relations can be offered to those churches with which we presently have temporary ecclesiastical contact.

C. CANADA

1. Deputies have supplied the Canadian Sister Churches with copies of Acts of Synod, Armadale, 1990 and also have sent an invitation to Synod Bedfordale, 1992.

2. There has been no other correspondence other than a request to the Canadian deputies for comment on Synod Armadale's concerns regarding the ICRC (see report on the ICRC).

3. Recommendation:

3.1 Synod decides to continue the sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the adopted rules

D. KOREA

1. Mandate:

- 1.1 To intensify efforts to improve the exchange of information between our churches;
- 1.2 To continue the sister relationship under the adopted rules;

2. Correspondence:

2.1 Deputies were advised of the 40th General Assembly to be held September 17-21 1990 and a fraternal delegate was invited to attend.

2.2 A letter of greeting was sent by deputies on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches.

2.3 the Fraternal Relations Committee provided a summary in English of some of the important decisions made by the 1990 Assembly.

2.3.1 *Up until now the General Assembly has only had a part time General Secretary but it was decided to appoint a full time General Secretary from next year.*

2.3.2 *Up until now the Seminary has only had a very small campus in Seoul with the main campus being in Pusan. It was proposed by some that the Seoul Seminary be enlarged, and the Assembly decided to refer the matter to the Seminary authorities and the Board of Trustees to decide.*

2.3.3 *At the 2nd meeting of the ICRC the fact that the Korean version of the Apostle's Creed did not include the words "descended into hell" was discussed and so at the Assembly it was decided that the Theological Committee should study that matter this year.*

2.3.4 *It was decided to establish sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches.*

2.3.5 *As far as financial support of the Seminary and College is concerned it was decided that the churches should support the Seminary to the amount of US\$230,000 and the College to the amount of US\$107,000.*

2.3.6 *The youth ministry department of the church (Students for Christ) already has quite a few staffworkers but it was decided at Assembly that every Presbytery should appoint full time staffworkers for ministry in High Schools and on University Campuses in the Presbytery and that they should be responsible for their full support.*

2.4 Copies of the Acts of Synod, Armadale 1990 were sent as was a request for comments on the concerns expressed by Synod Armadale re the ICRC. No reply has been received to date.

3. Conclusions:

3.1 Deputies have received no advice or invitation from the PCK regarding the General Assembly expected to be held in 1991. A letter has been sent requesting clarification.

4. Recommendations:

4.1 Synod instruct deputies to continue their efforts to intensify the exchange of information between our churches.

4.2 Synod decide to continue the sister relations under the adopted rules.

E. THE NETHERLANDS

1. Correspondence

1.1 After Synod Armadale, 1990 deputies sent three copies of the Acts of this synod as soon as they became available. Deputies also sent a letter to solicit comments re our concerns with respect to the ICRC. No correspondence has been received in return.

1.2 Deputies FRCA have written to the Dutch deputies expressing disappointment that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have entered into a sister relationship with The Reformed Church in the United States, the L'Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire and the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines without informing or consulting the sister churches in Australia

2. Acts Leeuwarden

Deputies received three copies of the Acts of Leeuwarden, 1990. From the Acts we will offer the following summary:

2.1. General

2.1.1. Synod could welcome a number of delegates from churches abroad.

- Rev. K.W.R. Cameron, from the Free Church of Scotland,
- Rev. N. Koch, from the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka,
- Rev. M.G. Johnston from the Evang. Presb. Church of Ireland,
- Rev. Joy M. Vingno (together with Rev. B. Niangar) from the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines,
- Rev. R. Grossmann from the Reformed Church in the U.S.A.

2.2. Theological University

2.2.1. Synod appointed Drs. C.J. de Ruyter, minister of the Church of Rotterdam-Centrum as lecturer of Diaconiology, to fill the upcoming vacancy of Professor Dr. C. Trimp.

2.2.2. Synod appointed Dr. F. van der Pol as Professor for the History of the Ancient Church, the Middle Ages and the Reformation, as well as in Symbolics.

2.3. Churches Abroad

2.3.1.1. Synod finalised a new set of rules for establishing and maintaining sister relations with churches abroad (see report about "Rules for Sister Relations").

2.3.1.2. Synod also decided no longer to enter into a "Interim Relation of Ecclesiastical Contact" because it has become clear that in practice this form of relation does not function satisfactorily.

2.3.2. Concerning foreign churches synod decided (to instruct deputies):

2.3.2.1. To maintain contact with those churches abroad with which The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands decided to continue or to enter into a sister relation, viz.:

- The Canadian Reformed Churches,
- The Free Reformed Churches of Australia,
- Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika,
- The Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timor-Savu,
- The Presbyterian Church in Korea,
- The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland,
- The Reformed Church in the United States,
- L'Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire,
- The Free Reformed Church of the Philippines,

2.3.2.2. To consult with those churches abroad, which the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in this General Synod decided to offer a sister relation, viz.:

- The Free Church of Scotland,
- The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland in order to inform these churches about this decision and to maintain the contacts with them in accordance with the existing practice, as long as they have not accepted this offer.

2.3.2.3. To consult with the following churches abroad, viz.:

- The Reformed Church of Japan,
- The Reformed Presb. Church of Taiwan, Second Presbytery.
- The Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, in order to search for the most suitable form for continuing the ecclesiastical contacts, because of the decision of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in this General Synod no longer to enter into the "Interim Relation of Ecclesiastical Contact," which consultation should lead to proposals to the next General Synod, in order that the contacts with these churches may be continued in accordance with the existing practice.

2.3.2.4. To maintain contact with those churches abroad regarding to which The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands decided in this General Synod to continue or to intensify the existing ecclesiastical contacts; viz.:

- The Reformed Presb. Church of Korea (Hapdong),
- The Reformed Presb. Church of Taiwan, First Presbytery.,
- The Evangelical Presb. Church of Singapore,
- The Presb. Church of Eastern Australia,
- The Reformed Churches of New Zealand,
- The Orthodox Presbyterian Church,
- The Greek Evangelical Church,
- The Iglesia Reformada Presbiteriana, in order to remain working in the direction of a sister church relationship.

2.3.2.5. To pay attention to developments within the following churches which came already to notice of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, and to lay exploratory contacts with these churches, if required, viz.:

- The Musyafir Churches on Timor,
- The Christian Reformed Churches,
- L'Union des Eglises Reform. Evang. Indep. de France,
- Die Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika,
- Die Nederduitse Geref. Kerk in Zuid- Afrika,
- The Church of Christ under the Tiv in Nigeria,
- and also the Presbyterian Association in England.

2.3.2.6. To seek contact with other churches abroad, the possibility of ecclesiastical communion with which may be surmised, in order to look into this possibility and make preparation for its realisation in accordance with the rules accepted by this Synod.

2.4. International Conference of Reformed Churches

2.4.1. Synod decided regarding the ICRC to charge the Committee:

2.4.1.1. to appoint delegates, and if desirable: advisers, to the next meeting of the ICRC and to instruct the delegates as follows:

a) to be diligent concerning the question whether the following should belong to the task of the Committee for Missionary Matters:

- the way in which member churches are involved in missionary work among the Jews;
- advising member churches of new mission fields;
- indicating opportunities for co-ordinating the work of charitable institutions on mission fields of member churches.

b) to look after and to promote that the rules that have been agreed upon are adhered to;

2.4.1.2. to coordinate the preparation and organisation of the next meeting of the ICRC in The Netherlands, if the possibility for this meeting in Korea should be omitted;

2.4.1.3. to urge the Interim Committee of the ICRC again to come to a necessary "Christian testimony".

2.5. Contact in the Netherlands

2.5.1. Synod resolved regarding the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands:

- to express gratitude for the fact that the General Synod of the Christian Reformed

Churches in The Netherlands, held in Groningen 1989, decided to leave the Reformed Ecumenical Council;

- to express disappointment about the decision the General Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands has taken regarding the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

- to appoint again a Committee to continue the talks with the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

2.5.2. Synod resolved to appoint a committee for the furtherance of ecclesiastical unity with churches and groups which stand or wish to stand on the basis of the Word of God and of the Three Forms of Unity and which live together, or wish to live together in accordance with the Reformed Church Order.

3. Recommendation:

Synod decide to continue the sister relation with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in accordance with the adopted rules.

F. INDONESIA

1. Mandate:

1.1 To continue the sister relations with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (RCSTS) in accordance with the adopted rules;

1.2 To continue contact with the RCSTS by correspondence and, where possible visits;

1.3 To seek contact with the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor to see whether we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according to their own confessions;

1.4 To gather information about the progress of the reformed activities of the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia.

2. Correspondence:

2.1 Deputies have had various contacts with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (Geraja Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia) and the missionary working there, Rev Pol. It was brought to our attention by Rev. Pol that we could be of considerable assistance to the churches in Indonesia if we were able to sponsor a minister of the Indonesian sister Churches to enable him to spend some time amongst us to learn the English language and to receive some theological training under the guidance of one or more of our ministers in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The period involved would be approximately three months during the mid year vacations of the Theological School.

2.2 Deputies were happy with the proposal since this would be an excellent opportunity to increase contact with our sister churches in Indonesia. An invitation was extended to Rev. Doko, who was considered the most suitable person to benefit from such a visit. However the absence of Rev. Doko during the 1991 mid year break created some practical problems and the Indonesian sister churches have asked that Rev. Doko be able to stay with us during mid 1992 instead.

2.3 At the same time, Rev. Pol had drawn our attention to Mr Johnson Dethan, a young student at the Theological School who is one of the most gifted students at the school. Johnson Dethan is a member of the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor. Deputies have already reported that there is growing contact between these Churches on Timor and our sister Churches of Sumba/Savu especially through contact with a Rev. Fangidae. Rev Pol writes:

"Rev Fangidae is a man of Reformed convictions who would like to see the Reformed faith become firmly rooted in the Musyafir Church. One of the problems he has encountered in attempting to realise this objective is that the Musyafir Church has no Theological School. Potential ministers have been sent to various institutions, the result being that the calvinistic background has been diluted by evangelical and charismatic

influences. He has succeeded in reversing this process to some extent. In his area a classis has been formed which has received the Belgic Confession as the expression of the faith of the churches and the Reformed Church Order as the standard for ordering church life."

2.4 In order to strengthen the Reformed character of the churches, Rev. Fangidae has requested permission to send students to the Theological School of the Reformed Churches of Sumba/Savu in order to be trained for the ministry. At the moment there are five students from Timor at the Theological School on Sumba.

2.5 Our sister Churches in the Netherlands have already taken steps to know the Musyafir Churches better and have appointed Rev. J. Knigge to assist the churches there.

2.6 Because of the inability of Rev. Doko to accept an invitation to visit the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, Rev. Pol suggested that it would be desirable for student Johnson Dethan to receive the opportunity to study English and receive further theological orientation in Australia.

2.7 Deputies considered the proposal by Rev. Pol and agreed that practical assistance be offered to this student. Although he was not a member of our sister churches, it should be noted that Deputies have reported that the last Synod of the Reformed Churches of Sumba/Savu decided that students from the Musyafir Churches who have successfully completed the training at the Theological School at Wai Marangu (Sumba), can serve in the Reformed Churches in Sumba/Savu. In accepting this proposal, we would be able to strengthen the cause of the Reformed faith in Timor and thereby assist us to fulfil the mandate given by Synod Armadale, 1990.

2.8 Consequently on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches, deputies invited student Johnson to Australia for three months starting in July 1991. The approval of the churches in Australia was sought and also a request to contribute to the cost. Regrettably difficulties with obtaining a visa has prevented Johnson from travelling to Australia so far. Deputies explored all avenues to assist Johnson to obtain a visa, including an appeal to the Minister for Immigration.

3. Church Life

3.1 The synod of the RCSTS which was to be held late in 1991 in Timor was postponed and therefore deputies have not sent a delegate to visit these churches.

3.2 However, information was received that a conference of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia was to be held in Sumba from November 12-14, 1991. Deputies were able to request Br C. de Man to attend this conference on behalf of the FRCA. He was able to take a letter of greeting.

3.3 Br C. de Man has submitted a report on the conference and this is included as an appendix.

3.4 Deputies were unable to fulfil their mandate regarding the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia.

4. Recommendations:

4.1 Synod supports the efforts of deputies to invite student Johnson from the Musyafir Churches in Timor and Rev Doko from the RCSTS to visit Australia for orientation and training.

4.2 To continue sister relations with the RCSTS in accordance with the accepted rules.

4.3 To continue contact with the RCSTS and the Musyafir churches by visits if possible.

4.4 Deputies continue to seek information regarding the Musyafir Churches in Timor to see if we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according to our confessions.

4.5 Deputies gather information about the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia

Appendix

Report by br C. De Man on his visit to Sumba/Timor

Before we went to Sumba we first visited Kupang on the island of Timor, where we stayed with Rev Fangidae of the GMM Church. He had invited us to come again to stay with them and in the mean time had built a small hotel. Rev Fangidai and his wife speak good English and anyone is welcome to stay there. The first Sunday we went to the church where Rev Fangidae preached. The consistory consists of elders (men) and deacons (women). His style of preaching is somewhat unusual. During the preaching he comes off the pulpit and asks questions directed to the congregation.

After the church service we went straight to Tarus, a small village about 20km from Kupang, where Johnson Dethan is a trainee minister, a very nice young man. The preaching by Rev F was more in our style. A choir sang a few songs during the collection, a common practice in Indonesia, also in the FRC both before and after the church service. The next Sunday we went to the FRC where Rev M Biha is minister, a very good preacher. He got married in September. The next morning we went by boat to Sumba. A nice trip that takes about 20 hours. Rev Biha and an elder from the GMM were also on board. We stayed overnight in Waingapu. When we arrived in Waimarangu we were welcomed by Rev Hawu (deputy for overseas relations) and many more people.

The conference was in Waimarangu. It was held in a building used otherwise as the church or school. There are about 20 pupils: 3 from the GMM. Rev Hawu had arranged for us to stay with the family DeVries, an engineer for the V.N. Waimarangu is about 12km from Melolo on the scarp of the mountains.

The conference started on the 12th of November. It was attended by 3 delegates of Kalbar and 4 of NTT. The delegations of Irian Jaya was delayed due to plane trouble but arrived on the afternoon of the same day. The meeting was opened at 9 o'clock in the morning by Rev Hawu and Rev Radja. The conference was attended by a delegate of the department of religions and a delegate of the local government. The government plays an important part in the granting of freedom of religion in Indonesia. About 90% of the Indonesians are Moslems, but overall they are quite easy about true religions except in Sumatra, where there is still a lot of fighting going on against the fundamentalists who want to make Indonesia like Iran.

Opportunity was given to all delegates to say a few words, in my case to read the letter of the FRC (translated). Then the meeting was postponed till the next day (Wednesday) when it was opened in the usual manner. After that the moderators were chosen. The Chairman was Rev Rumaseu of Irian Jaya (who became minister last year) and Candidate Amin from Kalbar was Vice Chairman. Candidate Amin is still waiting for a call, a problem in Kalbar where there are 2 vacant churches. Rev Doko, a teacher at the school in Waimarangu was first secretary and Rev G Weiensba from Irian Jaya 2nd secretary. Discussion papers were tabled and listed in order for discussion. Voting by women is one item. Kalbar has to make a report about this matter in one year and send it to the churches. Procedure for censure is another item. It will have to be explained to the members of the church in the language of their district. Especially, the elders of the churches need to be educated in this matter.

Gifts and voluntary contributions to the church are a big problem because of the poverty of the members. It is common for ministers and or their wives to have another job. One of the wives is a fisherman. Another point is to prepare a paper so that the churches remain one in faith and teaching of the Word of God. Because of distance, there remains many problems. Synod is held only in NTT due to expense. A conference of Indonesian churches is held every four years. The next conference will be held in Kalimantan. Only NTT is a member of ICRC but nobody has even been there because of money and language problems.

There were many other points. For example - Psalmbooks, magazines and heathen traditions. Kalbar was requested to make a report about this matter in connection with other churches. All together the meeting took about 3 days. The meeting was closed on Friday night, 14/11/91 by Rev Rumaseu. On Saturday we left again for Melolo and stayed there till Tuesday.

C. de Man.

January, 1992.

G. SOUTH AFRICA

The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

1. Introduction:

1.1 Since the previous report of Deputies to Synod Armadale 1990 (refer to Acts of Synod pages 249-252) the Deputies have made contact by correspondence with the SA Sisterchurches on two occasions:

1.2 In September 1990, relating Synods instruction to Deputies to continue the sister relations under the adopted rules. Two copies of the Acts of Synod Armadale 1990 were forwarded.

1.3 After receiving two copies of the Acts of Synod Kaapstad 1990 with the Summary of Proceedings in the English language, the Deputies have been asked to provide us with more detailed information about the contact of the FRCSA with the Reformed Churches in SA. To date no further information has been received.

1.4 Deputies have invited representation of the sisterchurches in SA to Synod Bedfordale during May 1992.

1.5 Deputies received an invitation to the forthcoming synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa to be held D.V. April 29th to May 2nd, 1992. Deputies will send a letter of greeting on behalf of the FRCA.

2. Acts Kaapstad

2.1 Contact foreign churches:

Synod discussed the deliberation with foreign sister churches in relation to the need of the laying down of rules for church correspondence which should be acceptable to Presbyterian churches.

Synod decided to continue the church correspondence with the FRCA, CRC and the RCN (lib) according to fixed regulations.

Brotherly contact will be continued with RC in Eastern Sumba/Savu, Presb. Ch. in Korea, and the Free Ch. in SA. This will involve the exchange of church information and messages of sympathy and encouragement.

The new delegates for Correspondence were charged to:

- *Continue the consultation with the sister churches regarding the drawing up of regulations for church correspondence which will also be acceptable to the Presbyterian churches;*
- *Exchange ideas with the sister churches regarding the acknowledgement of other churches as a "true church" especially if those churches are in the same country and what the consequences of such an acknowledgement are;*
- *Sending the proceedings of the Synod to our sister churches and if considered beneficial to churches with whom brotherly contact is maintained;*
- *Managing affairs flowing from the membership of the ICRC and the maintaining and promoting of the reformed direction of the conference, in co-operation with our sister churches.*

In addition, the delegates were instructed to investigate and discuss with Australia and Canada, the possibilities of sending delegates from time to time to one another's Synods.

2.2 I.C.R.C.:

In the discussion of the Report from the delegates to the International Conference of Reformed Churches regarding the subject Apartheid, the Synod judged its preference for the discussion of the matter in a broader perspective.

Synod considered the paper by Prof Dr J Douma too politically inclined and one-sidedly aimed at South Africa.

Synod decided to again send two delegates to the 1993 Conference in Seoul.

It was also decided to instruct the ministers of the FRCSA to study the report of the study committee in relation to the Ecumenical Articles of Faith and to report to the next Synod.

2.3 Contact home churches:

The discussion concentrated mainly on the recommendation of delegates "that the Synod should pronounce its acknowledgement of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) as a true church of Christ, but that the manner in which the RCSA determines and maintains its borders of the church, is not acceptable to the FRCSA because it seems to provide inadequate protection of the church people against unscriptural schools of thought".

In the discussion it was pointed out that the RCSA should understand that the FRCSA is not finished when a church group is acknowledged as a true church. One of the impediments which prevent further discussion of the FRCSA with the RCSA is that the latter has not broken the bonds with the RES.

Synod decided not to go as far as to pronounce the RCSA a true church.

A number of instructions were given to the new delegates in their further contact with the RCSA. They include:

- To participate on behalf of our churches in interdenominational gatherings to which we are invited and where matters regarding the FRCSA are discussed or where we might give a contribution which has a testimonial character;
- To reflect on the practical application of contact with churches with whom contact is considered significant; and to implement such contact;
- To suitably react on the decisions of the Synod of the RCSA of 1991 regarding the breaking of the bonds with the GER, on condition that it is positive;
- To examine whether our main objections against the RCSA (i.e. the inadequate protection of the boundaries of Christ's church) has in the past been sufficiently explained or whether the RCSA has not understood this, and to make recommendations to the next Synod.

2.4 New Afrikaans Bible translation:

The Synod decided to adopt the recommendation of delegates not to pronounce its judgment about the definite approval or disapproval of the new Afrikaans Bible translation (NAB) but to instruct a new delegation to proceed with the work of the previous delegation.

2.5 New translation Articles of Faith:

Following a report by the ministers, the Synod decided to allow the translation of the Three Ecumenical Articles of Faith and the Three Formularies of Unity in the 1987 church book, for church use.

2.6 Revision liturgical forms:

The delegates as nominated by the Synod of Johannesburg in 1988 who had to translate the Liturgical Formularies submitted their work to the Synod. The Synod decided to have the work tested once again critically by a new delegation.

This new delegation should then finalise the publishing of a booklet. The synod decided to instruct them to also incorporate the new text of the Church Order and the alternative Order of Service in that booklet.

2.7 Order of service:

After discussions the Synod accepted without alteration the recommendations of the delegation appointed by the previous Synod and decided:

- To return to the Order of Service of the time of the Reformation from the 16th Century;
- The Synod subsequently decided to leave the decision to each church itself whether the Amen hymns are to be sung by the congregation after the prayers, preaching, confession of faith etc.;

- To conclude, the synod decided to instruct delegates to examine the alternative melodies of the sung Amen. In the meantime, the amen will be sung according to the last line of the Apostolic Confession of Faith. Because the order of service is considered a "subsidiary item" (Art. 47, C.O.), the Synod thought that a certain amount of freedom is allowed in the liturgy, however, it should never lead to lack of restraint or carelessness.

2.8 Melodies and rhythms:

The church of Pretoria requested that the melodies and rhythms of the psalms and hymns in future be sung according to the Afrikaans Church Book of 1987.

The delegates from the church of Pretoria had to motivate why they once again tabled this point despite the many discussions on previous Synod meetings. Since especially the children who do not attend Reformed schools, the presence of visitors in our worship meetings as well as the influx of new members from other Afrikaans churches urgently necessitates the use of the Afrikaans music notation.

2.9 The pronouncement of the blessing during sermon-reading:

The churches of Johannesburg and Pretoria tabled objections against the decision of the Synod of Johannesburg 1988 about the pronouncement of the blessing during sermon-readings.

The church council of Pretoria stated that the Synod of Johannesburg 1988 considered it "advisable to have uniformity in worship meetings. As the Synod recommends an order of service, so should it recommend on the matter of the pronouncement of the blessing to the churches."

The church of Pretoria also stated that the church of Cape Town followed the Synod decisions only in so far that the words of blessing spoken in a sermon-reading should be unaltered, but that the reading elder may decide for himself whether he uses an additional gesture; while the church of Johannesburg decided not to follow the Synod decision at all. Pretoria therefore concludes that the decision of the two church councils not to follow the Synod recommendations (fully) reveals an inadequate agreement of the Synod judgment; the character of a reading-sermon and the position of the elder in a reading-sermon and the pronouncement of the blessing with the additional gesture to be not only the prerogative of the minister.

The findings of the Synod of Johannesburg 1988 also inevitably poses the question whether a non-minister might also be authorised to administer the sacraments.

Therefore, the consistory of Pretoria, suggested:

1. A thorough investigation on the whole issue of a sermon-reading is needed;

2. An attempt to answer in the investigation the following questions:

a) Who may be authorised by a church council to precede in a service of worship, excluding the minister? Only elders? Or even a church member without a specific calling?

b) Is the pronouncement of the blessing in the Bible limited to certain positions?

Based on the answers to these questions, it could be determined what a sermon-reader might be authorised to do.

3. It would be advisable if the Synod of Cape Town 1990 withdraw the recommendation of its minister regarding the blessing in reading-sermons and to appoint a delegation to study this issue.

The Synod adopted the recommendations and judgments of Pretoria after discussions (referring to Art. 33, C.O., last part), on condition that the decisions of the Synod of Johannesburg 1988 not be withdrawn. The Synod decided to grant each church freedom of choice in the implementation of the decisions of Johannesburg 1988, until the next Synod.

2.10 Marriage ceremonies:

Following the report from a delegation which investigated the issue of marriage ceremonies, the Synod decided that:

The marriage-ceremony should be performed during a private function. This however does not mean that the marriage is a private and not churchly concern. The marriage-ceremony does not have to be a worship-service, even if it stays a churchly concern: the church council approves the marriage-ceremony, asks for the approval of the congregation by means of proclamation, and asks the congregation to attend the ceremony in the presence of their fellow-believers.

The synod concluded with the following:

a) The performance of the marriage-ceremony, as well as the churchly confirmation of the marriage, should take place in the same ceremony, and following that, the forms should be signed.

b) The ceremony should be seen as a private concern and the scriptural teaching specifically aimed at the bridal pair.

c) Art. 70 of the Order of the Church is not contrary to this view, as "confirmation" and "solemnization" of a marriage, has the same meaning and may be kept unaltered.

The synod decided to allow a transitional period regarding the implementation of this decision. Until the next Synod, each church would decide for itself whether to see the churchly wedding ceremony as a private concern or to stick to the custom of performing it during a worship service.

2.11 Church Visitation:

The church of Pretoria requested the withdrawal of the previous Synod decision which stipulated a biennial instead of an annual church visitation.

The motivation of the decision taken by the Synod Johannesburg 1988, was the high costs of the church visitations.

Pretoria maintains that there should be sufficient grounds for the deviation from Art. 44 C.O., and because of the huge distances between the three churches and the scant informal contact because of these distances, the church visitation remains the most effective form of mutual supervision; and the church visitors provide advice to the local consistory; members of a congregation may also ask for help from the church visitors. Financial cost can not be compared to the benefits of these visitations regarding the good relationships between the churches.

The synod however decided that because of:

a) the need for more intensive contact, and

b) the high costs of visitation

we should seriously endeavour that church visitations satisfy the need for mutual contact, supervision and advice.

2.12 Mission:

The delegates from Pretoria suggested on the recommendation of Pretoria's consistory, through the Mission Delegation in the Netherlands, to absolve the Synod of the FRCSA of its duty to have a role regarding co-operation when Pretoria's church takes over the responsibility for the mission in Mamelodi from Drachten Z/O's church. Only the classis Grootegast in The Netherlands will form the co-operation bonds.

The Synod expressed its gratitude for the joyful developments in the mission area as well as the takeover by Pretoria's church.

The Synod agreed that the Synods of the FRCSA would no longer have any role to play in the relation of co-operation.

2.13 Support of theological students:

The recommendation of the delegation regarding Art. 19, C.O. to investigate the possibilities of theological studies at a South African University and post-graduate studies in The Netherlands as finishing, met with opposition from the Synod. Study-time would not be shorter and the theological climate in South Africa differs from that in the countries of our sister churches. The willingness of our sister churches in Australia, Canada and The Netherlands to call a candidate-minister who has studied only in South Africa, seems unlikely.

The Synod decided to instruct a new delegation to:

1. Find out whether the Theological University of Kampen would allow students without a B.A. degree as prerequisite.
2. Find out at the Theological College of Hamilton about the possibilities of allowing a South African student and what the financial implication are.

3. Recommendation:

Synod decide to continue the sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa in accordance with the adopted rules.

I. IRELAND

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

1. Mandate

Synod 1990 gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. to express thankfulness to the EPCI for their acceptance of the relationship of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact;
- b. to use the contact to continue discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other and with the aim to be able to come to a recommendation to Synod to extend full sister relations.

2. Progress

The deputies have sent two letters to the EPCI, the first a letter of greeting and a copy of the Acts of Synod 1990 (August 190). As no response was forthcoming a second letter was sent in November 1991 restating the contents of the first letter and requesting additional materials and information. As yet no reply has been received as response to this letter either, nor has any contact been initiated by the EPCI. This is possibly due to our mail being directed to the wrong address since our contact has moved to minister in another congregation. Should any mail arrive before our next synod, more information will be forwarded in a supplementary report.

Last synod, deputies were instructed to use the temporary Ecclesiastical Contact as a means of continuing discussions and exchanging information with the aim to be able to come to synod with a recommendation to extend full sister relations. Although not much has yet transpired between the FRCA and the EPCI, the desired recommendation does not need to be precluded. For, to be consistent with our efforts to phase out temporary ecclesiastical contact, we should move in the direction of sister relations. Further, using the considerations of Synod 1990, there are no impediments to offering sister relations to the EPCI. Article 147 consideration 5 states, "Over the years it has become quite clear that the EPCI cherishes and displays the three marks of a true and faithful church" and consideration 8 reads, "New deputies should be mandated to discuss and explain our current rules for sister churches with the EPCI".

3. Recommendation

Deputies recommend to Synod that it appoints new deputies with the mandate to move

towards becoming sister churches with the EPCI and, in so doing, to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister relations.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

1. Introduction

Synod 1990 gave the deputies the following mandate:

- a. To keep contact at a low level,
- b. that deputies be given a mandate to study all the materials received and the reports from our sister churches in the Netherlands. If necessary they are to ask the RPCI for more information in order to commence investigation to see whether the RPCI may be recognized as a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- c. to report to Synod concerning progress made (1990 Acts, art. 124).

2. Progress

Although contact with the RPCI was kept relatively low key, much material was made available for the deputies to use. For the purpose of the report we used various brochures outlining the beliefs and practices of the RPCI, the monthly magazine "The Covenanter Witness", the "Code" and "Testimony" of the RPCI and various reports sent by the deputies to the Synods of our sister churches in the Netherlands.

2.1 History

The RPCI has its roots in the second Scottish Reformation of 1638 - 1649. Prior to this, in 1618, the Scottish crown became unsympathetic towards the Presbyterian system, and a conflict arose between church and state. King James contrived to overthrow the Presbyterian system and introduced a law which became known as the Articles of Perth. This law was rigorously enforced. However, being contrary to the beliefs of the Presbyterians, they responded, in 1638, with a national covenant in which the church pledged to recover the purity and liberty of the gospel as it was established and practiced before the Articles of Perth. Presbyterianism was restored and the Articles of Perth annulled. Five years later, in 1643, a Solemn League and Covenant was signed by the Scottish Presbyterians and the English parliament. Both parties pledged to "preserve the reformed religion in Scotland and to work for the reformation of religion in doctrine, worship, discipline and government according to the Word of God".

These Scottish Presbyterians became known as Covenanters.

During this period of Scottish History, Ireland too was undergoing change. The beginning of the seventeenth century saw many Scotsmen enter Ireland to farm on the many tracts of land which were made available near Ulster. Many Scotsmen also arrived as soldiers used to quell the Rebellion of 1641. Thus the Reformed faith as practiced in Scotland was introduced.

Within two years The Presbyterian Church became 'covenanted' and the foundations of the present Reformed Presbyterian Church was laid. This was brought about when the Solemn League and Covenant was brought from Scotland in 1644 and warmly approved and signed in many places. Thus too the name given to the RPCI as Covenanters.

From this time on, the RPCI has always accepted and taught that the Scottish Covenants of 1638 and 1643 obliged seceding generations to continue as Covenanters.

Pledging themselves to this caused many ups and downs in the history of the RPCI. Already in 1660 the position of the Covenanters was challenged and the Solemn League and Covenant was condemned as "treasonable, seditious and schismatical". A difficult period of persecution followed and the cause of Reformed Presbyterianism as Covenanters was almost lost. However, under the ministry of David Houston, the individual societies, separated because of the persecutions, were united in common fellowship which led to the reestablishment of their Covenanting position. The years following were no easier till 1744 when links were made with Scotland and the RPCI

was placed under the supervision of the Scottish Reformed Presbytery. A Period of growth followed during which time the first Irish Reformed Presbytery was formed, in 1763, and the church received its official name as the RPCI. Although it experienced various tumultuous times it is this same church with whom we have contact today. (The material above is mostly taken from the book "The Covenanters in Ireland" by Adam Loughridge.)

2.2 Situation

The RPCI has forty congregations spread throughout Ireland which are being served by some thirty ministers. There are approximately 4500 members, including those baptized. (Synod Spakenburg, 1987.) It has a sister-church relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia. The RPCI also has an official "friendly relationship" with the Free Church of Scotland, and with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. (Synod Spakenburg, 1987.)

The RPCI is very active in Home Mission and regularly hold open air meetings, book stalls and material distributions. Regular updates of the activities are reported in the monthly magazine, the "Covenanter Witness". Also reported regularly is the work done in Foreign Mission. Currently much work is being done together with the Scottish Presbyterian Church in France, specifically Nantes. The main objectives of all this work, both at home and away is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the end that sinners may be brought to his kingdom, to build up believers in faith and holiness to the end that they themselves may be witnesses to Christ and to establish an indigenous church, self propagating and self supporting, scriptural in doctrine, government and worship. (Code 12.65.13)

A Theological college, set up in 1854, is also maintained by the RPCI. It remains under the control of Synod who appoints a committee of superintendence for supervision. Six ministers teach at the college, each minister still being responsible to his own congregation. The three year course, resulting in a Theological Diploma (Dip.Th.) by the successful candidate, consists of the following subjects: Theology, Apologetics, Christian Ethics, and Church Principles; Old Testament Language and literature; New Testament Language and Literature; Church History; and Pastoral Theology, Homiletics and Mission.

2.3 Confessional Standards

The subordinate standards of the RPCI are the Westminster Confession of faith and the Catechisms Larger and Shorter. The reformed doctrine is also summarized, interpreted and applied in the Testimony of the Church.

2.4 Marks of the True Church

2.4.1 The pure preaching of the Gospel

The Ohmann and VanVeen report, included in the report of the deputies of our Dutch sister churches to Synod Leeuwarden, claims the preaching in the RPCI to be scripturally sound and practical. Although the sermons they heard were rather dogmatic in nature, possibly because the RPCI do not have catechism sermons, the practical Christian lifestyle in a world full of evil was still emphasized. We deputies also had access to various sermons printed in the 'Covenanter Witness'. These sermons too were scriptural and applicable to the daily lives of the Christian. The teaching of Christ's authority over state, church and individual (and its practical applications) was repeatedly emphasized.

2.4.2 The pure administration of the Sacraments as instituted by Christ.

The RPCI have two sacraments: Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism.

Holy Supper is seen as "a sacrament wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth; and worthy receivers are, by faith, made partakers of His body and blood with all His benefits to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace." (Testimony page 55/56)

The Code stipulates the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated at least twice a year in the following manner:

The date is to be publicized in advance and preparation services are to be held at convenient times. Tokens are presented to those who wish to partake, including the visitors whose profession and practise are known to the Session. On the actual day the minister "Fences the Table" from an appropriate place in Scripture, reads the terms of membership of the RPCI, gives solemn words of warning to intending communicants urging careful self-examination and then gives words of loving invitation and encouragement to those who are truly repentant. The communicants take their places, the tokens are collected, the minister takes bread, gives thanks and breaks and distributes it and the wine. A suitable address is then given. Sometime following the celebration of the Lord's Supper, a service of thanksgiving is held.

Holy Baptism is seen as a sign and seal of God's Covenant of Grace. It certifies that God's promises are sure and that the blessing promised in Christ are valid. Baptism is to be public and should be preceded by the preaching of God's Word. In answering the questions on presentation of the child for baptism, emphasis is also placed on the responsibilities of the parents in bringing up the child in the fear of the Lord. Various relevant promises are made.

2.4.3 The exercise of Church Discipline for correcting and punishing sins

Church Discipline is carried out for the maintenance and promotion of purity, order and peace in the church, and for the good of offenders. We read in the Code that the subjects of discipline by the courts of the Church are ministers, office bearers, members and baptized youth of the Church, and the congregations and inferior courts of the church as such. In dealing with discipline, the RPCI remain very close to scripture, i.e. Matthew 18:15-17.

2.5 Church Government

The form of church government is Presbyterian and differs little from the other Presbyterian churches we know.

2.6 General

a. The RPCI is known as a Covenanter Church. They believe in the practise of covenanting in which they bind themselves as church in solemn covenant to God to observe and to apply His word in every day life.

"We, as a church, believe that the covenants our church and nation entered into with God in the 17th century are not just interesting bits of history, They oblige us today. By them we are bound by Covenant to God to do three things:

- 1. Promote and defend the Protestant, Reformed faith;*
- 2. Bring our nation back to Christ as Lord and King and*
- 3. Give ourselves as church and individuals to the Lord Jesus Christ".*

(Covenanter Witness June 1991.)

b. The singing in church is exclusively Psalm singing without the accompaniment of instruments. This practise is based on the principle that nothing is to be admitted into the worship services other than that prescribed in the Word of God.

These two issues need additional study and consideration as they may lead to impediments in future sister relations.

3. Recommendations

Deputies recommend to Synod

- a. that deputies be appointed to maintain contact at the present level
- b. to use these contacts to continue discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other, particularly on the matters of covenanting and purity of worship.

c. to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister relations on which basis the FRCA and RPCI can move in the direction of becoming sister churches.

J. SCOTLAND

Free Church of Scotland

1. Mandate

The 1990 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. to seek clarification whether or not our offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, as well as the associated rules, have in fact been accepted by the FCS and to ask the FCS to clarify their understanding of "fraternal association";
- b. to use the Rules for temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to discuss issues of concern as mentioned in the report of deputies;
- c. to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS while giving due heed to the concerns outstanding.

2. Progress

2.1 In accordance with this mandate a letter, dated October 1990, was sent to the FCS. We quote this letter:

Dear Brothers,

It is about a year ago that we received a letter of your Committee. In this letter you welcomed a fraternal association with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). At the time we received this letter our Synod had been postponed for half a year due to a pilot dispute which made traveling very difficult for some of the delegates. Instead of November 1989 we now met in May 1990. This may explain the delay in answering your letter of 10th Oct. 1989.

As regards this letter we have some questions.

1. In your letter you write that "the Committee welcome fraternal association with the FRCA." Somewhat further you write "the Committee are also ready to recommend to our General Assembly...." We are wondering whether this recommendation has also been accepted by your General Assembly, i.e whether the FCS has officially accepted our offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact as well as the associated rules.

2. It is not clear to us either what you mean with the term 'fraternal association'. We are not familiar with this kind of relationship. The FRCA have only sister relations and as a stepping stone to a full sister relation we use Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact. We have the impression from what you write that what you call 'fraternal association' is almost the same as our Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact. Yet we would like you to clarify this term 'fraternal association'.

The rules that apply for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact are:

- 1. To invite delegates to each other's Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates the privilege of the floor to convey greetings and allow them to briefly address the Assembly/Synod.*
- 2. To exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern.*
- 3. To be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching a relation as sister churches, specifically, to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations as sister churches.*

Since we want to use our Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to discuss matters of concern. We would like to raise the following issue which indeed caused concern on synod floor when discussing our relations with the FCS. During a visit to your church brought by two of our deputies in February 1988 we heard that occasionally some of your ministers fill the pulpit in a Reformed Baptist Church. Since this information was conveyed to us

just before we left we had no time to discuss this with you. To us it is strange to have pulpit exchange with churches one has no formal relation with. Our question is, how do you view this especially in light of Chap. XXV of the Westminster Confession?

As far as we can see this same point also determines your view on the ICRC. For how can you propose a full commitment of the member churches towards one another, whilst in their mutual contacts some of these churches have not as yet recognized each other as full sister churches? If possible we would also like to hear something more about this point.

It is our sincere wish and prayer that through our discussions we may come to a better understanding of one another. We are looking forward to your reply of our letter. May the King of the Church through His Spirit guide both you and us in all our deliberations.

With brotherly greetings,

on behalf of deputies for relations with churches abroad,

2.2 Till now we haven't received a response to this letter. Yet we received the Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, convened at Edinburgh May 1990. These Acts have also included the reports of deputies. In the report of deputies for ecumenical relations it reads regarding the FRCA,

"A letter expressing a desire to move toward 'Sister Church' relations which would involve mutual granting of associate seats in the General Assembly or Synod to delegates was received from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. In reply the Churches were assured of the desire of the Free Church of Scotland to establish cordial relations with them but stating that whilst we welcomed delegates as guests we did not grant them free access to the floor of the Assembly."

Deputies recommended to the Assembly,

"to assure the Reformed Churches of Australia (must be Free Reformed Churches) of their fraternal love and support and hope for further understanding of each other's outlook and duties in the years to come,"

This recommendation was accepted by the General Assembly. It appears that we may deduce from this that our offer for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact has indeed been officially accepted by the General Assembly, though it does not say this explicitly.

2.3 Some further information from the Acts of the General Assembly, May 1990:

a. As regards the ICRC it reads,

"The General Assembly thank those who represented the Church at the International Conference of Reformed Churches. They await the further information to be made available and are glad to be assured of the usefulness of the conferences between the Churches faithful to the Reformed Standards."

"The General Assembly encourage the Committee to arrange a regional conference with like-minded Churches in the United Kingdom."

An invitation to attend a meeting of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) was respectfully declined.

b. As regards the RCNZ in the report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations it reads, *"The Committee learned by letter from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand that the inter-church Relations Committee of this Church were mandated by their Synod to "begin negotiations toward establishment of a Sister-Church relationship with the Free Church of Scotland". The Committee welcomed this approach and resolved to provide the New Zealand Church with relevant information about the Free Church of Scotland."*

It was proposed to the General Assembly and subsequently accepted "to greet the RCNZ as brothers in the Lord."

c. With Prof. Douglas MacMillan accepting the call to become minister Of Buccleuch & Greyfriars, Edinburgh, the Chair of Church History and Principles at the College at Edinburgh fell vacant. The General Assembly appointed Rev. Hugh M. Cartwright.

2.4 The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed

Churches delegated the Revs. Cl. Stam and J. Visscher to visit the FCS. Synod 1986 and 1989 of the CRC had given their deputies a mandate to investigate these churches with a view to possibly entering into a sisterchurch relationship with them. The report of these two delegates was published in Clarion, Volume 40, page 30ff. They arrive at their conclusion, "We came away from the meetings with the impression that here is a Church which is faithful to the Lord and which seeks to serve Him in all things. The certain practices are different from what we are used to and can not be doubted, but we are of the opinion that those differences do not hinder us from recognizing the FCS."

2.5 Recently deputies also received the Acts of the General Assembly, convened at Edinburgh May 1991. As regards the FRCA it reads in the report of deputies for ecumenical relations:

"Correspondence from these churches has been received too late for consideration by the Committee and will be dealt with in due course. The Australian brethren are uncertain as to what the Free Church means by fraternal relations and in their own system recognize only 'Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact' and 'Sister-church Relations' both quite rigidly regulated. The Committee's response will be reported to next General Assembly."

As to the rules for correspondence deputies recommended to the General Assembly:

"The General Assembly are encouraged to learn of continuing fraternal relations with churches abroad. They await the outcome of discussions with churches in the Dutch tradition desirous of securing sister-church relations. They charge the committee to report progress on these matters to next general Assembly."

The report and recommendations of deputies were unanimously adopted by the General Assembly.

3. Recommendations:

- a) to express our disappointment about the lack of communication from the FCS;
- b) to continue efforts in order to receive a response from the FCS on the letter of deputies dated Oct. 1990
- c) to charge new deputies with the instruction:
 - to use the rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact to discuss issues of mutual concern;
 - to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister relation. On this basis the FRCA and the FCS can move in the direction of becoming sister churches.

K. NEW ZEALAND

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

1. Mandate

The relevant decisions of the 1990 Synod re the RCNZ are as follows:

1. To express its joy over the obedience granted to the RCNZ in withdrawing from the REC;
2. To maintain the contact at the present level, in order that the FRCA may be a hand and a foot in the struggle by the RCNZ to preserve the reformed faith in their churches, to address the obstacles that kept us apart in the past and to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties with whom we do not have any official relations, specifically, to encourage them to break the ties with overseas churches such as the RCA, CRCNA and the contacts with the NGK, since if these continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ;
3. To adopt deputies' recommendation regarding more direct contacts with the RCNZ, and to permit the deputies to visit the RCNZ in order to clearly address the impediments mentioned in the Recommendation above;
4. To consult with the Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts;

5. To keep the churches informed about any progress;
6. To report to the next synod.

2. Discharge of mandate

We have conveyed the decisions of the 1990 Synod about the RCNZ to their deputies in a letter dated 20 Aug/90. In that same letter we mentioned increasing contact, e.g. visits by br TMP VanderVen and Dr J Faber of our Canadian sister-churches to the RCNZ; the past barriers between the RCNZ and FRCA (also being discussed with the RCA); their sister-relations with CRCNA and the recent developments within the CRCNA.

On 27 May/91 we wrote to our Dutch deputies re their contacts with the RCNZ and specifically about the NGK. We urged them to consider visiting the RCNZ and to address them personally about the NGK. Thus we attempted to coordinate our efforts concerning the contacts with the RCNZ. Copies of all our correspondence with the RCNZ was enclosed.

On 27 May/91 we again wrote to the RCNZ deputies, conveying our desire to visit them if they deemed this worthwhile; asking if any action had been taken with regard to their sister-relations with the CRCNA; solving some internal matters with respect to the remarks made by Rev J Sawyer to our 1990 Synod (which were subsequently published in UNA SANCTA and NEDERLANDS DAGBLAD); and to the matter of their contacts with the NGK (the unaffiliated reformed churches in the Netherlands who left the federation circa 1967).

On 18 June/91 we received a letter from their deputies, thanking us for our letters. Concerning the CRCNA they write,

We have taken note of your concerns about the CRCNA. As you have noted, as a committee we have expressed our own concerns about trends in our sister church in our denominational magazine. We have also written directly to her (CRCNA) Interchurch Relations Committee. We intend to provide a full report to our forthcoming synod in Sept/92 and seek a clear mandate as to how to proceed from there.

Concerning the NGK they have noted our comments. As yet they have not heard from our Dutch deputies from whom they would like information.

They wrote that a visit to the RCNZ would be most beneficial, specifically, to their 1992 Synod in Bishopdale in Sept/92. Our representative would be classified as a visitor with the following privileges:

- 1) hospitality throughout the week of synod;
- 2) remaining present at all the deliberations (except those conducted in closed session);
- 3) addressing the synod in order to convey information about our churches and any other message which we wish to relate;
- 4) conveying relevant information at specific points when our input would be helpful to synod in its deliberations.

We spell out these guidelines because the 1990 Synod also gave us a mandate to recommend rules for representatives from sister churches and churches with whom we have contacts. The above guidelines could help us in this.

On 20 Sept/91 we wrote back to solve some continuing problems re the published remarks of Rev J Sawyer, to inform them that we wrote to our sister churches in the Netherlands re the NGK, and to accept their invitation to visit them in Sept/92.

Your deputies decided to send Rev W Huizinga as our representative. He has been specifically responsible for the contacts with the RCNZ. Since the mandate for this has already been given and financial allocations made, the bookings can be made well in advance. An official credential for our representative has been sent to the RCNZ for this visit.

Thus the deputies have discharged their mandate as far as possible. The planned visit

will hopefully help to accomplish more. Since this visit is planned after our planned 1992 Synod, a report on this visit will have to serve at the next synod.

We receive a regular subscription to their church magazine, FAITH IN FOCUS. From this subscription we remain up to date with events in the RCNZ. Personal correspondence is also helpful.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

Your deputies must conclude that the mandate has not been fully finished. Also, impediments continue to exist. Thus we conclude that the contacts should be maintained at the present level.

We recommend:

1. To maintain the contacts at the present level;
2. To maintain the contact at the present level, in order that the FRCA may be a hand and a foot in the struggle by the RCNZ to preserve the reformed faith in their churches, to address the obstacles that kept us apart in the past and to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties with whom we do not have any official relations, specifically, to encourage them to break the ties with overseas churches such as the RCA, CRCNA and the contacts with the NGK, since if these continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ;
3. To consult with the Dutch deputies to coordinate our contacts;
4. To encourage direct contacts by having visitors to our and their synods;
5. To keep the churches informed about any progress;
6. To report to the next synod.

L. SINGAPORE

Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

1. Mandate

The 1989 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. a renewed mandate to investigate thoroughly this church to ascertain whether it is a true and faithful church, according to our confessions;
- b. to continue to discuss with them their sister-relations with the PRCA, and many other relations/contacts with other third parties;
- c. to prepare for the ERCS a paper on how we see the "covenant and election" together with the offer to discuss this with them;
- d. to be prepared to develop the contacts by visits, and whatever other help requested so that the ERCS is encouraged to be and to remain Reformed;
- e. to discuss with the ERCS their views on coming to sister-relations, or possibly, a type of working-relation in which we accommodate our rules for sister-relations to their situation;
- f. to issue periodic updates about the ERCS.

2. Since in the past there had never been any official contact by way of letter we tried to re-establish contact by the following letter, dated October 1990,

Dear brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is about two years ago now that your churches were visited by two representatives of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). A report of these two delegates served at our Synod held in May of this year. This report was duly considered as reflected in Art. 107 of the Acts of Synod. We are enclosing a copy of these Acts for your information. You will note that the report referred to can be found commencing on page 276 of the Acts.

As FRCA we are sensitive to the fact that the work of our Lord Jesus Christ is not confined

to our borders, but that He gathers His people from all tribes, tongues, and nations. As such we are thankful for the many positive comments from your area.

The FRCA, as can also be gleaned from the Acts, have extensive contacts and also sister church relations around the globe. We treasure these relations and are continually strengthened by the input from overseas churches. It has, however, also been our aim to seek for faithful churches in our own area, i.e. closer to home. This for our own benefit, but also to offer any assistance and support to these churches. We have therefore been encouraged by the positive report tabled at our Synod. It appears the Lord has been good to you and that His Spirit is at work amongst you.

We hope that through the visit of two representatives of the FRCA you have learned more about our churches. In the event you want more information about our church life in Australia we are more than willing to provide you with this information. We are enclosing a copy of the booklet 'The Free Reformed Churches and what they stand for'.

It is our ardent desire to learn more about the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore and for that purpose to enter into a correspondence relation with your church. Hopefully in this way we can discuss in particular the areas outlined by our Synod. We would appreciate your kind attention to the matters raised by this Synod. As churches in this apostate world we need one another to remain faithful to our Lord and Saviour. Perhaps you will be so kind as to give us your personal reaction and thought about the matters referred to in the Acts of our Synod, Art. 107.

Brothers, we are aware that your man-power is limited and that you have an enormous task ahead of you in your own country. We wish you the Lord's indispensable blessing upon your work. May He as the King of the church through His Holy Spirit help and guide by all your work in His vineyard.

With brotherly greetings,

on behalf of deputies for relations with churches abroad,

3. Since that letter Rev. A. Veldman has been sent regular copies of the Weekly Bulletin of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore as well as a few copies of a publication called PGT (The Pillar and Ground of the Truth).

4. From the information supplied we learn:

a. Pastor Lau Chin Kwee continues to give sound Reformed guidance to this young church.

b. The Board of Elders have implemented Catechism Instruction -or are in the process of doing so.

c. Emphasis has been placed on the fact that the Church must be a confessing Church.

d. The congregation continues to give liberally for the work of the Church and new Church Building.

e. There is evidence of strong links between the ERCS and the PCRA. During 1991 an official delegation was received by the ERCS from those churches, whilst for some time now they have had one of their ministers in their midst.

5. As deputies had not received a reply to their first letter a further letter was sent on 27 May 1991 referring to our previous letter and also offering support with Catechism material. Volume 1 of "I Belong" was included.

6. In reply to this letter the ERCS indicated that their manpower is too limited to enter into discussions of mutual concern. Nevertheless it showed interest in receiving further copies of of "I Belong".

7. At the beginning of 1992 deputies received a reply to previous letters in which it was conveyed that the classis of the ERCS in May 1991 took the following decision, "That a correspondence relationship be maintained with the FRCA with no view towards sister relationship at this time." The same letter also states, "We would like to continue to get to know you as churches through mutual communication."

8. The Dutch sister churches have in the meantime sent a delegation to the ERCS

consisting of Prof. J Kamphuis and Rev. O.J. Douma. During the course of their contact Prof. Kamphuis spoke to the ERCS on the issue of the covenant dealing specifically with item c. of our mandate. Deputies have asked the Dutch deputies for a copy of their report. 9. Deputies have received a letter from the Committee for Other Churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRCA) complaining about alleged inaccuracies and misrepresentations contained in the Acts of Synod Armadale 1990. A copy of that letter is attached to this report. Deputies consider that Synod Bedfordale 1992 ought to address the allegations and respond to them in a suitable manner.

10. Recommendations:

- a) to maintain the contacts at the present level
- b) to use these contacts to ascertain whether the ERCS is a true and faithful church according to our confessions;
- c) to discuss with the ERCS their sister relations with the PRCA, and many other relations/contacts with other third parties;
- d) to consult with the Dutch deputies to coordinate our contacts.

Appendix

Letter from PRCA

September 10, 1991

Dear Sirs

It has come to our attention that a rather lengthy report of your Contact Committee has appeared in the Acts of your Synod of 1990 in which your Contact Committee speaks of contacts with the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore. Because these churches are sister churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, our own denomination comes in for extensive discussion in this report. Not only was this report accepted by your Synod, but various decisions were also taken by the Synod with respect to these matters.

It is not an exaggeration to say that our Contact Committee and our Synod are deeply disturbed by this report and by the subsequent decisions of your Synod on this matter. We wish to express to you displeasure, and we ask you to bring this matter to the attention of your Synod and ask your Synod to make necessary corrections.

Our displeasure is first of all due to the fact that both you committee and your Synod have chosen to write extensively concerning our Churches in a public record which has the official sanction of the broadest assembly of your churches without informing us of this in any way. That you have included in this material obvious and serious inaccuracies involves you and your churches in public slander, a serious violation of the law of our God. you know as well as we what our Heidelberg Catechism says concerning the sins of the ninth commandment. Of this you have become guilty.

We are also displeased that you should report to your Synod concerning unofficial contacts with a few men of the ERCS as if they were official contacts between ERCS and the FRC of Australia. We inquired of the brethren in Singapore concerning these contacts and they were as astounded by your report as we were; but they also assured us that your report simply was not true: there was no official contact between their churches and yours. Why you chose to present your unofficial visits as if they were official contacts, we do not know and why you should assume more in your relations with the ERCS than was actually true is a mystery to us. (For a specific reference, see the statement of your committee under 6, P 286: "... with delegates of the ERCS.")

To turn now to the inaccuracies and troubling elements which we find in this material, we call attention specifically to the following:

- 1. It is not true that the Protestant Reformed Churches "in 1950 changed their direction,*

and again the influence of the theory of Dr A Kuyper crept in ... now more specifically his doctrine about 'presumptive regeneration'" (3.3 of the Committee Report, p278). In the controversy which troubled our churches in the late Forties and early Fifties, various ministers within our denomination attempted to bring into our churches views of the covenant which were directly opposed to the covenant views on which our churches have always stood. When our churches succeeded in maintaining their views, and those who were sympathetic to other views left our churches, it was because we had only maintained the truth for which we always stood. That this is true is evident from the fact that all the ministers and those who followed them returned to the Christian Reformed Church within a few years.

Nor is it true that we adopted the views of Dr A Kuyper concerning presumptive regeneration. This view has never been held in our churches and we have specifically and times without number repudiated it.

2. Under the same point, in the quotation from Van Oene's book, it is said that we believe in "two kinds of 'covenants,' one for the elect and one for 'all who are baptized,'" that we believe in "two types of promises, some 'unconditionally' only for the elect and some others, (apparently conditionally) for 'all baptized.'" We have no idea where Van Oene got such nonsense, for no one has ever taught anything like this in our churches.

3. In the same quote from Van Oene's book we find the following: "According to these points the sacrament of baptism does not sign and seal the covenant of God and His indubitable promises. The real covenant was only for the elect and people could not do anything else than 'presume' and 'hope' that the child to be baptized belonged to the elect." We specifically and emphatically reject such notions. We believe that the sacrament of baptism does indeed signify and seal the covenant of God and His indubitable promises. While indeed we hold that the covenant is only with the elect, we reject categorically that this covenant must be distinguished from some other covenant and that such a position leaves us only to "presume" and "hope" that the child to be baptized belongs to God's elect.

4. We reject, therefore, also the conclusion of Van Oene in the last statement of the quote: "The Protestant Reformed Churches had gone back to the doctrine of Dr Kuyper and had officially accepted the theory of 'presumptive regeneration.'"

5. Under 3.4 (p 278; see also Art 107 of the Acta proper, observation 3, p 62) it is stated that on the basis of our view we cannot say that covenant children who die in infancy are saved. We assure you that we fully believe in and subscribe to Canons I,17. In this connection, with the reference to Rev H Hoeksema's book, "Believers and their Seed," you have misinterpreted his book and the statements he made in it, something which ought to be obvious from even a cursory reading of the entire book.

6. In 7.4 (p287; see also 7d of the observations found in Art 107 of the Acta proper, p63), the distinct impression is left that our churches have adopted the Declaration of Principles as an additional creed which as a creed is binding within our churches. In this connection we point out two facts:

a) The Declaration was originally adopted as a guide for use on the mission field only;
b) It is not an additional creed, but a statement of what the Three Forms of Unity teach concerning various points of doctrine, including the truth of the particular and unconditional nature of the promise of God's covenant. It is for this reason also that we have never made any specific issue of our covenant view (see 7.4 of the report of your report to the Synod of 1990); we firmly believe that our covenant view is found in our Three Forms of Unity and that those who subscribe to our Confessions bind themselves to a particular and unconditional promise of the covenant.

We recognize the fact that you and your churches disagree with us on our view of God's covenant. We are not attempting to enter into a debate on these views. But it ought to be obvious to any one who has a grain of Christian charity and the love which Christ

requires that perversions of our views publicly disseminated in an official document goes beyond all propriety. You may, of course, argue that your conclusions as to what we teach are arranged in spite of our disclaimer. That is your privilege. But to present your conclusions as the actual teachings of our churches when we in fact deny these conclusions, is to represent us falsely. And to do this without a single quote or reference to any of our writings, but to refer only to the writings of a man from one of your sister churches as the authority on what we teach, is unChristian in the extreme.

Finally, we wish to express our anger at your obvious attempts to drive a wedge between the ERCS and our Churches. That you do so can be the only interpretation of such statements found in 8, b, 1 & 2 on p 63 of the Acts; 3 under "Considerations" on p 64; and 2 - 6 of "Recommendations" on p 64, which recommendations were adopted.

We therefore humbly ask you to present this letter to your Synod with the request that your Synod publicly print this letter in its Acta along with an apology for these inaccuracies and misrepresentations.

Respectfully submitted,

*Committee for Contact with other Churches
of the Protestant Reformed Churches,
Herman Hanko, Secretary*



M. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

1. Mandate

The 1990 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. to study the concerns signalled in the considerations with respect to the ICRC (cf. Considerations 14, 15, 18, 19).
- b. to consult with the sisterchurches regarding these concerns.
- c. to publish the results of their study for the interest of the churches.
- d. to serve the following synod with a report and recommendations.

2. Correspondence

Two letters were received from the secretary of the ICRC. These are attached to this report as an appendix.

Deputies sent the Acts to all the sister-churches and subsequently wrote a letter to them all, drawing special attention to the need for consultation on the matter of these synodical concerns about the ICRC. To date correspondence has been received only from the sister-churches in South Africa (their letter is appended to this report).

Significantly diverging views on the issues involved and the severe constraints of time have prevented deputies from completing their mandate and providing definitive recommendations. Therefore, that which follows seeks to expose and articulate deputies' present positions.

The results of the study for the interest of the churches has not been published because deputies were not able to finish their task and to come with one final report.

3. Progress report on the study of concerns re the ICRC

The views that have emerged among Deputies are laid down in two separate reports (A and B). It is recommended that these two reports along with the proposal of constitutional amendment be sent to all the sister-churches. This would give valuable information to those churches, make our concerns clear and urgent, and hopefully elicit good response and discussion.

The two Reports A and B now follow (in Sections 4 and 5 respectively). It is understood that not all deputies endorse both reports; their signatures at the end of this report to Synod only indicate their agreement to send both to Synod. Following the two reports, deputies offer in Section 6 a proposed constitutional amendment of the First Purpose of the ICRC Constitution. Deputies' Recommendations are given in Section 7.

4. REPORT A

Report re continuing membership in the ICRC - a study about concerns of the 1990 synod

PREAMBLE

As far as the concerns go, a few general comments may be in order at the outset. Deputies were served with long and full considerations by the 1990 Synod. All the issues were amply outlined. This was helpful. On the other hand, these considerations also demonstrated the ambivalence of the synod. Some considerations have aptly been compared by one deputy to the Pacification Formula of 1905. First a consideration sways in one direction, and then it formulates an alternative view. The views of A & B are both covered, and everyone is appeased. This was helpful at the last synod at which a sharp division ensued with a divided recommendation - a recommendation to withdraw from the ICRC and one to continue the membership. To have both sides of the argument presented is helpful for the deputies in understanding the issues involved. But obviously, one had to make a choice.

To do this the deputies re-read and re-studied the minutes of the 1985 & 1989 ICRC, the

past reports and Acts about this matter. A bibliography on these past reports and decisions as well as on articles in well-known magazines has been made for the sake of the deputies. A careful, critical and objective reading of this material was necessary, since one so quickly chooses his viewpoint and reads the material with this pre-judgment in mind.

THE STUDY OF THE CONCERNS OF THE 1990 SYNOD

Re CONSIDERATION 14 (which we quote in full)

14. Whereas deputies report of the 1985 ICRC that although there is difference in tradition between reformed and presbyterian churches there is still unity in faith Acts, (Article 110, B.13), delegates to the 1989 meeting of the Conference report that there was the outward show of unity, but no real commitment to it (B1,B(b)). Indeed: Contrary to the provision in its Constitution, the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organisation where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist (Deputies Report B1,C,2).

This difference between the report of the delegates to the 1985 Conference and that of those who attended the 1989 Conference raises the question as to why a lack of unity is now reported. The following considerations arise:

a. The disappointment of our delegates to the ICRC seems to be related to their view of what the Conference, according to its own Constitution, ought to be. This Constitution states, a.o.,

The purpose of the Conference shall be: 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ; 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches (Article III).

At the Conference, our delegates stated, a.o.:

despite the emphatic statement in the Constitution that member churches in the Conference express the unity of faith they have, this wider gathering presents us with the unsatisfactory situation of a meeting of churches some of which have as yet not formally recognised each other as having unity of faith in Christ, and even others who have had little or no contact.

Further:

The FRCA would like to see this unsatisfactory situation redressed. Unity of faith in Christ must be clearly established back at home before it can be expressed here.

On this point it should be noted that the procedure followed at the 1983 Synod gives legitimate reason to conclude that Synod saw the need to first establish that there was (had been) unity of faith in the Constituent Assembly before deciding to join the ICRC, as the delegates write in their report (B1,B(a)). Synod after all interrupted its discussions on the ICRC and declared all participating non sister-churches faithful Churches of the Lord (cf Acts 1983, Articles 72,75).

However, future Synods implicitly accepted the fact that various churches could be members of the ICRC without the one having recognised the other as true and faithful. This is evident from the fact that we decided to continue membership in the ICRC irrespective of the fact that we had not yet recognised all other member churches as true and faithful. In fact, Synod 1985 stated that the decision to join the ICRC was based on our acceptance of the constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE, and not an any evaluation of potential member Churches (Article 88, Ground 6). Moreover, the very fact that the FRCA proposed to add to Article IV of the Constitution that member churches must show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the Conference in their own country indicates that they saw sister relationships as an aim and not as a prerequisite. These data call into question whether the FRCA delegates at the recent ICRC indeed spoke words accurately representing the stance adopted by the FRCA.

Still, in light of a. the delegates' understanding of the Constitution, b. the conclusion inferred by the 1983 Synod, and c. the failure of previous Synods to grapple effectively

with the matter of sitting with a non- sister church at the ICRC, it is understandable that our delegates come with their particular statements.

It is unsatisfactory that the matter of sitting with churches not yet recognised remains inadequately addressed. This is the more so because appellants to this Synod raise this point (cf H Ballast c.s. regarding Article 3; L 'tHart, A H Terpstra, B Vermeulen, Consideration 2).

b. A second consideration bearing on the disappointment registered by our delegates appears to be due to the lack of agreement and direction in several discussions at the 1989 Conference (Deputies Report B1,B(b)). Our deputies judge this lack of direction to be the result of the different understandings present surrounding the doctrine of the Church. They write:

We clearly detected in the Conference that the different understanding of the meaning of the Church with the different emphasis placed on it by the Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity and the Presbyterian Churches with their Westminster Standards would result in a divided approach to fundamental matters, and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas (B1,B(b)).

On the basis of decisions made at our previous Synods, it is incorrect for deputies to suggest that there is within the Three Forms of Unity on the one hand and the Westminster Standards on the other an inherent difference in the doctrine of the Church (cf Acts 1985, Article 88, Ground 5,7). Nevertheless, that there was at the Conference indeed a different emphasis surrounding this doctrine with its various practical implications is indicated by the various discussions reported in the Minutes (cf Minutes 3.2.2; 5.5.3; 7.4; see also 10.2.2(a)). This different emphasis present at the Conference is further footnoted by the Conference's decision to take up the suggestion...regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a 'true church' and the consequences of such a statement for inter-communion, etc.

This long consideration points at the apparent lack of unity in the ICRC between churches of continental origin and those of presbyterian origin. Whereas delegates to the 1985 ICRC spoke of unity in spite of the differences in tradition, the delegates to the 1989 ICRC complained of the lack of unity. The delegates to the 1989 ICRC spoke of the need to have unity of faith clearly established before expressing it at the ICRC. Some member churches of the ICRC do not know each other, it is alleged, while quite a number have not officially recognised each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If one makes two lists, one column of member churches who subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and the other column of member churches who subscribe to the Westminster Standards, it looks like this (using abbreviations from 1990 Acts):

CanRC	EPCI
FRCA	FCS
FRCSA	FCSA
RCN(lib)	PCEA
	PCK
	RPCI

All the churches in column one enjoy sister-relations with each other. The RCN(lib) have sister-relations with all the churches in column two with the exception of the PCEA (and FCSA?). The FRCA has sister-relations only with the PCK and has recognised the EPCI & FCS as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has contacts with the RPCI & PCEA. The other churches in column one are not as progressed in these relations and contacts with churches in column two. So the delegates are correct in stating that official recognition and expression of the unity of faith have not occurred in many cases. But what type of unity of faith is meant in the constitution - unity by mutual recognition

of each other as true and faithful churches or unity on the basis of the constitution of the conference? Some read it as the unity of faith in the former sense, a unity which a synod/assembly concludes exists between two true and faithful churches after a full examination has been made of the relevant confessions and standards, including an inquiry to see if the marks of the true church exist and are being practised. Such a unity leads to sister-relations. Others point out that this unity must be read in the context of the constitution of the conference, namely, that it is a confessional unity involving a recognition of certain reformed confessions to which the member church is reputed to adhere. This is an important and essential point in analysing the concerns we have with the ICRC. If unity of faith is identified with an official recognition of the member churches of the ICRC, i.e. that they are true and faithful churches with whom we can consequently have sister-relations, then the concerns will obviously be very real, since sister-relations are not enjoyed among all the member churches. Then the phrase unity in faith which the member churches have in Christ does indeed have a hollow sound. That this was indeed an accepted interpretation is shown in this Consideration 14 where reference is made to what the 1983 Synod did in first recognising all churches participating in the ICRC as faithful churches of the Lord before deciding to join the ICRC. The clear impression was given that joining the ICRC meant recognising all member churches as true and faithful. Indeed, this has consequently been the view many have. But is this impression which was in part created by the 1983 Synod itself correct? Several factors militate against this interpretation. First of all, one must always understand expressions contextually. What is the context of this phrase, unity in faith? Obviously, one finds this phrase in the constitution of a reformed conference, not in a set of rules for sister-relations. Moreover, it is found in a section giving the PURPOSE of the conference. To belong to the ICRC implies a certain degree of unity, owing to the reformed nature of the conference. The degree of unity will depend on the actual work of the Triune God in establishing those churches and in the degree of mutual recognition of that unity.

Secondly, this phrase belongs in a constitution of a reformed CONFERENCE. The ICRC is NOT an ecclesiastical assembly, but is a conference which promotes international relations among churches who adhere to reformed confessions. One should not treat the ICRC as though it is an ecclesiastical assembly. This is maybe an obvious point, but very essential in this discussion about our concerns. It is thus within the context of the ICRC's constitution that one should understand this phrase.

Thirdly, the Constitution of the ICRC has a basis and purpose. In the article about the purpose of the conference one reads as the first aim to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ. This is the debated statement. In the context of the Constitution it is obvious that the unity which already exists in Christ is based on the oneness in the confession of the reformed faith. Also, the conference has to assure itself that the member churches adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis (Art IV.1.a). These points assure that the conference is reformed in character. Otherwise the conference would lose its distinct reformed character. There must be a reformed basis. However, the acceptance of member churches does not have the same status as the official recognition by synods/assemblies of churches as being true and faithful. That recognition must be able to lead to sister-relations, while acceptance as a member-church in the ICRC allows one to join a conference. There is quite a difference.

Fourthly, the actions of the ICRC show that there is a distinct difference between being a member-church of the ICRC and enjoying sister-relations with other reformed churches. At the 1989 ICRC an elaborate discussion took place with regard to the proposal of the FCS that the Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognise the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member

churches (pp 12-14, PROCEEDINGS). The recommendation of the committee dealing with this matter was negative, stating that this is covered by Art.III.2 and that this goal does not automatically arise from being a member of the ICRC. The discussion points recorded in the proceedings all point out that a distinction needs to be made what were conference responsibilities and what were the responsibilities of the churches. Again, the mutual recognition sought by the FCS proposal was possible only between sister-churches. In other words, this proposal was defeated because its acceptance would have meant that joining the ICRC was equivalent to entering sister- relations with all the member churches. Yes, it would have elevated the conference to the official status of an ecclesiastical assembly. The rejection of this proposal clearly demonstrated that one may not say that the (limited) unity of faith in Christ at the ICRC is equivalent to recognition of the all the member churches as being true and faithful.

It is the view of this report that one must speak of the type of unity as defined by the constitution of the ICRC. A dive into the decisions of past synods might enlighten this point. The 1983 Synod decided officially to join the ICRC (art.87). Its deputies had reported that both the churches with the Three Forms of Unity and those with the Westminster Standards had no problem to recognise each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord (p.96 of the Acts). In a communique the Constituent Assembly states that the confessional unity that exists among the participating churches was reaffirmed and promoted (p. 103 of Acts). The 1985 Synod stated the decision to join the ICRC was based on our acceptance of the constitutional BASIS & PURPOSE, and not on any evaluation of potential member churches (Acts, art.88, ground 12). Thus one could join the ICRC without first having recognised all the member churches as true and faithful. The fact that the FRCA proposed to add to Article IV that member churches must show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country indicates that they saw sister-relations as an aim and not as a prerequisite.

Having argued for a contextual understanding of this phrase unity of faith found in the first purpose of the ICRC's Constitution, one should at the same time not forget that this phrase uses language also found in our confessions. Many of our members understand this phrase according to what they have learned from LD 21, Q. & A. 54 about the unity of true faith by which Christ gathers, defends and preserves his church. We know that true faith is defined in LD 7, Q. & A. 21 (the sure knowledge and firm confidence). The result of such full unity in faith in Christ is that the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship can and must follow. To many this phrase thus means that the ICRC will express and promote that (full, organisational and institutional) unity of faith in Christ which faithful churches should exercise towards each other. This would mean, among other things, that the ICRC could express the unity of faith in Christ by sitting around one Lord's table. Yet this would then make the ICRC into an ecclesiastical assembly. Though this does NOT happen in actual fact and though this concept was soundly defeated at the last ICRC, this first purpose continues to present concerns, sows confusion and sends up danger signals to many. Thus there is enough justification for recommending **THAT THIS FIRST PURPOSE BE AMENDED.**

Since the first purpose is usually broad and general, and since the second purpose specifies to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches, deputies propose the first purpose to read to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the member churches confess. The proposal (see below) gives further elucidation. At this point it is sufficient to say that this proposed amendment says exactly what this interim report understands by the present first purpose.

In evaluating this concern one must look at the NATURE of the ICRC. It is distinctly a CONFERENCE where churches may confer, discuss, coordinate, cooperate, and recommend with the understanding that all its conclusions shall be advisory in character.

This distinguishes it from a council or synod which can make binding decisions. As long as this fact is quite clearly in view, it would seem quite reasonable to be able to meet with, discuss and make conclusions with churches who have been granted membership because they are reformed churches with reformed confessions and are reputed to abide by these confessions.

It is also important to consider the AIM of the conference to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches. This aim can TAKE SOME TIME. One can wish that the original proposal for a council of reformed churches all holding to the Three Forms of Unity had materialised. Then the fullest cooperation among sister churches could have been exercised; together we could have discussed how to approach reformed churches who hold to the Westminster Standards; and unity instead of debate would have resulted. Yet one cannot turn the clock back, since so much has happened since then. Reformed churches with the Westminster standards have been recognised by the FRCA and by our sister-churches. We have come further, preventing one from going back. One must work with the present situation. That means we are faced with a TRANSITION-PERIOD. For example, the FRCA has already become acquainted with the EPCI & FCS to the point that they have been recognised as true and faithful churches. But we have only contacts with the RPCI & PCEA. There is much work to be done before sister-relations can be enjoyed with these churches. Before we enjoy sister-relations with them many years may have passed. Yet as the ecclesiastical relations grow, so will opportunity to utilise the ICRC as a forum to coordinate projects and cooperate together in projects. It will become more and more meaningful.

However, until that transition-period is over, if it ever will be, there will remain some unsatisfactory matters, e.g. that no cooperation in the field of missions will be possible with all the member churches. People will complain about the stated unity of faith (as stated in the Constitution), while that unity has not materialised in an official and mutual recognition of one another. That is the time-frame we are in presently, and it complicates the discussion about the ICRC in our midst.

As the ICRC becomes more and more a body of reformed churches who have mutually recognised one another, the purposes of the conference will more and more become fulfilled. One might even envisage the upgrading of the conference to a council at that point.

Some might reply that instead of entering sister-relations with some of these member-churches, we might have to conclude from our contacts that we cannot recognise them as true churches, in which case the only alternative, in a confessional sense, is to view those churches as the opposite, since the confessions do not allow for something in between. Of course, this would be the consequence of careful investigation, probably over a period of years. Yet if it is necessary, because of clear information and evidence, to conclude this, then the designation of that church as a false church must be made. There are only two options open, according to our confession. However, in some cases insufficient evidence because of lack in correspondence, etc. will cause one to refrain from judgment altogether. Yet what happens when a church must be declared false? Hopefully this will not happen, and the progress in the contacts suggests that this is unlikely. Nevertheless, if it did happen, one would have to invoke Article IV. 2 of the Constitution of the ICRC. This article states that termination of membership shall be by two-thirds majority whenever the conference is of the opinion that the member church in its doctrine and/or practice is no longer in agreement with the Basis.

The second point under this consideration is the alleged and apparent LACK OF UNITY FOR A CONFERENCE. Apparently there is an alleged difference in views about the doctrine of the church. As we know from discussions with the PCEA & FCS we as reformed people who have experienced a recent reformation in which the doctrine of the church played a prominent role put a lot of stock in this doctrine, and rightly so. As a

consequence other churches whom we investigate have a distinct feeling that they are lacking and deficient in this doctrine. This can be implied from the fact that the PCEA requested the ICRC to have this matter discussed and studied. This matter continues to be a source of aggravation from all sides. It is therefore quite timely that a study-committee will come with a report and statement on this debated subject.

It should also be stated that synods have not (yet) concluded that the doctrine of the church as covered in the Westminster Standards form an impediment for recognition of churches who hold these standards. On the contrary, churches who hold them have been recognised and sister-relations are enjoyed with the PCK. These facts show that one should not quickly conclude that there is no unity in the ICRC because confessionally we think differently about the church. Consideration 14 also referred to the establishing of a committee to study this very matter as further evidence of a different emphasis on this doctrine. However, alleging there are differences and establishing the same are two different matters. One must await the outcome of this study.

Concerning this study Committee on Theological Affirmation Consideration 12 had much to say. Two views were merged in this consideration. One said that this committee is good and the other view considered it potentially dangerous. Yet if this subject of the church is so contentious, especially for us, one might ask why it should not receive international attention as well as local specification. It has relevance to more than the contacts with the PCEA.

Thus the formation of this study committee is to be applauded, not lamented (cf Consideration 12 of 1990 Acts, art 145 where the views of deputies in Recommendation B2" are favourably endorsed). Consideration 3 of Article 110 of the 1987 Acts reads, So as to make the conference more meaningful it will be preferable if not essential that definite conclusions be reached by the conference on the items on the agenda, e.g. on the doctrine of the church, covenant..." (cf Art.88, 3.2 of the 1985 Acts where the discussion and study of items such as the doctrine of the church is requested and supported). Thus a previous synod has even explicitly requested such a discussion, study and conclusion about this very matter. One should not fear that this project will interfere with the present activities of churches who together discuss mutual recognition of one another as true churches with a view to possible sister-relations. Instead, such a discussion on a global dimension may prevent the necessity and the multiplication of such discussions nationally. It again shows how the ICRC can help deputies in the discharge of their mandates.

But will such an Agreed Statement become like a credal statement, to be added to what our reformed confessions already say? One must answer in the negative to this question. Article V - AUTHORITY of the Constitution states that the conclusions shall be advisory in character. This means that the statement must be discussed and adopted by the member-churches before it would receive any official status. Before that happens such an (proposed) affirmation will reach the churches well in advance of the next conference; can be discussed at local and synodical level; and then be discussed and hopefully finished with a conclusion at the next ICRC. Thus it would be impossible for such a proposed statement to develop a life and authority on its own within the confines of the conference. Not the conference but the member-churches must give it a life and authority. One should thus quietly await the report and discussion about the theological affirmation about the church, before these allegations are accepted. One may have feelings, but the minutes of the ICRC do not demonstrate such a difference. Indeed the Communique of the Constituent Assembly stated the confessional unity that exists among the participating churches was reaffirmed and promoted (1983 Acts, p.104). Our delegates underlined this official communique saying they had richly experienced that there was a growing unity and understanding between the delegates of the churches. Minor differences concerning the doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters were no impediment to

accept each other as faithful churches of the Lord...(1983 Acts, p.97). The 1983 Synod decided to join the ICRC and thereby also defeated an explicit proposal to study and evaluate questions and criticisms of the ICRC, i.e. the unreserved acceptance of the Westminster Confession into the basis of the ICRC, next to the Three Forms of Unity (cf Acts, p.48). The 1985 Synod, as stated above, decided to uphold this decision on the ground (12) that it was based on our acceptance of the Constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE...(p.65) which thus includes the acceptance of the Westminster Standards. It would thus be wrong to state absolutely that the two sets of standards will result in a divided approach to fundamental matters, and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas. As Consideration 14 itself says it is incorrect for deputies to suggest that there is within the Three Forms of Unity on the one hand and the Westminster Standards on the other an inherent difference in the doctrine of the church.

One further important argument needs to be tested. In church matters we have always practised the rule that unity in faith, expressed by unity around the Lord's table, be established first before we venture into cooperative activities with other Christians or churches. First things belong first. Does membership in the ICRC not violate this healthy principle? Should unity of faith, in the full Scriptural sense, not be established first before venturing into a conference-partnership? Many have this honest question.

In answering this argument which favours withdrawing from the ICRC until this full unity of Scriptural faith is established one must reiterate some previous points. One cannot overstate the importance of distinguishing the ICRC as a CONFERENCE from an ecclesiastical assembly or other organisation such as a reformed, political party. That the ICRC is an advisory body whose conclusions are not binding on the member churches indicates that such a distinction needs to be kept in mind. In addition, the ICRC, in part, is a vehicle for achieving the purpose of establishing full unity with other member-churches. There is already substantial ecclesiastical unity between the member-churches and the ICRC wants to enhance that unity even further. Thus one is not 'putting the cart before the horse.'

Re CONSIDERATION 15 (which we quote in full)

15. The Conference purposes to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ (Constitution Article III.1). This unity of faith is rooted in the Basis of the Conference, ie, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (...) and the Westminster Standards... (Article II). Before a church can be admitted as a member of the ICRC, the Conference must be convinced that this potential member adheres and is faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis (Article IV). As such, we in the FRCA accept that there is unity of faith with other member churches sitting with us in the Conference.

A problem arises when evidence appears that (a) member church(es) maintain(s) practices which conflict with the Standards mentioned in the Basis and thus with Scripture.

This consideration concentrates on the stated unity which member churches have by agreeing to the Basis of the ICRC and on being reputed to practise what they confess. As such this consideration favours continuing membership.

However, a problem could arise when member-churches maintain practices which conflict with the standards mentioned in the Basis. This matter has just been addressed in the last point about Consideration 14.

Re CONSIDERATION 18 (which we quote in full)

18. Our membership in the ICRC obliges us to seek the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship with other member churches (Constitution Article III.2). This obligation gives rise to the query what is to happen if sister relations prove impossible. Does it imply departure from the ICRC? Or ought a lesser level of permanent relations to be considered? This matter needs to be addressed since Acts 1985, Article 88, Grounds 8,9,10,11 suggest

that cooperation is possible only with sister churches. This too may be a matter to discuss with the sister churches.

In the comments about Consideration 14 this concern about road blocks to unity and sister-relations was mentioned and discussed. The Constitution of the ICRC includes Article IV. Membership of which point 2 describes the termination of membership of a member-church whose doctrine and/or practice is no longer in agreement with the Basis. The departure spoken of in this synodical consideration would be of the unfaithful church. This then would be a matter not only for one church but for all the member-churches.

As far as relations go with churches with whom we cannot reach sister-relations, the only present alternative is ecclesiastical contact which must remain of temporary nature and which should be a stepping-stone to sister-relations. However, the rules and ecclesiastical relations are under review. Churches who hold to the Westminster Standards have more understanding for sister-relations, e.g. the EPCI & PCK have sister-relations with the GKN(lib) and the RPCI & FCS have been offered sister-relations with the GKN(lib). Thus there does not seem to be as much reluctance by these churches to enter sister-relations.

On our part, the crucial point is whether bonds of churches can be recognised as true and faithful. The consequence of such recognition should be the offer of sister-relations (cf art.67, 1985 Acts). If no such recognition can be given, it is very questionable whether any relations on a lower level should be entered into. It has not been done, and no proposal of that nature has been entertained by synods. Thus recognition as true churches needs to be made first as basis for any ecclesiastical relations to follow.

Re CONSIDERATION 19 (which we quote in full)

19. In decisions previously made regarding the ICRC, our Synods have hardly forwarded positive grounds for joining the ICRC. All we find is an indirect reference to the opportunity for contact by way of a conference with foreign churches of Reformed Confession (cf Acts 1985, Article 88, Ground 4). This matter needs to receive more attention so that it becomes clear whether we have a (continuing) calling with respect to the ICRC, and if so what it is.

Indeed, past synods have not paid too much attention to the positive motives for membership in the ICRC, besides stating the rather general purpose of having the opportunity to meet foreign churches of reformed confession.

Is there a distinct, biblical CALLING to join the ICRC? Phrased in this strong manner the question would seem to require a negative answer. But one should first think about the character of the church. In the OT Israel was composed of twelve distinct tribes, all enjoying their own geographical and tribal identity. However, the LORD made it clear that they were to act IN UNITY. The two and half tribes on the east side of the Jordan, for instance, had to cross the Jordan and help the other tribes conquer the land of Canaan before returning to their own lands. In the NT the Lord gathers, defends and preserves for Himself a chosen race, a holy nation, a kingly priesthood and God's own people (1 Pet 2:9) from all nations. Though they have their own geographical and historical identity, they have the same obligation to act IN UNITY with all who call on the same Lord and God. There must be the willingness to recognise and practise the oneness which Paul fought for in Ephesus (cf Eph 4:4-6). The ICRC is a useful vehicle to promote that aim. But is there a clear biblical calling? Again, one must refer to biblical principles, as stated above. The character of the catholic and christian church of God, as outlined in the Bible, determines its ecumenical calling in this world. The local churches of Christ have always practised a calling to be a BODY OF BELIEVERS, not a collection of individual believers. Independentism did not characterise the church in Jerusalem; quite the contrary. Also, we see how the churches met on certain occasions and helped one another. They felt obliged, in Christ, to be a hand and foot also for one another as churches.

One might draw a parallel here with our concept of a FEDERATION of churches which has classes and synods. One does not find an express command and call to join a federation of churches. However, the principle of acting as one body in one faith does obligate one. Again, one does not find an express call to attend classes and synods, though the biblical call to act in unity finds an orderly expression in such meetings. Reformed churches have thus always fought for federal unity and international unity, opposing independentism. This same principle applies to membership in an international conference.

That same obligation applies now on the international scene, for we confess I believe a holy CATHOLIC church. Catholic refers to world-wide and universal in terms of time ("out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end" as Q. & A. 54 puts it). It is for this reason that the early church after the apostolic age enjoyed ecumenical councils from which we have the ecumenical creeds. For this reason also the international Synod of Dordrecht invited representatives from reformed churches in other countries. Does the Bible not say to the church of God...called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours (1 Cor 1:2)? The Bible and church history both tell us how the catholic church seeks to help and be helped by the other faithful churches in the world. As the Dutch deputies reported

Amazement for the world-wide work of Christ makes us seek unity with the councils (of the early church), the Synod of Dort of 1618/19 with its international character and with the reformed practice of the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

This then in short outlines some biblical principles which call for serious involvement in promoting the world- wide work of the Good Shepherd in gathering and defending his one flock. Continuing membership in the ICRC is a significant vehicle for doing this. In outlining the motivation for membership in the ICRC one should not overlook the fact that the Constitution of the ICRC has Article III - PURPOSE which reads as follows:

- 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;*
- 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;*
- 3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfilment of the missionary and other mandates;*
- 4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;*
- 5. to present a reformed testimony to the world.*

These five points, in a condensed fashion, do give the main, positive, and encompassing purposes of the conference.

Concerning 1. to express and promote the unity... one must say that in actual fact this takes place. These meetings do express unity and help to cement ties. The various speeches, workshops and discussions foster the unity among the churches.

Concerning point 2 about encouraging the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches, one must also conclude that this takes place. The membership in the ICRC has stimulated, e.g. the EPCI & RPCI (both in Northern Ireland) to have annual discussions with each other about their differences and so to seek further unity. They also pursue more cooperation with each other. Also, the FRCA & PCEA have mutual contacts, as do the VGKSA & GKSA in South Africa. The FRCA starts to learn more about the RPCI; CanRC is learning more in an official way about the PCK & FCS. Indeed, the ICRC has promoted and encouraged this pursuit of ecclesiastical relations.

However, it would be good to make a suggestion at this place. In order to accomplish what the first two purposes state it would be good to make more organised use of the ICRC to render an account of what has been done to seek unity and closer ecclesiastical fellowship in between meetings. Also, informative and printed introductions of the various member-churches and observer-churches would be helpful in gathering

necessary information about the churches. The deputies would be greatly helped in their work if this was done regularly in an organised fashion.

One can therefore say that the ICRC allows us as churches a very opportune forum in which we can exercise part of our relations/contacts with reformed churches abroad. Our geographical location, our small numbers and our limitation in manpower and finances means that we cannot exercise our relations with sister-churches in the Netherlands, Canada, South Africa, and Korea at a personal level. Most of the sister-relations are conducted by means of correspondence. This conference allows us to meet each other face to face to discuss the matters included in the rules for sister-relations. Here we can meet representatives from sister-churches and churches we have recognised. It gives the chance to discuss events at the broadest levels in the respective churches; to coordinate and cooperate re common issues, common tasks (missions, Bible translations, Liturgical Forms, rules for ecclesiastical relations, etc.); and to address certain problems and concerns. Thus part of our commitment in the exercise of ecclesiastical relations could meaningfully be fulfilled at the conference. We should specify that time be given to this function at the meetings of the ICRC.

At the conference churches which we have not recognised nor met may be present. The conference allows for and has the custom of introducing the churches. Instead of travelling around the world to glean such information, this can be done at the conference. Discussions are possible before, during or after the conference. Here we can meet these churches 'in person' and receive firsthand information.

About point 5 there may be some questions. What is meant by a reformed witness to the world? Our Belgic Confession has often been described as a witness to the world. Does this purpose thus mean that such confessions or credal statements will be produced? In perusing the proceedings of the past meetings of the ICRC one does not find this to be the case. Instead, the actual meeting in itself is a witness; the conclusions can testify to the world and the communiques of past ICRCs have been helpful. If every ICRC would issue such a communique of all its conclusions about the discussions and workshops, then a helpful, reformed testimony would be presented to the world at large.

In a panoramic sense, by attending, reporting on and reading about such international conferences of reformed churches one receives a greater awareness of what we confess - I believe a holy, catholic church, the communion of saints. Even though it is a conference and not an ecumenical council, as in the early church, such a gathering of delegates from reformed churches all over the world affords that awareness, as well as all the opportunities listed above.

PROBLEM AREAS

Though the mandate to deputies mentioned the need to study the concerns signalled in the Considerations 14,15,18,& 19, other problem areas were mentioned in Article 145 and in deputies' reports. It would be good to address them as well.

1. Nature of the Conference.

The question can be posed if the forum of a reformed conference is the most suitable one. To assess this one could ask for the **ALTERNATIVES**.

Would we appreciate an international **SYNOD** of reformed churches? It would then become an ecclesiastical assembly, to be regulated by our Church Order. Official delegation would have to be done through the synods. Agenda would be settled by the churches, not by an interim committee. Decisions would be binding and settled. Is this desirable? There would be problems with churches from a presbyterian background, since they would view such an international assembly differently. How could one blend the polity of the presbyterians and reformed on this score? Also, would churches like binding decisions? Presbyterians prize their autonomy; we too do not seem to like to feel obligated to decisions. All in all, this alternative does not satisfy.

An international COUNCIL might upgrade the status of the meeting in that it would represent a more closely knit and cohesive body of churches. Also, one could expect more conclusions, recommendations, common statements and more cooperative ventures from such a body. The real hindrance to such a change is the fact that churches who hold the Three Forms of Unity and those who hold the Westminster Standards have not sufficiently drawn ranks close enough (by means of mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ) to justify such a move.

Thus we come back to the format of the CONFERENCE. That it is a REFORMED body decides the basis - the reformed confessions of the Great Reformation. It wants only those churches who adhere to the infallible Word of God, who hold the principles of the reformation, and who practise these reformed confessions. That it is INTERNATIONAL obligates the member churches to admit reformed churches from around the world, regardless of race, colour, language or political persuasion. Our confession of the church as catholic is in line with this. That it is a CONFERENCE means that these churches come to confer with one another - to discuss, to study, to worship (not in the official sense of a worship service, but to study the Bible and pray and sing together), to coordinate possible projects, to seek cooperation, and to draw conclusions and recommendations for the member-churches. A conference usually does not make binding statements. It is a more flexible forum, not obligating one to condone all the views and practices of those who attend and who are members. In contrast to a synod or council, the format of a conference should allow churches to join even though they have not formally met all the member churches nor recognised them as true and faithful. Churches could use this conference to exercise contacts and relations which otherwise would be done by correspondence.

One must have an eye for potential dangers in this regard. For example, the proposal from the FCS that the Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognise the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches would have made the ICRC into something more than a conference. It would have become something akin to a synod. Thankfully, the meeting voiced clear and convincing arguments against such a move (cf PROCEEDINGS of the 1989 ICRC, pp 12-14), deciding not to adopt this proposal. One must distinguish between the responsibilities of the churches and the responsibilities of the conference.

Admittedly, the ICRC is more than many conferences where people who have a similar goal or aim come together to confer without any obligations attached. The ICRC is very structured and orderly. It admits member-churches and can terminate membership; not just any federation of churches can be members. Does this detract from the conference? For those who like to see things done orderly and decently the structured approach should be welcomed. That it remains distinctly reformed, fully biblical, should also be applauded. Yet its authority is limited, ensuring that it remains a conference.

In the final diagnosis the format of the CONFERENCE seems to be the best one, though it does have its disadvantages, i.e. that it becomes a mere 'talking body' and that it has no authority.

2. Subscription

This problem has occasioned much discussion and unrest at the 1989 ICRC. Some felt that delegates should subscribe to their own confessions alone and not to all the confessions mentioned in the Basis of the Constitution. Others thought that it was necessary to approve the ministries, confessions, etc of the member churches so that unity can be shown and used. How can this problem be rectified?

First of all, the term subscription is ill-chosen. One subscribes as an ordained office-bearer to the confessions of the church. However, since the ICRC is a conference and not an official assembly of the church, this term is not applicable. This is shown by the fact that delegates do not rise from their chairs, for instance, to demonstrate their

agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. The sending churches ensure that their delegates subscribe to their own standards.

Secondly, the matter of confessions arises in the Constitution to form the BASIS of the ICRC. It is agreed that only reformed churches who hold to these confessions can become members. It is not stipulated that joining means we adopt the Westminster Standards as our own, or that we subscribe to every idea in those standards. Neither do presbyterian churches need to adopt the Three Forms of Unity. However, we do agree that the Westminster Standards are reformed and that those who faithfully adhere to them can thus become members of the ICRC.

It is this last point that does cause friction. Not all agree that the Westminster Standards are fully reformed. Most agree that they are of reformed origin and are reformational, a fruit of the Great Reformation. Reformed churches in the past have recognised these standards and practised ecclesiastical relations with churches like the FCS. The FRCA has said the same, cf grounds 5, art.88 of the 1985 Acts - seeing that in our contact with sister-churches we have recognised the Westminster Standards as a Reformed Confession, we cannot regard the constitutional basis of the ICRC as being contrary to God's Word. Thus historically, this has never been a stumbling block.

Yet after the Liberation of 1944 the doctrine of the church again came into focus because of certain unhealthy and unscriptural views. This has probably caused many of us who prize the Liberation as a blessing of God to examine presbyterian bonds of churches in the light of this doctrine. So especially the doctrine of the church in the Westminster Standards has come under attack. The ICRC has noted this and decided to establish a Committee on Theological Affirmation to study this very problem. Instead of bypassing this debated issue the ICRC has chosen to tackle it.

PRACTICAL CONCERNS

1. The complaint that the ICRC meetings are very expensive and do not reap much benefit is one heard not only from within our own ranks. Smaller bonds of churches must look at these things carefully. After all, we must be good stewards. This means that careful planning is needed to make the meetings successful and fruitful. The subjects to be introduced and discussed must be practical for the churches and of common concern. Otherwise the ICRC becomes a glorified Bible-conference with gifted speakers. The topics for discussion must reflect the agenda of the churches. In this regard it is good to see that the theme of the next ICRC is to be Issues facing the Church.

2. In order to reap fruit from the ICRC it should issue conclusions to its discussions. There have been few conclusions, but many discussions. This is to be lamented, since past synods have repeatedly requested that such conclusions be drawn (cf 1985 Acts, art 88, 3.2, 1987 Acts, art 110, D.3.f). In order to prevent the ICRC from becoming a mere 'talking- body' conclusions should be made as stipulated in the Constitution. Also, cooperative ventures among sister-churches should take on more prominence.

3. There is the practical consideration that the REC has not decided to expel the GKN(syn). This means that a number of reformed bonds of churches (e.g. OPC & RCNZ) have taken the initiative to leave the REC. They are looking for a solidly reformed conference, not one where they must always battle to stay reformed. Also, others still in the REC are now starting to lose a sense of direction. They stay in the REC because they do not see an alternative. For us to withdraw from the ICRC at this very time when so many look to solidly reformed churches for fellowship and help would be to renege on our responsibilities.

4. It is a fact that none of our sister-churches have contemplated withdrawing from the ICRC. The reports of delegates to the ICRC (GKN-lib, VGKSA) and the decisions about the ICRC by the GKN-lib were favourable. The GKN-lib viewed our deputies' proposal to withdraw with alarm. All this means that the option of withdrawing would place us in

isolation. Seeing that the FRCA already suffers from geographical isolation and numerical limitation, it would not help unnecessarily to add this international isolation as well.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The study of the concerns of the 1990 Synod do not present conclusive substantiation which would warrant withdrawal from the ICRC;
2. The study of the positive benefits of membership in the ICRC shows that this conference can be well used to exercise part of our ecclesiastical relations and contacts. The conference which meets every four years could help synod and deputies discharge their mandates with respect to these relations and contacts on a personal and face-to-face level. Synod should give deputies the mandate to utilise to the maximum the conference in this fashion. The ICRC should be urged to have member-churches and observer-churches introduce them selves, and member churches should give an account of how they endeavour to come to the closest ecclēsiastical fellow ship with other member churches, especially with those in their own country.
3. In order to make the conference most meaningful vigorous efforts need to be made to investigate member- churches whom we do not know and whom we have not recognised as true churches so that possible recognition and sister-relations may ensue. This would allow coordination of cooperative projects, e.g. in mission, and would allow it to function to its full potential as a conference of reformed churches.
4. If member-churches cannot be recognised as true churches, then Art.IV.2 of the ICRC must be used. If the problem proliferates, then a future synod will have to reassess our membership and role in the ICRC. At present the FRCA has not rejected any member-church as not being a true church, i.e. of being a false church.
5. The matter of the confessional basis of the ICRC has caused problems, owing to misunderstandings. It should be clear that the FRCA has agreed to recognise the Westminster Standards only as basis for a conference of reformed churches, and does not by this itself subscribe to the Westminster Standards.
6. The first purpose about unity of faith continues to give considerable concern because of the differing interpretations given to it. An amendment of this first purpose ("to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the member churches confess") should be supported.
7. The forum of a conference seems the most suitable at the present time. However, member-churches such as the FCS would like to change it into something akin to a synod or international assembly (with church services, communion meals, etc). Resistance should be maintained against this attempt (as the last ICRC did).
8. The conference should ensure that it remains practical for the member-churches and does not become a glorified Bible-conference with gifted speakers. The subjects presented should be of common interest and concern.
9. The conference should strive to round off discussion of a subject with conclusions, so that the member- churches may be served with the proceedings of the conference.
10. Since the REC has refused to terminate the membership of the GKN(syn) and thus becomes guilty of associating with deviation from the reformed confession, churches can be expected to leave the REC and look for a truly reformed, international body. We should not retract from our international responsibilities and privileges but practise them through member ship in the ICRC for the benefit of other bonds of churches who need support.
11. None of our sister-churches have discussed withdrawing from the ICRC. Their reports of the last ICRC do not share our concerns (cf the letter from the FRCSA). To withdraw would thus leave us isolated.

5. REPORT B

A study about the concerns of the 1990 Synod regarding the ICRC mandate
The 1990 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. to study the concerns signalled in the considerations with respect to the ICRC (cf. Considerations 14, 15, 18, 19).
- b. to consult with the sisterchurches regarding these concerns.
- c. to publish the results of their study for the interest of the churches.
- d. to serve the following synod with a report and recommendations.

Deputies sent the Acts to all sisterchurches. When no response had been received by August 1991, they subsequently wrote a letter to them all (and the FCS & EPCI), drawing special attention to the need for consultation on the matter of the synodical concerns about the ICRC. To date correspondence has been received only from the sister-churches in South Africa (their letter is appended to this report).

The results of the study for the interest of the churches have not been published because significantly diverging views and time constraints have prevented Deputies from completing their mandate and providing definitive recommendations.

PREAMBLE

Deputies were served with long and full considerations by the 1990 synod. This was helpful as they clearly demonstrated the contrasting views with which synod was confronted.

In order to report as objectively as possible on the concerns detailed, many of which have surfaced in previous synodical discussions, deputies re-read and re-studied the minutes of the 1985 and 1989 ICRC, and the past reports and Acts about this matter. A bibliography on these as well as on relevant articles is attached for your benefit.

Moreover, since Synod expressed that our concerns may affect our continuing membership in the ICRC (Acts 1990, Art. 145, Recommendation 3) and that successive synods have deferred coming to a definitive decision regarding our continuing membership of the ICRC because of opposing views, deputies considered it prudent to present a historical overview of past decisions in these matters, thus exposing the points of tension that have led to the concerns identified by Synod 1990.

This historical overview, while not strictly essential to an understanding of the concerns detailed by Synod 1990, is provided to enhance a contextual appreciation of the matters under discussion, thus permitting informed analysis.

B.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1.1 After the initial institution of our churches in this country, it was resolved to accept the rules for correspondence with foreign churches as proposed by the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands, Kampen 1951 (Synod Acts 1956, Art. 51).

1.2 Synod 1956 advised the Canadian Reformed Churches that it accepted the rules for correspondence as adopted by Synod Homewood (1954) with the proviso that there must be mutual consultation prior to putting into place any amendments or additions to the Confessions, Church Order and Liturgy.

1.3 Synod 1956 confirmed that correspondence would be conducted only with those foreign churches which had their origin in the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands (Art. 5).

1.4 Synod 1959 formulated a set of rules governing the correspondence with foreign sisterchurches (Art.48, 1- 2).

1.5 Synod 1959 noted that the foreign (sister)churches did not agree with the FRCA

regarding prior consultation in the matter of amending or extending the Confessions, Church Order and Liturgy. They considered informing one another to be sufficient (Acts 1962, Art.30).

1.6 Synod 1962 instructed deputies to conduct correspondence with foreign sisterchurches in accordance with the Rules adopted by Synod 1959, Art. 48).

1.7 Synod 1962 instructed deputies to make detailed study of the question in how far consultation with foreign sisterchurches is necessary and possible in connection with desired amendments and additions to the Confession, Church Order and Liturgy and report to the following synod (Art. 36,4).

1.8 Synod 1962 received a letter from the RCA seeking verbal discussions regarding potential unity (Art. 12). This was refused and reference is made to previous correspondence which had not been responded to by the RCA. On the other hand, the FRCA declare a willingness for discussions as soon as the RCA provide the required basis i.e. a return to obedience.

1.9. The same synod resolved to write a letter for publication in the Dutch press warning people of Free Reformed persuasion not to migrate to New Zealand because the RCNZ were not obedient churches (Art. 18, 37).

1.10 Synod 1964 again resolved to urge foreign sisterchurches to pursue prior mutual consultation in matters of amendments and additions to the Confession, Church Order and Liturgy. If agreement could not be reached, to continue correspondence in accordance with the rules adopted by Synod Bunschoten-Spakenburg 1958-1959 (Art. 25,43).

1.11 Synod 1964 also resolved to advise the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands of their inconsistent position in, on the one hand, seeking contact with our sisterchurches in The Netherlands, and to have full correspondence with the RCA (Art. 43, 8a).

1.12 Moreover, the same Synod petitioned the deputies of our Dutch sisterchurches to bring this inconsistency to the notice of their Christelijke Gereformeerde counterparts. Should this appeal receive a favourable hearing, Synod resolved to study the question whether or not the latter could be approached to enter into correspondence with the FRCA (Art. 43,8b).

1.13 Synod 1964 also resolved to write to the Dutch sisterchurches protesting their exchange of letters with the RCNZ. Our synod felt so strongly about this that the letter in question would be sent to every local sisterchurch in The Netherlands (Art. 25, 49, Appendix II).

1.14 Synod 1964 was advised by the RCA that they would seek no further contact with our churches while the FRCA maintained the views articulated by their Synods 1959 and 1962. The FRCA responded with an appeal to the RCA to begin to deal with the issues that were the cause of the present division. (Appendix I).

1.15 Synod 1966 laments that the Canadian sisterchurches do not correspond as well as might be expected and instruct new deputies to bring about improvement (Art.11).

1.16 Synod 1966 is advised that the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken have taken to the little-hope-giving course by their more and more pluriform -ecumenical actions (Art.18(a)).

1.17 This is confirmed by their response to the letter sent by Synod 1964. Synod 1966 considered (it) useless to write again (Art. 18(b)).

1.18 The deputies of our Dutch sisterchurches advise Synod 1966 that Synod Rotterdam-Delfshaven has rejected the appeal by the FRCA (Acts 1964, Art.25,49, Appendix II) to not enter into correspondence with the RCNZ, even though they have sympathy for what is submitted in this letter (Art.18(c)).

1.19 Synod 1966 regrets the request from the Dutch sisterchurches to drop the rules for correspondence which sought prior consultation in cases of amendment or extension

and to be satisfied with informing each other after the event. While synod resolves to comply with this request it is decided to voice displeasure about the position taken by the Dutch churches ... and to find fault with her in not having replied to the extensive arguments provided by Synod Launceston 1964 (Art. 18(d)).

1.20 Synod 1966 also discusses a proposal by the church of Armadale to appoint deputies which (sic) will inquire whether the FRCA are called and able to recognise the Korean Presbyterian churches as foreign sister-churches and on this basis to enter into correspondence with them. It is proposed that, if possible, the matter be finalised quickly so that it need not wait until a next synod meets (Art. 19). This proposal is adopted.

1.21 A letter is received from the RCA indicating that further correspondence with the Free Reformed Churches is not desired 'so long as the attitude of these churches does not change'. A reply is sent again urging the RCA to consider the matters raised in previous correspondence by the FRCA (Art. 39).

1.22 Synod 1968 receives an invitation to join the Australian Council of Reformed Churches (Art.15). This invitation is declined on the basis of relationships with third parties e.g. RES, Synodical Churches (Appendix II).

1.23 Synod 1968 adopts a proposal from the church at Armadale to consider whether and in which manner our Churches have a common duty towards those people ... (who) have separated themselves from (the apostate Presbyterian Churches) and (now) gather separately under the name of 'Presbyterian Reformed Churches' (Art. 16). A letter is sent to these churches (Appendix I).

1.24 Deputies report that no response has been received from Korea. In the meantime the Dutch sisterchurches have initiated correspondence with this church (Acts 1968, Art. 41).

1.25 New Deputies are charged to examine whether the FRCA have the duty and are able to recognise The Presbyterian Church of Korea and enter into correspondence with it (Art. 42(7)).

1.26 Synod 1970 gratefully ascertains the fact that the correspondence with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland can be continued because it has been proved ... that (they) desire to remain faithful to the Reformed Confession and Church Order (Art. 26).

1.27 Synod 1970 received a letter from a Korean deputy (Art. 28) and instructs its deputies to continue efforts to enter into a relation of correspondence with 'The Presbyterian Church in Korea'. Moreover, they are further instructed to be active in seeking to establish contact with Churches that are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and to examine whether we can enter into correspondence with them also (Art. 35).

1.28 Synod 1970 also makes reference to third parties who have correspondence with other churches which are not recognised by our own churches. This may cause all sorts of difficulties and it requests more detailed information from foreign sisterchurches (Art. 35).

1.29 Synod 1972 re-affirms its opposition to joining the Aust. Council of Reformed Churches (Appendix II).

1.30 Synod 1972 seeks closer ties with the work of the Dutch deputies and resolves to ask them in how far it is possible to include them (FRCA) in the international and intercontinental fields (Art. 42).

1.31 Synod 1975 received a letter from the Korean churches and resolves to enter in principle into full correspondence with them (Art. 73, 78, 82).

1.32 Synod 1975 also resolved to meet with the respective Presbyterian Reformed Church groups to discuss positions (Art. 85, Appendix).

1.33 Synod 1978 appoints deputies to strengthen contact with the PCEA in response to a letter from their Inter-Church Relation Committee (Art. 24, Appendix II).

1.34 Synod 1978 adopts rules for correspondence with the Presbyterian Church of Korea and resolves to do all it can to make the relationship as effective as possible (Art. 38).

- 1.35 Synod 1978 agrees with the principle for an ecumenical Synod as mentioned in the report of deputies (Art.38).
- 1.36 Synod 1978 receives a report regarding the call of Dr. Hur (Art. 47).
- 1.37 Synod 1978 decides not to appoint new deputies to continue talks with the Presbyterian Reformed Church on the grounds of considerable differences (Art. 63).
- 1.38 Synod 1980 receives a letter from the Dutch deputies re preparations for a Reformed International Conference (Art. 30(3)).
- 1.39 No report is received re contacts with PCEA. New deputies are urged to continue the contact and keep in touch with developments between Dutch deputies and the FCS (Acts 1980, Art. 37).
- 1.40 Synod 1980 writes a letter to the Canadian Reformed Churches out of concern for diverging directions due to lack of consultation (Appendix).
- 1.41 Synod 1980 resolves to develop closer contacts with geographically close churches (Art. 30).
- 1.42 Synod 1983 does not admit a letter from the church at Kelmscott urging the FRCA not to join in with the International Conference as there is insufficient material available to come to a decision on this matter (Art. 58).
- 1.43 Synod 1983 receives a report on the Constituent Assembly meeting of the International Conference (Art. 59).
- 1.44 Synod 1983 discusses numerous questions re the ICRC. In answer to a question which criteria are used by deputies to recognise each other as true and faithful churches, the response is that there are no problems coming to (that) recognition ... if they are based on (the) Reformed Confession (Art. 60(3)). They also assert that the road to coming to (...) sister church relations is a long one (Art. 62. (1)).
- 1.45 Synod 1983 heard from deputies that membership of the RES by a church has never been an impediment for entering into provisional ecclesiastical contact (Art. 62(3), cf. 1.22).
- 1.46 Synod 1983 recognised the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan as a true and faithful church, despite an objection to the procedure (Art. 72,74).
- 1.47 Synod 1983 recognised the EPCI as faithful churches of the Lord. This was done on the basis of a brief report from deputies, for which the latter apologise (Art. 75).
- 1.48 Synod 1983 adopts the procedural motion that before a church may be declared true and faithful, information must be gathered and important issues discussed (Art.76).
- 1.49 Synod 1983 adopts a proposal which expresses regret at the way deputies have handled the invitation to the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC (Art. 79).
- 1.50 Synod 1983 adopts the proposal of deputies to join the ICRC despite a detailed counter proposal (Art. 87).
- 1.51 Synod 1983 resolves to further investigate the position of the PCEA (Art. 96).
- 1.52 Synod 1983 rejects a proposal for renewed contact with the RCA (Art. 103) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Art. 105).
- 1.53 Synod 1985 received a letter from the PCEA advising it that they have acknowledged the FRCA as true and faithful churches and recognising the mutual responsibility to exhort one another to continued obedience (Art. 24).
- 1.54 Synod 1985 decides that Synod 1983 wrongly decided not to admit the letter from Kelmscott urging Synod 1983 not to join the ICRC because insufficient information was available (Art. 29).
- 1.55 Synod 1985 decides that the decision made by Synod 1983 recognising the RPCT and EPCI (Art. 73 and 75, Acts 1983) was made with undue haste and without due consideration (Art. 43).
- 1.56 Synod 1985 adopts a proposal setting out the practical implications and consequences of acknowledging churches as true and faithful and what that statement must be interpreted to mean (Art. 67).

1.57 Synod 1985 acknowledges that the available information is not sufficient for the responsible recognition of the PCEA as a true and faithful church (Art.68).

1.58 Synod 1985 saw deputies report renewed contact with the RCNZ Synod decides that RCNZ relations with third parties are impediments to continue existing contact (Art. 75).

1.59 Synod 1985 resolves not to deal with a letter from the church at Kelmscott to which is appended a letter from classis WA of the RCA (Art.78).

1.60 Synod 1985 rejects a number of appeals re ICRC membership and resolves that the 1987 Synod is to make a decision regarding our continuing membership of the ICRC on the basis of deputies' and delegates' reports (Art. 88)

1.61 Synod 1987 confirms that the EPCI are faithful churches but registers its disappointment that the deputies did not adhere to their mandate with respect to the marks of the church (Art. 79, D 1,2). It confirms that the FCS is a faithful church and offers TEC.

1.62 Synod 1987 decides to resume contact with the RCNZ, despite the absence of a proposal from deputies or the churches to do so, and despite its membership of the RES, although this membership is under review subject to what the RES will do with the GKN (Syn.) (Art. 105).

1.63 Synod 1987 resolved to continue investigations of the ERCS (Art.106).

1.64 Synod 1987 resolves to continue membership of the ICRC and that the 1990 Synod decide our continuing membership on the basis of reports submitted (Art. 110).

1.65 Synod 1987 instructed deputies to continue their discussion with the PCEA of the concerns mentioned earlier (Art.115).

B. 2 THE DIRECTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE GROWING TENSIONS AS EXPOSED BY THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The ambivalent views with which Synod 1990 was confronted did not arise overnight but have their origin in the interpretations of previous synodical commitments and decisions. As the history of our churches began to unfold in the matters under discussion, so did the tensions. General agreement prevailed up to Synod 1964, and it was the decision by Synod 1966 to adopt Armadale's proposal as recorded in 1.20 above that witnessed the first concerns in this context. Since 1966 the strength of concerns have developed from a quiet stream into the torrent that was Synod 1990.

Using the selected historical happenings as our guide, we now wish to chart the course of the FRCA in the matters under discussion and make some endeavours in identifying the development of opposing views. For ease of reference we will use the same numerical tags as used under the heading Historical Overview. However, each numerical tag will, of course, be preceded by the number '2', as this is the second section of our study.

2.1.1 - 2.1.7 From their inception, the FRCA accepted rules for correspondence with foreign sisterchurches of Dutch origin (GKN lib.) and placed strong emphasis on the need for prior consultation in matters of amendments or additions to the Confession, Church Order and Liturgy (1.1 - 1.6). When this proviso was not reciprocated by the foreign sisterchurches, the FRCA instructed deputies to make a study of this matter (1.7). 2.1.10, 2.1.15, 2.1.19 The results of this study were adopted by Synod 1964 and were conveyed to the foreign sisterchurches. However, the Dutch sisterchurches requested the FRCA to drop the rules for correspondence which sought prior consultation and to be satisfied with informing each other after the event. Synod 1966 resolved to comply with this request under protest and decided to voice its displeasure (1.19).

NOTE: The constant emphasis on prior consultation by the FRCA clearly indicates their view of the importance of meaningful relationships with foreign sisterchurches.

2.1.8 - 2.1.9 A request from the RCA for verbal discussions was refused until there was

evidence of a return to obedience by these churches. Their contact with the synodical churches and RES membership were considered an impediment. This also applied to the RCNZ and prospective Dutch migrants were seriously warned not to immigrate to that country as the RCNZ were not obedient churches (1.9).

2.1.11 - 2.1.13 The problem of third parties is identified here. Such is the weight of feelings by the FRCA on this point that a letter is sent to every local sisterchurch in The Netherlands (1.13).

2.1.16 - 2.1.17 The position of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken is identified as a result of their more and more pluriform- ecumenical actions in their contact with other churches. The FRCA considered it useless to write again (1.17).

NOTE: The FRCA took a strong stand on the issue of third party relationships.

2.1.18 The FRCA saw the Dutch sisterchurches undermine their position in relation to the RCNZ. The third party problem became further entrenched, leaving the FRCA out on a limb. The tensions were beginning to grow.

NOTE: The little-hope-giving course of the CGKN, as identified by the GKN in their more and more pluriform- ecumenical actions, threatened to become a self-fulfilling prophecy for the GKN in their relationship with the RCNZ. The warning bells began to chime!

2.1.20 Synod 1966 marks a watershed in the history of FRCA relationships with foreign churches other than those emanating from the GKN (Lib.). The KPC are investigated and this matter is given a high priority. The speed with which potential recognition is envisaged betrays a naivete of the process involved as it was not until 1975 that it became a reality (1.31).

2.1.22 - 2.1.23 The FRCA rejects an invitation to join an Australian Council of Reformed Churches on the basis of the third party problem involving the RES and others. On the other hand, a proposal to reach out to Australian Presbyterians in need, is adopted.

2.1.24, 2.1.25, 2.1.27, 2.1.31 Despite a lack of response from the PCK, full correspondence with them is entered into by the FRCA. This decision is based on two letters from the KPC and on information gained from the Dutch Deputies.

NOTE: Concerns regarding the apparent lack of information gained from the PCK by FRCA deputies and the one- sided endeavours began to strengthen among FRCA members.

2.1.28 The FRCA reiterated the problem of third parties and warned of all sorts of difficulties.

2.1.30, 2.1.35, 2.1.38 A request by the FRCA to the Dutch deputies for international and intercontinental involvement results in the International Conference.

NOTE: The involvement of the FRCA in this conference witnessed the first public disquiet. These focussed on the churches participating (third parties, 1.28, 2.1.16 and the lack of information required to come to a responsible decision. Indeed, local churches were hastily required to commit the FRCA to this conference without prior discussion. 2.1.33, 2.1.39, 2.1.51, 2.1.53, 2.1.57, 2.1.65 Initial contact is established with the PCEA. Successive deputies are instructed to continue a study of various concerns.

NOTE: The exhaustive studies undertaken in relation to the PCEA, demonstrate a growing awareness of areas of concern with churches of Presbyterian origin and persuasion.

2.1.40 A lack of consultation between the FRCA and the CRC causes concern in terms of diverging directions.

NOTE: Even though the FRCA had relented in its position on this matter, concerns continue to be expressed. They obviously felt that a meaningful relationship was under threat.

2.1.42, 2.1.54 The tensions re the involvement of the FRCA in the ICRC are documented in an appeal which is incorrectly rejected, as this study of the concerns has established.

2.1.43 - 2.1.44 A deputies' report and discussion on the ICRC determines that the FRCA can accept churches as true and faithful churches ... if they are based on the Reformed Confession.

NOTE: This assertion contradicts previous decisions not to enter into discussions with churches who also maintain Reformed Confessions e.g. RCA, RCNZ, RPCA etc. Obviously more was required. The ambivalence demonstrated here is clear and shows deputies had gone beyond their mandate.

2.1.45 This statement (in support of an action) does not square with the refusal of the FRSA indicated in 1.22, and 1.29.

NOTE: This ambivalence further confuses members and continues to foster tension

2.1.46 - 2.1.47 Decisions recognising churches as true and faithful are made in contravention of accepted rules and procedures (1.55).

NOTE: These decisions quite legitimately question the decency and in good order aspect of Synod's work. This was recognised as such by the next synod. In the meantime, the decisions made were maintained.

2.1.48 This would have to be one of the most contradictory decisions made by the 1983 Synod in the context of its actions referred to above. How one can declare a church as true and faithful knowing as little as Synod 1983 did about Taiwan, and then agree to a motion setting out the procedure for such recognition, does little to inspire confidence. Indeed, it could not but demand revision.

2.1.49 - 2.1.50 The decision to join the ICRC was made despite a documented counter-proposal. This counter-proposal contained elements that should have been upheld as they are clearly in accordance with previous decisions.

NOTE: The questions of third parties, RES membership, official recognition and lack of information had all received attention by previous synods of the FRCA. Indeed they had previously been acknowledged as legitimate concerns worthy of resolution prior to establishing relationships.

2.1.56 - 2.1.57 The decision recorded here indicates that much work needs to be done before coming to the desired conclusion of unity of faith.

NOTE: This does not square with the acceptance of the churches represented in the ICRC or the acknowledgement of foreign churches of Presbyterian origin. Some we do not know at all while others are only casually known. Moreover, it rejects the assertion of Deputies that the FRCA can accept churches as true and faithful if they are based on the Reformed Confessions (1.44). The consequences of Deputies' wrong interpretation are not addressed.

2.1.58 Once again synod declares relations with third parties an impediment to contact.

2.1.60 The rejection of a number of appeals and the resolution to defer a decision of continuing membership of the ICRC to the following synod suggest a degree of uncertainty or wisdom. Obviously, the strength of opposing views was gathering momentum.

2.1.61 A decision is maintained despite the recognition that deputies have not adhered to their mandate and despite Art. 67, Acts 1985.

NOTE: This decision begs the question whether an examination of the marks of the true church is not essential to the judgment made. It is understandable that members continue to be baffled by and become suspicious of such important decisions.

2.1.62 This decision to resume contact with churches who are RES members defies earlier synodical resolutions.

B.3 AN EVALUATION OF THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

3.1 As indicated earlier, there was general agreement in the FRCA concerning the

development of contacts with foreign churches up to Synod 1964. The contacts established were with those churches who had their origin in the GKN (Lib.).

3.2 One of the outstanding characteristics of this period was the insistence by the FRCA on prior consultation in matters relating to the basis of sisterchurch relations and any proposed changes to that basis. The FRCA obviously considered such consultation paramount to any meaningful relationships. The sway of foreign opinion finally saw the FRCA abandon its position, albeit under protest and with displeasure (1.19).

3.3 The position of the FRCA regarding the RCA and RCNZ during this period clearly reveals their understanding that contact with denominations (Synodicals) or groups (RES) that compromised the truth could and would not be entered into, unless there was a return to obedience.

3.4 Another noteworthy observation is the position adopted by the FRCA concerning the problem of third parties. Such was the concern at this point that the question of whether to enter into correspondence with the CGKN would only be considered if and when the relationship with a third party was terminated (1.12).

3.5 A thumb-nail analysis of the CGKN by a Dutch deputy (1.16) and the refusal of GKN not to enter into contact with the RCNZ (1.18), indicated an ambivalence on the part of the GKN. This decision also placed a strain on the relationship between the GKN and FRCA as the latter had made an impassioned appeal to cease contact (1.13).

3.6 The GKN, meanwhile, was beginning to accelerate its contacts with foreign churches. Their correspondence with the PCK led the FRCA to make a similar move. While there is no recorded opposition to this initiative from within the FRCA, the decision to enter into full correspondence with the PCK (1.31) was viewed with disquiet by some. This was due to the lack of information received from the PCK and the almost total reliance upon information gained from the GKN.

3.7 It is at this point in time that significant differences in opinion began to publicly see the light of day. The call extended to Dr. S.G. Hur unlocked a discussion that focussed on our recognition of the PCK. The majority had no difficulty with the process that led to the recognition of the PCK. A minority expressed disapproval of the one-sided endeavours and our reliance on (incomplete) information from Dutch sources. Moreover, the Dutch deputies had given the FRCA reason to question their position in the matter of the criteria used to come to a recognition of foreign churches by their stand on the RCNZ.

3.8 The process that led to the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC witnessed further and growing differences of opinion. While no one had any difficulty with the initial proposal for a Reformed Conference of foreign sisterchurches, the final product of the preparations for such a conference was greeted with both joy and dismay. Those in favour saw it as an opportunity to strengthen and develop ties with churches of Reformed persuasion. Those against identified a pragmatism that accommodated a less than honourable approach in the recognition of churches we hardly knew, and contrary to the decision in 1.48. Moreover, the problem of third parties (1.28, 2.1.16) was ignored while discussion was impossible due to the pressure of time.

3.9 The proponents of ICRC involvement understandably heralded a breakthrough in international relations based on a true commitment to the Reformed Confessions. The opponents lamented a contravention of accepted procedures and previous decisions (e.g. 1.22 & 1.48) and alleged a caving-in to modern ecumenical trends. When Synod 1983 decided not to admit a letter detailing various concerns, tensions grew further. When, a little later, it was said that the FRCA had no problems acknowledging churches as true and faithful if they are based on the Reformed Confession, tensions headed for a climax.

3.10 At the same time the FRCA acknowledged three churches as true and faithful on the basis of an unacceptable process and incomplete information (1.46 & 1.47). When a following synod, responding to an appeal, concluded that opposing views should have

been heard and the recognition of the three churches in question was done in a manner inconsistent with the adopted rules and procedures, yet the decisions themselves were not rescinded, hope for some clarity in the confusion diminished.

3.11 With the ongoing commitment of the FRCA to the ICRC and the subsequent development of contacts with foreign churches, the suspicion between proponents and opponents continued to grow. Discussions became heated and were conducted in an atmosphere of, at times, unbearable tension. It need therefore not surprise anyone that the considerations of Synod 1990 demonstrated the ambivalence that they did. It became an exercise in appeasement. If a decision is to be made regarding the matter in hand, as it must, a careful, critical and objective reading of the concerns recorded in the 1990 Acts is essential, since one so quickly chooses his viewpoint and reads material with a pre-judgment in mind.

3.12 We trust that the historical overview - which indicates consistent progress in contacts with other churches despite the inconsistencies identified - and its evaluation will assist an understanding of the recorded concerns and lead us to a study of these concerns within the context of history.

STUDY OF THE CONCERNS OF THE 1990 SYNOD

B4. Re CONSIDERATION 14 (which we quote in full)

14. Whereas deputies report of the 1985 ICRC that although there is difference in tradition between reformed and presbyterian churches there is still unity in faith Acts, (Article 110, B.13), delegates to the 1989 meeting of the Conference report that there was the outward show of unity, but no real commitment to it (B1,B(b)). Indeed: Contrary to the provision in its Constitution, the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organisation where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist (Deputies Report B1,C,2).

This difference between the report of the delegates to the 1985 Conference and that of those who attended the 1989 Conference raises the question as to why a lack of unity is now reported. The following considerations arise:

a. The disappointment of our delegates to the ICRC seems to be related to their view of what the Conference, according to its own Constitution, ought to be. This Constitution states, a.o.,

The purpose of the Conference shall be: 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ; 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches (Article III).

At the Conference, our delegates stated, a.o.:

despite the emphatic statement in the Constitution that member churches in the Conference express the unity of faith they have, this wider gathering presents us with the unsatisfactory situation of a meeting of churches some of which have as yet not formally recognised each other as having unity of faith in Christ, and even others who have had little or no contact.

Further:

The FRCA would like to see this unsatisfactory situation re dressed. Unity of faith in Christ must be clearly established back at home before it can be expressed here.

On this point it should be noted that the procedure followed at the 1983 Synod gives legitimate reason to conclude that Synod saw the need to first establish that there was (had been) unity of faith in the Constituent Assembly before deciding to join the ICRC, as the delegates write in their report (B1,B(a)). Synod after all interrupted its discussions on the ICRC and declared all participating non sister-churches faithful Churches of the Lord (cf Acts 1983, Articles 72,75).

However, future Synods implicitly accepted the fact that various churches could be members of the ICRC without the one having recognised the other as true and faithful. This is evident from the fact that we decided to continue membership in the ICRC irrespective of the fact that we had not yet recognised all other member churches as true and faithful. In fact, Synod 1985 stated that the decision to join the ICRC was based on our acceptance of the constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE, and not an any evaluation of potential member Churches (Article 88, Ground 6). Moreover, the very fact that the FRCA proposed to add to Article IV of the Constitution that member churches must show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the Conference in their own country indicates that they saw sister relationships as an aim and not as a prerequisite. These data call into question whether the FRCA delegates at the recent ICRC indeed spoke words accurately representing the stance adopted by the FRCA.

Still, in light of a. the delegates' understanding of the Constitution, b. the conclusion inferred by the 1983 Synod, and c. the failure of previous Synods to grapple effectively with the matter of sitting with a non- sister church at the ICRC, it is understandable that our delegates come with their particular statements.

It is unsatisfactory that the matter of sitting with churches not yet recognised remains inadequately addressed. This is the more so because appellants to this Synod raise this point (cf H Ballast c.s. regarding Article 3; L 'tHart, A H Terpstra, B Vermeulen, Consideration 2).

b. A second consideration bearing on the disappointment registered by our delegates appears to be due to the lack of agreement and direction in several discussions at the 1989 Conference (Deputies Report B1,B(b)). Our deputies judge this lack of direction to be the result of the different understandings present surrounding the doctrine of the Church. They write:

We clearly detected in the Conference that the different under standing of the meaning of the Church with the different emphasis placed on it by the Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity and the Presbyterian Churches with their Westminster Standards would result in a divided approach to fundamental matters, and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas (B1,B(b)).

On the basis of decisions made at our previous Synods, it is incorrect for deputies to suggest that there is within the Three Forms of Unity on the one hand and the Westminster Standards on the other an inherent difference in the doctrine of the Church (cf Acts 1985, Article 88, Ground 5,7). Nevertheless, that there was at the Conference indeed a different emphasis surrounding this doctrine with its various practical implications is indicated by the various discussions reported in the Minutes (cf Minutes 3.2.2; 5.5.3; 7.4; see also 10.2.2(a)). This different emphasis present at the Conference is further footnoted by the Conference's decision to take up the suggestion...regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a 'true church' and the consequences of such a statement for inter-communion, etc.

4.1 This consideration points to the apparent lack of unity in the ICRC between Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Whereas delegates to the 1985 ICRC spoke of unity in faith despite differences in tradition, the delegates to the 1989 ICRC signalled the lack of unity. Synod then raised the question as to why a lack of unity is now reported.

4.2 The deputies' acknowledgement of a unity in faith at the 1985 ICRC must be attributed to:

a) the decision (of the FRCA) to join the ICRC was based on our acceptance of the constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE ... (1985 Acts, Art. 88, ground 12);

b) the ICRC purposes to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have (note: present tense) in Christ (Constitution Art. III.1);

c) This unity of faith is rooted in the Basis of the Conference, i.e., 'the Holy Scriptures

of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (...) and the Westminster Standards ... (Art.II);

d) therefore we in the FRCA accept that there is unity of faith with other member churches sitting with us in the ICRC.

4.3 In contrast, the 1989 delegates saw and heard things that they allege compromise that unity. Indeed, Contrary to the provision in its Constitution, the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organisation where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist' (Deputies Report BI, C,2).

This conclusion is based on their observations that:

a) *despite the emphatic statement in the Constitution that member churches in the Conference express the unity of faith they have, this wider gathering presents us with the unsatisfactory situation ... (where some) have as yet not formally recognised each other as having unity of faith in Christ, and even others who have had little or no contact* and

b) *the lack of agreement and direction in several discussions at the 1989 Conference (Deputy Report BI,B(b)).*

4.4 The question present deputies must now answer is whether the quoted observations of the 1989 delegates to the ICRC warrant the conclusion that the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organisation where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist. Moreover, they must identify the points of tension between the conclusions of both the 1985 and the 1989 delegates.

4.5 The 1985 delegates were able to report favourably because they took their stand upon previous decisions. For example, the 1983 Synod decided officially to join the ICRC (Art. 87). Its deputies had reported that both the churches with the Three Forms of Unity and those with the Westminster Standards had no problem to recognise each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord (Art. 60,(3). In a communique the Constituent Assembly states that the confessional unity that exists among participating churches was re-affirmed and promoted (p. 103, 1983 Acts). The 1985 Synod stated the decision to join the ICRC was based on our acceptance of the constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE, and not on any evaluation of potential member churches (Acts, Art. 88, ground 12). Thus one could join the ICRC without first having recognised all the member churches as true and faithful. The fact that the FRCA proposed to add to Article IV of the ICRC constitution that member churches must show willingness to strive (our emphasis) for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country indicates that they saw sister- relations as an aim and not a prerequisite (cf. 4.11).

4.6 Observation a), however, clearly takes issue with these statements and questions their accuracy and validity. This is made clear by the allegation that there was the outward show of unity, but no real commitment to it (BI,B(b)).

4.7 An analysis of the grounds which underpin the conclusions of the 1985 delegates does raise a number of important and relevant questions:

a) Is it defensible to profess a unity of faith with ICRC members on the basis of its constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE? (1.2 and 1.3)

b) Is it correct to assert that this unity of faith is rooted in ... the Holy Scriptures ... and in the Three Forms of Unity (...) and the Westminster Standards ..."? (Art. II), 1.2(c).

c) Is it valid to conclude that therefore (the above) we in the FRCA accepted that there is unity of faith with other member churches sitting with us at the ICRC? (1.2 (c)).

4.8 Question a) suggests a negative answer. 'Unity of faith' can never be professed on the constitutional basis or purpose of some organisation, regardless of what it is. It is like saying we are one because we want to be one, aim to be one. Indeed, unity of faith, as we confess it in Lord's Day 21, is not a fact because of what we want or what we aim for. Unity of faith is fact when the churches concerned are true and obedient churches.

4.9 Question b) must also be answered negatively. Identical confessional statements do not ensure a unity of faith. If it were true then we would have (had) unity with many churches, well before those of Presbyterian origin. Indeed, items 1.8, 1.9, 1.12, 1.13, 1.16, 1.17, 1.22, and 1.29 are ample proof of the position (previously) adopted by the FRCA on this question

4.10 Question c) must therefore also be answered negatively. Moreover, it is not valid either in terms of cold logic. It is like saying we say we are one because we want to be. That is a circular argument which proves nothing.

4.11 For the sake of completeness, it must be noted at this point that the decision of the FRCA to propose to add to Article IV of the ICRC Constitution that member churches must show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country, is a further indication of the prevalent ambivalence at this point. On the one hand (refer above) that unity of faith is taken to be a fact by virtue of ICRC membership, yet, on the other, it must be striven for with member churches in one's own country. Quite clearly, there is a short-circuit here. For how can one strive for a unity of faith that already exists?

4.12 As for observation b) the 1989 delegates correctly assert that discussions evidenced different understandings of the meaning of the Church. They attribute these differences to the different emphasis placed upon it by the Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity and the Presbyterian Churches with their Westminster Standards (BI, B9b).

4.13 This observation appears to lack the substance required to warrant the conclusion taken by the 1989 delegates. After all, Synod 1985, speaking about its contents, had determined that there was no inherent difference between the Three Forms of Unity, on the one hand, and the Westminster Standards, on the other, in the doctrine of the Church (Art. 88, Ground 5,7). What emerged at the 1989 ICRC was a different emphasis surrounding this doctrine with its various practical implications (cf. Minutes 3.2.2; 5.5.3; 7.4). The establishment of a Committee on Theological Affirmation indicates the desire to remove these differences and come to a common understanding. 4.14 On the other hand, we have just seen in 4.9 that we cannot and may not acknowledge a church on the basis of what confessional standard it has. The measuring stick is not what they say, but what they do. That is the criteria used by Art. 28 B.C. It was and is also the criteria used by the FRCA in their dealings with, for example, the RCA. Thus the 1989 delegates do not so much offer a comment on the content of the Westminster Standards but on the practical outworking of that Standard in the churches who subscribe to it.

4.15 In that context, the differences assume a relevance that is presently the subject of intense study by, for example, the deputies for contact with the PCEA (Acts 1990, Art. 77, Rec. 5(a), and which to this moment have prevented us from acknowledging them as true and faithful churches (1.65). Conversely, it could (and should) be argued that such differences have not stood in the way of acknowledging other churches (1.31, 1.46, 1.47). Besides the fact that a following synod noted irregularities in these actions, it is one of the more obvious ambiguities in the dealings of the FRCA which have led to the present confusion.

4.16 On the basis of the evidence presented, the conclusion of the 1985 delegates, even when supported by a.o. previous (inconsistent) synodical decisions, cannot be maintained. Additionally, the 1989 delegates have identified an unsatisfactory and contradictory situation which must be addressed. Until it has been resolved, we cannot legitimately assert in this context that unity of faith between ICRC members can be said to be a (indisputable) fact.

B.5 Re CONSIDERATION 15 (which we quote in full)

15. The Conference purposes to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ (Constitution Article III.1). This unity of faith is rooted in the

Basis of the Conference, ie, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (...) and the Westminster Standards... (Article II). Before a church can be admitted as a member of the ICRC, the Conference must be convinced that this potential member adheres and is faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis (Article IV). As such, we in the FRCA accept that there is unity of faith with other member churches sitting with us in the Conference.

A problem arises when evidence appears that (a) member church(es) maintain(s) practices which conflict with the Standards mentioned in the Basis and thus with Scripture.

5.1 This consideration confirms the unity of faith we have with other member churches in the ICRC. However, we have established above (item 4) that this assertion is built on a mistaken premise and cannot be maintained on the arguments provided.

5.2 Nevertheless, if, hypothetically speaking, we could legitimately come to the point of professing a unity of faith with all ICRC members, then the question what to do when evidence appears that (a) member church(es) maintain(s) practices which conflict with the Standards mentioned in the Basis and thus with Scripture is answered in Article IV. 2 of the ICRC Constitution.

5.3. Upon presentation of evidence, the Conference would have to invoke the relevant article. This article states that termination of membership shall be by two-thirds majority whenever the conference is of the opinion that the member church in its doctrine and/or practice is no longer in agreement with the Basis (Art. IV. 2).

5.4 Should the conference fail to act in this way, it will have become unfaithful to its own constitution and lost its right to demand the allegiance of its member churches. The withdrawal of membership becomes the only alternative.

B.6 Re CONSIDERATION 18 (which we quote in full)

18. Our membership in the ICRC obliges us to seek the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship with other member churches (Constitution Article III.2). This obligation gives rise to the query what is to happen if sister relations prove impossible. Does it imply departure from the ICRC? Or ought a lesser level of permanent relations to be considered? This matter needs to be addressed since Acts 1985, Article 88, Grounds 8,9,10,11 suggest that cooperation is possible only with sister churches. This too may be a matter to discuss with the sister churches.

6.1 This consideration highlights the (hypothetical) problem of what to do if sister relations with ICRC member churches prove impossible, despite the obligation to seek fullest ecclesiastical fellowship with other member churches.

6.2 Synod 1985 made a distinction between ecclesiastical fellowship and sister-Church relations (Art.88, GROUND 8). Indeed, the former leads to the latter. To enjoy ecclesiastical fellowship" demands a recognition that a church is true and faithful and that the respective churches acknowledge a unity of faith. Sister-church relations, however, occur when the adopted rules for such relations are accepted by both parties. In other words, sister-church relations formalise in a practical way the legitimacy of an (earlier) decision to acknowledge unity of faith with true and faithful churches.

6.3 Therefore, developing sister-church relations must always be possible, in the shorter or longer term, with those (member) churches who have previously been acknowledged as true and faithful and with whom we share a unity of faith. To question the possible non-eventuation of such a development makes nonsense of previous declarations. Conversely, the confusion in the usage of the terms true and faithful and unity of faith, and what they precisely denote, could have led to the question in discussion.

6.4 It may be useful to re-state the decision of Synod 1985 in this context. Art. 67 clearly defines what the result is of formal recognition of churches being true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and sharing a unity of faith. It must have as a direct consequence that a sister-Church relationship can be established (Art. 67 (2)).

6.5 If all that has been declared and affirmed between the member churches previously is to be afforded its proper significance, the question raised in this observation is a non-event. The fact that it was raised, however, is further evidence of the 'double-speak' that is threatening to become endemic in the discussions and decisions concerning our contact with other churches.

B.7 Re CONSIDERATION 19 (which we quote in full)

19. In decisions previously made regarding the ICRC, our Synods have hardly forwarded positive grounds for joining the ICRC. All we find is an indirect reference to the opportunity for contact by way of a conference with foreign churches of Reformed Confession (cf Acts 1985, Article 88, Ground 4). This matter needs to receive more attention so that it becomes clear whether we have a (continuing) calling with respect to the ICRC, and if so what it is.

7.1 Indeed, past synods have hardly forwarded positive grounds for joining the ICRC. This is understandable, perhaps, when we consider that the original proposal was for a council of Reformed sisterchurches all holding to the Three Forms of Unity. The benefits of such a council may have been considered so obvious that it seemed superfluous to detail them.

7.2 When that proposal was hastily replaced by one advocating participation in the ICRC, time was against setting out a list of positive grounds - assuming it could have been done at that time.

7.3 Synod Acts since that period - commencing 1983 - indicate that the discussions concerning the ICRC and our continuing membership have largely centred on presenting both the for and against positions and clarifications of previous decisions. Moreover, these debates have not focussed so much on the positive grounds for membership, as on the legitimacy of (past) decisions made concerning that membership and the inherent issues of unity of faith and the acknowledgment of churches as true and faithful.

7.4 Nevertheless, while previous synods may have had their hands full in repelling what they considered were unfounded objections to the manner in which the FRCA became involved with the ICRC, it is possible now to advance some grounds for joining the ICRC. These can be found in its constitution under Article III - PURPOSE - which reads as follows:

- 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that member churches have in Christ;*
- 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;*
- 3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfilment of the missionary and other mandates;*
- 4. to study common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;*
- 5. to present a reformed testimony to the world.*

These five points, in a condensed fashion, do give the main, positive, and encompassing purposes of the conference.

7.5 Point 1), however, makes an assumption which has been shown to be untenable at present (cf. Section 4). Point 2) is a laudable objective but can only be realised if the assumption mentioned in point 1) can be legitimately established. Point 3) cannot be realised with the majority of members because the FRCA sent a letter to the ICRC indicating that they would cooperate in actual mission activities with sister churches only (Acts 1990, p.302,10.2 (a)). Point 4) is a worthy endeavour, while point 5) is difficult to interpret without more information.

7.6 This consideration also raises the question whether we have a (continued) calling with respect to the ICRC, and if so what it is. To answer that question, one must first define the word calling. We understand its meaning to connote a divine summons or command. If that is true - and dictionaries support that understanding - one must be able

to appeal to the scriptures for substantiation. Quite clearly, the Bible does not speak about the calling of churches or church federations to become members of a conference.

7.7 It may be countered that a previous synod also dealt with this matter (Acts 1983, Art. 96 (A.I,2,3) and came to the opposite conclusion. However, it ought to be noted that the context of that discussion revolved around our contacts with the PCEA, a church in our own country. Nevertheless, it may be asserted that the principles advanced in the 1983 considerations must hold sway also in the international arena. Yet if we maintain, as we must, that the word calling connotes a divine summons, then that must be substantiated by the scriptures and/or confessions, as we have said. It is noteworthy that this has been done by Synod 1983 in relation to the catholicity of the Church (Art. 96, AI), but the same cannot be said of the calling of the true believers and of the true churches to strive for unity in every place and every country ... (Art.96, A2).

7.8 Indeed, Prof. Dr. J. Van Bruggen, speaking in a discussion concerning the rules for correspondence with foreign sisterchurches at the most recent synod of the GKN (Leeuwarden 1990) asked where the Word of God and the confessions taught that we must strive to achieve a world-wide ecclesiastical unity. Answering his own question, he asserted that the unity in the body of Christ already exists. The calling, he continued, to pursue an organisational unity cannot be scripturally supported (Acts 1990, Art. 93, p.96).

7.9 If this calling cannot be scripturally validated for sisterchurches, as Dr. Van Bruggen asserts, it can hardly be advanced in the context of the ICRC, an organisation of like-minded churches, the aim of which is a.o. to encourage sisterchurch relationships. Therefore, the allegation of independentism in this context is a red herring.

7.10 This does not mean, however, that we may not participate in a body such as the ICRC. All things being equal, it may well be a spiritually rewarding experience and serve to alert us to the task we have as churches in the place God has placed us. Church history records the positive results of such ecumenical councils. But we can and may never impose participation upon the premise that we have a calling in this regard. Scripture simply does not warrant such a conclusion.

PROBLEM AREAS

Though the mandate to deputies provided clear terms of reference, this study unearthed some problem areas that also need urgent attention. We briefly identify three of them.

B.8 Unity of Faith

8.1 In our discussion of Observation 14, we highlighted a short-circuit in the terminology used (4.11). Quite obviously, the term unity of faith can be interpreted in more than one way. This has and continues to cause confusion.

8.2 An example. By virtue of our ICRC membership, the FRCA and the PCEA have a unity of faith. That is their declared position towards one another. Yet, we proposed to add an article to the ICRC constitution which enshrines the obligation of churches to strive for unity with member churches in their own country. The simple question is: how can a church strive for unity with a member church (in their own country or elsewhere) when it is claimed in the ICRC constitution - PURPOSE (1) - that unity of faith already exist between them?

8.3 To overcome this problem, some deputies have suggested that this phrase - unity of faith - can be understood and used in two ways. Some read it, they say, as the unity of faith which a synod/assembly concludes exists between two true and faithful churches after a full examination has been made of the relevant confessions and standards, including an inquiry to see if the marks of the true church exist and are being practised. Such a unity leads to sisterchurch relations.

8.4 Others, they continue (themselves included), consider that this term unity of faith must be read and understood in the context of the ICRC constitution, namely, that it is a confessional unity involving a recognition of certain reformed confessions to which the member church is reputed to adhere.

8.5 It is this type of confusion and ambiguity that is the root cause of much of the present division. It has plagued discussions for nearly two decades as is evident throughout this study. It must be removed if we desire rational and intelligent debate.

8.6 This can be achieved simply by upholding the meaning of the phrase as we confess it in Lord's Day 21, question and answer 54. Clearly, its meaning here is that briefly and generally described in 8.3.

8.7 For this confessional view to be upheld - as it must be - the answer to the problem lies in an amendment to the ICRC constitution. Instead of Article III (1) - PURPOSE - reading:

to express and promote the unity of faith member churches have in Christ;
it ought to be amended to read:

to express, promote, and pursue the unity of the reformed faith that the member churches profess;

B.9 True and Faithful Churches

9.1 The meaning of this term, too, is plagued by ambiguity. On the one hand churches are said to be true and faithful when they subscribe to either the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards and faithfully adhere to them (Acts 1983, Art.75). On the other hand, a church may not be declared true and faithful until sister-Church relationship(s) can be established (Acts 1985, Art. 67(2)).

9.2 The difference in meaning that becomes obvious here is more profound than it may first appear. Indeed, our synods have acknowledged this difference when one of them, for example, saw fit to advise the 1989 ICRC meeting that our churches would cooperate in actual mission activities with sister churches only (Acts 1990, p.302, 10.2 (a)).

9.3 This decision is inherently contradictory and casts a cloud of confusion over the decision recorded in Acts 1985, Art. 67(2).

9.4 Moreover, our delegates to the 1989 ICRC meeting were totally consistent when they supported the views of the FCS who highlighted the anomaly in the situation that there were member churches of the Conference who, while recognising other member churches in the Conference as true churches and accepting their delegates as brethren, did not allow members of these churches to enjoy all the benefits conferred by sister church relationships (Acts 1990, p. 293, ix).

9.5 If the declaration true and faithful can be pronounced when churches are:

1. faithful in the ministry of the Word, of the sacraments, and of church discipline; 2. have proven in their own church history obedience to the command of the Lord to separate themselves from apostate churches; 4. have expressed their willingness and desire to have fellowship in unity of faith with other faithful churches in the world (Acts 1983, Art. 96 B),

then there must be documented evidence to support such a declaration. If the same synod that made these observations can three days before declare a church true and faithful on the basis of an oral report (Art. 72), a decision which the 1985 Synod judged to have been taken with undue haste and without due consideration (Art. 43(I), then one must question the integrity of that declaration. This manner of working cannot inspire confidence and devalues such declarations.

9.6 If we are to serve the cause of clarity, these foundational terms must be clearly defined and consistently applied. Anything less will see the FRCA continue to build their position in these matters on decisions that simply cannot survive the acid test because of their flawed foundation.

B.10 The ICRC as Conference

10.1 The prescriptive nature of the ICRC constitution continues to be a source of contention. If it is to serve as a discussion forum and a vehicle to assist one another as churches of reformed persuasion, why the insistence upon formal membership, it is asked.

10.2 Attending a conference must be possible without membership. The delegates (or the bodies that delegate them) ought to be able to pay the established registration fee to cover costs, participate in the discussions, and then return home to report to those who sent them.

B.11 CONCLUSIONS

1 This study of the concerns of the 1990 Synod presents evidence that the report of the 1985 delegates asserting a unity of faith between member churches of the ICRC cannot be substantiated on the basis of the grounds specified by them.

2. Conversely, this study has presented sufficient evidence warranting the conclusions of the 1989 delegates that a unity of faith between all ICRC member churches does not or cannot exist at this point in time.

3. This study has brought to light numerous inconsistencies and ambiguities which lie at the root of the ambivalences detailed by Synod 1990. These must be urgently addressed.

4. The sheer weight of (contradictory) evidence may justifiably lead to a questioning of the integrity of the FRCA in these matters by other churches.

5. There is no scriptural evidence for the conclusion that the FRCA (or anyone else, for that matter) have a (continued) calling with respect to ICRC membership.

6. PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT OF THE FIRST PURPOSE OF ICRC

The deputies propose to the 1992 Synod that the FRCA proposes to the next ICRC to adopt the following amendment of the first Purpose of the ICRC as stated in its Constitution so that it reads instead

1. to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the member churches confess;
Grounds

1. The present reading to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ uses language from our confessions, indicating that the full unity of faith as established in organic unity or sister- relations between federations of churches can be expressed and promoted at and by the ICRC. Many understand the purpose in the above manner; and in turn this understanding causes much concern. It is not the task of the ICRC but of the broadest ecclesiastical assemblies to recognise and to give expression to this full unity of faith (cf the Proposal of the FCS to the 1989 ICRC, Proceedings, pages 12- 14).

2. The present reading - the unity of faith that the member churches HAVE in Christ (stress is ours) - could imply and implies to many that this unity is already a present fact. It could imply that unity already exists among all the member churches. The next purpose ("to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship...") belies this implication. Instead of fostering ambiguity, confusion and dissension, a clearer statement of purpose would promote appreciation for the purpose of the ICRC.

3. The first purpose should always be broad, comprehending every other stated purpose. The amendment tries to do so.

4. The amendment does not leave room for ambiguity. Expression and promotion of the reformed faith which all the member churches confess is general, involves the more

specific aim of promoting full interchurch relations, but includes a comprehensive array of discussions, aims and projects which will all express and promote the reformed faith.

5. The reference to reformed faith should encourage especially those who hold to the Westminster Standards. Instead of being called presbyterian in contradistinction to reformed all member churches are now said to confess the reformed faith. Needless and divisive distinctions are thus avoided.

6. The reference to the reformed faith which the member churches CONFESS (stress is ours) neatly ties in with the BASIS of the Constitution where the reformed confessions are listed. It knits the article of basis and purpose together.

The deputies propose that synod give new deputies the mandate to forward our concerns (as outlined by the 1990 Synod), the two reports presented to synod and this proposed amendment to the next ICRC via its secretary. Also, deputies propose that all the sister-churches be directly informed of this action and be consulted with the aim of receiving their response.

As far as the logistics of presenting this proposed amendment to the next ICRC goes, Article VI stipulates that proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference. He shall send it to the member churches immediately. Thus we are already somewhat late. However, the Regulations of the ICRC in Article VII - Agenda Material do allow for other material to be considered if it is important and urgent (cf. #4). We would argue that this proposal is important and urgent, and indeed may decide whether we continue or discontinue our membership, since this issue about the unity of faith is one of our major concerns, if not THE major concern.

What about our continuing membership?

Your deputies considered what should be done meanwhile. Thus far the 1983 Synod has decided to join the ICRC; the 1985 Synod confirmed this decision over against appeals and decided to send delegates to the first ICRC; the 1987 Synod confirmed this decision again, awaiting the outcome of the constitutional amendments; and the 1990 Synod had serious concerns which could affect its continuing membership. Seeing the line of the previous synods, deputies consider it unwise and ungrounded to change, cancel or suspend our membership during this interim stage. Instead deputies recommend that meanwhile membership be continued and that delegates be sent to the 1993 ICRC. This would allow us full involvement with the discussion about our proposed amendment as well as giving more time to evaluate the direction of the ICRC. Your deputies recommend that synod appoint the delegates (and alternates) and give the delegates instructions.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO SYNOD

1. to discharge deputies of their mandate;
2. to give new deputies a renewed mandate to finish the study of the concerns of the 1990 Synod about our (continuing) membership of the ICRC;
3. to send the two reports about the mentioned concerns to the sister-churches and to consult with them about them;
4. to propose to the next ICRC to amend the first Purpose to read as follows
 1. to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the members churches confess;
 5. to send this proposed amendment with the grounds mentioned above to the ICRC and to urge the next ICRC to deal with this matter;
 6. meanwhile to continue our membership in the ICRC until the study of the concerns has been finished;

7. to have synod appoint two delegates and two alternates to the 1993 ICRC which will be held in the Netherlands;
8. to instruct the delegates to the next ICRC to have synod's decisions implemented and its concerns conveyed;
9. to have deputies publish the results of their study for the interest of the churches;
10. to have delegates furnish a report of the 1993 meeting of ICRC for the deputies so that a report can be published for all the churches and for the next synod;
11. to have deputies submit a report with their recommendations to the next synod.

Appendix

Letter from South Africa

Dear Brothers

We are in receipt of your letter of August 21 1991 asking for our comment on the concerns signaled by the Synod Armadale 1990 with respect to the ICRC.

We regret not having reacted earlier to your request. New developments in our church and socio/political life have kept our minds more than busy over the past few months. We understand that your concerns centre around the following issues:

1. The purpose of the ICRC as stated in Article III of the Constitution, especially
 - a. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ (consideration 14a & 15).
 - b. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches (consideration 14a & 18).
2. The different interpretation of the meaning of the Church which would result in a divided approach to fundamental matters and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas (pp. 104 & 109 Acts, consideration 14b)
3. Continued membership (consideration 19).

In complying with your request we would offer the following for your consideration:

1. The ICRC is a conference of reformed churches coming together on the basis of the Holy Scriptures as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards for the purpose of, inter alia, expressing and promoting the unity of faith and to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches.

It would indeed be a hard task to prove that unity of faith does not exist between member churches.

Time and again it has been proved that the Three Forms of Unity are as reformed as the Westminster Standards. Indeed member churches confess that there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:4 ff). There is, consequently, no ground for suspicion about the bona fides of member churches in this respect.

2. This does not mean to say that there are no differences between member churches. One cannot ignore the different historical backgrounds and cultural/political environments which moulded the churches of Christ over time.

It is precisely these differences which are the heart of the matter where the ICRC states as one of its purposes to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among member churches. The ICRC serves as a platform where differences should be discussed openly. These discussions take time and flourish only in an atmosphere of mutual trust. After all it is quite something when one's credentials are scrutinized. In our view this atmosphere of mutual trust has not come about yet should be given more time.

Moreover, the purpose of the ICRC states to encourage the fullest fellowship. Nowhere

does it read to exercise full fellowship. Wouldn't this mean that the ICRC recognizes the difficulties in this respect for reformed churches with different backgrounds?

3. It is obvious that the exercise of mutual fellowship on the national level is of far more importance than on the international level. It is the churches first calling because it is closer at home and for that reason more difficult.

We in South Africa experience the same difficulties as you seem to encounter with ICRC members in your country.

Our approach might be different in that we realize that the differences between Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika and the Free Church of Southern Africa are so vast that physical unity is, if any, at least generations away. Nonetheless, we acknowledge the FCSA as a true church of Christ and encourage mutual fellowship on both official and personal levels. In our opinion this does not imply departure from ICRC principles.

4. Where a different understanding of the meaning of the Church calls for an agreed statement as to what constitutes a true church and the consequences of such a statement for intercommunion, etc. there is no cause for alarm. Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession is clear on this matter and certainly stands up to scrutiny as it has done through the ages. There cannot be any harm really in conveying the marks of the true church to our Presbyterian brothers! Indeed, this is what the ICRC is for.

5. Finally, the benefits of membership of the ICRC are not clear at this point in time but potentially available. We think in terms of training for the ministry/mission where the usual sources of training in the Netherlands, though highly valuable, become less relevant in view of the needs of local reformed churches. This might sound a bit far-fetched but we are in South Africa rapidly facing the question where we get our future ministers and missionaries from.

Another benefit is that through the ICRC, we have another means offering and receiving assistance in matters that are of concern for the churches in our troubled times. This assistance is not necessarily limited to spiritual assistance only.

In conclusion, we do appreciate your concerns about the ICRC but cannot see the reason for suspension or even cancellation of membership.

Where faithful churches of the Lord come together to discuss matters of mutual concern we feel our churches should participate.

With brotherly greetings,

Rev. F.J. van Hulst (convener)

A. Roos (secretary)

ICRC NEWSLETTER 1 (May 1, 1991)

Greetings in the Lord!

With the impressions of the 1989 Conference still fresh in our mind, our attention is already directed to the meeting scheduled for 1993. Preparations for that meeting are under way, and we are pleased to convey to you some of the initial arrangements made by the Interim Committee.

Following the resolution of the 1989 Conference, it was decided that the Third Meeting of the ICRC will be held, Deo Volente, in Korea in 1993 midway through the month of September. The theme of the Conference will be **ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH TODAY**, with the following topics, Marriage and Divorce, Preaching, Theonomy, Prophecy Today?, Women in Office?. We are still in the process of attracting competent speakers. The result will be published as soon as possible.

The Interim Committee reminds the churches that on the basis of Article 5,3 and 7,e of the Regulations, churches which apply for membership need a recommendation from two member churches. Recommendations should be received by the Corresponding Secretary one year before the meeting.

Meanwhile, we have the pleasure to report that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has decided to apply for membership in the ICRC.

There have been some changes in the Committee on Theological Affirmation. The Committee now consists of Prof.Dr.J.Faber, Canada (convener); Prof Dr.N.H.Gootjes, Canada; Prof.F.S.Leahy, Northern Ireland; Prof.D.Macleod, Scotland.

The members of the Committee on Missions are: Rev.W.Boessenkool, South Africa; Prof.A.C.Boyd, Scotland; Prof.Dr.K.Deddens, The Netherlands; Rev.C.J.Haak, The Netherlands (convener); Prof.Dr.Ho Jin Jun, Korea; Rev.W.D.J.McKay, Northern Ireland.

To ensure proper procedure we mention that Proposed amendments to the Constitution should be sent to the Corresponding Secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference (Const., Art.6).

It is not yet possible to report on pertinent events and developments, as per information supplied by the churches (See 1989 Conference, Session 12,3,IX and Sess.13,1,IX & X). Up to the present moment only a few of the member churches have reacted to our request for data. We trust that in our next newsletter we will be able to supply you with the information received.

Copies of the 1989 Proceedings are still available at CAN.\$ 7.95 each.

With Christian greetings,
M. van Beveren, Corr.Secr.

ICRC NEWSLETTER 2 (November 8, 1991)

Greetings in the Lord!

This brief note is to inform you that much to their regret the Presbyterian Church in Korea will not be able to host the 1993 meeting of the ICRC.

The planned construction of a new Seminary building with its meeting facilities in Seoul - intended to accommodate the Conference - did not receive the required government permit.

The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, alternate host appointed by the 1989 Conference (Session 12,3,1), are willing to receive the ICRC in 1993 in the month of September. Details will be mailed to the churches as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
M. van Beveren

N. OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Reformed Church of Zaire

1.1. Deputies received correspondence from the Reformed Church in Zaire (Eglise Reformee Au Zaire). The moderator Rev. Kazadi Lukunda Ngube - Ngube advised:

a. The Reformed Church in Zaire (EZRA) is based on the doctrine of:

1. Belgic Confession of Guido de Bres (1561)

2. Catechism of Heidelberg (1563) and

3. Canons of Dordt (1618-1619) to which is added the Ecumenical Creeds.

b. The EZRA is established on the fourth largest national territory of Zaire and has a total of 70 parishes/congregations in town and countryside or rural presbyteries.

c. A request for relationship of sister churches is made.

1.2 Deputies do not have a mandate regarding these churches. However it should be noted that the last synod of our sister churches, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, decided to establish sister relations with the Reformed Church in Zaire. In the report on the Netherlands, deputies advised that they have written to our sister churches expressing disappointment that the FRCA was not informed of this development, other than through the Acts of Synod Leeuwarden and deputies reports to Synod Leeuwarden.

2. Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines

2.1 Deputies received information and greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines (FRCP). A copy of a pamphlet produced by the FRCP. These churches were present as observers at the ICRC in Vancouver. As with the EZRA, the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines were recognised as sister churches by the last synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

2.2 Deputies have no mandate regarding these churches.

3. Recommendation

Synod instructs deputies to request more information regarding the EZRA and the FRCP from our sister churches in the Netherlands. Meanwhile deputies are instructed to send greetings to these churches.

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD - SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Esteemed Brethren,

Attached is information regarding contacts and letters received since the publication of our main report. One item not yet addressed in the original report - that of the privileges of observers and visitors to synod, has now been dealt with.

Section headings (i.e A,B,C..) are the same as the main report.

B. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Proposal regarding visitor / observer

Mandate:

"To request the DRCA to recommend to the churches and the next synod a definition of a visitor and an observer from other churches and a description of their status and privileges," Acts Synod 1990, Art. 38, Rec. 4.

Observations:

a) Synod Armadale 1990 discussed the matter regarding a visitor/observer on two occasions:

- in relation with a request of the RCA that synod receive an observer from their churches, Acts Synod 1990, Art. 38, Obs. 1.

- in relation with the status of Rev. J. Sawyer who attended Synod Armadale on a personal title, Acts Synod 1990, Art. 53, Rec. 4.

In both instances synod made a decision ad hoc since neither the rules for sister-relation nor the rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact cover the status of a delegate from a federation of churches the FRCA have no official contact with.

b) As to delegates of one of the sister churches deputies have recommended to receive them and to sit as advisers, as much as possible, Rep. Dep., B.3.1.8

As to delegates of churches with which the FRCA have temporary ecclesiastical contact it has been decided to invite them and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor but no vote, Acts Synod 1987, Art. 82, Rec. 5a. Synod Armadale amended the rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact as follows:

a) to invite delegates to each other's assemblies and to accord such delegates the privilege of the floor to convey greetings and allow them to briefly address the Assembly/Synod.

Considerations:

a) In giving a description re a visitor/observer distinction should be made between a delegate from a federation of churches with which the FRCA have official contact and a visitor or observer from any other federation of churches.

b) Neither the proposed rules for sister relations, nor the present rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact give a clear description of the status and privileges of a delegate who is invited to attend synod.

Recommendations:

a) To make the following distinction:

Advisory delegates from sister churches;

Observer delegates from churches that are in the process of becoming sister churches;

Visiting delegates from churches that want to come in contact with the FRCA.

b) To give these delegates the following privileges:

On any matter they may be permitted to speak when requested. This applies both to the floor of the synod and the advisory committees.

Advisory delegates

They will be given the right to speak on matters that involve their churches, but they shall have no vote.

Observer delegates

They will be given the right to address synod once for the purpose to pass on greetings and to tell something about their churches.

Visiting delegates

They will be given the right to attend synod, yet without privileges. Such delegates will be offered normal Christian hospitality i.e. lodging and meals.

C. CANADA

Deputies have received a letter of greetings to Synod Bedfordale from the Canadian sister churches. They also advise that the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches is scheduled to meet D.V. on Tuesday November 2, 1992 in the building of the Canadian Reformed Church at Lincoln, Ontario. The FRCA are invited to send a delegate.

D. KOREA

1. In the main report, deputies noted that no advice or invitation had been received from the PCK regarding their 1991 Assembly. Deputies have since received a letter from the

new Fraternal Relations Committee (whose chairman is now Dr. S.G. Hur) apologising for the oversight and advising of the major decisions made by the General Assembly of 1991.

2. The General Assembly, Pusan, 1991:

1. Decided to hold a prayer meeting of all the ministers and elders in Korea once a year;
2. Approved that the East-Pusan Presbytery is split into two. Consequently the PCK now consist of 23 Presbyteries;

3. Appointed a study committee on divorce and remarriage;

4. Appointed a study committee on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as to in particular, the controversial issue: baptism of the Holy Spirit.

5. Decided that all mission societies must be under the guidance of the Mission Society of the General Assembly.

6. Decided to sell the Seminary building site proposed in Inchun (near Seoul) and to look for a site in the middle part of Korea, because the shifting of the Seminary to Seoul is regarded as impossible according to government policy.

7. Decided to grant financial support for the activities of ministers (chaplains) serving in the army (equivalent to three hundred US dollars a month for each). Presently there are 47 chaplains.

8. Accepted the draft for the revision of the constitution (Confessional Standards and the Church Order) proposed by the Study Committee on the Revision of the Presbyterian Constitution, and decided to send it to the presbyteries for their deliberation and approval. This does not mean a substantial change of the contents of the Constitution (Which contains the Westminster Confessional Standards and the Form of the Presbyterian Government). It aims at a modernisation of the outdated language and vocabulary in the Confessional Standards and a systematic rearrangement of the forms for Presbyterian Government.

E. THE NETHERLANDS

1. Several copies of the booklet produced by the Dutch deputies entitled "The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands" were received.

2. A reply to our request for comments on the concerns raised by Synod Armadale, 1990 regarding the ICRC has been received. (See section M).

3. A further letter was received answering earlier correspondence. The letter advises:

1. That two delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, namely Rev. O.J. Douma and Br D.J. van Wynen intend to visit Synod Bedfordale, 1992. The same delegates will also visit the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa which commences April 29th, 1992.

2. That Revs. A. de Jager and H. van Veen are delegated to visit the Synod of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand in September, 1992. We are advised that they will also 'make a short visit to the brothers of the Presbyterian Churches in Eastern Australia'.

3. That the letter regarding the change in rules for correspondence appears to have gone astray.

4. The Dutch deputies responded to the letter of disappointment written by our deputies to the decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands entering into sister relationships with the Reformed Churches in the United States, the L'Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire and the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines without informing or consulting the sister churches in Australia. Their (translated) response is as follows: You point out that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands entered into sisterchurch-relations with three churches without consulting the FRCA or at least informing them. Now the synod of Leeuwarden accepted also this clause in the before mentioned rules: "The churches have to inform each other regarding relations with third

parties". You received the same information through the Acts of the named synod. About consultation beforehand there is no mention in the rules. Such is not possible nor desirable. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have a sisterchurch relation with eleven churches at the moment. If all eleven churches had to be consulted regarding a possible relation with another church, that would unjustifiably delay a decision. Yet the sisterchurches are entitled to be informed about a newly started relation. In case this decision raises some critical questions for one or more sisterchurches, the related church has to justify herself over against her sisterchurches. Moreover it can stimulate the sisterchurches to get in contact with the same church. However we have to stay sober and not overrate our own possibilities. Apparently your principle, "your sister ought to be our sister" is a nice ideal, but is not always possible to bring it into practice. We like to put a question mark if it is always a must. In this context we can understand very well that the FRCA, taken in consideration their restricted manpower and means, prefer contacts with churches in their own region. The priorities for the churches in the Netherlands are different then the priorities for you in Australia.

Probably you were surprised about the speedy procedure followed in entering sisterchurch relations with the by you named churches. We can understand that, but we hope that you note the reasons for that. The churches in the Netherlands saw a clear calling to support the building up of the church and the theological forming within the Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire, a church who received help from the church of Zuidhorn already for some time. A church who not only asked for help but also was interested to enter into a sisterchurch relation with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Through contracts with the ERCZ, the Reformed Churches discovered a sisterchurch from the past, the Reformed Church of the United States. It concerns the continuation of the former German Reformed Church, who was under the jurisdiction of the classis Amsterdam! This church offered us also a sisterchurch relation. We recognised this church as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ and saw no motive to refuse her request or to postpone a decision for three years. The interest of a sisterchurch relation with both churches has therefore more importance for the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands than for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, who see these churches only as sister of a sister. It is different with the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines. They are geographically much closer. The contact with these churches has had a remarkable beginning and a tumultuous course after a visit of Rev. JM Vingno to the Netherlands in 1986. This church asked repeatedly for a sisterchurch relation and spiritual and material help, which synod Leeuwarden granted. Investigation showed that there were many reasons to honour both requests, as Synod Leeuwarden did. Apart from that we point to the by you mentioned deputies reports and the Acts from Leeuwarden for the most relevant information. If there are still concrete questions about above named churches, the related section of our deputies undoubtedly will as much as possible answer them.

As far as contact with churches in a country where the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands have a sisterchurch, there is always the rule applied that consultation with the sisterchurch takes place. That is why we follow your discussions with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia with great interest. We hope that Synod of Bedfordale may make decisions which will bring progress on the way to further unity with the PCEA.

We trust we have answered your letter to your satisfaction. During your coming Synod there will undoubtedly be opportunity to talk about these things with our deputies.

May the Lord give you strength and wisdom for your task as deputies of his churches in Western Australia and Tasmania, and may He guide you in all your resolutions at the coming

5 The Deputies RCN defend their action by noting that the new rules for sister relations

(see main report section B) no longer refers to consultation but only that 'the churches will inform each other concerning the entering in of relations with third parties'. In our main report deputies already noted that this formulation of the rule regarding entering into third parties was weak compared with the original 'be responsible to each other concerning correspondence with third parties'. Furthermore, deputies RCN fail to realise that the revised rules for correspondence have been sent to the sister churches "with the request that the sister churches agree to continue the sister church relationship on the basis of the newly formed rules". Until the new rules are accepted by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the old rules remain in force.

F. INDONESIA

1. Deputies are advised that the Synod of the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia (GGRI) has been postponed to the end of August, 1991. In accordance with the mandate given by Synod Armadale, brs H. Swarts and C. de Man have been delegated to attend.
2. Deputies have continued efforts to obtain a visa for Johnson Dethan to travel to Australia and stay with a family of the Free Reformed Churches. The latest information received is more positive and Johnson will arrive D.V. in May, 1992.
3. Deputies received information that Rev. Fangidae from the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor was intending to visit Australia during May. The opportunity was taken to invite Rev. Fangidae to visit the Free Reformed Churches. Further information regarding the visits of Rev. Fangidae and Johnson Dethan has been published in the UNA SANCTA.
4. Since Rev. Fangidae may arrive in Perth near or at the time of Synod, deputies although acknowledging that there is no formal contact between the FRCA and the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches, nevertheless recommend to Synod to consider allowing Rev. Fangidae the floor of synod to express a word of greeting and to give an opportunity to introduce the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor.

I. IRELAND

1. The convener of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI) Inter-church Relations Committee has sent copies of Pres bytery reports for 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990. It should be noted because the EPCI has only one Presbytery, this its broadest Assembly, the convener informs that the EPCI remembers us in their prayers; and they value the bond which they have with us.
2. The EPCI advise that their contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI) are developing and growing all the time. Whilst there are differences between them over matters such as exclusive Psalmody and the Covenants, yet the EPCI report they are united in the fundamentals of the Reformed faith. The EPCI and the RPCI are not sister churches but are involved on the level of 'fraternal relations'.

Late report on RPCI

3. We would like to submit a LATE REPORT (see RULES FOR SYNODS, ART 9.b) dealing with the REPORT ON THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND.

Originally your deputies intended to recommend recognition of these churches and to

offer to them temporary ecclesiastical contact. However, deputies chose to recommend the termination of this relation. Also, two points needed further attention, namely,

3.1. The impact of their distinctives, i.e. their principles of covenanting and the purity of worship, on relations with other churches. Under 2.6 (last paragraph) we wrote that these two points needed more study. For instance, would the RPCI accept sister-relations with our Dutch sister churches on the basis of the rules of our Dutch sister churches?

3.2. What relations do they have with other churches?

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to ask for confirmation about these issues. If an answer came in time before synod, it would be sent straight to synod. If the answers were favourable, the understanding was that the original intention to recognise the RPCI as true and faithful churches could stand. You will find that the above-mentioned questions were answered favourably. As far as the deputies go, the investigation is finished. While the matter is fresh it would be good to finish it, rather than have it wait arbitrarily two years.

We thus pass the accompanying letter on to synod for consideration and judgment.

Wishing you God's guidance and wisdom in all your deliberations. We hope and pray that you may "be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10).

For the deputies,

Reverend A Veldman, chairman

L van Burgel, secretary

Reverend W Huizinga, vice-chairman

H Plug, member responsible for contact with RPCI

K. NEW ZEALAND

1. Deputies received an invitation from the RCNZ for an observer to attend the proposed synod planned to commence on 28th September, 1992 at Christchurch. As advised in our main report, Rev Huizinga has been delegated to attend.

M. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC)

1. The 1993 Conference is to be held DV in Zwolle, the Netherlands, commencing September 1, 1993 and concluding September 10, 1993. A prayer meeting is planned for August 31, 1993.

2. A directory of the member churches of the ICRC including historical background and current activities has been prepared.

3. In the directory we find that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) have applied for membership. Regarding the RCUS we are advised that fraternal relations are maintained with the OPC, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Lib) and the Reformed Confessing Church of Zaire. The RCUS subscribe to only one of the three forms of unity - the Heidelberg Catechism. Thus by the constitution of the ICRC the RCUS appears to be ineligible for membership. New deputies appointed by Synod, Bedfordale will need to address this matter.

4. Our sister Churches in the Netherlands have responded to our request for comments on the concerns regarding the ICRC raised by Synod, Armadale, 1990. The text of their response follows:

We thank you as yet for your letter of August 21 1991, asking for our comments on what has been laid down in Article 145 of the Acts of Armadale Synod of 1990, more especially on the considerations 14, 15, 18 and 19.

We are quite happy to co-operate in this matter, but we would like to stress right at the

start that we will not be presenting any new arguments. As a matter of fact, enough arguments are being given in the considerations themselves to answer your specific questions.

1. Sister church relations.

According to art.III of the Constitution the purpose of the Conference is 'to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ and to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches'.

It is clear that the member churches which have agreed to this basis ought to try to establish sister church relations with the other member churches, since such a relation does not automatically follow from being a member of the Conference.

Such endeavors can take a lot of time, to be spent on investigations, visits and correspondence. We should also take into account that many Presbyterian churches have not given these matters much thought in the past; our rules for sister church relations are in many respects new to them. The process of getting to know each other sufficiently well and of formulating convincing arguments for a sister church relationship can, therefore, be at times a troublesome and protracted one.

In our opinion it is much to early at this moment in time to envisage a situation in which establishing such relations has proven to be impossible. And even a failure to realise such a relationship need not necessarily mean a breaking off of relations within the I.C.R.C.

We reject the idea that co-operation with other churches of our Lord Jesus Christ is only possible when an official sister church relation has been established. We therefore subscribe to the opinion of Revs. Bruning c.s. laid down in their report under B1 and B3.

2. Doctrine of the Church.

Deputies have no objections to the appointment of a committee for "Theological Affirmation".

According to art.II,4 of the Constitution it is the purpose of the Conference (among other matters) 'to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters'.

We share the view that the Reformed Churches who have the Three Forms of Unity as their confession, consider the Westminster Standards as a reformed confession.

However, since at the Conference it has become clear that some members wish to discuss these issues, deputies consider it to be important to have a thorough discussion on the study that is being made. Again, we agree with the report mentioned above where it says: "If the doctrine on the church is indeed at the heart of recognizing each other as true and faithful churches, why not have this matter studied by a committee of theologically skilled persons both of Reformed and Presbyterian background?"

3. Termination of membership.

Certainly it will be no easy matter for the Conference to be convinced that a member church no longer adheres to the basis (and thus to the Scriptures) in its doctrine and/or practice.

However, this matter, in our opinion, is adequately covered in art.IV,2 of the Constitution.

4. Purpose of the Conference.

Positive grounds for joining the I.C.R.C are given in art.III of the Constitution. It is, of course, up to the member churches to make this article work. The I.C.R.C. as yet is a young organisation and proposals on your behalf are certainly welcome.

In consideration 7 your synod has stated that it is a reason for gratitude that churches that desire to serve the Lord according to His Word can meet together in an effort to satisfy the stated purpose of the I.C.R.C.. Deputies heartily agree to this. There is ample reason to continue this opportunity for contact through a conference with foreign churches of a reformed confession.

N. OTHER CONTACTS

1. Deputies have received a letter from the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church giving warm greetings and advising that the 1991 General Assembly of the OPC gave the CEIR the following mandate:

“to direct the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to consider the desirability and feasibility of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church adding the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt) to its present confessional standards (the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism) and of establishing a common Presbyterian and Reformed church order, so as to provide a basis for unity into one church body of those who are committed to one faith.”

The CEIR further report that:

“our motivation in this consideration is the unity of the church. Our theology of the unity of the church is set forth in our document, ‘Principles of the Unity of the Church’”.

The CEIR state that the OPC, historically from the Scottish/Presbyterian tradition, has had, from the beginning, strong influence from the continental/Reformed side. The OPC now seeks to look at these two traditions and to see if there are ways of uniting them confessionally and governmentally.

The CEIR of the OPC request our help in this task. They request any studies or suggestions.

Deputies recommend that Synod Bedfordale mandate new deputies to respond to this request.

L van Burgel for Deputies Relations Churches Abroad.

1 May, 1992.

REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER

1 MANDATE

Synod 1990 gave this instruction (*Acts*, article 149, page 114):

- a. adapt the Canadian text so that it clearly reflects the specific Australian circumstances. Where there are noteworthy differences deputies must report these to Synod;
- b. maintain the division of Articles of the Canadian Church Order;
- c. submit a final draft to next Synod.

2 REPORT

This report presents a comparison of the Church Orders of (1) the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and (2) the Canadian Reformed Churches, together with observations and recommendations for a revised text.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE REPORT

3.1 Structure

This report presents the material in four columns with headings indicating the contents of the column concerned (see pages 244 and following). The text of the Australian Church Order (ACO) is shown Article for Article in sequential order in the lefthand column. In parallel with the Articles of the Australian Church Order, the second column presents the equivalent Article(s), or most equivalent part(s) of Articles of the Canadian Church Order (CCO). Deputies' observations are shown in column 3, and the recommended text in column 4.

3.2 Material

The text of the Australian Church Order was taken from the booklet '*The Church Order of Dordrecht as revised by Synod Kelmescott 1983*'. As not all the titles of the articles are shown in the margin, they were taken from the index in the back of this booklet (pages not numbered). Synod 1985 published some 20 amended articles dealing with the classis, which have also been incorporated in this report.

The revised Canadian Church Order was adopted by synod Cloverdale 1983, amended by synod Burlington 1986, and further amended by synod Winnipeg 1989. For this report the text with amendments was taken from these synod's *Acts*. It is different in many places from the version in the 1984 Book of Praise. Note : In his book *With common consent*, WWJ VanOene has on several occasions a text that could not be reconciled with the *Acts* - the major ones being: in articles 3 (much different), 4 (missing word), 44 (missing words), 60 (missing word), 71 and 72 (different words).

3.3 Different types of print in the report

Normal print.

Where the provisions of the two Church Orders are reasonably equivalent or the differences are considered to be of little or no importance the parallel texts appear in normal print. In the remainder of this report these cases are classed as 'no difference'.

Italics print

Both Church Orders contain provisions that do not appear in the other Church Order.

Where adoption of the Canadian text is considered acceptable without a need for change, these different provisions are shown in italics.

Bold print

indicates a noteworthy difference between the two Church Orders. As a rule, the Australian provision is recommended. Proposals to change the Church Order must come from the churches.

3.4 Abbreviations

For convenience the Australian text (article, provision) is referred to by 'A-text' (article, provision). Likewise, the Canadian text (article, provision) is referred to by 'C-text' (article, provision). Other shorthand used: Australian Church Order = ACO; Canadian Church Order = CCO; Australian Church Order Article 1 = A1; Canadian Church Order Article 1 = C1.

4 THE TASK

4.1 Quality of language

Even the casual reader of our Australian Church Order notices that it is lacking in this essential attribute. This was also one of the reasons why synod Albany 1987 (Art 33) decided to have the CO's language scrutinised and improved, making use of the Canadian text in so far as possible. Based on Deputies' report, synod Armadale 1990 took, what was recommended as 'the easy way out' of going over to the Canadian Church Order, with adaptation to Australian circumstances where necessary, which supposedly could be done with a minimum of effort and not too many changes.

Unfortunately, poverty of language and lack of clarity are not unique to the Australian Church Order. As it existed then (prior to Winnipeg 1989), the text, style, layout, etc., of the Canadian Church Order also suffered from these deficiencies. In recognising this, synod Burlington 1986 made some changes and also appointed a Committee to review its language, and synod Winnipeg 1989 adopted most of that Committee's recommendations for improvement, which resulted in more than 50 changes including some major re-arrangements. Unfortunately, many weaknesses, linguistic and otherwise, were overlooked and are still there. This leads to the question of

4.2 Further linguistic improvement ?

Our mandate is silent on further linguistic improvements. No doubt, previous Deputies' praise for the Canadian CO had something to do with that. The Canadian churches themselves however in making large-scale linguistic and other changes to that version of their Church Order, demonstrated the inappropriateness of that praise. The question now arises whether deputies should stick rigidly to their mandate which relates to the 1983 version, praised by previous deputies and accepted by synod 1990 as the model for our Church Order, or arbitrarily adopt the 1989 version as their starting point.

To choose the 1989 version could be construed as defying the letter of the mandate. Not to do so however defeats the aim of the mandate to achieve greater uniformity with the Canadian CO.

Therefore, taking into account (1) that the whole exercise began as a linguistic revision; and (2) that the mandate aims at the greatest possible uniformity, deputies have taken the 1989 Canadian CO as their starting point. Recognising that this decision takes on board a whole host of linguistic and other changes that were not known to synod 1990, deputies feel justified to recommend further appropriate changes where similar remaining weaknesses are evident.

4.3 Differences and specific Australian circumstances

Besides the acclaimed superiority of language of the Canadian Church Order, there is supposedly little difference in substance between the two Church Orders, opening up the

prospect of "every church-member having ready access to the Church Order as it is printed in the Book of Praise, the only significant difference between it and ours being in matters of the assemblies."

Unfortunately, deputies must again disagree. While the difference in church organisations does result in some minor differences in the text of some articles, these pale into insignificance when compared with the nature and number of other differences between the two Church Orders. This makes the prospect of achieving uniformity by way of the given mandate (adapt the Canadian text to Australian conditions) a pipe-dream.

At this point we must decide what synod 1990 meant by 'noteworthy differences' and 'specific Australian circumstances'. It will be helpful to place a discussion about such differences and their degree of significance in the context of previous synods' dealings with proposed changes to the Church Order. For example, Synod Launceston 1985 had a request on its table to change in Articles 73 and 74 the word 'consent' into 'advice'. This was not agreed to, one of the grounds being that 'changes in the Church Order can only be made if good and sufficient reasons are given'. An appeal to change the wording of Article 35 back to what it was in the CO's 1959 version was also rejected by the same synod. Similar examples of Canadian synods' prudence can be given. Let one suffice. Synod Winnipeg 1989 rejected its Committee's proposal to replace in Articles 57, 58 and 63 the word 'ensure' by 'see to it'. A proposal to make in Article 58 the word Church and the following words plural ('as the Churches have summarized it in their confessions') was also rejected.

From these examples it can be seen that adaptation of the Canadian text using the given criteria is no simple matter. By the standards mentioned, practically every difference in formulation is 'noteworthy'. Another factor of importance is that deputies have no mandate to advance proposals to change the Church Order. Only a church can do this. Guided by these principles deputies have considered where this approach would take them, and concluded that the result of their work can only be a recommended text which closely resembles that of the present Australian Church Order. In fact, the end result will unavoidably closely approximate the result which previous Deputies would have achieved in carrying out their mandate, i.e. revise the Australian Church Order, using the Canadian text as much as possible.

4.4 Other obstacles

Previous deputies also wrote that their recommendation would solve the problem of what to do with the blank space that is currently our article 26. This would have been correct had there been as little difference between the COs as was suggested. However, the Australian CO has three articles (12, 61 and 70) that have no equivalent in the Canadian CO, requiring three additional places in the number range. In the other direction there are four un-usable articles (14, 21, 47 and 75) leaving four gaps in the number range. One more Canadian article could be absorbed (25 into 17). Simply filling these 5 or 6 gaps is not an option, only three being required. Also, the Articles so placed would finish up in the wrong location, among un-related Articles.

Despite an early recognition of this problem deputies made serious efforts to obtain the desired uniformity but in the end were forced to return to the numbering of the Australian Church Order. Also in this respect the desired uniformity with the Canadian CO is unachievable.

4.5 Conclusion

In light of the many 'noteworthy' differences between the two Church Orders, including whole Canadian articles that do not apply, whole Australian articles that must be retained, the unachievable uniformity in numbering, and the cautious approach of previous synods

in dealing with the simplest of proposals for change in the CO, deputies have concluded that the desired uniformity with the Canadian Church Order is an impossibility.

4.6 A possible way out

Deputies believe that at this point the mandate could have been returned as unachievable. Mindful however of the frustration which another delay in completion of the task may cause (see footnote), deputies decided to continue as best they could, using an approach which in their opinion accords with the spirit of their mandate when read in the light of previous deputies' mandate and report. At the risk of seeing many hours of work going to waste, deputies offer (what they believe is) the only solution that fits within the given constraints.

Footnote:

A short history of our Church Order and its 'revisions' may be of interest.

1 Synod 1954/38,39 adopts the CO of Dordt as accord for ecclesiastical cooperation, and rejects a request from the Church of Albany to appoint deputies to examine the desirability of revising the Church Order. "Any proposal of that nature", said synod, "supported by proper argumentation, should be presented to the churches."

2 Synod 1959/17 provisionally adopts an English translation of the CO, but keeps the Dutch text as final authority.

3 Synod 1975/25 adopts Launceston's request to 'appoint deputies to revise the CO and to propose a definite text in English to the next synod'.

4 Synod 1978/41 appoints new deputies with the same mandate.

5 Synod 1980/25 decides to 'encourage new deputies to be appointed to continue the work in the same vein', 15 Articles only having been translated from the 1978 Revised Church Order of our Dutch sister-churches. Synod approves this 'Deputies- initiated' change of mandate.

6 Synod 1983/46 adopts the revised CO, incorporating many changes in language and provisions. As part of this decision a committee is instructed to 'thoroughly examine the linguistic aspects of those articles incorporating the changes made by synod'. This committee reports later on during synod, but: 'a few minor changes are still to be made' (Art 99). (After eight years the task was not finished!)

7 Synod 1987/33 at the request of Kelmscott, appoints deputies to 'scrutinise and improve the language use of the CO', and 'to make use of the Canadian text in so far as possible'.

8 Synod 1990/149 mandate is printed in paragraph 1 of this report. It is somewhat ironic that synod in its considerations qualifies the task as 'a relatively minor linguistic update', and believes that 'careful stewardship of our resources points in the direction of adaptation of the Canadian document'.

5. THE METHOD USED

The method follows a series of defined steps in arriving at a recommended text for each Article, as follows:

5.1 Consider each Australian (A) Article in turn, starting at A1 in Column 1 on page 1;

5.2 the Canadian (C) Article or part of Article with similar provisions is shown in Column 2;

5.3 if however (the substance of, or a major part of the substance of) the provisions in the A Article do not exist in the CCO, Column 2 is blank. In that case, retain the A-Article and go to step 5.6; (example: A61)

5.4 make the necessary adjustment(s) to the C-Article to allow for the difference in church organisations (assemblies, name of the churches);

Sometimes this affects only one word (example: Articles A46 - C50), sometimes a complete Article (example: deletion of C47).

For the remainder of the process these differences are disregarded.

5.5 Compare the A and C provisions and decide whether there is

(1) no difference (normal print) - go to step 5.51

(2) difference but not of substance (italics) - go to step 5.52

(3) difference of substance (bold print) - go to step 5.53

Note : a difference of substance includes every case where a synod has made a specific decision of choice between possible alternative texts.

5.51 if there is no difference between the texts adopt the C-text and go to step 5.6;

(example: A49 - C43)

5.52 if there is a difference but not of substance adopt the C-text and go to step 5.6;

(example: A46 - C50)

5.53 if there is difference of substance take one of the following steps;

5.54 if adoption of the C-text (provision, formulation, etc) is considered to be an improvement, and that text looks more like the text of our (FRCA) 1959 Church Order, recommend adoption of the C text and go to step 5.56, unless the particular A-text was already subject of a request or appeal to one of our synods, in which case go to step 5.55 (example A35 - C37);

in that case the desired uniformity with the Canadian CO can only be achieved by way of an another approach to synod from (one of) the churches.

5.55 change the C-text to reflect the Australian provision(s) (example A13 - C13);

this may involve adding the A-provisions in bold,

and/or deleting the C-provisions in bold,

and/or replacing C-provisions by A-provisions in bold

5.56 besides difference(s) of substance the texts may also have difference(s) of no substance. These are treated as specified in 5.52;

5.57 in cases where one or more provisions are more appropriately placed in another Article deputies recommend accordingly (example: part of A2 should go in new Article 12)

5.6 examine the results obtained so far and design an appropriate improvement for any remaining weakness. In cases where the resulting text is inferior to the present text deputies recommend retention of the A-text, if necessary with a recommended improvement of its language (example A16 - C16).

Note: For the purpose of this method the terms 'weakness', 'improvement' and 'inferior' relate to such attributes of language formulation as clarity, ambiguity, conciseness, verbosity, completeness, etc.

5.7 Any C-Article remaining unmatched by an A-Article is deleted (example C21).

6 OTHER RULES

The recommended text

* has english spelling;

examples: honour, *not* : honor

adviser, *not* : advisor

* has capitalisation only at the beginning of a sentence;

example: No lording it over others , *not* : No Lording It Over Others; (C74)

Note 1: the texts of the Canadian *Acts*, the Book of Praise and With common consent are inconsistent in showing these capitals.

Note 2: throughout the recommended text 'church' and 'churches' are shown without capitals, except in names of church federations, for example 'Free Reformed Churches'

* avoids verbosity and unnecessarily complex expressions;

examples: shall, *not* : shall be bound; (C10)

faithfully preach the Word, *not* : thoroughly and sincerely to proclaim the Word; (C16)

lead in prayer, *not* : publicly call upon the Name of God; (C16)

sin, *not* : any matter pertaining to purity of doctrine or piety of life; (C67)

* consistency of expression throughout the text;

examples: approval, *not* : approbation; (C5)

7 ONE OTHER MATTER

There is one other matter requiring attention. As mentioned in our report (observations Articles 73-68, on page 20) Synod 1987 passed on to Deputies for the linguistic revision of the CO, a request to replace the word 'consent' in Articles 73 and 74 with 'advice'. This unfinished matter was overlooked by Synod 1990, probably owing to the fact that Deputies' report does not mention it. Deputies believe to be acting correctly by taking the matter in hand; and offer the following comments and recommendation.

7.1 The CO has some ten Articles where a major assembly is called to serve the minor assembly with help in decision making. The nature of that help is described by different words.

A comparison of some of the Articles of

- (1) our present ACO,
- (2) the old Dutch CO (source of our 1959 version),
- (3) our 1959 CO, and
- (4) the 1989 Canadian CO shows:

Article	Assisted by	ACO	Dutch Dutch	1959 ACO	1989 CCO
A5	classis	approval	approbatie	approbation	approval
A6	counsellor	advice	advies	advice	advice
A8	synod	approval	goedvinden	approve	approval
A17	classis	discernment	oordeel	judgment	judgment
A38	classis	agreement	advies	advice	advice
A73	classis	consent	advies	consent	advice
A74	classis	consent	advies	consent	advice
A76	synod dep's	advice	advies	advice	concurring advice

7.2 This comparison shows that the text of Articles 73 and 74 of our Church Order got out of line already back in 1959.

7.3 A dictionary description of the word advice is : counsel, specially skilled opinion (Latin: *ad visum* = according to what is or seems best)

7.4 A dictionary description of the word consent is : to be of the same mind, to agree

(Latin: *consentire* - *con* = together, *sentire* = to feel, to think)

7.5 This shows that the weight and meaning of the word 'consent' as used in these Articles of our CO is substantially stronger than that of 'advice'.

7.6 To remain in the historic line, and for the sake of greater uniformity with the Canadian

CO, Deputies recommend that the request be granted. In anticipation of this decision the word 'advice' has been included in the recommended text of Articles 74 and 79.

8 THE RESULTS

The results of the work are as complete as deputies could make them, within the limits of the mandate. As reported in the observations further attention is needed, in particular where provisions are lacking or inconsistent with practice (Articles 25, proposed 54, proposed split of 59 and 60, 72, 79).

The recommended text (in column 4) - :

- 1 uses the text of the 1989 revised version of the Canadian Church Order as first choice;
- 2 reports noteworthy differences between the two Church Orders (by way of bold print, amplified where necessary in the observations column);
- 3 retains specific Australian circumstances;
- 4 retains the division of Articles of the Canadian Church Order;
- 5 improves language and expression;
- 6 re-arranges related provisions;
- 7 offers the possibility of a continuous Australian-based number range.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. that synod approve deputies' choice of the text of the 1989 revised Canadian Church Order;
2. that synod approve deputies' reading of their mandate in the light of the 1987 mandate and the report to 1990 synod;
3. that synod adopt the recommended text;
4. that synod instruct deputies to finish the work, including any changes approved by the churches; and the publication of the adopted text.

Respectfully submitted.

J Eikelboom

J Numan

S H Terpstra

Armadale, November 1991

RECOMMENDED TEXT OF THE CHURCH ORDER

as it appears in column 4 of the worksheets (Pages 244 and following)

(Articles in small print shall be in force until classes have been formed)

ARTICLE 1 - Purpose and division

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary to have regulations in respect of offices and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, sacraments and ceremonies; and discipline.

OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE

ARTICLE 2 - The offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office

A. All office bearers

No one shall fill an office without having been lawfully called thereto. The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after preceding prayers, and in accordance with the regulations adopted for that purpose. Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. Elders and deacons

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices. The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation either as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or at the most twice as many, from which number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons in accordance with the adopted regulations.

C. Ministers

When a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

C. Ministers

When a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of the classis church shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

ARTICLE 4 - Bound to a church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church.

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. Eligibility

Only they shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

- (1) have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or
- (2) are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or
- (3) have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister-church relationship. The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. Declared eligible

Only they shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

(1) have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or

(1) have passed a preparatory examination by the synod, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or

(2) have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or

(3) have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call.

1. They shall be ordained only after the classis church has approved the call.

Classis shall approve the call

The classis church shall approve the call

a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, signed by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and

b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This examination by classis shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.

b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This examination by the synod shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.

2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.

They shall be installed after the classis church has approved the call.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only, in case he remains within the same classis.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration of honourable discharge from the consistory with the deacons and from the classis church.

2. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the required announcements were made and that the congregation has approved the call.

ARTICLE 7 - From One church to Another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of the classis church. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church he served.

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry classis, after the approval of synod, shall examine him in a preparatory examination, and upon a favourable outcome allow him as candidate to officiate in the churches of the classis for a set period of time. Thereafter the classis shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry the classis church shall seek to obtain this evidence by way of inquiry from the church to which he belongs, and from elsewhere if necessary. The examination shall take place in an extraordinary synod. This synod shall set a period during which the person may, as candidate officiate in the churches of the classis area. Thereafter the classis church, with the advice of Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order, shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLE 9 - Recent converts

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by the classis in which he lives, with the cooperation of the deputies of synod.

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by synod (extraordinary)

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the sacraments in another church without the permission of the consistory of that church.

ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he remains bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis. Some ministers may be called for the training of students for the ministry, others for mission work.

If a minister accepts a call to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he remains bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis church. Some ministers may be called for the training of students for the ministry, others for mission work.

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

If a minister of the Word, by reason of age, sickness or otherwise, is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and

this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of the classis church and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of the consistory shall receive the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of the consistory shall receive the approval of the classis church, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. They shall watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order. Ministers shall also acquaint themselves with the work of the deacons and if necessary visit their meetings.

ARTICLE 17 - Equality among office-bearers

When two or more ministers are bound to the one congregation equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and if necessary of classis. This rule also applies to elders and deacons.

When two or more ministers are bound to the one congregation equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and if necessary of synod. This rule also applies to elders and deacons.

ARTICLE 18 - Training for the ministry

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above. The churches together are obliged to provide properly for the professors of theology and for their widows and orphans.

ARTICLE 19 - Students of theology

The churches shall aim to ensure that there are sufficient students of theology, extending financial aid where necessary.

ARTICLE 20 - Task of Missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall in the specific region assigned to them proclaim the Word of God, administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded his church, and ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of elders

The elders shall govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the upbuilding of the congregation they shall make homevisits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying

out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 22 - Task of deacons

The deacons shall perform the ministry of mercy. They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need; and urge church members to render assistance where necessary. They shall collect and manage the gifts of the congregation, and after mutual consultation distribute them where there is need. The deacons shall keep the consistory informed about their labours.

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The places of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff

All ministers of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose.

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors which via literature and other means of communication could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 27 - Office-bearers and the government.

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation her obligation to be obedient to, and show respect for the government, because God has instituted it. They must set a good example in this regard and by means of proper respect and communication invoke the government to protect the ministry of the church.

THE ASSEMBLIES

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall meet regularly : the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

These assemblies shall deal with ecclesiastical matters only, observing the provisions of this Church Order. A major assembly shall deal only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a 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.

For interpretation of this article refer to the Synod decisions 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials and voting

Delegates to a major assembly shall bring with them their credentials, signed by the minor assembly. They shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

ARTICLE 34- Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain the matters to be dealt with and ensure that every one observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the authority to make judicial pronouncements in respect of the consistory. This applies also to the synod in respect of the classis

The classis church has the authority to make judicial pronouncements in respect of the consistory. The second-appeal church has this authority in respect of the classis church. This applies also to the synod in respect of the second-appeal church or - if the latter is not involved - of the classis church

ARTICLE 36 - Consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and be presided by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall preside in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for general management, including the material affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 37 - Consistory and the deacons

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of classis shall be sought.

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of the classis church shall be sought.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by synod to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however the same minister shall not preside twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every meeting shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

The sentence: "The chairman shall...." must be read in the light of the decision taken by Synod 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis

If two or more ministers are serving the one church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister of its choice. He shall for the sake of good order serve the consistory with advice and especially lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister. Letters of call shall be counter-signed by him.

Each vacant church shall request the synod to appoint as counsellor the minister of its choice. He shall for the sake of good order serve the consistory with advice and especially lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister. Letters of call shall be counter-signed by him. When a vacancy arises more than two months prior to synod, the classis church shall appoint a counsellor and report to synod

ARTICLE 44- Church visitors

Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect; in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit a written report of their visits to classis

The synod shall appoint some of its most experienced and capable ministers to visit the churches. If necessary synod may appoint a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect; in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit a written report of their visits to synod. This report shall cover the two annual visits made to a church and be sent to the consistory concerned.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held once every three years. Each classis shall delegate to this synod two ministers and two elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that meeting. A synod

shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two classes this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis .

The synod shall be held once every three years. Each classis shall delegate to this synod two ministers and two elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that meeting. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two churches this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis church.

ARTICLE 46 - Churches abroad

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

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the close of the major assemblies censure shall be applied to those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of major assemblies

Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties. These deputies, or some of them, shall also oversee the peremptory examination of prospective ministers. Every major assembly shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed for separate matters, as much as possible. All deputies shall keep proper record of their work and submit a written report. If required they shall justify their actions. They shall not be discharged from their task until the major assembly discharges them.

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

ARTICLE 50- Mission

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall observe the provisions of this Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the division into classes.

WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as practicable.

ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall ensure that parents honour their promise made at baptism, to provide for their children education which is in harmony with the Word of God, as the churches have summarised it in their Confessions.

ARTICLE 54 - non-existing

ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only they who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation in writing concerning their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 58 - Church records

The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, arrival and departure or death are properly recorded.

ARTICLE 59 - Attestations for communicant members

Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by the chairman and the clerk. This attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.

ARTICLE 60 - Attestations for non-communicant members

An attestation for a non-communicant member shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned with the request to take the member under its supervision and discipline.

ARTICLE 61 Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they shall in respect of deacon support remain under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

ARTICLE 62 - Church services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that as a rule once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and hymns

In the church services only the psalms and hymns approved by synod shall be sung.

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

ARTICLE 66 - Days of prayer

In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions a day of prayer shall be proclaimed by the church appointed for that purpose by synod.

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 68 - No funeral services

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to his honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence then the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Consistory involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any report of sin unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.

ARTICLE 72 - Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless the member concerned has shown real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of the classis church has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place.

The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of this desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised the readmission shall take place after the public confession of sin, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by the classis. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the

above-mentioned consistories. Classis, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by synod. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. The second-appeal church, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

ARTICLE 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly : False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; and further all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of baptised members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, then, with the advice of the classis, the matter shall be made known to the congregation. The consistory shall mention his name in the announcement and shall also set a term. The congregation shall be urged to admonish him and pray for him. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, with the use of the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, then, with the advice of the classis church, the matter shall be made known to the congregation. The consistory shall mention his name in the announcement and shall also set a term. The congregation shall be urged to admonish him and pray for him. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, with the use of the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

CONCLUDING ARTICLES

ARTICLE 80 - No lording over others

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order

These articles which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with

common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented or diminished. However no consistory or classis shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by synod.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 1 - Aim and content of the Church Order

In the Church of Christ all things should be done in good order. For this reason it is necessary to have **regulations in respect of:**

I the offices

II the assemblies

III supervision over doctrine and worship

IV discipline

ARTICLE 2 - Three offices

Three offices are to be distinguished; the office of the minister of the Word, of elder and of deacon.

Some ministers may be set apart for the training of students in the Ministry of the Word, others may be set apart for Mission work.

ARTICLES 3, 5, 6 and 7

For a discussion of Articles 3, 5, 6, 7 and 20, see pages 24-26.

ARTICLE 4 - Binding to a certain church

No person shall be called to the Ministry of the Word unless he will be bound to a certain church.

ARTICLE 8 - Admission without theological training

Those persons who have not received theological training cannot be admitted to the Ministry of the Word unless there is **convincing evidence** that they have exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, discretion and gifts of public address.

Where such persons present themselves for admission to the Ministry of the Word the ~~classis, upon the approval of the synod, shall examine them.~~ Classis Church shall make some investigations, whereby she shall consult the Church of which the person concerned is a member.

If in the opinion of the classis the examinations have favourable results, the classis The examination shall take place in a Synod (extraordinary). This Synod shall determine a period of time during which the above persons

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 1 - Purpose and Division

For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there be offices and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, *sacraments, and ceremonies*; and discipline.

ARTICLE 2 - The Offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the Elder, and of the Deacon.

ARTICLE 6 - Bound to a Church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain Church, **either to be stationed in a certain place, or to be sent out for the gathering of the Church from among the heathen or from among those who have become estranged from the gospel, or to be charged with some other special ministerial task.**

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional Gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is **assurance** of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech.

When such persons present themselves for the ministry, classis, after the approval of regional synod, shall examine them in a preparatory examination

Cross-out and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies observations

ARTICLES ACO1 - CCO1

The A-text is superior in respect of language and lay-out.

The C-text looks more like the 1959 A-text. However, the words '**regulations in respect of**' describe more accurately the purpose of the CO.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with inclusion of these words, and a minor improvement in language.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 1 - Purpose and division

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary to have regulations in respect of offices and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, sacraments and ceremonies; and discipline.

ARTICLES 2 - 2

The provision relating to training does not exist in the CCO. It must be retained, but does not belong in this Article. The provision relating to mission is covered by C6. It does not belong in that Article either. Deputies recommend that these provisions be placed in Article 12, or (second choice) in Article 4. The C-text can be adopted without change

ARTICLE 2 - The offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

ARTICLES 4 - 6

Recommendation : adopt the C-text after deletion of the provisions in bold. Move the provision relating to mission to Article 12. (see observations 2-2.)

ARTICLE 4 - Bound to a church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church.

ARTICLES 8 - 8

Recommendation : adopt with the A-provisions in bold, and an improved formulation

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry ~~classis; after the approval of synod; shall examine him in a preparatory examination, and upon a favourable outcome allow him as candidate to officiate in the churches of the classis for a set period of time.~~ the classis church shall seek to obtain this evidence by way of inquiry from the church to which he belongs, and from elsewhere if necessary. The examination shall take place in an extraordinary synod. This synod shall set a period during which the person may, as candidate officiate in the churches of the classis area. Thereafter the classis church,

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

may, as **candidates, officiate** in the churches of the classis area.

Thereafter the ~~classis~~ Classis Church shall further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations adopted for that purpose by the churches, **and with the advice of Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order.**

ARTICLE 9 - Admission of ministers who have of late joined the church

Ministers, who have of late joined themselves to one of the churches and originate from a church with which the churches do not maintain sister church relationship, shall only be admitted to the Ministry of the Word with great caution.

The appropriate general church stipulations shall thereby be duly observed. Where the ~~classis and the deputies of the synod~~ Synod (extraordinary) deems it necessary, such persons shall first pass through a trial period.

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the Sacraments in another church without the **permission** of the consistory concerned.

ARTICLE 11 - Support for ministers

The consistory, on behalf of the congregation, shall be bound to provide for the proper support of its minister(s)

Canadian Church Order

and allow them to **speak an edifying word** in the Churches of the classis;

and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLE 7 - Recent Converts

No one who has recently come to the confession of the Reformed Religion shall be declared eligible for call within the Churches unless he *has been well tested* for a reasonable period of time *and has been carefully examined by classis with the cooperation of the deputies of the regional synod.*

ARTICLE 15 - Preaching in Other Places

No one shall *be permitted* to preach the Word or to administer the Sacraments in another Church without the **consent** of the consistory of that Church.

ARTICLE 10 - Proper Support

The consistory **with the deacons**, as representing the congregation, shall be bound to provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

Cross-out and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies observations

Recommended text

with the advice of **Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order**, shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLES 9 - 7

This C-Article is somewhat duplicating C4.B.2 (page 25). The expression '... joined one of the churches and ...' has been retained since it clearly spells out that the convert was duly admitted to the church.

Since *every* examination for admission to the ministry must be done carefully, that stipulation does not carry sufficient weight here, and the expression '**with great caution**' has been retained. C4.B.2 speaks of 'the classis in which they live'.

The recommended text has been formulated accordingly.

ARTICLE 9 - Recent converts

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by the ~~classis in which he lives, with the cooperation of the deputies of synod, synod (extraordinary)~~

ARTICLES 10-15

Since '**officiating**' covers both preaching and administration of Sacraments, and '**preaching**' does not, the A-title has been retained.

The words '*be permitted to*' are unnecessary since there is no need to stipulate that something is not permitted unless permission is given.

Recommendation : Adopt the C-text under the A-title, with 'permission' and without '*be permitted to*'.

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the sacraments in another church without the permission of the consistory of that church.

ARTICLES 11 - 10

Like everywhere else in the CO 'shall' is sufficient. The words 'as representing the congregation' are not necessary.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with 'shall', without '**with the deacons**', and without 'as representing the congregation'.

ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 12 - Appointment to an extraordinary task

A minister shall not accept an appointment which will cause him to be completely devoted to an extraordinary task - such as an army or hospital minister - unless he remains bound to a church. The nature of the relationship between that minister and the church to which he is bound, must be arranged with the consent of the ~~classis~~ Classis Church.

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement

A minister who by reason of age, sickness or otherwise is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office,

rightfully remains a Minister of the Word.

The church which he has served shall support him honourably. This obligation also applies in relation to widows and orphans of ministers.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of Ministers

If a minister of the Word retires because of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office **due to illness or physical or mental disability**, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the Church which he served last, and

this Church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and/or other dependants.

Retirement of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and of deputies of regional synod

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister of his bond with the congregation without the prior knowledge and approval of the ~~classis~~ Classis Church and the deputies of the synod.

ARTICLE 11 - Dismissal

If a minister of the Word is judged unfit and incapable of serving the congregation fruitfully and to its edification, without there being any reason for Church discipline, the consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss him from his service within the congregation without the approbation of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, and not without proper arrangements regarding the support of the minister and his family for a reasonable period of time. If no call is forthcoming in three years, he shall be declared released from his ministerial status by the classis in which he served last.

* Cross-out and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies observations

ARTICLE 12

The first provision of A12 (bound to a church) is adequately covered by Article 4. The substance of the second paragraph must be retained.

It is probably better to speak of 'call' rather than of 'appointment', even though professors at the theological seminary are appointed.

Deputies recommend inclusion here of the provisions relating to training and mission, see observations 2-2 and 4-6.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he remains bound must be arranged with the consent of the ~~classis~~ classis church. Some ministers may be called for the training of students for the ministry, others for mission work.

ARTICLES 13 - 13

The provisions: 'retires because of age' and 'retirement of a minister...etc' do not exist in the ACO and have therefore not been included with the recommended text.

Since dependants has a wider meaning than orphans the latter has been maintained

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

If a minister of the Word by reason of age, sickness or otherwise is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

ARTICLES 14 - 11

There is a noteworthy difference between 'service within the congregation' and 'bond with the congregation', the latter signifying a more definitive separation as in a dismissal.

The C-provisions in **bold** have not been adopted in the recommended text since they are not in the ACO.

Recommendation : adopt only the parts shown in normal print, and retain 'bond with the congregation'.

Deputies also recommend retention of 'approval' as in C12.

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of ~~classis~~ the classis church and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 15 - *Relief from office*

Once a minister of the Word is called to office *in accordance with the rule of Article 5*, he is bound to the service of the Church for life. *This means he may not resign from his office.* He can only be relieved from his office and enter upon another vocation if the consistory and the ~~classis~~ Classis Church, *in co-operation* with the deputies of the synod, determine that there are substantial reasons for so doing.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 12 - *Bound for Life*

Inasmuch as a minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the Church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons, of which the consistory ~~with the deacons~~ shall judge, and which shall receive the approval of classis *with the concurring advice* of deputies of regional synod.

Cross-out and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies observations

ARTICLES 15 - 12

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without 'with the deacons'; without the reference to regional synod and with a slight change in formulation.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of the consistory shall receive the approval of ~~classis~~ the classis church with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the Sacraments.

They shall watch over their fellow office bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 17 - Equitable distribution of duties

When two or more ministers are bound to one congregation equality shall be maintained as much as possible, not only regarding their office but also in all other respects, according to the discernment of the consistory and, if necessary, of the classis Synod.

This rule also applies in relation to elders and deacons.

ARTICLE 18 - Training for the Ministry of the Word

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain a theological seminary for the training for the Ministry of the Word.

It is the task of the professors of theology, inter alia to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

Ministers of the Word who have been set apart to serve in the training for the Ministry remain bound to the church which they have served in the same manner as emeriti ministers, and keep the rights of a Minister of the Word.

The churches together are obliged to properly provide for them and their widows and orphans.

ARTICLE 19 - Students of theology

The churches shall encourage members so that there will be students of theology. They shall extend financial aid where necessary.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 16 - The Office of Ministers of the Word

The specific duties of the office of minister of the Word are thoroughly and sincerely to proclaim to the congregation the Word of the Lord, administer the sacraments, publicly call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; also to instruct the children of the Church in the doctrine of salvation, visit the members of the congregation in their homes, and comfort the sick with the Word of God;

and further, together with the elders, to keep the Church of God in good order, exercise discipline, and govern the Church in such a manner as the Lord has ordained.

ARTICLE 17 - Equality among the Ministers of the Word

Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.

ARTICLE 25 - Equality to Be Maintained

Among the elders as well as among the deacons equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also, as far as possible, in other matters, of which the consistory shall judge.

ARTICLE 19 - Training for the Ministry

The Churches shall maintain an institution for the training for the ministry.

The task of the professors of theology is to instruct the students of theology in those disciplines which have been entrusted to them,

so that the Churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above.

ARTICLE 20 - Students of Theology

The Churches shall endeavour that there be students of theology, extending financial aid to those who are in need of it.

Cross-outs and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 16 - 16

The C-text compares poorly with the clear and concise A-text. Being unnecessarily long (much of it can be found in the Form for ordination), it still lacks the essential provision '**they shall watch over their fellow office-bearers**'. Its language is pathetic and the rambling sentence improperly constructed (the duties of *the office of ministers* together with *the elders* ?)

For these reasons and because of the many different provisions Deputies have retained the superior A-text.

As recommended in observation 40-42 a sentence from that text ought to be incorporated here.

ARTICLES 17 - 17 and 25

C17 prescribes equality among all the ministers, whereas the ACO speaks about ministers belonging to the one congregation. The C-text has been changed accordingly.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, under the title 'Equality among office-bearers', and retain the words '**when two or more ministers ... etc**'.

ARTICLES 18 - 19

These texts have some essential differences as indicated. The A-provision regarding ministers who serve in this training is covered by Article 12 (recommendation). Article 13 does the same for emeriti ministers.

The recommended text retains the A-provisions and has some improvements in language.

ARTICLES 19 - 20

The original Dutch version of the Church Order reads (translated):

"The churches shall aim to ensure that there are sufficient theological students, extending financial aid where necessary". ("De kerken zullen, voor zoveel nodig, ar-

Recommended text

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. They shall **watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation**. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order. Ministers shall also acquaint themselves with the work of the deacons and if necessary visit their meetings.

ARTICLE 17 - Equality among office-bearers

When two or more ministers are bound to the one congregation equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and if necessary of ~~classis~~ synod. This rule also applies to elders and deacons.

ARTICLE 18 - Training for the ministry

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above. The churches together are obliged to provide properly for the professors of theology and for their widows and orphans.

ARTICLE 19 - Students of theology

The churches shall aim to ensure that there are sufficient theological students, extending financial aid where necessary.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 20

For a discussion of ACO Articles 3, 5, 6, 7 and 20, see pages 24-26.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of elders

The task of the elders is, together with the ministers of the Word, to govern the congregation with pastoral care.

They shall see to it that the ministers, their fellow elders and the deacons carry out their offices faithfully. For the upbuilding of the congregation they shall make home visits as often as is profitable, but at least once per year.

They shall also, together with the ministers, exercise church discipline and see to it that everything in the congregation is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 22 - Task of deacons

The task of the deacons is to perform the ministry of mercy.

They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need and, furthermore, urge church members to render assistance.

They shall, moreover collect the gifts, take charge of them properly and, after mutual consultation, distribute them where there is need.

ARTICLE 22 - The Office of Elder

The specific duties of the office of elder are, together with the ministers of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's Church, **that every member may conduct himself properly in doctrine and life according to the gospel;**

and faithfully to visit the members of the congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God, reproving those who behave improperly. They shall exercise Christian discipline according to the command of Christ against those who show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent, and shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned. Being stewards of the house of God, they are further to take care that in the congregation all things are done decently and in good order, and to tend the flock of Christ which is in their charge. Finally, it is the duty of elders to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice and to supervise their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 23 - The Office of Deacon

The specific duties of the office of deacon are to see to the good progress of the service of charity in the congregation; to acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties, and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy;

and further, to gather and manage the offerings and to distribute them in Christ's Name according to need.

They shall encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love, and promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.

Cross-outs and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

beiden dat er studenten in de Theologie zijn, die door haar onderhouden worden").

Deputies recommend this reading, as it approximates the CCO text, but includes the essential word "necessary"

Recommended text

ARTICLES 21 - 22

The text of this article is poorly constructed, like that of C16.

Starting off with: 'the duties (plural!) of *the office of elder* (singular!)', it changes to: '*they*', and finishes with: 'the duty (singular!) of *elders* (plural!)'.

It is unnecessarily long and again lacks (partly) an essential provision dealing with mutual supervision, this time of the offices. For reasons similar to those mentioned at C16 Deputies recommend to retain the A-text, with an improvement in formulation.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of elders

The elders shall govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the upbuilding of the congregation they shall make homevisits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLES 22 - 23

For reasons similar to those in observation 21-22 Deputies recommend retention of the A-text with a minor change in formulation.

Also, as recommended under observation 40-42 one sentence of that text could be placed here.

Note: the expression 'shall give account' may suggest that the deacons are under consistory supervision. The recommended formulation avoids this.

ARTICLE 22 - Task of deacons

The deacons shall perform the ministry of mercy. They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need; and urge church members to render assistance where necessary. They shall collect and manage the gifts of the congregation, and after mutual consultation distribute them where there is need. The deacons shall keep the consistory informed about their labours.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 23 - Retirement of elders and deacons

The elders and deacons shall serve for two or more years, subject to the local regulation. As a rule each year a proportional number shall retire. The retiring office bearers shall be replaced by others unless it is deemed desirable for the congregation to **call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 20 shall be observed.**

ARTICLE 24 - Missionary calling

The churches shall perform their missionary calling observing the articles of this Church Order.

When churches work together in performing this calling, they shall abide by the division into regions which have (has?) been accepted for the bond of churches.

ARTICLE 25 - Task of missionaries

The task of ministers who are called to the Mission work is to proclaim the Word of God in the region assigned to them.

They shall administer the Sacraments to those who have come *to faith*, and they shall teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded His Church. According to *good order* they shall also institute the offices.

ARTICLE 26 - non existing

ARTICLE 27 - Office bearers and the Government

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation that she is obliged to be obedient to and show respect for the government because God has instituted the same.

They should themselves be a good example in this regard and by means of proper respect and correspondence invoke the government to continually protect the ministry of the Church.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 24 - Term of Office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years, according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The place of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others, unless *the consistency with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the benefit of the Church render it advisable to have them serve another term, or to extend their term, or to declare them immediately eligible for re-election.*

ARTICLE 51 - Mission

The Churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task.

When Churches co-operate in this matter, they shall, *as much as possible*, observe the division into classes and regional synods.

ARTICLE 18 - Missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall be and remain subject to the Church Order.

They shall report and give account of their labours to the Church which sent them and shall at all times remain subject to its calling.

It shall be their task, in the specific region assigned to them or chosen by them in consultation with the Church that sent them, to proclaim the Word of God, to administer the sacraments to those who have come to *the profession of their faith*, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded His Church, and to ordain elders and deacons *when this appears feasible*, according to *the rules given in the Word of God.*

ARTICLE 28 - Civil Authorities

As it is the office of the civil authorities to promote in every way the holy ministry, so all office-bearers are in duty bound to impress *diligently and sincerely* upon the whole congregation the obedience, love and respect which are due to the Civil Authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter and endeavour by due respect and communication to secure and retain the favour of the authorities towards the Church, so that the Church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

Cross-outs and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 23 - 24

Recommendation : adopt the C-text after replacing 'have them serve another term or to extend their term ... , etc' with 'call them into office again', deleting 'with the deacons', and adding 'In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed'

ARTICLES 24 - 51

The provision 'shall perform their missionary calling observing the articles of this Church Order' cannot be missed. 'provisions' should be preferred to 'articles'. To fit within the correct division of the CO, the Article number changes to 50.

Recommendation : Adopt the C-text with those changes.

ARTICLES 25 - 18

The A-Article speaks in particular about the task of missionaries, and not about their subjection to the CO or their duties with respect to the Church that sent them. This emphasis needs to be retained.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without its provisions in bold, under the A-title.

The Article number changes to 20, to fill the gap left there by the disappearance of A20 (see pages 24-26), and make room for transfer of Articles 50, 51 and 52 to 24, 25 and 26.

ARTICLES 27 - 28

Deputies believe that the A-article gives the *better* scriptural reason ('... because God has instituted the same') for being obedient and showing respect to the government (Rom 13:1). Likewise, its closing words offer the *better* purpose of securing the authorities' favour towards the church, i.e. : to 'protect the ministry of the church'. The A-text is also superior in formulation, layout and conciseness, wherefore deputies recommend to retain it, with an improvement in language.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The place of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 50- Mission

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall observe the provisions of this Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the division into classes.

ARTICLE 20 - Task of Missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall in the specific region assigned to them proclaim the Word of God, administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded his church, and ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

ARTICLE 27 - Office-bearers and the government.

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation her obligation to be obedient to, and show respect for the government, because God has instituted it. They must set a good example in this regard and by means of proper respect and communication invoke the government to protect the ministry of the church.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 28 - *Three assemblies*

Three ecclesiastical assemblies shall meet regularly; the consistory, the classis and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - *Opening and closing of the assemblies*

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin with calling upon the Name of the Lord and be closed with thanksgiving.

ARTICLE 30 - *Authority of the assemblies*

These assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner.

A major assembly shall only deal with those matters which concern the regional churches in common or which could not be resolved in the minor assembly.

If it concerns a new matter *arising from the churches* it can be placed on the agenda of the major assembly only by way of preparation in the minor assembly.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 29 - *The Ecclesiastical Assemblies*

Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: The Consistory, the Classis, *the Regional Synod* and the *General Synod*.

ARTICLE 34 - *Proceedings*

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with calling upon the Name of the Lord.

At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.

Furthermore, each classis, regional synod, or general synod shall determine the time and place of the next classis, regional synod, or general synod respectively and appoint the convening church for that meeting.

ARTICLE 30 - *Ecclesiastical Matters*

These assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner.

A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its Churches in common.

A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

Cross-outs and underlinings in Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 28 - 29

Recommendation : adopt the C-text after amendments to reflect the Australian circumstances. Since 'maintained' has connotations with permanency, 'meet regularly' is preferred.

ARTICLES 29 - 34

The 2nd and 3rd paragraphs of C34 were transferred (in amended form) from Articles 44 and 47 respectively, by the 1989 synod of Winnipeg (Art 169). These provisions are found in the ACO in articles 47 (2nd para), and 41/45 (3rd para).

The 2nd paragraph must remain as Article 47.

Since in the ACO the classis does *not* appoint a convening church the 3rd paragraph has been left in Articles 41 and 45 respectively.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs.

Deputies recommend also to replace 'calling upon the name of the Lord' with 'prayer'.

ARTICLES 30 - 30

The A-title should be retained as it more accurately describes the contents of the Article

The ACO formulation 'arising from the churches' is confusing, as it suggests that the major assembly does have the authority to place a new matter '*not arising from the churches*' on its agenda.

Deputies suggest that in the CCO text the words: '*which has not previously been presented to that major assembly*' are not necessary, and can give rise to the false notion that the major assembly has authority to place a new matter on its agenda, if that that matter was at least once on the agenda during the history of the churches.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, under the A-title, without the words mentioned above, and with a much needed improvement to its language.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall meet regularly : the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

These assemblies shall deal with ecclesiastical matters only, observing the provisions of this Church Order. A major assembly shall deal only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 31 - Appeal to a major assembly

If anyone *is of the opinion* that he is wronged by a decision of a minor assembly he *can* appeal to a major assembly. The decision which is taken by a majority vote shall be accepted as binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

For interpretation of this article refer to the Synod decisions 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 32 - Delegation to major assemblies

Delegates to major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by their senders, *and on that basis* they have the right to vote.

They shall not vote on matters which concern themselves or their own churches.

ARTICLE 33 - Instructions and proposals

A minor assembly shall not draw up an instruction or a proposal for a major assembly before any decisions of former synods concerning the proposed matter are accurately read.

That which is once finished must not be brought up again, *unless it is considered that amendment is essential.*

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

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; and whatever may be agreed upon by a 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.

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials

Delegates to the major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by those sending them;

they shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless *they are substantiated by new grounds.*

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 31 - 31

Note 1: Synod 1985 decided (Acts Article 81, page 57):

1. to maintain the decision of Synod 1959, Acts Article 16, concerning appeals whereby the "classis" is replaced by the "classis church", and a second-appeal-church is appointed;

2. to appoint classis churches;

3. to appoint second-appeal churches;

4. to state that the second-appeal churches shall not function when an appeal is made within two months prior to a synod.

Note 2: Synod 1959 decided (Acts Article 16, page 7) : (free translation) : As long as there are no classes, appeals under Article 31 CO shall be conducted as follows :

1.a) stage 1, to the appointed sister-church; which shall have the weight of a classis decision;

b. stage 2, to the second sister-church; which shall have the weight of a decision of a regional synod;

c. stage 3, to the synod.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text. Improve it by changing 'the right to appeal' to 'the right of appeal'.

Synod might also consider replacing the underlined words by the above Notes 1 and 2.

ARTICLES 32 - 32

The language of the C-article is not impressive, (*'those sending them !'*) and its title inappropriate (it talks more about voting than about credentials). Deputies offer the reading as shown,

or: 'A minor assembly shall provide its delegates to the major assembly with proper credentials.'

ARTICLES 33 - 33

The message in this article is more readily apparent from our 1959 CO where the two sentences are one, connected by the words 'in order that what was once decided be not proposed again ..'.

Since the C-text expresses this more clearly deputies recommend its adoption.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a 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.

For interpretation of this article refer to the Synod decisions 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials and voting

Delegates to a major assembly shall bring with them their credentials, signed by the minor assembly. They shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 34 - Task of chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a **chairman** whose main task is:

- (1) to clearly present those matters to be dealt with;
- (2) to ensure that discussions take place in an orderly manner
- (3) to command to silence those who argue about minor things or who are vehement in speaking; he must reprove them if they refuse to listen.

His task shall cease when the assembly ends.

In addition to the chairman, a clerk shall be appointed who shall write down those matters worthy of being recorded.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction of the major assemblies in respect of the minor

The ~~classis~~ Classis Church has the authority to make *judicial pronouncements* in respect of the consistory. The second-appeal-Church has this authority in respect to the Classis Church. This applies also to the synod in respect ~~of to the second-appeal-Church or - if the latter is not involved - to the classis~~ Classis Church.

ARTICLE 36 - Composition and meetings of the consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory consisting of the minister(s) of the Word and elders.

It shall meet **regularly** and shall be presided by the minister. Where there is more than one minister they shall preside in turn.

The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons. This meeting shall deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, the material affairs of the church, financial management and all things which the consistory considers to be necessary for general management.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 35 - President

In all assemblies there shall be a **president** whose task it is to present and explain the matters to be dealt with and to ensure that every one observes due order in speaking, to deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and to discipline those who refuse to listen.

In **major assemblies** the office of the president shall cease when the assembly has ended.

ARTICLE 36 - Clerk

A clerk shall be appointed whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of all things worthy to be recorded.

ARTICLE 37 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the *same jurisdiction* over the consistory as the *regional synod* has over the classis, *and the general synod over the regional synod.*

ARTICLE 38 - Consistory

In all Churches there shall be a consistory composed of the ministers of the Word and the elders who, **as a rule**, shall meet **at least once a month.** **As a rule** the ministers of the Word shall preside. If a Church is served by more than one minister, they shall preside in turn.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 34 - 35 and 36

Recommendation : adopt the C-texts with a change in formulation, the A-provision in bold, and 'chairman' in favour of 'president'. ('chairman' being the word used in our assemblies).

Note : Canadian Synod Acts also use 'chairman'

Synod 1985 (Art 34) decided to retain 'his task shall cease'

ARTICLES 35 - 37

The text of the C-article is in line with those of the original Dutch and FRCA Church Orders. Synod 1985 (Art 44) rejected an appeal to restore this original meaning to the text. Because of this substantial difference the A-Article has been retained with minor change in language.

ARTICLES 36 - 38

The contents of both ACO and CCO conflicts with Article 30 BC which includes the deacons in the church Council. Recommendation : adopt the C-text with inclusion of the A- and deletion of the C- provisions in **bold**.

The last sentence has been improved by re-arrangement.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 34- Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain the matters to be dealt with and ensure that every one observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The ~~classis~~ classis church has the authority to make judicial pronouncements in respect of the consistory. The second-appeal church has this authority in respect of the classis church. This applies also to the synod in respect of the second-appeal church or - if the latter is not involved - of the ~~classis~~ classis church.

ARTICLE 36 - Consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and be presided by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall preside in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for general management, including the material affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 37 - Consistory and the deacons

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 37 - *Working together where there are few office bearers*

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the consistory can, on the basis of local rules, always meet together with the deacons.

In that case, matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

This shall invariably be the rule if **both** the number of elders **and** the number of deacons is less than three.

ARTICLE 38 - Institution of offices

Initial or renewed institution of the offices in a place shall be carried out only with the *agreement of the ~~classis~~ Classis Church*.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without consistories

Places where as yet no consistory can be instituted shall, by the ~~classis~~ Synod, be placed under the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of the deacons

The deacons shall under invocation of the Lord, regularly come together to transact the matters pertaining to their office.

They shall give account of their *policies and* management to the consistory.

ARTICLE 41 - The classis

A classical meeting shall consist of the churches of the classical region which shall respectively delegate a minister and an elder with the required credentials. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months.

Every meeting shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again.

At these meetings the ministers shall preside in turn. The meeting may also choose a chairman. However, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 39 - *Consistory and the Deacons*

Where the number of elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement;

this shall invariably be done where the number of elders or the number of deacons is less than three.

ARTICLE 40 - Constitution of a Consistory

In places where a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall be done only with the *advice* of classis.

ARTICLE 41 - Places without a Consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 42 - Meetings of Deacons

When the deacons meet separately, as a rule once a month, to deal with the matters pertaining to their office, they shall do so with calling upon the Name of God.

They shall give account of their labours to the consistory.

The ministers shall acquaint themselves with the work of the ministry of mercy and, if need be, may visit these meetings.

ARTICLE 44 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating with proper credentials a minister and an elder *or, if a church has no minister, two elders*. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, **unless the convening Church, in consultation with the neighbouring Church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the Churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession.**

In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Recommended text

ARTICLES 37 - 39

Recommendation : adopt the C-text after a slight change in formulation; and with the addition of '**and deacons**', and of the A-paragraph in **bold**, and after replacing 'or' in the last paragraph with '**both ... and**'.

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

ARTICLES 38 - 40

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with minor change. The 1959 CO (Art 38) has 'advice'

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of ~~classis~~ the classis church shall be sought.

ARTICLES 39 - 41

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without change.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by ~~classis~~ synod to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLES 40 - 42

The thrust of these articles is different, ACO prescribing that the deacons **shall meet regularly**, and CCO prescribing that, **when they meet they shall pray**. Recommendation : change the C-text to retain the emphasis and specific provisions of the A-article (with some changes in formulation)

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of C42 belong to Articles 22 and 16 respectively, and deputies recommend that they be placed there.

ARTICLES 41 - 44 (part of)

The provision 'with proper credentials' is redundant, since it is already in Article 32. Our synod 1985 (Acts Article 81) decided to replace the word 'classis' in the sentence commencing "The chairman shall ask ..." by 'synod', on the ground that this procedure has been on the agenda of past synods. Perhaps the meaning of the term 'be chosen' is 'preside'?

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however the same minister shall not preside twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every meeting shall deter-

Recommendation: include the 1985 decision as shown; and adopt the C-text after some minor changes / re-arrangement, the deletion of the paragraph commencing 'unless ...' and insertion of 'Every meeting shall determine..'

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the offices is proceeding, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being executed, and whether there is any matter about which the consistories require the judgment or the help of the classis for the proper *continuation of their congregational life*.

At the last meeting prior to a synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend that synod.

The sentence: "The chairman shall..." must be read in the light of the decision taken by Synod 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers not delegated to a classis

Where two or more ministers are bound to a church, those who have not been delegated according to the foregoing article *may be present* at the classical meetings (in) an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request the ~~classis~~ Synod to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such. He shall, for the sake of good order, serve the consistory with advice, particularly in relation to the calling of a minister. Letters of call shall be signed also by him.

When a vacancy arises more than two months before a Synod, the Classis Church shall appoint a counsellor according to this Article, and report to the next Synod.

ARTICLE 44 - Church visitation

~~Each year the classis shall authorise some of its most experienced and capable ministers to carry out church visitations in all the churches in its region. The Synod shall appoint some of its most experienced and capable ministers to carry out church visitations. Where it is necessary the classis may authorise Synod may appoint a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister.~~

The visitors shall enquire whether the office-bearers, *individually and collectively*, faithfully carry out their offices, *adhere to the sound doctrine*, whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained and *whether they, as well as they are able by word and deed, promote the upbuilding of the congregation*.

The purpose of the visitation is, to admonish those office-bearers who in some way are found to be negligent; to advise and assist so that the peace, the

Canadian Church Order

The president shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper *government of their Church*.

The last classis before *regional* synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

If two or more ministers are serving a Church, those who have not been delegated *shall have the right* to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 45 - Counsellors

Each vacant Church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call.

ARTICLE 46 - Church Visitors

Each year classis shall authorize at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the Churches in that year.

It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether *all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God*, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office *faithfully as they have promised*, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained *in every respect*,

in order that they may *in good time fraternally* admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Recommended text

mine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

The sentence: "The chairman shall..." must be read in the light of the decision taken by Synod 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 42 - 44 (part of)

Recommendation : Adopt the C-text with minor change.

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis

If two or more ministers are serving the one church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLES 43 - 45

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with minor changes in language and retention of the A-provisions in bold. To express clearly the intention (conveyed by the words 'also by him'), that the counsellor shall be party to the letter of call, Deputies propose the word 'counter-sign'. The C45 wording could be interpreted to mean that it is he who signs the letter of call.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request ~~classis~~ the synod to appoint as counsellor the minister of its choice. He shall for the sake of good order serve the consistory with advice and especially lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister. Letters of call shall be counter-signed by him. When a vacancy arises more than two months prior to synod the classis church shall appoint a counsellor and report to synod

ARTICLES 44 - 46

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with retention of the A-provision in bold, and a minor change in language.

ARTICLE 44- Church visitors

~~Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. The synod shall appoint some of its most experienced and capable ministers to visit the churches. If necessary the classis may authorise synod may appoint~~ a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect; in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit a written report of their visits to ~~classis synod. This report shall cover the two annual visits made to a church and be sent to the consistory concerned.~~

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

edification and the well-being of the churches may be promoted.

The visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the ~~classis~~ Synod. This report shall cover the 2 annual visits made to a church and be sent to the Consistory concerned.

ARTICLE 45 - The synod

The synod shall be convened once in every three years *unless there are urgent reasons which require an earlier meeting.*

Every classical meeting shall delegate to the synod two ministers of the Word and two elders.

Where ~~at least two classical-meetings~~ churches consider that the synod must be convened within the three year period, the church appointed for the purpose of convening the next synod shall, with the approval of ~~its classis~~ the Classis Church determine the time and place for it.

At the conclusion of the synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that meeting

Canadian Church Order

towards the edification and preservation of Christ's Church.

They shall submit a written report of their visits to classis.

ARTICLE 49 - General Synod

The *general* synod shall be held once every three years.

Each regional synod shall delegate to this synod four ministers and four elders.

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 Regional Synod.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Recommended text

ARTICLES 45 - 49

The 1959 CO (Art 50) has 'advice and approbation'
Recommendation: adopt the C-text with changes to reflect the specific A-circumstances, and a minor change in language.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held once every three years. Each classis shall delegate to this synod two ministers and two elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that meeting. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two ~~classis~~ churches this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its ~~classis~~ classis church.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 46 - Relations with foreign churches

The relations with foreign churches shall be regulated by the synod. With foreign churches of Reformed confession a sister-church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. On minor points of church order and ecclesiastical practice foreign churches shall not be *condemned*.

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the conclusion of classis and synod meetings censure shall be exercised over those who have misconducted themselves at the meeting.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of *major assemblies*

Every major assembly shall appoint deputies to execute matters ordained by it. Different groups of deputies shall, as much as possible, be appointed for separate matters.

The synod, *in addition*, shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classis in all cases for which there is provision in the Church Order, and - upon the request of the classis - in cases of special difficulties.

They, or some of them, shall also oversee the peremptory examination of prospective ministers.

The deputies shall keep an accurate record of their work and submit a written report. They shall, if required, justify their actions.

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The consistories and major assemblies shall take proper care of the archives.

ARTICLE 50 - Signing of the Confession by ministers and lecturers

The ministers, the professors and other lecturers at the Theological Seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, by which the forms, drawn up for those various offices, shall be used. Ministers who refuse to do so shall, as a result, be immediately suspended and the classis shall not receive them. When, *after discussion*, they persist in their refusal they shall be deposed from their office.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 50 - Churches Abroad

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

ARTICLE 34 - Proceedings (part of)

At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof ...

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of *Regional Synod*

Each *regional* synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties.

These deputies shall keep proper record of their actions and submit a written report to *regional synod* and, if so required, they shall give account of their actions.

They shall not be discharged from their task before and until regional synod itself discharges them.

ARTICLE 43 - Archives

The consistories and the major assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

ARTICLE 26 - Subscription to the Confession

All ministers of the Word, elders, deacons and professors of theology shall subscribe to the Confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches by signing the form(s) adopted for that purpose. *Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office.* Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office *by the consistory with the deacons*, and classis shall not receive him. If he *obstinately* persists in his refusal, he shall be deposed from office.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 46 - 50

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without change.

ARTICLES 47 - 34 (part of)

Recommendation: retain the A-Article using the text of the corresponding part of C34.

ARTICLES 48 - 48

The ACO makes allowance for every major assembly to appoint deputies, the CCO only for the Regional synod. Recommendation : adopt the C-text with changes to reflect clearly the specific Australian circumstances, the inclusion of the A-provisions in bold, and with minor changes in expression.

ARTICLES 49 - 43

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with minor change.

ARTICLES 50 - 26

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with changes to reflect accurately the specific Australian circumstances. Replace 'professors of theology and other lecturers' by 'teaching staff at the theological seminary'.

To place the Article within the correct division of the CO change its number to 24.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 46 - Churches abroad

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

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the close of the major assemblies censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of major assemblies

Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties. These deputies, or some of them, shall also oversee the peremptory examination of prospective ministers. Every major assembly shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed for separate matters, as much as possible. All deputies shall keep proper record of their work and submit a written report. If required they shall justify their actions. They shall not be discharged from their task until the major assembly discharges them.

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff

All ministers of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 51 - Signing of the Confession by elders and deacons

The elders and deacons shall also subscribe to the aforementioned forms of unity for which the relevant form is used.

ARTICLE 52 - *Averting false doctrine and error*

In order to ward off false doctrines and errors which **via literature and other means of communication** could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, as well in the preaching of the Word as in catechetical instruction and at home visits.

ARTICLE 53 - Administration of Baptism *to children*

Baptism, being a seal of God's covenant, shall be administered to the children of the believers **in a church service** as soon as it is *practicable*.

ARTICLE 54 - **Baptismal promise and education**

The consistory shall see to it that the parents, *to the best of their ability*, cause their children **to be given education** which is in harmony with *the doctrine of the Church as they promised at the Baptism*.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 27 - False Doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors which could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 57 - Baptism

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as *feasible*.

ARTICLE 58 - **Schools**

The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children **attend a school** where the instruction given is in harmony with *the Word of God as the Church has summarized it in her Confessions*.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLE 51

Recommendation : retain the Australian article, with minor change. Note that this Article does not specify what shall be done when an elder or deacon refuses to sign. To place the Article within the correct division of the CO change its number to 25.

ARTICLES 52 - 27

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with insertion of the words in bold.

To place the Article within the correct division of the CO change its number to 26.

ARTICLES 53 - 57

The provision 'in a church service' is in C56 and need not be repeated here. As C59 speaks of baptism of adults, this Article's title ought to be 'baptism of infants'.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text accordingly, with retention of 'practicable' (referring to the practical circumstances).

Deputies recommend re-numbering of Articles 53-60. There are two vacant numbers to be filled. This can be done by making a new Article 'Public profession of faith' (to be given number 54) and splitting Article 60 into two (to be given numbers 59 and 60). A possible text for Article 54 is:

'Public profession of faith

They who have come to an understanding and acceptance of the doctrine of God's Word and desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their motivation and knowledge of that doctrine. The public profession shall take place in a church service, with the use of the adopted Form'

ARTICLES 54 - 58

The two COs are dealing with this subject under different headings. As an ecclesiastical document the CO should speak about baptism and education, rather than about schools. The ACO title and thrust ought to be retained. In particular the words referring to the promise at baptism must not be lost. Since this promise already incorporates 'the best of their ability' (third question), this qualifier need not be repeated here.

Recommendation : Adapt the C-text accordingly, under the A-title, and with an improvement in language.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription of the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose.

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors which via literature and other means of communication could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as practicable.

ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall ensure that parents honour their promise made at baptism, to provide for their children education which is in harmony with the Word of God, as the churches have summarised it in their Confessions.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 55 - Administration of Baptism to adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be ingrafted into the Christian Church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - The use of forms for Baptism

For the administration of Baptism of infants and adults the ministers shall use the forms which are adopted for that purpose.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of their faith according to the Reformed doctrine and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the basis of a **proper** attestation concerning doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 58 - The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months *in a church service in accordance with the ecclesiastical order and under supervision of the elders*. The form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper shall be used.

ARTICLE 59 - Church registers

The consistories shall compile registers in which the names of the church members, their dates of birth, Baptism, public profession of faith and marriage are accurately entered.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 59 - Baptism of Adults

Adults who have not been baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian Church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - Administration of Sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered *only under the authority of the consistory, in a public worship service*, by a minister of the Word, with the use of the adopted Forms.

ARTICLE 61 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-Churches shall be admitted on the ground of a **good** attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 60 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 64 - Church Records

The consistory shall maintain Church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, *and departure or death* are properly recorded.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 55 - 59

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, using the word 'grafted' as in Rom 11 and HC Ans 74.

ARTICLES 56 - 56

See observation 58-60 for some of these provisions.
Recommendation : adopt the C-text after replacing 'worship service' by 'church service' (see A62) and 'authority' with 'supervision' ('authority' is used with 'by').

ARTICLES 57 - 61

It is our established practice that members of sister-churches are admitted to Holy Supper upon production of a note (here referred to as an 'attestation') from their consistory, confirming membership in good standing. Whereas 'proper' implies that this 'attestation' needs to be in writing, it could be argued that a 'good' attestation need not necessarily be a written one. To remove this uncertainty, deputies propose the adoption of the C-text with a suitable change.

ARTICLES 58 - 60

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without change.
See also observation 56-56.

ARTICLES 59 - 64

Recommendation : adopt the C-text (perhaps we should add 'arrival').

Recommended text

ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation in writing concerning their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 58 - Church records

The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, arrival, and departure or death are properly recorded.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 60 - Attestation to another church

When members depart to another congregation the consistory shall, after making the required announcement to the congregation, give such members an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct. It shall be signed by the chairman and the clerk. This attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of their faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.

Where a member, who has not yet made profession of faith, decides to move to another place an attestation shall be sent to the consistory concerned with a request to take this member under its supervision and discipline.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 62 - Attestations

Communicant members who move to a sister-Church shall be given an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, after previous announcements to the congregation, signed on behalf of the consistory by two of its members.

In the case of non-communicant members such an attestation shall be sent directly to the consistory of the Church concerned.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 60 - 62

The Australian CO clearly refers to churches within the bond ('another congregation'), whereas 'a sister-church' could also mean an overseas church.

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with amendments to retain the A-provisions in bold, and a change in language.

The text could be further improved by inserting the words 'upon their request', thus:

Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, upon their request and following appropriate announcements to the congregation....

The split of the article into two is proposed in the observations with A53-C57 on page 15.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 59 - Attestations for communicant members

Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by the chairman and the clerk. This attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.

ARTICLE 60 - Attestations for non-communicant members

An attestation for a non-communicant member shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned with the request to take the member under its supervision and discipline.

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 61 - Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they will in respect of deacon support remain, as much as possible, under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible, support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

ARTICLE 62 - Church services on the Day of the Lord

On the Day of the Lord the consistory shall call the congregation together two times for church services.

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that, in the preaching, the doctrine of God's Word as contained in the Heidelberg Catechism will as a rule be proclaimed once per Sunday, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and hymns

In the church service the psalms shall be sung in the metrical version which has been accepted by the Synod. Similarly only those hymns which have been approved by the synod shall be sung.

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services.

The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on those days shall therein be proclaimed.

ARTICLE 66 - Day of Prayer

In times of war, national calamities or other great afflictions the church which has been appointed for this purpose by the last synod, shall nominate a day of prayer.

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 52 - Worship Services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for worship twice on the Lord's Day.

The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed.

ARTICLE 55 - Psalms and Hymns

The metrical Psalms adopted by general synod as well as the Hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services.

ARTICLE 53 - Days of Commemoration

Each year the Churches shall, in the manner decided upon by the consistory, commemorate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as His outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE 54 - Days of Prayer

In time of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the Churches, a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the Churches appointed for that purpose by general synod.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

ARTICLE 61

Recommendation : retain the Australian article, with minor change.

ARTICLES 62 - 52 (part of)

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, retaining 'church services' (see Synod 1983/14, rejection of a proposal to replace 'church service' by 'worship').

ARTICLE 63 - 52 (part of)

Adopt the C-text, adding '*preferably in the afternoon service*' (see 1983/42 decision to insert these words).

ARTICLES 64 - 55

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, with retention of 'church services' and an improvement in language.

ARTICLES 65 - 53

Deputies had some hesitation in placing these articles over against one another because of the vast differences in contents and character.

The Australian article has been retained.

ARTICLES 66 - 54

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, omitting the provision '*the presence of which...*' (Synod 1983 deleted a similar provision, see Acts 1983/43) and retaining the A-provisions in bold.

Also retain: 'in times of'

Recommended text

ARTICLE 61 Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they shall in respect of deacon support remain under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

ARTICLE 62 - Church services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that as a rule once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and hymns

In the church services only the psalms and hymns approved by synod shall be sung.

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

ARTICLE 66 - Days of prayer

In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions a day of prayer shall be proclaimed by the church appointed for that purpose by synod.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall see to it that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the minister(s) solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God.

The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony. With the solemnisation the adopted form shall be used.

ARTICLE 68 - No funeral services

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to His honour.

The aim of discipline is

that the sinner be reconciled with God and his neighbour and that the offence is removed from the Church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in his conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence then the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Report to the consistory

Secret sins shall not be made known to the consistory if the sinner, after personal, brotherly admonitions or after admonition before one or two witnesses, comes to repentance.

If anyone, having been admonished of a secret sin in accordance with the rule of Matthew 18, does not heed

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 63 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - *as authorized by the consistory* - solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnization of a marriage may take place either in a private ceremony or in a public worship service. The adopted Form for the Solemnization of Marriage shall be used.

ARTICLE 65 - Funerals

Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.

ARTICLE 66 - Nature and Purpose

Since Church discipline is of a spiritual nature and, as one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, has been given to the Church to shut and to open that kingdom, the consistory shall ensure that it is used to punish sins against both the purity of doctrine and the piety of conduct, in order to reconcile the sinner with the Church and with his neighbour, and to remove all offence out of the Church of Christ - which can be done only when the rule given by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 is followed in obedience.

ARTICLE 67 - Consistory Involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any matter pertaining to purity of doctrine or piety of life that is reported

Deputies' observations

ARTICLES 67 - 63

Recommendation : adopt the C-text, retaining 'shall take place in a private ceremony'

For consistency with other articles the expression 'with the use of the adopted form' has been maintained. This also makes the article read better.

ARTICLES 68 - 65

The thrust of these articles is different, the ACO ruling out **funeral services**, and the CCO directing how **funerals** must be conducted. Since the Church Order should not deal with non-ecclesiastical matters deputies recommend retention of the Australian article.

ARTICLES 69 - 66

The C-text is not an improvement on the A-text. It is verbose and its contents exceeds the bounds of its title (in its reference to Mat 18). When BC29 speaks of church discipline which 'corrects and punishes' sins, it is important to understand that this punishment is of a spiritual nature (BC30). If therefore the CO would speak of 'punishing', that spiritual character ought to come out in the formulation better than it does in the CCO text.

The expression ... that the sinner is reconciled 'with God is preferred to 'with the Church'. Because of these differences deputies have retained the A-text with minor change in expression.

ARTICLE 70

Recommendation : retain the Australian article.

ARTICLES 71 - 67

There is no need for an expression like 'any matter pertaining to purity of doctrine or piety of life' when the single word 'sin' is clear and sufficient, and in use for the same purpose in this and related articles.

Recommendation : adopt the Canadian text with some changes in formulation.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 68 - No funeral services

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to his honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence then the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Consistory involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any report of sin unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

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such admonition, or where someone has committed a public sin, then **report of this shall be made to the consistory.**

ARTICLE 72 - Confession of guilt at repentance

When someone repents from a public sin or a secret sin which had to be announced to the consistory, the consistory *shall accept this confession of sin if sufficient signs of repentance are evident.*

The consistory shall determine whether an announcement of this confession of guilt should be made to the congregation.

ARTICLE 73 - Procedure relating to discipline

Any person who obstinately rejects *church* admonition or who has committed a public **or some other serious** sin shall be denied admission to the Lord's Supper by the consistory.

If after numerous subsequent admonitions, the person does not show any signs of repentance, the consistory shall as an ultimate remedy proceed to excommunication for which the accepted form is to be used.

No-one may be excommunicated without the consent of the ~~classis~~ Classis Church.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

After someone has been denied admission to the Lord's Supper and following the consequent exhortations, the consistory shall proceed with excommunication only after it has informed the congregation of the obstinacy of the sinner. His sin and the numerous attempts made to convert him by reprimands, denial of admission to the Lord's Supper and many admonitions shall be made known at that time. The congregation shall be urged to

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to it unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.

ARTICLE 69 - Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall *not accept his confession of sin unless he has shown real amendment.*

The consistory shall determine whether the benefit of the congregation requires that this confession of sin shall be made publicly and in case it is made before the consistory or before two or three office-bearers, whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards

ARTICLE 68 - Excommunication

Anyone who obstinately rejects the admonition *by the consistory* or who has committed a public sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper.

If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall so inform the congregation by means of public announcements, in order that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition, and the excommunication may not take place without its *cooperation*.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Recommended text

ARTICLES 72 - 69

It would be useful if the C-provision in bold were included in our CO.

It has not been included with the recommended text since this change requires a proposal from the churches.

ARTICLES 73 - 68 (part of)

Synod 1985 (Art 89), in reply to a letter about the use in Articles 73 and 74 of 'consent' instead of 'advice', decided to retain 'consent'. (The Acts' Index incorrectly speaks of a 'proposed amendment'). Synod 1987 (Art 63) decided, in response to a request to replace 'consent' with 'advice' in these articles, to pass the matter on to the appointed deputies for the linguistic revision of the CO. Deputies recommendation is to grant the request - see paragraph 7 (page 4) of the introductory remarks. Note that this part of C68 is placed in Articles 74 and 79.

For consistency with other articles (76, 79) the title of this article should read 'Discipline in respect of communicant members'. This title is also more appropriate for this reason that excommunication is only *one* of the steps of discipline.

Recommendation : adopt part of the text of C68 with some changes in language, under the mentioned title, adding the words 'or some other serious' and deleting the provisions dealing with non-communicant members (see Article 79).

ARTICLE 74 - 68 (part of)

Recommendation: adopt part of the text of C68.

ARTICLE 72 - Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless the member concerned has shown real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of *ekklasis* the classis church has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

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admonish him and to pray for him. *This shall be announced on three occasions. In order to spare the sinner, the name shall not be mentioned the first time.*

In the second announcement his name shall be mentioned after consent has been given by the ~~classis~~ Classis Church.

In the third announcement *the consistory shall inform the congregation that he shall be excluded from the communion of the church if he does not repent. In this way the excommunication shall have the silent consent of the congregation*

The consistory shall determine the time lapses between the announcements.

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission of those excommunicated

When an excommunicated person again wishes to be accepted into the congregation through repentance the congregation shall be advised accordingly.

If no-one is able to bring any objections against this, the person shall, after a period of at least three Sundays and **after having publicly confessed his sin**, be re-admitted into the congregation. The accepted form shall be used for this.

ARTICLE 76 - Discipline in relation to office bearers

When ministers of the Word reject the admonitions of the Church or when they publicly or otherwise engage in a serious sin, they shall be suspended *on the ground of the judgement of their consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation appointed by the ~~classis~~ Synod.*

The ~~classis~~ second-appeal-Church, with the advice of the deputies of the ~~synod as mentioned in Article 44 for Article 49 CQ~~, appointed by the Synod, must judge whether the ministers ought to be deposed. When elders or deacons are guilty of one of the above mentioned sins, the judgement of their consistory and the

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In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned.

In the second public announcement which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained the name *and address* of the sinner shall be mentioned.

In the third public announcement *a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place.*

In case a non-communicant member hardens himself in sin, the consistory shall in the same manner inform the congregation by means of public announcements. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned and a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place.

The time between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 70 - Readmission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the Church, the congregation shall be informed of his desire *in order to see* whether there are any lawful objections.

The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised, the readmission shall take place with the use of the Form for that purpose.

ARTICLE 71 - Suspension and Deposition of Office-bearers

When ministers, elders, or deacons have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuse to heed the admonitions by the consistory **with the deacons**, they shall be suspended from office *by the judgment of their own consistory with the deacons* and of the consistory **with the deacons of the neighbouring Church**.

When they harden themselves in their sin or when the sin committed is of such a nature that they cannot continue in office, the elders or deacons shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories **with the deacons**. Classis, with the concurring advice of the

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

ARTICLES 75 - 70

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with inclusion of the words relating to the public confession of sin.

ARTICLES 76 - 71

Deputies recommend that the C-text be adopted, excepting the provisions in bold, and with a few necessary changes.

The article would read better if all references to the plural were changed to the singular. Moreover, since the suspension and deposition of an office bearer is a very serious matter and such events occur rarely in our churches, it is neither fitting nor realistic to have the Church Order speak of this in plural (ministers, elders, deacons).

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of this desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised the readmission shall take place after the public confession of sin, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by *classis* synod. If he hardens himself in the sin or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. ~~Classis~~, The second-appeal church, with the advice of the

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and bold (essentials)

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consistory of a neighbouring congregation will be sufficient for their suspension or deposition.

ARTICLE 77 - Sins requiring discipline over office-bearers

Of the serious sins which are the grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers, the following are mentioned in particular: the promotion of a false doctrine, overt schismatical activities, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or the intrusion into the office work of someone else, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, violent behaviour, continual drunkenness, gaining wealth by unlawful means; added to these are those sins and serious offences which are grounds for excommunication in respect of other church members.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders and deacons shall amongst themselves exercise Christian censure and shall, in relation to the execution of their office exhort and admonish one another in a brotherly manner.

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of baptised members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where, in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant.

If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, then, with the consent of the classis church, the matter shall be made known to the congregation.

The consistory shall mention his name in the announcement and shall also set a term. The congregation shall be urged to admonish him and pray for him. **he does not in the said term, show any real repentance, the consistory shall, in a church service, exclude him from the communion of the Church. The adopted form shall be used for this.**

If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the Church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation

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deputies of regional synod, shall judge whether the ministers are to be deposed.

ARTICLE 72 - Serious and Gross Sins on the Part of Office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly: False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching one self, and further, all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the Church.

ARTICLE 73 - Christian Censure

The ministers, elders and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 68 - (last part)

In case a non-communicant member hardens himself in sin,

the consistory shall in the same manner inform the congregation by means of public announcements.

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned

In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Recommended text

deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

ARTICLES 77 - 72

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without change.

ARTICLE 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly : False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself, and further all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

ARTICLES 78 - 73

Recommendation : adopt the C-text without change.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 79 - 68 (part of)

Our churches adopted the Canadian version of the Form for the excommunication of non-communicant members (Synod 1970, Art 27) and subsequently the revised Form as it presently exists in the Book of Praise (Synod 1987, Art 100). This Form does not match with the text of A79 so that it can not very well be used in the excommunication procedure. This requires attention (a proposal) from the churches.

The CCO also does not have the provision shown in the final paragraph of A79. Since the provisions of the COs are quite different, the Australian article has been retained.

The following text should be suitable for an article adjusted to the adopted Form of Excommunication:

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be publicly announced without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him.. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of baptised members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, then, with the advice of the ~~classis~~ classis church, the matter shall be made known to the congregation. The consistory shall mention his name in the announcement and shall also set a term. The congregation shall be urged to admonish him and pray for him. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, with the use of the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

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and a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place.

ARTICLE 80 - No lording

No church shall in any way lord over another church and no office-bearer shall in any way lord over any other office-bearer.

ARTICLE 81 - Compliance with and amendments to the Church Order

All these articles which relate to the lawful order in the Church have been fixed *by mutual deliberation and accepted in unanimity*. If it is in the interests of the churches, they should be amended, augmented or diminished. A consistory or classis may, however, not do this. They are to diligently observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they are not changed by the synod.

ARTICLE 74 - No Lording It Over Others

No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 76 - Observance and Revision of the Church Order

These articles, which regard the lawful order of the Church, have been adopted *with common accord*. If the interest of the Churches demand such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented, or diminished. However, no consistory, classis, or *regional synod* shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the articles of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by a *general synod*.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

admonitions, then with the consent of ~~classis~~ the classis church the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name and address of the sinner, and the date at which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, using the adopted Form. If he after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

ARTICLES 80-74

Recommendation : adopt the C-text.

ARTICLES 81-76

Recommendation : adopt the C-text with retention of 'provisions'.

Recommended text

ARTICLE 80 - No lording over others

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order

These Articles which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented or diminished. However no consistory or classis shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by synod.

ARTICLE 3 - Necessity to be Lawfully Called

- (A1) No person shall fill any of these offices without having been lawfully called there-unto.

ARTICLE 5 - The Calling to the Ministry of the Word

- (A2) ~~The lawful calling to the Ministry of the Word of those who have not yet occupied the office of minister involves the calling, the examination, the approval of the congregation, and the ordination.~~
- (A3) The calling takes place, under invocation of the Lord, by the consistory and the deacons with the co-operation of the congregation and with observance of the regulations in local use.
- (A4) Only those may be called for the first time who ~~by the classis, in which they reside,~~ have been examined preparatorily by the Synod.
- (A5) Churches which have no minister in office shall extend a call after having received advice from its counselor ~~who has been appointed for this purpose by the classis.~~
- (A6) The examination both of doctrine and life shall be conducted by the ~~classis~~ synod to which the call must be submitted for approval.
- (A7) ~~It shall take place in the presence of the deputies of the synod or some of them.~~
- (A8) The approval of the congregation is obtained when the name of the called minister has been announced in the church for two consecutive Sundays and no lawful objection has been brought forward.

ARTICLE 3 - The Calling to Office

- (C1) No one shall ~~take~~ any office ~~upon himself~~ without having been lawfully called thereto.
- (C2) Only male members who have made profession of faith and may be considered to meet the conditions as set forth in Holy Scripture (e.g. in 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1), shall be eligible for office
- (C3) The election to any office shall take place with the cooperation of the congregation, after preceding prayers, and according to the regulations adopted for that purpose by the consistory ~~with the deacons.~~
- (C4) The consistory with the deacons shall ~~be free to give the~~ congregation the opportunity beforehand to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed fit for the respective offices.
- (C5) The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation either as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or at the most twice as many, from which number the congregation shall choose as many as are needed.
- (C6) Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons in accordance with the adopted regulations.
- (C7) Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approbation on at least two consecutive Sundays.

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Deputies' observations

The subject matter of ACO Articles 3, 5, 6, 7 and 20 (the Calling to Office of Officebearers) is found in CCO Articles 3, 4, 5 and 9.

The approach taken by the two Church Orders in dealing with this material is quite different. The ACO deals separately with the calling to Office of Ministers of the Word (Article 5 - first call, and Article 6 - subsequent calls), and of Elders and Deacons (Article 20). The CCO takes the calling to office of all office bearers together in Article 3, and deals more extensively with the Ministers in Article 4 - their Eligibility, and Article 5 - their Ordination and Installation.

Therefore the parallel comparison layout employed with the other Articles is not suitable. Instead the various provisions are compared by way of dealing with each paragraph of the Australian articles in turn.

For this purpose the different provisions of the Articles have been shown in separate paragraphs, **individually numbered (in brackets)**.

Recommended text

A1 : this is found in C1. 'fill' is better, since the CO is speaking to the churches, not to a person. Adopt C1 with that change.

A2 is not in CCO. It is not needed either, because of the different way it treats this material.

A3, A11 and A19 are in in C3. The latter refers to the calling to office of all office bearers in terms of their election to office. This manner of speaking about the calling to office is not known in our churches. Since CCO Article 3 carries the heading : **The calling to office**, Deputies have replaced the word **election** in C3 by **calling**.

A4 is in C9 / C12. Adopt without change.

A5 and A14 are in C16. Adopt without change.

A6 is in C17 / C18 / C19 / C20. Adopt without change.

A7 is in C21. Adopt without change.

See also ACO48, third paragraph.

A8 and A16 are in C7. Adopt without change.

ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office

A. All office bearers

No one shall fill an office without having been lawfully called thereto. The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after preceding prayers, and in accordance with the regulations adopted for that purpose. Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. Elders and deacons

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices. The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation either as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or at the most twice as many, from which number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons in accordance with the adopted regulations.

C. Ministers

When a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of ~~classis~~ the classis church shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

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- (A9) The ordination shall take place in a church service.
 (A10) The form, which has been adopted for that purpose, shall be used together with the imposition of hands by the officiating minister.

ARTICLE 6 - Calling to another Church

- (A11) Ministers who are called to another church shall be likewise called in the aforesaid manner by the consistory and the deacons with the co-operation of the congregation and the observance of the regulations in local use.
 (A12) The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in sister churches outside the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia,
 (A13) as well as for the repeated calling of the same minister during the same vacancy.

- Churches which have no minister in office shall extend
 (A14) a call after having received advice from ~~its~~ its counsellor ~~who has been appointed for this purpose by the classis~~.

- All churches are to obtain the approval of the ~~classis~~
 (A15) classis church to which ministers, called in accordance with the provisions of this article, shall show good ecclesiastical testimonies of doctrine and life.

- The approval of the congregation is also required and
 (A16) is obtained when the name of the called minister has been announced in the church for two consecutive Sundays and no lawful objection has been brought forward.

- The ordination shall take place in a church service in
 (A17) which the form adopted for that purpose shall be used.

ARTICLE 7 - Certificate of Dismissal with the Acceptance of a Call

- When a minister has accepted a call to another church,
 (A18) that church shall not accept him as her minister until he has presented proper certificates of dismissal from the church and classis where he has served.

ARTICLE 20 - Calling of Elders and Deacons

- Elders and deacons shall be called to their office by the
 (A19) consistory and the deacons, in co-operation with the congregation and observing the regulations in local use.

- In these rules it must be stated that the church members
 (A20) have the opportunity to bring to the attention of the consistory names of persons whom they consider suitable.

- (A21) The consistory and the deacons shall draft a list of

Canadian Church Order

- (C8) The ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the relevant forms.

Article 4 - Eligibility for the Ministry

A. ELIGIBILITY

Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

- (C9) 1. have been declared eligible for call by the Churches;
 (C10) 2. are already serving in that capacity in one of the Churches; or
 (C11) 3. have been declared eligible in, or are serving in one of the Churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-Church relationship.

B. DECLARED ELIGIBLE

Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the Churches who

- (C12) 1. have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the Churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the Churches;
 (C13) 2. have served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, and have been examined by the classis in which they live, with due observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for that purpose; or
 (C14) 3. have been examined according to the rule described in Article 8.

C. CALLING TWICE

- (C15) The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

D. COUNSELLOR

- (C16) When a vacant Church extends a call, the advice of the counsellor shall be sought.

ARTICLE 5 - Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word

- A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry
 (C17) before, the following shall be observed:
 (C18) 1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call. Classis shall approve the call
 (C19) a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

A9 is not in CCO. It is not needed either.

A10 is in C8. Adopt C8. For consistency with other articles use the term 'with the use of the adopted Forms' (sometimes 'using the adopted Form')

A11 is in C3. See A3.

A12 and A13 are not in CCO. A12 is required and deputies recommend insertion in Article 5A.3. A13 is probably not needed because of the provision in C15. See the later comment against C15.

A14 see A5.

A15 is in C23 / C24 / C25. Adopt without change, except that 'approbation' becomes 'approval'

A16 is in C7. See A8.

A17 is in C8. See A9 and A10.

A18 is in C26 and C30. (somewhat of a duplication). Adopt C26 and C30.

A19 is in C3. See A3.

A20 is in C4, but without the obligation on the consistory to give the congregation the opportunity to draw attention to suitable brothers. Also, this whole procedure as it concerns the calling of Ministers of the Word is not an agreed one in our churches. Deputies have adapted C4 to reflect the specific Australian circumstances.

A21 and A24 are in C5. Again it is not an agreed procedure in our churches as regards the calling of a

Recommended text

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. Eligibility

Only they shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

(1) have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or

(2) are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or

(3) have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister-church relationship. The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. Declared eligible

Only they shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

(1) have passed a preparatory examination by the ~~classis in which they live~~ synod, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or

(2) have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or

(3) have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be ordained only after ~~classis~~ the classis church has approved the call.

Classis The classis church shall approve the call

a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, signed by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and

b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This examination by ~~classis~~ the classis church shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.

2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

(A21) candidates twice the number required, from which the congregation elects the appropriate number of persons.

(A22) The consistory shall afterwards declare them appointed.

(A23) **If no lawful objections are brought forward**, these persons shall be ordained in their offices in a church service.

(A24) If necessary the consistory and the deacons shall present to the congregation the same number of persons as are necessary to fill the vacancies.

(A25) **If no lawful objections are brought forward**, they shall be ordained in the manner stated above.

(A26) In both instances the form for the ordination of elders and/or of deacons which has been adopted for that purpose, shall be used.

Canadian Church Order

of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, signed by the consistory of the Church to which he belongs;

(C20) b. upon a peremptory examination of the candidate by classis with satisfactory results.

(C21) This examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of the regional synod.

(C22) 2. For the ordination they shall show also to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the Church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

(C23) B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

(C24) 1. They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.

(C25) For this approbation as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that Church and classis, or from the Church only, in case he remains within the same classis.

(C27) 2. For the approbation by classis of a call of those who are serving in one of the Churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

(C28) C. Further, for the approbation by classis of a call, the calling Church shall submit a declaration that the proper announcements have been made and that the congregation has given its approval to the call.

ARTICLE 9 - From one Church to Another

(C29) A minister, once lawfully called, shall not leave the Church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis.

(C30) On the other hand, no Church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the Church and the classis where he served, or of the Church only, if he remains within the same classis.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Minister, and deputies have adapted also this paragraph to reflect the specific Australian circumstances.

A22 is in C6. Again it is not an agreed procedure in our churches as regards Ministers.

Part of A23 (also of A25) is not in CCO. Deputies have inserted this in Article 3A

A24 is in C5. See A21.

A25. See A23.

A26 is in C8. See A10.

CCO Articles 3, 4, 5 and 9 contain a number of provisions not found in as many words in ACO. However, most of these are current practice in our churches. They are :

C2, C10, C11, C12 second part, C13,

C14, C15, C19, C22,

C27, C28 and C29

The majority are acceptable, however deputies offer the following comment on some:

(C2) C2. This provision is new and requires a proposal from the churches. The words '**may be considered to**' should be deleted for Scripture does not speak in that manner. (1 Timothy 3 : 2, "**A bishop must be ...**", and vs 8 likewise : "**Deacons must be ...** "). Similarly, the Form for Ordination calls them "men, endowed with the Holy Spirit".

Deputies offer the following preferred reading:

Only male members who have made profession of faith and who meet the conditions as set forth in Holy Scripture (e.g. in 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1) shall be eligible for office.

(C13) The provision in C13 is not necessary since the rules for admission of these ministers are already given in Article 9. If the entry is desired as a cross-reference only (like C14) it ought to read: 'have been dealt with in accordance with the rules in Article 9'. Deputies recommend accordingly.

(C15) C15 and C16. These provisions should not be placed in Article 5 since they have nothing to do with 'Eligibility' for the Ministry. C16 (which is not in ACO) could be inserted as this is current practice in our Churches.
(C16) Deputies recommend that these provisions be placed in Article 3 which deals with calling to office.

Recommended text

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

They shall be installed after ~~classis~~ the classis church has approved the call.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration of honourable discharge from the consistory with the deacons and from ~~classis~~ the classis church, that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and ~~classis~~, or from the church only, in case he remains within the same classis.

2. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the necessary announcements were made and that the congregation has given its approval to the call.

ARTICLE 7 - From One church to Another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of ~~classis~~ the classis church

Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church ~~and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.~~

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

Australian Church Order

Canadian Church Order

ARTICLE 14 - Temporary release

If a minister, because of illness or for other substantial reasons, requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he can receive the same only with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and shall at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

(note : the sentence is improperly constructed)

ARTICLE 21 - An Edifying Word

Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training and in order that they may become known to the congregations.

ARTICLE 47 - Regional Synod

Each year some neighbouring classes shall send delegates to meet in a regional synod. If there are two classes, each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. If there are three classes the number shall be three ministers and three elders. If there are four or more classes the number shall be two ministers and two elders. 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 classis. The last regional synod before the general synod shall choose delegates that general synod.

ARTICLE 75 - Property of the Churches

All property, both real and personal, which belongs to the Churches comprised respectively in classes, regional synods, and general synods in common, shall be held in trust for such Churches in equal shares by deputies or trustees appointed for that purpose from time to time by the appropriate classis, regional synod, or general synod, and such deputies or trustees shall be bound by the terms of their appointment and instruction and are subject to being discharged by a subsequent classis, regional synod, or general synod.

Cross-outs and underlinings in the Australian Church Order are in effect until classes have been formed

Deputies' observations

Recommended text

The provisions in CCO Articles 14, 21, 47 and 75 do not appear in the Australian Church Order.

They are listed here for information only.

Differences between the Church Orders are shown in *italics* (non-essentials) and **bold** (essentials)

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Esteemed brothers

1 Mandate

Synod 1990 gave your Deputies the following mandate (Acts, art. 86 and 125):

1. Continue our combined support for the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton, and to request the Churches to forward \$35 per communicant member annually for this cause, starting 1st July 1990.
2. Collect funds for Hamilton from the Churches and forward them to the college.
3. Encourage the Churches to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theological Seminary/University in Korea and/or Kampen.
4. Continue correspondence with both Hamilton and Kampen in order to maintain contact and to obtain information.
5. Publish relevant news about the training for the Ministry so that church members understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students.
6. Arrange the support of theological students whenever needed in accordance with Article 19 CO and the stipulated rules for this fund.
7. Alert the churches to the requirements and the possibilities for an Australian based theological training in the light of changing circumstances.
8. Appoint deputies from Perth, Western Australia to investigate the possibility of finding a facility to house some books.
9. To address, through the DpRCA, the appropriate and corresponding deputies (Interessortale Samenwerkings Vergadering) of the Dutch sister churches with a view to removing this apparent inequity.

2 Contact with Hamilton theological College.

2.1 In compliance with Synod 1990 decision, the deputies have requested the churches to contribute \$35 annually per communicant member towards the maintenance of the college, starting at the first July 1990. Refer to 6.0 Finance.

2.2 Information received via annual report 1990-1991: Some of the highlights reported on are as follows:

2.2.1 On 7th September 1991 the college hosted an open house in celebration of its 21st anniversary. This evening signalled the completion of the transition which started during the preceding year. Dr N H. Gootjes delivered his inaugural address and Dr J. De Jong could be installed as Professor of ecclesiology and diaconology.

2.2.2 On 13th May 1991 Prof. J. Geertsema had his studies in Toronto crowned with the degree with the master of theology from Wycliffe College and the of University of Toronto.

2.3 In spite of the fact that Dr. Faber's visit of September/October 1990 to the Australian bond of churches cannot be attributed to any effort of the deputies, yet a mention of this event in this report is certainly in order. During his stay on our continent, Dr. Faber did much to promote the Hamilton Theological College. In particular the various congregational meetings convened for this purpose, brought the college, its professors and students nearer.

2.4 In order to consolidate the fraternal ties between the college and our bond of churches, the deputies sent greetings on the occasion of the convocation day 1990 and 1991 by way of facsimile.

3 Contact with Theologische Universiteit, Kampen and Theological Seminary, Pusan.

3.1 During the past term, Deputies neglected to encourage the churches to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theological Seminary/University in Pusan and/or Kampen.

Just prior to making submission to Synod 1992 this default was corrected by recommending the churches to hold collections for "Pusan". Concerning "Kampen" it was brought to our attention that its institution is currently adequately provided for and however much appreciated additional funds through collections are no longer a matter of necessity.

3.2 Information concerning "Kampen" and "Pusan".

3.2.1 Whereas in previous years "Kampen" forwarded financial reports, data academica and updated study guides, regrettably no such information was received by the deputies during the past term

3.2.2 Indirect information regarding : "Pusan" was received in the form of a most worthwhile article from the hand of Prof. Dr S.G. Hur in *Una Santa* vol. xxxviii no. 20 p408.

4 Financial aid to students.

On the 14th March 1991, deputies received an application for financial assistance ad. art. 19 C.O. from Br. Johan Plug. Considering that Br Plug was due to commence his studies at Hamilton Theological College in September 1991, the date of application was relatively late. This unfortunate timing caused some degree of inconvenience to the churches in that unexpectedly a considerable percentage of the total approved sum had to be gathered before September 1991 for use by Br Plug, with the balance due by the end of the calendar year.

It is our opinion that the cause of this occurrence lies in the fact that a parcel containing the bulk of information from the previous deputies for reasons unknown, failed to reach the deputies until the middle of May 1991, leaving us in the dark concerning application procedures and related matters. Furthermore, considerable time was lost in locating a copy of the formal application and agreement forms.

The application in question was supported by a means test and budget estimate forming the basis of assessment.

Deputies approved the application for financial assistance for 1991-1992 in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations to the sum of \$12,510.00 covering Br Plug's financial needs concerning tuition fees, study books, travel, health insurance and general living expenses.

Furthermore, after careful deliberation deputies acceded to Br Plug's request for an air fares allowance for his wife and children to the total sum of \$9,500.00 as a one-off payment without setting a precedent. However, due to uncertainty as to what constitutes exceptional circumstances (ad Art. 7 Regulations), deputies resolved to seek clarification on this matter from the Synod before committing the churches to the support of br. Plug's family. The present deputies have made this very clear to br. Plug prior to his departure for Canada, and have not made any commitments to support his family.

While seeking clarification in general on Art. 7 of the Regulations, the deputies also ask Synod to decide whether the churches have in fact already morally bound themselves to give support to the family of br. Plug by reason of the statements made by the previous deputies, which have given br. Plug certain indications that he would receive support for both himself and his family in light of his "exceptional circumstance" (ad Art 7 of the Regulations). For your information, we include the pertinent letters in which these statements have been made (see Appendices i and ii).

It may be noted that in the past Br J Kroeze for example received financial support for his whole family.

On the subject of rules and regulations, Deputies felt some reservation concerning the basis of assessment as stipulated in rule no.7 (p395 Acts Synod 1990). Deputies are of the opinion that the level of financial assistance to Theological students should be determined on the basis of gross income and reasonable liabilities in lieu of assessment based on taxable income. This measure could potentially reduce the liability to the churches and would ensure a more equitable distribution of assistance.

5 Publicity.

5.1 Appropriate information received from "Hamilton" was passed on to the membership by means of an article in the *Una Sancta* vol.xxxviii no. 24 p.490.

5.2 Deputies also convened a meeting with Dr Faber and five aspiring theological students from within our churches as a forum to discuss study syllabi, prerequisites and general matters pertaining to Hamilton Theological college.

6 Finance.

6.1 Support theological college Hamilton, refer Appendix iii.

6.2 Support Br. J Plug, refer Appendix iv.

7 Training in Australia.

7.1 Deputies fully endorse the considerations and recommendations concerning possible theological training in Australia, brought forward by the previous deputies in their report to Synod 1990.

Item 6 of their recommendations (also adopted as part of your deputies' mandate) reads: "that new deputies receive the mandate to alert the churches to the requirements and possibilities for an Australian based theological training in the light of changing circumstances".

In context with the report in question the changing circumstances referred to are a consequence of a gradual development process taking up to several years. Since Synod 1990 the status quo has remained unaltered Deputies therefore considered it prudent to let the matter rest for some time until new developments necessitate re-evaluation of the situation.

7.2 In order to facilitate the establishment of a Theological library, Deputies were instructed to find a facility to house some books.

Considering that at present determining factors such as quantity, degree of permanence and usage are unknown, Deputies have agreed to temporarily make space available in their homes, until such time as circumstances require an alternative solution.

8 Study debt of Dutch candidates.

Deputies have relayed all relevant information to the deputies for relations with churches abroad and have requested them to take up the matter with the relevant body within the Dutch sister churches. At the time of this writing, no further developments can be reported on.

9 Recommendations.

Deputies recommend that:

1. Synod provide clarification of article 7 of the "Regulations for the Financial Aid of Students" (page 392 Acts Synod 1990)

2. Synod decide whether the churches are morally bound to support the family of br. Plug in light of the statement made to br. Plug by the previous deputies.

3. Synod amend rule 7 (p395 Acts synod 1990) to exclude any reference to the TEAS (Austudy) support scheme and to make gross income together with reasonable liabilities the basis for assessment in lieu of assessment based on taxable income.

4. Synod decide:

- A. To assess the churches \$35 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton as from the first of July 1992.
- B. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College.
 - b. To encourage the churches to hold regular collections for the Theological Seminary in Pusan.
 - c. Continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and to obtain information.
 - d. Publish relevant information about the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students.
 - e. Continue to arrange the support of Theological Students whenever required in accordance with Art. 19 CO.
 - f. To monitor the need for, as well as the feasibility of establishing theological training in Australia.

With brotherly greetings

The Deputies

L Schoof, J A Bolhuis, A T Schiebaan, Rev A Van Delden (adviser)

Appendix i

Letter of previous deputies to br. J. Plug

Deputies for Training for the ministry appointed by Synod 1987 of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Launceston, 1-8-1989
8 Negara Street
7250

Mr Johan Plug
25 Pioneer Road
ALBANY WA 6330

Dear brother,

We had a meeting of Deputies, after Rev. K. Jonker conveyed to us the initial correspondence he conducted with you over the past five weeks.

With this letter we inform you that, in view of the Deputies, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia would have a general obligation to provide financial support, should you decide to enter the training for the ministry. We should qualify this to the extent that the support would be of a supplementary nature.

Some other young brothers in W.A., as you would be aware, are preparing themselves for training at Hamilton over the next few years. We are not as yet aware of their future needs, but we will try and avoid a situation in which the churches could be over-committed.

At the same time, we wish to make full allowance for your exceptional circumstances. It may well be that some help may have to come from other sources such as your own congregation, or the churches in Canada.

You will understand, therefore, that, although Deputies cannot commit the churches for the full period required for studies - in W.A. as well as at Hamilton - this must not be interpreted as anything less than positive encouragement in your considerations of the course to be followed.

We trust you have already thought of the financial implications of unforeseen circumstances such as extended illness. We do not know whether insurance cover might be available for cover them.

Finally, we commit you and yours to our faithful God and His Word of grace in the days ahead. May be continue to show you the way. The future is His.

With brotherly greetings,

Signed: J. VanderRos (for Deputies)

Appendix ii

Letter of previous deputies to br. J. Plug

Deputies Training for the Ministry

Launceston, 30-11-1989

Dear brother,

Your letter of 19 August was finally discussed by the Deputies when they managed to have another meeting this week. I have been instructed to reply as follows:

The Deputies are pleased with the information you supplied concerning your plans. The news from Hamilton regarding the entry requirements was indeed very favourable. The reference to help from the churches in Canada, in our letter dated 1 August, was linked with the possibility of a situation "in which the churches could be over-committed". Should, at a future point of time, the Australian resources be fully committed, assisting a number of our students, then it might be advisable to approach the Canadian brothers (Art. 19 C.O.) for their assistance. You would, at that stage, no doubt be members of a Canadian congregation. So you would make the approach.

Kindly advise if at any time you need our help or advice. There may be difficult months ahead for you, moving away from Albany and setting up home again. May the LORD give you His comfort and His joy in abundance as you make these moves in the faith He has given you.

With brotherly greetings,

Signed: J. VanderRos (for Deputies)

Appendix iii

Support for Theological College - Hamilton

		Assessed	Received	Amount Due
Albany	1988	6,330	6,330	0
	1989	6,330	6,330	0
	1990	7,442	7,442	0
collection	5/91		310.02	
	1991	9,485	9,485	0
Armadales	1988	8,400	8,400	0
	1989	8,400	8,400	0
	1990	9,230	9,230	0
	1991	10,045	10,045	0
Bedfordale	1988	3,960	3,960	0
	1989	3,960	3,960	0
	1990	4,745	4,745	0
	1991	5,355	5,355	0
Byford	1988	3,240	3,240	0
	1989	4,080	4,080	0
	1990	414	414	0
	1991	6,930	6,930	0

The Church of Byford inadvertently sent the majority of their 1990 assessment directly to the Hamilton Theological College (A\$5,306) This accounts for the small amount assessed by the Deputies in 1990, which normally would have been \$5,720)

Kelmscott	1988	5,190	5,190	0
	1989	5,670	5,670	0
	1990	6,337	6,337	0
	1991	6,860	6,860	0
Launceston	1988	7,380	7,380	0
	1989	6,090	6,090	0
	1990	6,825	6,825	0
	1991	6,860	6,860	0
Legana	1988	0	0	0
	1989	2,040	2,040	0
	1990	2,925	2,925	0
	1991	3,325	3,325	0

Theological College - statement of receipts and payments 1-7-1989 to 10-2-92

Opening Balance 1-7-1989	3473.28
Receipts from the churches	
Albany	23567.02
Armadales	31655.00
Bedfordale	14060.00
Byford	11424.00
Kelmscott	24057.00
Launceston	13685.53
Legana	8290.00

Interest received	1366.16	
Total receipts		131586.99
Payments		
Hamilton College		106393.33
Bank charges		81.26
Repayment to Needy		
Students Fund see Note 2#		3818.33

Total payments **110292.92**

Closing Balance 10-2-1992 See Note # 1 **21295.07**

Note # 1 : Previous deputies had transferred the balance of the Needy Students Account to the Theological College Account, and sent this money to the Theological College as an overpayment. This was done with the understanding that the new deputies would re-imburse this amount to the Needy Students Fund from the Theological College Fund, as is done here. The sum of \$3818.33 consists of \$3355.51 - payment from Launceston -, and a balance of \$462.82 from the Needy Students Fund

Note # 2 : The Deputies deposited the funds for the College in the Permanent Building Society. The government has frozen all assets from this Building Society, therefore the amount of \$20,478.58 cannot be retrieved at this time. A loss is expected, the extent of which has not yet been determined. This matter is pending a decision from the Courts.

Appendix iv

Support for needy students

Opening balance	Assessed	462.82 received	amount due
Albany 1991/92	3850	3850	0
Armada 1991/92	4774	4774	0
Bedford 1991/92	2464	2464	0
Byford 1991/92	2970	2970	0
Kelmscott 1991/92	3278	3278	0
Launceston 1991/92	3542	3542	0
Legana 1991/92	1122	561	561
Kelmscott Youth clubs		600	
Interest received		301.62	
Total funds		22803.95	
Payments to J Plug			10000
Fees paid			26
Total payments			10026
Closing balance	see note		12777.95

Note: Deputies initially deposited funds in the Permanent Building Society. Now that the Government has frozen all assets of PBS an amount of \$10150.79 can not be retrieved. A loss is expected, the extent of which has not been determined.

SYNOD TREASURY

Report to the 1992 Synod

Esteemed brothers,

Attached is a "Statement of Receipts and Expenditure" and a "Funds Statement" for the Synod Treasury for the period 15 July 1989 to 31 January 1992.

Receipts:

In September 1990 when the treasury had adequate funds, the Synod account was transferred to a Cash Management Account. This is reflected in the amount of interest earned. Additional income was also received from the sale of reports by some of the churches.

Expenditure:

Expenditure was considerably less than budgeted for in many areas, however it should be noted that some accounts are still outstanding with deputies and may be received before the 1992 Synod.

Some items to note are:

Ref. 8: Deputies Churches abroad. An amount of \$1950.85 was advanced for an travelling costs for Mr Johnston (from Indonesia) to visit Perth. This money is in the form of a loan and will be reimbursed by the churches from collections.

No invoice has been received for I.C.R.C. costs.

Ref. 14: Printing Reports to Synod 1992. These costs are still to be incurred.

Draft Budget:

A draft budget will be prepared in consultation with the churches and forwarded to Synod via the convening Church.

With brotherly greetings

A. Hordyk

Synod Treasurer

24 Chamberlain Way,

Armadale, W.A. 6112

3 February, 1992

Statement of receipts and expenditure 15 - 7 -1989 to 31 - 1 - 1992

RECEIPTS

	Budget	Actual
Albany	9152.00	9152.00
Armadale	7380.00	7380.00
Bedfordale	4724.00	4724.00
Byford	5692.00	5692.00
Kelmscott	6284.00	6284.00
Launceston	6790.00	6790.00
West Tamar	2150.00	2150.00
Sale of reports	0.00	430.00
Bank Interest	0.00	1841.88
Totals	42172.00	44443.88

Treasurer of Synod

EXPENDITURE

	Budget detail	Budget total	Actual detail	Actual total
1. 1990 Synod costs				
Typist	700.00		777.85	
Photocopier hire	900.00		465.00	
Copying paper	150.00		82.10	
Stationery etc	300.00		33.60	
Insurance	65.00		0.00	
Computer supplies	300.00		208.52	
Amplifier hire	150.00		200.00	
Screen hire	60.00		80.00	
Table cloths	250.00		0.00	
Meals etc	1200.00		859.41	
Presentations	300.00		166.60	
Miscellaneous	200.00		42.00	
Postage/phone	200.00		172.40	
		5000.00		3087.48
2. Loss of income of synod delegates				
		3200.0		2700.00
3. Travel to 1990 Synod				
Launceston	3618.00		2473.50	
Albany	320.00		0.00	
		3938.00		2473.50
4. Printing of 1990 Acts				
		1500.00		1500.00
5. Deputies Bible translations				
Books/bibles	300.00		76.70	
Incidentals	200.00		0.00	
		500.00		76.70
6. Deputies contact PCEA				
Books	100.00		75.44	
Incidentals	200.00		84.00	
Travel	1600.00		1606.00	
		1900.00		1765.44
7. Deputies Book of Praise				
Books	50.00			
Incidentals	50.00			
		100.00		0.00
8. Deputies for contact with churches abroad				
Books	100.00		195.62	
Travel Costs	3800.00		1942.57	
Una Sancta Subss	500.00		294.00	
Typing/copying	600.00		60.90	
Postage/phone	250.00		334.27	
ICRC costs	500.00			

Advance Mr Johnston	0.00	1950.85	
	5750.00		4778.21
9. Deputies for revision of the Church Order			
Books	100.00	80.00	
Incidentals	100.00	0.00	
	200.00		80.00
10. Deputies training for ministry			
Incidentals	100.00		0.00
11. Church visitation			
Tasmania 1988	981.00	918.00	
Tasmania '90 & '91	800.00	688.00	
Albany '90 & '91'	320.00	160.00	
	2100.00		1766.00
12. Pulpit exchanges			
Tasmania 1990 & 1991 1x	2400.00	1092.00	
Albany 1990 & 1991 2x	320.00	320.00	
	2720.00		1412.00
13. Treasury admin.		350.00	182.66
14. 1992 reports		1800.00	0.00
15. Synod archives			
fireproof cabinet	2500.00	2380.00	
incidentals	200.00	50.00	
	2700.00		2430.00
16. Treasury reserve funds	5000.00		0.00
17. Post audit payments			
administration	383.00	346.40	
1990 reports	2150.00	2147.40	
Travel to meetings	120.00	120.00	
Travel etc ICRC	780.00	773.62	
Pulpit exchange	680.00	673.00	
	4113.00		4060.42
18. Loan repayment	1000.00		1000.00
19. Additional deputies costs			
EPCA	100.00	0.00	
Dialogue RCA	100.00	0.00	
	200.00		0.00
Totals	42171.00		27312.41

Funds statement for the period 15 July 1989 to 31 January 1992

Balance at 15 July 1989	556.23		
Receipts	44443.88		
		45000.11	
Less Expenditure		27312.41	
Balance at 31 January 1992			\$17687.70

Treasurer of Synod

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APPENDIX K

(see Acts 1992, Article 52)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ARCHIVIST

(as adopted by Synod 1975, Acts Article 53, re-stated by Synod 1983, Acts Articles 114 and 112, and amended by Synod 1992, Acts Article 52)

1. The church council of the church keeping the Archives is in charge of the Archives of Synod.
2. The church council shall appoint an archivist.
3. The archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; and who has received or seen items and the items involved.
4. The church council reports to Synod.
5. The archivist shall carefully store everything, using files which will be placed in the filing cabinet, taking care that everything is clearly catalogued.
6. Access to items in the general archives requires permission of the church keeping the archives. Access to items in the secret archives requires permission of two churches, or of Synod.
7. Original documents shall not be lent out, but the archivist shall supply photo copies instead. The name of the inquirer, the title of the document and the date shall be recorded.

REGULATIONS

for the financial aid of students

(Article 19 of the Church Order)

(as amended by Synod 1992, Acts Article 50)

- Article 1 Financial aid will be provided only to students who intend to become a minister in one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia or in one of their sister-churches. It will be provided in accordance with these Regulations and the RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS.
- Article 2 Financial aid will be provided only for studies at a college or seminary of one of the sister-churches mentioned in Article 1.
- Article 3 Financial aid will be provided in the form of interest-free loans for the purpose of meeting study costs and cost-of-living expenses of the student. Any additional aid for a married student will be provided on the same basis. The church to which the eligible student belongs when he begins his studies has secondary responsibility to provide support, after the student's family and before the federation of churches. The deputies, when assessing the churches, must take into account the financial commitments which the local churches have assumed with respect to the support of needy students.
- Article 4 Students proposing to enrol at one of the approved colleges must comply with the pre-requisites of that college before financial aid will be made available. A student who needs to complete additional studies after having obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian University, and before being admitted to a college may be financially supported by deputies for that time of his study.
- Article 5 In normal circumstances financial aid will be given only for the duration of a normal-length study course at the college concerned.
- Article 6 Payments will be made via the student's parents. In the event that it is considered more expedient to have the payments made directly to the student, a written request to that effect may be made to deputies.
- Article 7 Financial aid is normally available only for the needs of the student. In exceptional cases aid may be extended for the needs of the family of a married student.
- Article 8 To assist deputies in determining the student's need for financial aid, they may request information concerning his financial situation from the consistory of the church of which he is a member. Similar information may be sought about the student's parents. For this purpose an Application Form For Financial Assistance will be supplied.
- Article 9 If a student marries during the course of his studies, payments will

- continue to be made via his parents. A student who was married prior to the commencement of his theological study will be paid directly.
- Article 10 The parents of the student, or - in the case of the student being paid directly - the student himself, shall annually submit a budget of expenditure. Any proposed increase in expenditure must be sufficiently substantiated.
- Article 11 The student must keep deputies informed about his study progress. Deputies may also make their own inquiries at the college or seminary. If the student fails to make satisfactory progress and desires to continue with this studies he may request a continuation of financial aid. This request will be given consideration only if the college senate supports his case. After a second failure approval to continue financial aid can be given only if the failure was caused by circumstances beyond the student's control (sickness, accident etc).
- Article 12 The maximum amount of financial aid will be determined by deputies, if necessary after consultation with the college or seminary. Deputies will take into account the income of the student (including that of his wife if he is married), and the support from his parents or from any other source.
If a student is not eligible for government support for tertiary education, then financial aid will be given by deputies only in exceptional circumstances.
- Article 13 Circumstances which will tend to raise the level of financial aid needed will be considered by deputies on their merit.
- Article 14 The financial aid may include an allowance, as determined by deputies, for the purchase of books. This allowance is for the purpose of starting the student's library (dictionaries, commentaries etc). Proof of purchase of these books must be supplied by the student.
- Article 15 A student whose financial position changes due to either an increase or decrease in income or of assets must inform deputies accordingly, as this may affect the extent of financial aid received by him from the churches.
- Article 16 A student who desires to end his studies in the case he no longer wants to become a minister, or for any other reason, must inform deputies accordingly as soon as possible.
- Article 17 The financial aid will end at the time when the student, after having completed his studies and ecclesiastical examinations, becomes the responsibility of a church. If the student does not receive a call from a church the financial aid will end five weeks after his preparatory examination.
- Article 18 Subject to the provisions of Article 19, repayment of the provided loans will be waived once the student has been ordained as minister of one of the churches mentioned in Article 1, at the rate of two years of financial aid for every year of ministry, in the same order.
- Article 19 The provided loans or any outstanding amounts thereof must be repaid and are instantly claimable when:
- a the student terminates his studies
 - b the student decides not to become a minister
 - c the student, after having completed the course of studies, does not

make himself available for call by one of the churches mentioned in Article 1

- d the student does not accept a call extended to him or, after having accepted a call, withdraws and does not accept another call
- e the student ceases to be a member of the sister-church either by his withdrawal or by excommunication
- f the student, having become a minister, withdraws from or is dismissed by the church or sister-church concerned

In the case of financial hardship when immediate repayment in full would be too difficult, deputies may consider a request for repayment by instalments.

Article 20 If it becomes clear that too high a level of financial aid was given in the past, the total sum of excess money must immediately be repaid in full.

Article 21 The obligation to repay loans may be waived in case of sickness, death or in other exceptional circumstances.

Article 22 In any cases for which these Regulations do not make provision deputies have the authority to decide.

Article 23 Deputies must report to the next synod concerning any special actions which were taken.

Article 24 A copy of these REGULATIONS and of the RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS will be supplied to the student and to all who are directly involved in the financial aid to needy students ad Art.19 of the Church Order.

RULES

for the Fund for the Support of Needy Students

- 1 Students who apply for financial aid for their Theological study, on the ground of Article 19 of the Church Order, may be supported by the Fund for the Support of Needy Students (FSNS).
- 2 The FSNS provides financial aid for the following purposes:
 - a Tuition fees
 - b Study books
 - c Living expenses
 - d Clothing
 - e Pocket money
 - f Fares
 - g Health insurance
 - h Incidental expenses
 - i Other expenses as detailed
- 3 To become eligible for support from S.S.F. the student must:
 - a be a confessing member of one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
 - b be accepted by one of the recognised theological colleges
 - c undertake full-time studies
 - d have made satisfactory progress in the study for an Australian Bachelor of Arts degree and/or in the previous study year of the college
- 4 The FSNS distinguishes two classes of students:
 - a Students who are financially dependent on their parents for their studies at a theological college
 - b Independent students who have their own income and/or are supported by their wife; and all students who were married prior to the beginning of their theological study
- 5 In the case of a 'dependent' student the income of his parents must be assessed annually by way of a 'means' test, before the student can be supported by FSNS.
- 6 In the case of an 'independent' student his income and/or that of his wife must be assessed annually by way of a 'means' test, before the student can be supported by FSNS.
- 7 The basis for applying the means 'test' referred to in Articles 5 and 6 will be the student's gross income together with reasonable assets.
- 8 The forms for the 'means' test must be duly completed and signed.
- 9 An agreement between deputies and the parents and/or the student - as the case may be -, must be completed and signed before financial aid can be given by FSNS

RULES FOR SYNODS

OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of AUSTRALIA

(as amended by Synod 1992, Acts Article 156)

Article 1 - FREQUENCY OF SYNODS

Synods shall be convened once in every three years - in accordance with Article 45 of the Church Order, - provided that as long as Classes have not been formed Synods shall be convened once in every two years.

An extra-ordinary Synod shall be convened at the request of at least two Classes - in accordance with Article 45 of the Church Order, - provided that as long as Classes have not been formed it shall be done only at the request of at least two churches.

Article 2 - SYNOD DELEGATES

- (a) Every Classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to Synod, provided that as long as there are only two Classes, every Classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. Delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as is possible.

As long as Classes have not been formed, every church shall delegate its minister and one elder to Synod.

If no minister is available an elder may be appointed in his place; if no elder is available a deacon may be appointed in his place.

- (b) The churches shall provide their delegates with proper credentials, confirming therein their adherence to the Word of God; the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order.

Article 3 - CONVENING THE SYNOD

- (a) The Synod shall appoint, in alphabetic order, the church which is to convene the next Synod.

- (b) This convening church shall:

- 1 give six months written notice to the churches of the Synod's meeting place and time, and inform the churches of the closing date for correspondence.
- 2 invite the churches to submit items for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- 3 request Synod's Deputies to submit their reports for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- 4 prepare the draft agenda in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 (c) of these *Rules*.
- 5 forward to the churches - in triplicate, and at least three months prior to the convening of Synod - the draft agenda together with any documentation on the items received for inclusion on the draft agenda. An updated agenda - in triplicate and including documentation - is to be sent to the churches immediately after the closing date for correspondence.
- 6 ensure that all items required at Synod are tabled.

- (c) The following items shall be placed on the draft agenda:

- 1 all those listed in Article 13 of these *Rules*.

- 2 all those received from the churches by at least four months prior to the Synod date.
 - 3 all deputies' reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of Article 9(b) of these *Rules*.
 - 4 all correspondence received.
- (d) The closing date for correspondence to be dealt with by Synod shall be set at three weeks prior to the convening date.
- (e) In the case of an extra-ordinary Synod, the times and conditions specified in this Article shall be adhered to as much as possible.

Article 4 - CONDUCT OF SYNODS

- (a) When Synod deals with general business it shall be conducted in 'open' sessions. Business of a personal nature will be dealt with only in 'closed' sessions.
- (b) Separate Synodical *Acts* shall be written for the 'open' and 'closed' sessions.
- (c) Members of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of Australia have the right of admission to the 'open' sessions.
- (d) Synod delegates only may participate in the discussions unless Synod decides otherwise.
- (e) On the agenda of Synod shall appear all items submitted to the convening church before the closing date. Items of correspondence received after the closing date shall be included on the agenda only if Synod is convinced that there are exceptional reasons requiring their inclusion. However, after having adopted the agenda, Synod shall accept no further correspondence.

Article 5 - OFFICERS OF SYNOD

- (a) Synod shall appoint the following officers:
 - a chairman
 - a vice-chairman
 - a first clerk
 - a second clerk
- (b) the vice-chairman assists the other Synodical officers where needed in the execution of their duties; he prepares the 'Press Release' of Synod.
- (c) the first clerk prepares the *Acts* of Synod.
- (d) the second clerk conducts all Synod's correspondence. This includes written advice to all parties concerned, of Synod's decisions and appointments.
A copy of every item of outgoing correspondence shall be placed in Synod's archives.

Article 6 - VOTING

- (a) Wherever possible, decisions should be taken unanimously.
- (b) In the case of a vote being necessary, any question in a matter of general business shall be voted on orally. In the case of a tied vote, the question shall be deemed to have been rejected.
- (c) Questions concerning persons shall be voted on by secret ballot.
Ballot papers incorrectly filled in and blank ballot papers shall be invalid.
Those who receive the largest number of votes shall be deemed to have been elected, provided that this number be not less than half the number of valid votes cast.
If a decision cannot be made by way of two free ballots, any subsequent ballot shall decide between those who received most votes in the previous ballot.

If the vote is tied another ballot shall be held. Should a tied vote occur for a second time, the decision shall be made by calling upon the name of the Lord and the drawing of lots.

Article 7 - PROPOSALS AND DECISIONS

- (a) The chairman may direct that a proposal be submitted in writing.
- (b) Decisions shall be formulated and recorded in the *Acts* after the model in the Appendix

Article 8 - EXECUTION OF DECISIONS

Synod's decisions shall be carried out either by its officers or by Deputies appointed for that purpose.

Article 9 - DEPUTIES

- (a) The appointment of deputies with their alternates shall be done in accordance with Article 48 of the Church Order. In particular, Synod may appoint deputies with their alternates for:
 - relations with other churches
 - the exercise of discipline over office bearers (Article 76 of the Church Order)
 - the Synod's treasury
 - the Synod's archives
 - the audit of the archives
- (b) All deputies' reports must be made in writing. Unless otherwise instructed, such reports must reach the convening church in time for inclusion with the draft agenda to be sent to the churches three months before Synod - see Article 3 (b). Supplementary reports and Late reports dealing with matters which took place after the reports' due date shall also be submitted to the convening Church in writing for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- (c) Deputies shall present their financial statement (if any) to Synod, to be audited before they are discharged.
- (d) Synod shall give deputies proper and written instructions.
- (e) Deputies shall be appointed in closed session.

Article 10 - APPROBATION OF CALLS

As long as Classes have not been formed, the approbation of calls shall be done by Classis-church which shall report to the next Synod.

The following documents are required for the approbation of a call of a minister:

- 1 the letter of call
- 2 the letter of acceptance of the call
- 3 the Certificate of Dismissal from the church last served by the minister
- 4 the Certificate of Dismissal from the Classis to which the church last served by the minister, belongs
- 5 a Certificate from the calling church that the necessary public announcements were made

Article 11 - SYNOD COSTS

- (a) Itemised accounts of properly authorized Synod expenses incurred by either the convening church, Synod deputies or delegates, must be presented to the Synod treasurer for payment.
- (b) The several deputies appointed for one specific purpose must submit a joint statement of expenses.
- (c) The share of each church in Synod costs shall be in proportion to its number of confessing members as at the 1st January of the year of Synod.

Article 12 - SYNOD TREASURER

- (a) The Synod treasurer shall inform the churches of their share of Synod costs
- (b) He shall pay all properly authorized and documented Synod expenditures
- (c) The books of the treasurer shall be audited by Synod deputies, following which the treasurer will be discharged

Article 13 - STANDARD PROCEEDINGS

The following proceedings shall be standard at every Synod:

- 1 Opening by the convening Church
- 2 Signing of the attendance list and examination of credentials
- 3 Election of officers
- 4 Constitution of Synod
- 5 Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
- 6 Adoption of the Agenda
- 7 Adoption of meeting procedure
- 8 Incoming correspondence
- 9 Instructions
- 10 Report by Classis churches
- 11 Deputies' reports, and discharge of deputies
- 12 Audit of Treasurer's books, and discharge of Treasurer
- 13 Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of Synod costs
- 14 Appointment of deputies
- 15 Appointment of convening Church, and the place and time of the next Synod
- 16 Questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order
- 17 Personal questions
- 18 Adoption of *Acts*
- 19 Approval of Press Release
- 20 Censure according to Article 47 of the Church Order
- 21 Closing of Synod

Article 14 - AMENDMENT OF THESE RULES

Amendment of these *Rules* shall be sought only by means of a proposal from one or more churches.

Model for Committee Proposals

TITLE

Committee ? presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda Item(s) :

ADMISSIBILITY

1.
 - a.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - b.
- 2.

OBSERVATION(S)

- 1.
2.
 - a.
 - b.
- 3.
- 4.

CONSIDERATION(S)

- 1.
- 2.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1.
- 2.

SPEECHES AT SYNOD 1992

ADDRESS

by Reverend OJ Douma, on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Acts*, Article 16)

Mr chairman, esteemed brothers,

It is for us a reason of great thankfulness to be in your midst in this synod. As deputies of your sister churches in the Netherlands we have the privileges of sharing in your church life, that the Lord has blessed.

It was in 1981 that a delegate of the Dutch churches, the Reverend P Lok, visited your synod. That is 11 years ago. In the meantime you could grow from hardly four churches with 1800 members to seven churches with nearly 2800 members. We are also thankful for the fact, that nearly every church has its own minister. But the best thing we may discover in your midst is, that you not only given the name of Calvin to your teaching institutions but also follow his reformed line (trace) of more than four ages. With thankfulness we also mention, that your correspondence with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands is a matter of conscience for your churches. You do not run after your contacts abroad, but you verify them in an accurate way. With the joyful result, that you continue the sister church- relationship with them.

We might also establish with thankfulness, that you present your synodical matters as a fullgrown sister. We took note of your reports with great admiration. We cannot judge in fairness your church affairs from so far. But our general opinion is, that you earnestly maintain the truth of God in the midst of this world. We hope and trust to be affirmed in our expectations in this synod.

Some items of discussion have reference to the ICRC and the relation to presbyterian churches. Years ago your churches took the initiative for establishing a Reformed International Synod. But your original expectations that Reformed Churches should involve only the sister churches with the Three Forms of Unity were not granted. Presbyterian churches are also invited from the beginning. That was - by the way - in line with the history from before the Liberation of 1944.

We have observed more than once that you had (and maybe have) difficulty with the experience of unity between churches with the 3 Forms of Unity and those that maintain the Westminster Standards. We understand some objections. But the more we appreciate the proposal of deputies to this synod, that you like to maintain (be it provisional) the tie with the members of the ICRC and with the ICRC itself.

As to the churches which delegated us, we cannot tell you much news about them. The possibilities of contact and information are now in such a way, that almost nothing can be hidden in the world.

All the same, with thanks to the Lord, we can tell you, that the Reformed churches in the Netherlands grow steadily, although only from the inside outwards. The growth from outside is almost neutralised by church-desertion. This is a matter of great concern to us. We see how in Holland a stream of demonic thoughts is going on to dominate the political and social life and this is threatening our churches and its members. We have to fight in a struggle that is bitter and - according to our feelings - with unequal power in comparison with the world. But we thank our Lord Who granted us so much in the churches and in our schools and press and in our reformed associations. With the command and the consolation to hold fast what we have, so that no one may seize our crown (Revelation 3:11). And also to hold true to what we have attained (Phil 3:16).

You will understand that the church contact with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken - and also in some places the contact with the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken - arouses expectations by some people who are sometimes using means that are more experimental than well-considered and profitable. But we may (with confidence) go our in the world with what we received from our Lord. It is a pity that we must find, that most of the members of other churches are more interested in uns Scriptural tolerance and leaving history in peace than in what we received from our Lord.

Brothers, we ask you therefore: pray for your sister churches in the Netherlands as well. We discover in this world how difficult it is for a man - and also for a church - to put away sins out of heart and life. But we have a Mediator in heaven, Who knows our trouble. And He is able to do what a faithful heart has no idea of.

May the Lord bless you and our churches and all the churches, which maintain the Word of God and the confession of Truth.

The Lord may grant you a blessed synod. And also a rich church life in love and in wisdom to stand firm on the way to the triumph of Jesus Christ, which is as sure as the glory that comes!

Thank you very much.

RESPONSE

to Dutch delegates, by Synod's chairman (*Acts*, Article 39)

Brothers delegates,

In response to the address of Rev. J. Douma of last Tuesday evening, first of all I would like to thank him for the warm-hearted words he has spoken. The ties between the FRCA and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have always been very strong. And this is understandable as well, since the Netherlands is the country from which the first generation of migrants came. Yet it is also understandable that in the course of the years these strong ties have lost some of their colour. Especially lately there seems to be some shift of direction. If I may make this clear with just one example, then I think of the calling of ministers. In the past when there was a vacancy, it was quite usual that a minister from the Netherlands was called, yet during the last years it has become more and more common to call a minister from one of the Canadian sister-churches. At present we have 4 ministers who have come from Canada and two who have come from the Netherlands, though one of them is a real Aussie. The reason behind the shift in direction is that a generation has grown up that is no longer conversant with the Dutch language. In one way one can lament this, especially as far as study material is concerned. On the other hand this is quite a natural development.

Yet all this, of course, doesn't need to detract anything from the relations which we as churches have with one another. As to these relations, they have as their aim to be unto a help of one another. The new proposed rules, which will be discussed at this synod, start with, "Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage, and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world." Rev. Douma and Br. VanWijnen, your presence in this synod shows that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands indeed want to give real meaning to this rule, and we are thankful for this, especially since over the last two years the letters which we have received from you were not many. We hope, therefore, that this visit may be of great benefit for a better understanding of one another. A better understanding -also with respect to some of the concerns we have in relation to contact with other churches, and with respect to the ICRC. I'm very thankful that we have the opportunity to discuss these matters in your presence. You can take home what you have heard, and hopefully can now place all this in a much better context than when

you would have received a letter from us. Let us indeed hope and pray that this visit may reap fruits also for future contacts.

As you have said the other night, Rev. Douma, the FRCA have become a full grown sister. A full grown sister whose earnest desire is together with all the churches, i.e. together with the churches with which we stand on the same foundation, to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. May the King of the church give us indeed true unity in that struggle.

You have spoken, Rev. Douma, also about some of the problems which you as churches face in a secular society. On the one hand you have spoken about steady growth, yet on the other hand you also mentioned that this growth comes mainly from inside, the number of outside increase is often neutralised by the number of those who turn their back upon the church. In this we indeed experience that Satan does his utmost to destroy Christ's church gathering work, especially where it concerns the youth of the church. The seed of the covenant grows up in difficult times. And in Australia this is no less different in the Netherlands. There fore, together with you, we pray that our heavenly Father may make our young people realise what great heritage has been entrusted to them. A heritage which has been defended throughout the ages in many a Reformation.

Let us as sister churches indeed hold fast what we have, so that no one may seize our crown. Let us hold fast what we have, not in dead conservatism, but as a living churches of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown." In Rev. 3 this call is preceded by a promise. The glorified Christ says to His church in Philadelphia, "I am coming soon." This means our Lord Jesus Christ is on His way to the help of the church. Moreover through His Spirit He will guide the church in the truth. Let us then indeed as sister churches hold to this truth, without compromising it, so that no one may seize our crown.

Rev. Douma, Br. VanWijnen, may I ask you, upon your return to pass on to our sister churches in the Netherlands our warm greetings. You pray for us, we pray for you, that together we may remain faithful to the very end. May the King of the church bless you and in due time give you a safe journey back to the Netherlands.

FAREWELL ADDRESS

by brother DJ Van Wijnen, on behalf of Dutch delegates (*Acts*, Article 88)
Esteemed brothers,

It is not unusual to find myself on a pulpit. Every now and then elders will have to stand in for their minister and hold a so-called "lees dienst". What is unusual is that I have to address a Synod meeting in a foreign language. I realise that I will certainly make some mistakes. Please forgive me when I do so.

Something else is unusual... I refer to some remarks made by Rev. Huizinga some days ago. I am told that as a Dutchman I am supposed to be HONEST when I speak, but not necessarily POLITE! However, I will try to be both.

Rev. Douma and myself have enjoyed our stay, including your hospitality and friendship. The temperatures outside could have been a little higher, however there were 'warm' feelings in your hearts towards us, which more than anything else compensated that deficiency.

I therefore will certainly propose to my fellow deputies to never again allow 11 years to pass before new delegates from Holland will visit your churches. This, of course is based on the assumption that our behaviour has been of such that further invitations will be forthcoming...

I would like to make a few remarks on the decisions taken by this Synod so far. We are

grateful of what was decided about our churches. In particular the point which was expressed in the first consideration namely: **that our churches are faithful to the God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.** During the discussions on this subject it became evident that some of your members have rather great objections to certain unqualified developments in the Dutch churches. We pray that if in the future certain objections were to remain, these will either be fully substantiated or else completely disappear from your table.

As far as the ICRC is concerned we sincerely hope that this Synod will come to a positive decision and that your churches will wholeheartedly remain a member of that Conference. Because, dear brothers, if in the end we expect to be among a great company of people that no man can number, should we then not keep our eyes open for these people and extend a hand of fellowship? And if we believe that the church is one in PRINCIPLE, should we not then take whatever steps are possible to make it one in PRACTICE?

Esteemed brothers, to fail to see who your brothers are, is to give way to an inward-looking attitude which is liable to produce exclusivism.

As far as the PCEA is concerned and in the light of what I said above we are happy that you have decided to continue the discussion and we hope that you will be able to recognize these churches as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ in the near future.

We regret in having to leave you before Synod has come to an end, but other commitments compel us to go.

Mr chairman, much more could be said, but since your time is precious, I am going to finish.. What will the future bring us?

Brothers, Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you (1 Peter 5:7).

Continue to stand fast in the liberty where with Christ has made you free.

Today it is Ascension Day, Christ has been carried up into heaven:

*Though now ascended up on high
He hears and answers every cry
To Christ, who pleads before God's Throne
Our many weaknesses are known.*

And therefore:

*Let us, forgetting things behind
Press on to God's right hand
There, with the Saviour and His saints
Triumphantly to stand.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

ADDRESS

by Reverend E Fangidae of the Gereja Masehi Musyafir di Timor (Acts, Article 31)

Esteemed chairman, members of synod and guests.

I am honoured to be able to address you at this special occasion of the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). May I express my gratitude and appreciation for the invitation to attend this synod and for your help to bring me here. Personally, I am minister of the Gereja Musyafir Masehi of Kupang, which is the capital city of Timor. I speak to you and bring you greetings in the name of the Triune God on behalf of the Gereja Musyafir Masehi of Timor, or the Evangelical Pilgrim Churches of Timor (EPCT). This is the first time you see in person a representative of these churches at one of your assemblies. The first meeting we had with your people was back in November, 1987, when I attended the synod of your sister churches in Sumba (The Reformed Churches

of Sumba, Savu and Timor). There I met Rev K Bruning and brother C DeMan who represented the FRCA.

The honour to attend the Synod of the RCSST/GGRI gave me the opportunity to meet a number of our students who attend the Theological Seminary in Waimarangu in Sumba. We could also discuss relations with them. Indeed, we now have a good working relationship with your sister churches on Sumba, Savu and Timor. That relationship grows. I will come back to that.

2. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE EPCT.

You might think that the churches I represent are like your sister churches on Sumba, that is, they have grown as the result of missionary work. Well, though we do mission work, the churches have not started in that way.

Our churches originally belonged to the Protestant Indonesian Church, which you may compare with the Dutch State Church, the 'Hervormde Kerken'. Those churches were established about 400 years ago through the efforts of the Dutch State Church in the time of the Dutch East Indies Company. However, these churches became liberal during this century, as they did in the Netherlands. In 1950 we liberated ourselves from these liberal churches and we returned to the teachings of calvinism. In the first years there was a struggle to obtain good leaders so that a healthy reformed church-life could be developed. I will come back to that point. But I would like to repeat that our history is one of secession from the liberal and false church and a return to the full and reformed truth, that is, to the full and pure teachings of the Bible.

After 40 years of struggle in which we depended on the almighty, Triune God of mercy and grace the LORD has blessed us with a federation of churches. It includes 20 churches and two mission posts. The total membership is over 6000, including the children. Some of the largest churches are in Kupang (I serve the 'Galilee' church which has about 1000 members and the 'Brethren' church in Kupang has about 2250 members). There are 11 churches on the island of Timor with one mission post at a remote inland area. All these are on the western end of Timor. Then there are 7 churches on the island of Roti; one church and one mission post on the island of Savu and one church on the island of Semau just off Timor. Student Johnson Dethan was serving this church on the island of Semau. That then is something about the background, history and statistics of the Musyafir churches. Next I will tell you something more about these churches.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE EPCT.

From the time of the secession in 1950 till 1985 we had no clear statement concerning the doctrine of the churches. Our main founding father, Rev David Duma (who still lives and at 80 walks 20-40 kilometres on Sundays to go around the churches to preach), he taught pure calvinism. He travelled about on foot to spread the reformed faith and to build reformed churches. But there were so few leaders. Therefore he appointed and ordained the most gifted men as ministers, though they had no formal training. He instructed them to govern the church according to the teachings of calvinism.

But the lack of reformed literature in our language and the lack of good and continuous training for the leaders meant that the churches remained weak in doctrine and the government of the church. It is this serious lack that we try to correct today. I will come back to this.

Till 1985 we did not use a specific church order but followed a traditional approach in governing the churches. There was just no one able to help us with this. The only available literature was the Heidelberg Catechism, and this has been of great benefit to the churches, as far as doctrine and church government go.

From 1985 to 1991 there were united efforts to correct this weakness. At our 1991 Synod last year the synod unanimously adopted the Church Order of Dort and the Three Forms of Unity, the same standards as the Reformed Churches of Sumba, Savu and Timor,

churches with which we work closely and with whom we wish to draw even closer. At present the EPCT thus have the same standards as the FRCA.

IV. RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES.

In 1985 I met Rev J Klammer at the airport in Kupang. He was helping the Reformed Churches on Sumba, Savu and Timor. We became acquainted. The following year, 1986, he visited the EPCT specifically to learn more about us. You may have read of this in the report of your sister churches in the Netherlands. In 1987 your sister churches of Sumba invited us to their synod. I was delegated to attend. As stated before, I met Rev K Bruning and Brother C DeMan, my excellent host, there. I believe that Rev Bruning, as deputy then, reported back on that synod and meeting.

We enjoy a close relation with the Reformed Churches on Sumba, Savu and Timor. It has not come to sister relations yet, but we hope that will not take too long. Meanwhile we have a good, working relationship. It has been agreed that our students may attend their seminary in Sumba to be trained for the ministry. That is where our student Johnson Dethan has taken his theological studies. The seminary has the rule that students study for 5 years and must fill a two year vicariate, a type of apprenticeship. Our students may do that in the churches on Sumba. Student Johnson was doing so in one of the EPCT churches, the one on the island of Semau. Personally, the seminary in Sumba invited me to give lectures one month per year, which I gladly do. I should also mention that the lecturers or docents from Sumba come to Timor, to Kupang, to give seminars for our leaders so that they can be better equipped for their offices. So you can tell that there is a good working relationship.

In 1991 your sister churches in the Netherlands sent two ministers, Rev H Knigge and Rev T Wendt, to us to visit and interview us as well as to attend some of our meetings. They brought back a report to their churches, highlighting the need for able men who can teach our future leaders. As a result the deputies in Holland have decided to send Rev H Knigge to help us train present and future leaders in the reformed faith. He has been released from his duties from the church he served, and is now awaiting permission to come to Timor. He expects to come to us in early 1993, the Lord willing.

This brings me to my last point.

V. OUR EXPECTATIONS AND REQUESTS FROM YOU.

We have a growing relation with the GGRI/RCSST. We hope that soon becomes sister relations, especially after our 1991 Synod when we adopted the Church Order of Dort, exactly as they have it, as well as the Three Forms of Unity. We have the same expectations from you in Australia, from you, our neighbours, reformed neighbours, who have such a rich heritage to share with us. We would like you to get to know us better. I am surprised that you do not know more about us. Hopefully this visit will help. In 1988 we sent you a letter asking for sister relations. We were thankful that in 1990 your synod decided to seek contact with us and to visit us. It was too bad that the planned visit last year had to be postponed. We look forward to receiving your delegates this year when they attend the synod of the Sumba churches. We hope to be there for the synod in Savu too. Later on we hope to be your hosts in Kupang, Timor. I stress once more that our greatest need is not money but help in training good leaders for the churches, good ministers and good elders whom we call "ruling and teaching elders."

It was for this reason that we were very thankful that our student-minister, Johnson Dethan, can come to visit you here for about four months. We thank you for paying his way here and for organising his stay. He can now learn English in a formal and practical way; he will learn to understand reformed church life in its full form; and hopefully you can help equip him so that he can study further in Hamilton, Canada. I need someone to take my place; we need someone to help train good leaders. To do that we need

someone who is thoroughly trained himself. We hope he can go to Hamilton for that. We also hope that you can help to sponsor him to go to Hamilton and to train there. That is what we hope and ask. Is it too much? You decide.

At these precious moments one appreciates the close bond which the LORD builds between believers and brothers. We have an Indonesian saying, which is comparable to your English saying, "unknown is unloved." Getting to know you better means we will love you all the more. We hope that the same is true of you now that you start to know us better.

Once more, thank you very much for allowing me to come and visit you and to attend this synod. Our christian greetings in the name of our wonderful Saviour, who died for his bride, the church, and who will soon come to bring his bride to the Father. I thank you.

Rev Eli Fangidae, minister of the Galilee Evangelical Pilgrim Church of Kupang, Timor.

RESPONSE

to Reverend E Fangidae, by JL Van Burgel on behalf of Synod (*Acts*, Article 39)

Brothers and sisters and especially Reverend Fangidae, Synod has given me the privilege to respond to your address to this Assembly last night. Personally and on behalf of deputies we could with great joy receive you and Johnson Dethan in our midst after the many letters and phone calls exchanged between deputies, yourself and the Australian Government in an attempt to receive approval for student Johnson to obtain a temporary visa to Australia.

The delay has meant you, Rev. Fangidae could be here during the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches and we were able to receive first hand from you the history and overview of the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church in Timor (or the Evangelical Pilgrim Church of Timor). We could also receive your greetings and best wishes for the work of Synod. For this we are thankful.

Most importantly however our hearts were gladdened when we were told that also in Timor the Lord preserves a church which seeks to become truly Reformed, seeking to stay close to the truths of Scripture. We learnt that the Evangelical Pilgrim Church was faithful to the call to liberate from an apostate church in 1950 and to establish again a church founded on the Reformed Faith. Our churches too had to liberate in 1944 from a church which placed the wisdom of man above that of Scripture and sought to bind its ministers and members to unscriptural doctrines.

At this point the similarities in our church development diverge. Whereas the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) and the sister church later established in Australia (the Free Reformed Churches), were richly blessed in that there was an abundance of good Reformed literature, schools and other organisations could be established to promote sound doctrine. However from your account Rev. Fangidae, the liberated church in Timor was hampered by lack of those very resources which it needs to encourage sound doctrinal and church development. It is because of this you have travelled to Australia, you have met with deputies and committees and have addressed Synod. You ask for help so that young men can be trained as leaders in Timor to guide the church.

Be assured, Rev. Fangidae, that your appeal for this help will not go unheeded. Already we could invite student Johnson. Whether synod or individual churches receive your plea, your call cannot be ignored. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 4 vs 3 "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will

accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths”.

Regarding relations between our churches Synod 1990 already expressed the policy to concentrate relationships and contacts with churches which are geographically closer to us and for whom we have greater responsibility (Acts, Art 58). This Synod is expected to give newly appointed deputies a renewed mandate regarding the Indonesian Churches, but by the instructions of Synod Armadale, the current deputies have mandated two brothers to visit the Synod of the Sumba Savu churches in Savu. These brothers intend to continue on to Kupang after this Synod.

During your visit here Rev. Fangidae, you have been asked many questions about the EPCT. This is due to a sincere desire to know you and the Musyafir churches better and to help us determine our response to your requests. We know that you still have an ongoing struggle to continue to implement Reformed teachings and to reject false doctrine and practices. We are thankful that we can be introduced to a church which in your words “seeks a return to the full and reformed truth, that is the full and pure teachings of the Bible”.

If the desire to be obedient to all that the head of the church, our Lord has taught us remains within the FRCA and the EPCT, then our ties will be strengthened for we will have a common purpose and bond.

Rev. Fangidae, it is our desire that the Lord will bless and guide you in your ongoing task within Timor. May you be an instrument in His hands to lead many to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. We encourage you to continue your church reformational work in Timor and may you pass onto the church in Timor our warmest greetings.

ADDRESS

by Reverend WP Gadsby of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Acts, Article 76)

Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

May I begin by thanking you for this opportunity to address you during your busy meeting. Your deputies wrote to us on 4th February, 1992, noting that their mandate included exchanging visitors at deputy and synodical level. Our Synod was honoured by the presence with us last year of Messrs Eikelboom and Bouwman, but we appreciate that your deputies' invitation to us marks a new advance by your churches in your relationship with the PCEA. This is the first time we have enjoyed this privilege.

In response to your invitation, our 145th Annual Synod meeting in Taree recently resolved as follows:

That Synod commission the Convener of the Inter-Church Relations Committee to represent our Church at the forthcoming meeting of the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and to convey our fraternal greetings to the brothers of those churches.

As you probably know, the PCEA is the oldest existing Presbyterian church in this country having been founded in Sydney on 10 October, 1846. This was in response to the failure of the large Presbyterian church of the day to support the spiritual principles which led to the Disruption in Scotland in 1843, namely the sole Headship of Jesus Christ over his Church, and the spiritual independence of the church under Christ. The Pcea has the same basic constitution as the FCS, with the Westminster Confession of Faith as our main subordinate standard.

After 1846, the PCEA continued to maintain her principles despite the loss of ministers, members and church property through the church unions of the 1860's which led to the

formation of the PCNSW. Earlier this century, the PCEA held firm to the reformed faith while the PCA increasingly embraced theological liberalism, a trend which was arrested only with the departure of 70% of her members to form the Uniting Church in 1977. In 1953, there occurred a union between the PCEA and the Free Presbyterian Church of Victoria, itself dating from 1847. The following year, the Synod enacted a Federal Relations Acts corresponding to one adopted by the Free Church of Scotland in 1952, ensuring mutual eligibility of office-bearers and members between the Free Church and the PCEA.

From its inception, the PCEA's history has been closely intertwined with that of the Free Church of Scotland. We have cooperated with the Free Church in mission work in India, South Africa and Peru. Many of our ministers have received their training in the Free Church College, Edinburgh. A number of Scottish ministers have pastored churches in Australia, and vice-versa. The FCS was of course a founding member of the ICRC, and nominated the PCEA for membership.

Of course our close ties with Scotland have been well known to your churches, since contact between us began some 14 years ago, in Tasmania. (It was in 1985 that our Synod formally recognised your churches to be true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1988, you very generously covered the expense of Reverend Rowland Ward and myself coming to the West to have discussions with your deputies.)

We have noted with interest that in 1983, your Synod formally acknowledged the FCS to be a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This decision was reaffirmed by Synod Albany in 1987, which offered the FCS a Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, with defined rules. FRCA Synod Armadale in 1990 did not alter this recognition of the FCS but reaffirmed your commitment to this Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, and your resolve to 'move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the RCS while giving due heed to the concerns outstanding.' Much the same recommendation comes to this 1992 Synod from your deputies, despite their understandable concern about a lack of response from Scotland to your communications (p.36).

From reading your reports and minutes, we see that you have a number of concerns about the FCS: the question of adherents; the place of children in the covenant; even the matter of pulpit exchange with Reformed Baptists. These are issues your deputies have also raised with us. Statements made at the 1985 and 1989 meetings of the ICRC by FCS representatives have also caused you concern. Nevertheless, brothers, you have not withdrawn your recognition of the FCS as a faithful church of our Lord Jesus, but starting from this recognition you are attempting to explore the differences which exist between you.

All this we applaud, and we thank our Lord for it. We would not wish you to withdraw this recognition. It seems to us the proper way for you to go was to acknowledge the FCS to be a true and faithful church, and then proceed to sort out the problems that remain as you aim towards a full sister church relationship. You are saying to the FC, "Yes, we think you are a church of the Lord Jesus. Now let us talk in brotherly love about some of these problems we have with one another, as we walk along the road together towards greater unity."

What perplexes us is that you have not seen fit to treat the PCEA the same way! Rather you have, I understand, enacted rules which stand in the way of so doing.

The anomaly you face is that with us you are dealing with the sister church of a body which you have recognised to be a true and faithful church of the Lord. One which shares the same basic constitution, and which has full mutual eligibility of office bearers and members. This is no new observation on our part. The anomaly is something Reverend Rowland Ward and I pointed out at our November 1988 meeting with your deputies.

Now I do not wish to minimise the differences which exist between us. There are significant matters involving variations of practice and theory between our two bonds of

churches. These need to be addressed, and are being addressed, albeit slowly. However, I think the PCEA would appreciate receiving the same level of recognition from you as did the FCS, our sister church, some 9 years ago. We are, after all, fellow members of the ICRC, and yet we still haven't reached the place where you have said, 'Yes, you are a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Yet me be as frank with you as Brother Bouwman was with our Synod last year: 'It would help us to take all these questions and discussions more seriously if our relationship was based upon mutual recognition as true churches of Christ.'

Starting from there, your category of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, with its rules, would come into play, and we could move forward, speaking the truth in love to one another as churches which accept one another for the Lord's sake.

Without this recognition, it appears to many in the PCEA that - for reasons which are unclear to us - you regard us as a church to be different from the FCS, and not qualified to be acknowledged as a true church.

There are matters both within our respective confederations of churches that require scrutiny in the light of God's Word. From the deliberations of this afternoon's session, I am pleased that you are virtually unanimous in wanting to continue discussions with us. We look forward to doing this, as the good providence of the Lord permits.

In conclusion, brothers, again I bring you the fraternal greetings of the PCEA Synod. We regard you as brothers in Christ and your churches as true - though not perfect - churches in union with Him. In His name, I beseech you to move quickly to extend the same recognition to us.

May the Lord continue to bless your deliberations together as a synod of his one, catholic, apostolic Church.

Thank you.

BUDGET of 1992 SYNOD

AND COST SHARING

EXPENDITURE

Item	Details	Total	
1 Synod costs			
Typist	1000		
Photocopier hire	500		
Copy paper	100		
Stationery etc	100		
Equipment insurance	100		
Computer supplies	300		
Amplifier hire	200		
Screen hire	100		
Meals etc	1000		
Presentations	200		
Miscellaneous	100		
Postage and telephone	300		
		4000	
2 Loss of income			
Synod delegates		1200	NOTE 1
3 Travel to Synod			
From Tasmania	3000		
From Albany	160		
		3160	NOTE 2
4 Printing Acts of Synod		1500	NOTE 3
5 Deputies Bible translation			
Books and incidentals		300	
6 Deputies contact PCEA			
Books and incidentals	200		
Travel (if req'd)	1600		NOTE 4
Loss of income (if req'd)	1000		
		2800	
7 Deputies Book of Praise			
Books and incidentals		100	

Item	Details	Total
8 Deputies for contact other churches		
Books etc	200	
Travel costs(Perth/Albany)	1600	NOTE 5
Travel costs (overseas)	6500	NOTE 6
Loss income deputy o/seas	1000	NOTE 7
Una Sancta subs 92,93,94	500	
Incidentals	1200	NOTE 8
ICRC costs 91,92,93	700	
ICRC travel costs	5000	NOTE 9
ICRC loss income delegates	2000	NOTE 10
Mr Johnston fares advance	500	NOTE 11
Rev Fangedae fares	550	NOTE 12
		19750
9 Deputies revision Church Order		
Books and incidentals		100
10 Deputies training for ministry		
Incidentals		100
11 Church visits & pulpit exchange		
Tasmania 4x	3200	NOTE 13
Albany 4x	640	
		3840
12 Treasury administration costs		100
13 Printing reports next synod		1000 NOTE 14
14 Synod archives		
Incidentals		200
15 Deputies dialogue RCA		200
16 Treasury operating funds		7650
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>\$46000</u>

NOTES on Budget items

1. Information received from 3 churches only
2. Based on information received and one Albany travel cost
3. Based on 1990 Synod Acts printing costs
4. Assumes two deputies travel to PCEA
5. Based on 10 trips in two years
6. Trip to Indonesia - 1 week (fares 2x\$1000, accom etc 2x\$1000) and a trip to N.Z.- 1 week (fares 1x\$1500, accom etc 1x\$1000)
7. Indonesia trip - 2x\$500, N.Z. trip - nil
8. Includes postage, telephone, typing, photocopying, etc
9. Assumes trip to Holland (2 x fares plus accommodation)
10. Two delegates, two weeks
11. A further \$500 has been sent to Mr Johnston to cover costs
12. Sent to Rev Fangidae to cover air fares, Darwin to Perth
13. Not all ministers claim the cost of travelling to/from Albany
14. Based on \synod 1992 costs

These estimates are based on the assumption of Synod convening again in two years time. If this is changed to three years, items will need to be adjusted. Payments since closing books have also been included.

INCOME

1. Refund Mr Johnston and Rev Fangidae	3000
2. Interest	500
3. Refunds	300
4. Balance 1 February 1992	17600
5. From churches as detailed below	24600

TOTAL INCOME	\$46000
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COST SHARING

Church	number of communicant members	%share of cost	Amount \$
Armadale	284	20.29	4990
Albany	274	19.57	4815
Bedfordale	139	9.93	2442
Byford	211	15.07	3708
Kelmscott	193	13.79	3391
Launceston	200	14.29	3514
Legana	99	7.07	1740
	1400	100.00	\$24600

Number of communicant members taken from the 1992 yearbooks

Provisionally adopted text of Church Order

(with notes referred for further consideration by deputies, see *Acts*, Articles 113, 121, 137 and 147)

Articles in italic print are in force until classes have been formed

ARTICLE 1

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary that there be:

- I offices and supervision of doctrine;
- II assemblies;
- III worship, sacraments and ceremonies, and
- IV discipline.

I OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE

ARTICLE 2 - The offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office

A. All office bearers

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto. The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after prayer, and in accordance with the regulations adopted for that purpose. Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. Elders and deacons

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices. The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation at the most twice as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, from which number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons.

If necessary the consistory and the deacons may present to the congregation the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

C. Ministers

When a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

C. Ministers

When a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of the classis church shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

ARTICLE 4 - Bound to a church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church.

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. Eligibility

Only they shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

- (1) have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or
- (2) are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or
- (3) have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister-church relationship. The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. Declared eligible

Only they shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

- (1) have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or
 - (1) have passed a preparatory examination by the synod, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or*
- (2) have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or
- (3) have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call.

1. They shall be ordained only after the classis church has approved the call.

Classis shall approve the call

The classis church shall approve the call

a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, signed by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and

b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This examination by classis shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.

b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This examination by the synod shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.

2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.

They shall be installed after the classis church has approved the call.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the

consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only, in case he remains within the same classis.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration of honourable discharge from the consistory with the deacons and from the classis church.

2. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the required announcements were made and that the congregation has approved the call.

ARTICLE 7 - From one church to another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of the classis church. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church he served.

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry classis, after the approval of synod, shall examine him, and upon a favourable outcome allow him as candidate to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis for a set period of time. Thereafter the classis shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry the classis church shall seek to obtain this evidence by way of inquiry from the church to which he belongs, and from elsewhere if necessary. The examination shall take place in a synod (extraordinary if necessary). This synod shall set a period during which the person may, as candidate speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis area. Thereafter the classis church, with the advice of Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order, shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLE 9 - Admission of ministers who have of late joined the church

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by the classis in which he lives, with the cooperation of the deputies of synod.

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by synod (extraordinary if necessary).

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the sacraments in another church without the permission of the consistory of that church.

ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he remains bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis. Some ministers may be called for the training of students for the ministry, others for mission work.

If a minister accepts a call to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he remains bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis church. Some ministers may be called for the training of students for the ministry, others for mission work.

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

If a minister of the Word, by reason of age, sickness or otherwise, is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of the classis church and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of the consistory to relieve him from his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of the consistory to relieve him from his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of the classis church, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the

Sacraments. They shall watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 17 - Equality among office-bearers

When two or more ministers are bound to the same congregation equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and if necessary of classis. This rule also applies to elders and deacons.

When two or more ministers are bound to the same congregation equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and if necessary of synod. This rule also applies to elders and deacons.

ARTICLE 18 - Training for the ministry

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above. The churches together are obliged to provide properly for the professors of theology and for their widows and orphans.

ARTICLE 19 - Students of theology

The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology, extending financial aid where necessary.

ARTICLE 20 - Task of Missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall in the specific region assigned to them proclaim the Word of God, administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded his church, and ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of elders

The elders shall govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the upbuilding of the congregation they shall make homevisits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 22 - Task of deacons

The deacons shall perform the ministry of mercy. They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need; and urge church members to render assistance where necessary. They shall collect and manage the gifts of the congregation, and after mutual consultation distribute them where there is need. The deacons shall give account of their policies and management to the consistory.

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The places of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff

All ministers of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose. Anyone being in office who refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors which via literature and other means of communication could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 27 - Office-bearers and the government.

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation its obligation to be obedient and show respect to the government, because God has instituted it. They must set a good example in this regard and by means of proper communication invoke the government to protect the ministry of the church.

II ASSEMBLIES

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall meet regularly : the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

These assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a 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.

Synod 1985 decided (Acts Article 81, page 56):

1. to maintain the decision of Synod 1959, Acts Article 16, concerning appeals whereby the "classis" is replaced by the "classis church", and a second-appeal church is appointed;

2. to appoint classis churches;

3. to appoint second-appeal churches;

4. to state that the second-appeal churches shall not function when an appeal is made within two months prior to a synod.

Synod 1959 decided (Acts Article 16, page 7): (free translation): As long as there are no classes, appeals under Article 31 CO shall be conducted as follows:

1a) stage 1, to the appointed sister-church; which shall have the weight of a classis decision;

b. stage 2, to the second sister-church; which shall have the weight of a decision of a regional synod;

c. stage 3, to the synod.

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials and voting

Delegates to a major assembly shall bring with them their credentials, signed by the minor assembly. They shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

ARTICLE 34- Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with and ensure that every one observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the authority to make judicial pronouncements in respect of the consistory. This applies also to the synod in respect of the classis

The classis church has the authority to make judicial pronouncements in respect of the consistory. The second-appeal church has this authority in respect of the classis church. This applies also to the synod in respect of the second-appeal church or - if the latter is not involved - of the classis church

ARTICLE 36 - Consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and be chaired by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall chair in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for general management, including the material affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 37 - Consistory and the deacons

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of classis shall be sought.

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of the classis church shall be sought.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by synod to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Classes shall be held at least once every three months. The ministers shall be chairman in rotation, or one shall be chosen to be chairman; however the same minister shall not be chairman twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every classis shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

The sentence: "The chairman shall...." must be read in the light of the decision taken by Synod 1985, Article 81.

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis

If two or more ministers are serving the same church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister of its choice. He shall assist the consistory in maintaining good order by giving advice, especially in the matter of calling a minister. Letters of call shall be counter-signed by him.

Each vacant church shall request the synod to appoint as counsellor the minister of its choice. He shall for the sake of good order serve the consistory with advice and especially lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister. Letters of call shall be counter-signed by him. When a vacancy arises more than two months prior to synod, the classis church shall appoint a counsellor and report to synod

ARTICLE 44- Church visitors

Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect; in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit a written report of their visits to classis

The synod shall appoint some of the most experienced and capable ministers to visit the churches. If necessary synod may appoint a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect; in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit a written report of their visits to synod. This report shall cover the two annual visits made to a church and be sent to the consistory concerned.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held once every three years. Each classis shall delegate to this synod two ministers and two elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that assembly. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two classes this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis.

The synod shall be held once every two years. Each consistory shall delegate to this synod one minister and one elder. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that assembly. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two churches this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis church.

ARTICLE 46 - Churches abroad

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

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the close of the major assemblies censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of major assemblies

Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties. Each synod shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed for separate matters, as much as possible. All deputies shall keep proper record of their work and submit a written report. If required they shall justify their actions. They shall not be discharged from their task until synod discharges them.

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

ARTICLE 50- Mission

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall observe the provisions of this Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the division into classes.

III WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.

ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall ensure that parents honour their promise made at baptism, to provide for their children education which is in harmony with the Word of God, as the churches have summarised it in their Confessions.

ARTICLE 54 - Public profession of faith

They who have come to an understanding and acceptance of the doctrine of God's Word and desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their

motivation and knowledge of that doctrine. The public profession shall take place in a church service, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only they who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 58 - Church records

The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith and marriage are properly recorded.

ARTICLE 59 - Attestations for communicant members

Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by the chairman and the clerk. This attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.

ARTICLE 60 - Attestations for non-communicant members

An attestation for a non-communicant member shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned with the request to take the member under its supervision and discipline.

ARTICLE 61 Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they shall in respect of deacon support remain under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

ARTICLE 62 - Church services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that as a rule once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and hymns

In the church services only the psalms and hymns approved by synod shall be sung.

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

ARTICLE 66 - Days of prayer

In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions a day of prayer shall be proclaimed by the church appointed for that purpose by synod.

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 68 - Funerals

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

IV CHURCH DISCIPLINE

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to his honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence then the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Consistory involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any report of sin unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.

ARTICLE 72 - Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless the member concerned has shown real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of the classis church has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of this desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised the readmission shall take place, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by the classis. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. Classis, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this

neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by synod. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. The second- appeal church, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

ARTICLE 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly : False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; and further all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, with the use of the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis church the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, with the use of the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

CONCLUDING ARTICLES

ARTICLE 80 - No lording over others

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order

These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented or diminished. However no consistory or classis shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by synod.

Synod decided to refer the following notes and suggestions to deputies for consideration and recommendation

Article 1

The Australian Church Order commences "In the church of Christ all things should be done in good order"

This is an important statement. Consider retention.

Article 6

In 1b (small print) the recommended text had "classis church". This was amended to read "synod", in accordance with past decisions. Discussion highlighted some confusion and deputies are requested to thoroughly check the wording of this Article.

Article 16

Review the order "lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the sacraments", also in relation to the adopted Forms. Also review last sentence taken from CCO Article 42. This could be a "new matter", to which churches must be alerted.

Article 19

Synod deleted the word "sufficient" from the recommended text and replaced "aim" with "strive".

Article 25

Synod adopted the addition proposed by Bedfordale for inclusion in the provisional text.

Article 26

Consider whether the expression "... via literature and other means of communication ..." is ideal or necessary.

Article 30

Deputies are requested to propose an improved formulation of the original sentence of the Australian Church Order, ie. " ...assemblies shall deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner". Deputies should also review the title, especially the use of "authority" (see also Article 35).

Article 31

Synod decided to include the notes in deputies' report.

Article 35

Review the use of "authority" in this Article (see also Article 30)

Article 46

Consider changing "sister-church relationship" to "sister-relationship".

Article 50

Review the claim that the second sentence is essential. The obligation to observe provisions of the Church Order applies to every Article and need therefore not be stated.

Article 58

The recommended text made reference to "... arrival and departure or death...". This constitutes a "new matter" and consequently was deleted from the provisionally adopted text. Deputies are requested to consider merits of this addition and make a recommendation.

Article 59

Review the use of the term "communicant members" (can be 'confessing' members but not 'communicant'), and also the requirement that attestations be signed by "the chairman and the clerk" (which seems unnecessarily restrictive). Consider the alternative "by two of its members".

Article 63

Consider replacing "as a rule" with "preferable" or similar.

Article 64

Consider replacing “on Christmas” with “on the day of Christ’s birth” (see new Dutch Church Order). The term “sacred events” can also do with improvement.

Article 66

Consider the advisability of using “may” instead of “shall”.

Article 67

Review use of the expression “private ceremony”, which seems opposed to all communion of saints.

Article 71

Consider merit of replacing “one or two witnesses”, with “one or two other witnesses”.

Article 72

The proposed addition was not accepted, as it was considered too regulatory.

Article 73

Find a way of retaining the Australian Church Order formulation of “after numerous subsequent admonitions”.

Article 74

Make a recommendation regarding use of advice/consent, giving due consideration to submission of Reverend G van Rongen. The term “concurring advice” may be a possible alternative.

Article 79

Consider the possible effect of abandonment of old Australian Church Order provisions.

APPENDIX Q

Letter to Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

/- Rev C Bouwman,
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Australia
May 30, 1992

Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore,
c/- Box 39
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Dear brothers,

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia meeting in synod in May 1992 consider it necessary to address themselves to you by means of this letter.

In time past, contact was established between your churches and ourselves, with as result that Synod 1987 instructed deputies to serve the next synod of the Free Reformed Churches with a report concerning your churches. This report, submitted by deputies to Synod 1990, was published in the Appendix to the Acts of that Synod.

To our great dismay, we have learned that this report contained material that was damaging to you. The churches in Synod 1990, by permitting the publication of this report, have responsibility for the Christian character of its contents. Consequently, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, assembled in Synod 1992, express sincere apologies to you for the hurt we have caused. You would gladden us much by accepting this apology from us.

Because of the fact that your churches share with us the same confessions, it was our desire in the past that we might get to know each other better and so assist each other in our common service of our only Lord and Master. Brothers, this desire still remains. If a face to face meeting with (deputies from) your churches to discuss this letter would be considered desirable by you in order to realise this goal, we shall most willingly send delegates from our midst to Singapore. It is our fervent hope that our misdeed in 1990 will not hinder a positive relationship between your churches and ourselves.

Please find enclosed a copy of our decision to authorise this letter.

With Christian greetings,

On behalf of Synod 1992,

Rev A Veldman Chairman

Rev C Bouwman Second Clerk

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