

Acts of the 1996 Synod

and

Reports to the 1996 Synod

of the

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Kelmscott, Western Australia

10-21 June 1996



Synod delegates: Back (l-r): B vanderVelde (Launceston), J Eikelboom (Bedforddale), Rev J Poppe (West Albany), J Alberts (Legana),
 Rev F van Hulst (Launceston), H Gunnink (Byford)
 Middle (l-r): Rev W van der Jagt (Byford, Rev C Kleyn (Legana), A Mulder (West Albany), W Geurts (Armadaale),
 B Bosveld (Rockingham), Rev A van Delden (Rockingham), JL van Burgel (Bedforddale)
 Front (l-r): L 't Hart (Albany), Rev A Veldman (Albany), Rev W Huizinga (Armadaale), B Veenendaal (Kelmscott),
 Rev C Bouwman (Kelmscott), Rev W Hoyt (New Zealand visitor)

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Rev A Veldman, Rev W Huizinga, B Veenendaal and Rev C Bouwman.

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Monday 10th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 1

Opening

On behalf of the convening church of Kelmscott, Reverend C Bouwman opens Synod 1996. He reads 1 John 4:7-5:5, requests the singing of Psalm 16:1,4,5, and leads in prayer.

Welcoming and Opening Address

Dear brothers in the Lord,

It is my privilege, on behalf of the convening church for Synod 1996, to extend to you –delegates and guests– a hearty welcome to Kelmscott. Some of you have driven many metres to get here; others of you have flown more kilometres. The Lord our God has been pleased to protect you on the way, and for that we thank Him sincerely. Now that we are privileged to be your hosts, it is our heart-felt wish that you may find our preparations for this Synod and our care during the Synod acceptable. Please, if you have any need, feel free to let us know, and we shall try to help you in your distress.

For the nineteenth time in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the churches are allowed to come together in General Synod. The nine separate churches of the Free Reformed bond are permitted, by the grace of sovereign God, to be united in one faith, a faith confessed in the three Forms of Unity. Because of that common faith, the nine churches may know themselves to be sister churches in the Lord, and the membership of the nine may know themselves to be brothers in Christ.

It has been two years since the nine churches last met each other in General Synod. In those two years much has happened in the various of the nine, much that affects all the others.

I mention first of all the fact that the Head of the Church has given to Reverend K Bruning the crown of glory. Brother Bruning was allowed to serve the church of Armadale from 1960 to 1986. In the course of those 26 years, he was permitted to do much work that touched also the bond of churches, work that will undoubtedly be long remembered as foundational to what the bond may be today. After granting eight years of retirement, the Lord in wisdom called Reverend Bruning to his eternal home. We thank the Lord for what He has given in this minister of the Word, and we commit his widow into God's abiding and gracious care.

In the two years since the last Synod, the eight churches of the Free Reformed bond have received another sister. The church at Albany could spawn a daughter, known as the Free Reformed Church of West Albany. At this first meeting of all the churches since West Albany's institution, we

Acts

welcome this sister cordially into the bond. May you be a blessing to us all, and we a blessing to you.

Since her institution, the church of West Albany extended a number of calls and was blessed with the good news that Candidate J Poppe of Hamilton accepted West Albany's call. In the meantime, the Poppe family has arrived in Australia. Last December an extra-ordinary Synod was convened in order to examine brother Poppe. As a result of the positive outcome of that extra-ordinary Synod, brother Poppe could be ordained to the Ministry of the Word in the church of West Albany –and so too to the bond of churches– last January. This being your first major assembly at which you are present as Minister of the Word, we welcome you, Reverend Poppe!

Two ministers within the bond of churches have moved in the last two years. The result is that the vacancies of the churches of Rockingham and Kelm-scott were filled, while vacancies were generated in the churches of Bedfordale and Byford. Both vacant churches set about seeking a new minister of the Word. By the grace of the Lord, the church at Byford received a minister in the person of Reverend W vander Jagt from The Netherlands. Welcome, Reverend vander Jagt, to this second major assembly in which you may participate! Meanwhile, the church of Bedfordale has recently had Reverend PKA de Boer from Canada in her midst, and was yesterday gladdened by the delightful news that Reverend de Boer has accepted their call! May I suggest that this Synod make it a priority of business to send a letter of congratulations to Reverend de Boer on the occasion of his having accepted the call. In the expectation that the Lord will bless the immigration process, the nine Free Reformed Churches of Australia may be served by nine ministers of the Word in active service.

It should be mentioned too that Reverend A Veldman has had to grapple with a call out of the bond of Australian churches. Our brother, though, saw a continued task and calling in the midst of the Australian churches. For that decision we thank the Lord.

That's the more so because the church of Albany has had to contend with much in the mission work. Efforts in the past two years to attract a missionary have not borne fruit. As a stop gap measure, the sending church for mission has sent a second worker into the field; brother & sister A Slobe join brother & sister WS Fokkema in Papua New Guinea, be it for a limited period of time. The disappointment about not being able to find a missionary would possibly not be so acute if the church in Port Moresby were a shining example of what we wish a mission church to be. It is for us, then, to hold on to the promise of Holy Scripture that the Lord God sends His servants at the time and to the place of His choosing, so that all those chosen to life may come to faith in Him. As supporting churches for mission, we eagerly await more news from Albany about developments in attracting a missionary. Meanwhile, may the Lord bless the work that is done, both in Albany and in PNG, so that His church is gathered.

Yes, much has happened since the churches last met together in General Synod. With deep thankfulness, we may note that the Head of the Church has continued to gather, defend and preserve His Church. Now that we meet together again after two years, this is a gift we need to note with humility.

That this gift needs to be noted with humility is the more necessary in light of the fact that the men He used in gathering His churches are sinful people. This abiding sinfulness on our part has become so apparent again in the last two years. For there were so many events that have brought to the churches a sense of disappointment, and maybe even despondency. Consider these:

For many years the membership of the churches could labour to build up schools where the children of the covenant could receive reformed, Biblically based education. God has blessed our labours over the years so that so much could be established for the benefit of the coming generations. The past two years, however, have seen, for the first time in the history of the churches of Australia, that a school closed its upper grades. It is not for me to explain the whys and wherefores of this sad development. Suffice it to say that the closure became necessary because of the abiding sinfulness of the membership as a whole. The result is that parents who earlier could send their children to a Biblically based school (be it with so many sins remaining in staff and students alike) now send their children to schools where the reformed faith is not central. This, understandably, has been cause for great disappointment among so many parents of God's covenant children. May the Lord be pleased to grant ways and means to re-open the upper grades of the John Calvin School in Launceston. And may we all, as brothers and sisters together in Jesus Christ, consider ways and means to offer and provide assistance where necessary.

An awareness of abiding sinfulness is evidenced too in the concerns voiced in the past two years to the effect that in the churches there is a lack in spirituality. Concern is expressed about why persons do what they do; it's feared that so much is done "out of custom or superstition". It may be so that the concern is valid, that too many in the churches are driven by tradition. In that case, there certainly is cause for disappointment and room for much work. Equally, it may be so that the concern is not valid, that members cling to traditional habits not out of cold custom but rather because they see the heritage of the fathers as a ripe expression of living the faith – and so follow in the footsteps of the fathers out of thankfulness to God for the riches He has given in Jesus Christ. In this case, too, there is cause for concern because then the cry concerning a lack of spirituality is a cry that threatens the heritage God has given through the generations. Either way, there is an evidence of abiding sinfulness that in turn generates disappointment and even despondency.

For many years a journal could be published from out of the midst of the churches for the edification of the reformed way of life. Since the churches

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last met together in General Synod two years ago, *Una Sancta* has experienced a time of trouble in that three editors resigned from the editorial staff. I need not repeat here what was written on the pages of *Una Sancta* about those resignations. Suffice it to say that here again is evidence of abiding sinfulness, yes, of disagreement and disunity. This development has disappointed the church membership, and brought to some a sense of despondency.

The doctrine and application of the doctrine concerning the Church, surfacing as it does in our membership in the ICRC, remains a sensitive, even divisive, point in the churches. One would have hoped that, after so many years of discussion, the churches would have been reached a consensus on the point. That, however, has not happened – as is evidenced by the agenda of this coming Synod. That lack of consensus is painful for all who pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Two years it was since the churches last met together. So much has happened that leaves so many unhappy. And all of it in turn is evidence of continuing sinfulness in the nine churches of Australia. That the Lord God, then, has yet shown mercy to us, that He has gathered, defended, and preserved His churches in these two years, is then indeed cause for deep humility. We are so very undeserving of God's grace.

Two years it was since the churches last met together. God has blessed, though we through our sins have shown ourselves to be so very, very unworthy.

God has blessed, and so it was that Sunday by Sunday, the Word of life was preached in the various congregations; the ministers could do their work unhindered by excessive trouble and sorrow or by persecution of the world. Through His Holy Spirit, the Head of the Church caused His Word to go out, and so He called to Himself those chosen to life.

God has blessed, and so it was that elders and deacons were permitted to labour so many hours in the families of God's church. Countless amounts of energy were directed to building up the congregations in general and the various members individually. Though their work was done with so many short-comings, the fact that office bearers *laboured*, is continuing evidence of the Lord's continuing work in the midst of the churches.

God has blessed, and so it was that, as the Lord has also promised in His Word, the preaching and the labours of the elders has borne fruit. Many are they who, as a result of the work of the Spirit through the means of grace, were allowed to make profession of the faith publicly. Numerous entered into the holy married state "in the Lord". Again, so many in faith received children, and were moved by the Holy Spirit to pledge at the baptism of their covenant children that they would bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. Accordingly, in turn, so many parents have offered so much to provide an education for their covenant children that befits the children's identity as royalty, as children of The King.

God has blessed, and so it was that in the two years since the churches last met together in Synod, the membership could –in general– lead a Christian life in this world of sin, and so show to all the world in word and deed something of what the God of heaven is like.

Yes, God has blessed abundantly, and that while we all remained so sinful still. Growth there has been, thankfully so, but none of the members still with us have reached the goal of perfection. Yet the Lord has granted normal Christian activity amongst the forgiven and renewed sinners of His churches! To Him be the thanks and the praise for such a gift of His grace!

Now, after two years of not seeing each other, the nine churches may meet together again. The agenda speaks of much work to be done, work that includes the difficult task of forging a wise way forward in the face of continuing sinfulness and disagreement. The task is not easy. But dear brothers delegates, the Lord has shown in the last two years that the churches are His; He gathers and defends and preserves His own – despite our abiding sins. Work confidently, then, dear brothers, and very humbly: you are God's servants, tools of sovereign God to whom is entrusted the well-being of the churches. Recall the words of the apostle John: the love of God is this, "that we keep His commandments."

May the Lord grant His grace so that the members of this Synod listen to one another, and through discussion reach consensus on the basis of God's gracious commandments. Such decisions will show our love for God, and for each other.

With these words I, on behalf of the convening church of Kelmscott, declare the nineteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, opened. The meeting sings Psalm 85:2,3,4

Article 2

Examination of Credentials

The chairman of the convening Church requests the delegates of the Church of Launceston to examine the credentials. After these are scrutinised, these delegates report that all the Churches are properly represented by their *primi* delegates:

From the Church of:

Albany
Armadale
Bedfordale
Byford
Kelmscott
Launceston

Delegates:

Reverend A Veldman, Elder LA 't Hart
Reverend W Huizinga, Elder W Geurts
Elder J Eikelboom, Elder JL van Burgel
Reverend W vander Jagt, Elder H Gunnink
Reverend C Bouwman, Elder B Veenendaal
Reverend F van Hulst, Elder B vander Velde

Acts

Legana	Reverend C Kleyn, Elder J Alberts
Rockingham	Reverend A van Delden, Elder B Bosveld
West Albany	Reverend J Poppe, Elder A Mulder

From the churches overseas, credentials were received for:

GGRI - Indonesia	Reverend P Hawu, Reverend M Radjah
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Also present from the church at:

GGMM - Timor	Observer: Reverend E Fangidae
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Article 3

Election of Officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman	Reverend W Huizinga
Vice Chairman	Reverend A Veldman
First Clerk	Elder B Veenendaal
Second Clerk	Reverend C Bouwman

Article 4

Constitution of Synod

The chairman declares Synod duly constituted and thanks the convening church of Kelmscott for its contribution to the arrangements for this Synod.

Article 5

Agreement With the Three Forms of Unity

The delegates including Reverends P Hawu and M Radjah of our sister churches in Indonesia and the observer Reverend Fangidae of the Musyafir Churches in Timor, are asked to rise in order to show their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates and the observer rise.

Article 6

Adjournment

The meeting is requested to sing Psalm 51:4,7 and Reverend Veldman leads in thanksgiving prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Tuesday 11th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 7

Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 1:1,2, reads and meditates on Philippians 1:1-11, and leads in opening prayer.

The delegates are welcomed including Reverend B Hoyt who is an observer from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Article 8

Time Schedules

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

Monday to Friday	9.00 am to 12.00 pm
	1.30 pm to 4.30 pm
	7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

Article 9

Letter of congratulations to Reverend PKA de Boer

Synod resolves to send a letter of congratulations to Reverend PKA de Boer regarding his recent acceptance of a call to the church of Bedfordale.

ADOPTED

Article 10

Committees

The moderamen proposes to set up four committees to which some of the agenda items will be assigned. The proposal is adopted as follows:

COMMITTEE 1

Reverend C Kleyn (Convener)
Reverend A van Delden
Elder LA 't Hart
Elder H Gunnink

Agenda items:

11.4 Synod Treasurer
11.5 Auditors Synod Treasurer

Acts

- 11.7 Deputies for Archives and Library of Synod
- 11.9 Deputies inspection Archives of Synods
- 11.12 Deputies for audit of the books of Deputies Training for the Ministry
- 11.14 Synod Treasurer - Draft Budget

COMMITTEE 2

Reverend F van Hulst (Convener)
Reverend W vander Jagt
Elder W Geurts
Elder JL van Burgel

Agenda items:

- 8.1 FRC Kelmscott, appeal Article 123 Acts Synod 1994
- 8.10 FRC Kelmscott, revision ecclesiastical documents
- 8.11 FRC Launceston, proposal FRC Philippines
- 8.12 FRC Albany, Article 123 Acts Synod 1994, proposal FRC Philippines
- 8.13 FRC West Albany, Article 123 Acts Synod 1994, proposal FRC Philippines

COMMITTEE 3

Reverend C Bouwman (Convener)
Reverend J Poppe
Elder B vander Velde
Elder B Bosveld

COMMITTEE 4

Reverend A Veldman (Convener)
Elder J Alberts
Elder J Eikelboom
Elder A Mulder

Article 11

Reading of Privileges

Since there are present at Synod two delegates from sister churches and two observers from churches with whom we have contact, the chairman reads the privileges granted to delegates and observers according to Acts

Synod 1992, Article 19 (2a and 2c). The credentials for Reverend B Hoyt, of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, are received and read.

Article 12

Adoption of Agenda

The draft agenda is tabled as follows:

- 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 agenda
- 7 Adoption of meeting procedure
- 8 Incoming correspondence
 - 8.1 FRC Kelmscott, appeal Article 123 Acts Synod 1994
 - 8.2 FRC Bedfordale, appeal Article 83 Acts Synod 1994
 - 8.3 Reverend G van Rongen, request to use Synod Acts
 - 8.4 FRC West Albany, Synod meeting place proposal
 - 8.5 FRC Albany, ICRC regional mission conferences
 - 8.6 FRC Armadale, edifying word for theological students
 - 8.7 FRC Armadale, Bible translation
 - 8.8 FRC Armadale, proposal, Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons
 - 8.9 FRC Kelmscott, proposal, formation of classes
 - 8.10 FRC Kelmscott, revision of ecclesiastical documents
 - 8.11 FRC Launceston, proposal FRC Philippines
 - 8.12 FRC Albany, Article 123 Acts Synod 1994, proposal FRC Philippines
 - 8.13 FRC West Albany, Article 123 Acts Synod 1994, proposal FRC Philippines
 - 8.14 J Byl, Bible translations
 - 8.15 FRC Byford, appeal Article 83 Acts Synod 1994
 - 8.16 FRC Rockingham, proposal ICRC
- 9 Instructions
- 10 Reports by Classis churches
 - 10.1 FRC Kelmscott, report and Acts of Classis Kelmscott 6-12-1995
- 11 Deputies' reports and discharge of deputies

Acts

- 11.1 Deputies Bible Translation
- 11.2 Deputy publication of the Church Order
- 11.3 Deputies for revision of Rules and Procedures of Synod
- 11.4 Synod Treasurer
- 11.5 Auditors Synod Treasury
- 11.6 Deputies Training for the Ministry
- 11.7 Deputies for Archives and Library of Synods
- 11.8 Deputies for relations with other churches
 - 11.8.1 Sister churches
 - 11.8.2a Other churches (Reformed)
 - 11.8.2b Other churches (Reformed) - Supplementary report
 - 11.8.3 Other churches (Presbyterian)
 - 11.8.4 ICRC
- 11.9 Deputies inspection Archives of Synods
- 11.10 Deputies Article 66 Church Order
- 11.11 Deputies for the Civil Registration of the FRCA
- 11.12 Deputies for audit of the books of Deputies Training for the Ministry
- 11.13 Deputies Pulpit Exchange
- 11.14 Synod Treasurer - draft budget
- 11.15 Church Visitation reports
- 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 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

ADOPTED

It is noted that there are no Instructions

Article 13

Letter from a Deputy

A letter from brother J Bosveld regarding Deputies Report for Relations with Other Churches is received. Synod notes this letter.

Tuesday 11th June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 14

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 138:3.

Article 15 (cf. Article 90, Appendix G)

Rules for Synods

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.3 Deputies for revision of Rules and Procedures of Synod
Report of Deputies for Revision of Synod Procedures and Rules

DECISION:

- 1 To discharge deputies of their mandate and to thank them for all the work done.
- 2 To reject recommendation B. As a consequence recommendations C and D are not voted on.
- 3 To appoint new deputies with the mandate to revise the proposed regulations for conduct of Synod as submitted to Synod 1996 in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - a proposals on any provision that differs substantially from the present rules and practices of Synod must be separately formulated,
 - b the rules must be simplified to serve the basic needs of Synod, and
 - c a report should be submitted to the churches 6 months prior to next Synod.
- 4 To accept for Synod 1996, the same meeting procedures as used by Synod 1994 (Acts Article 7c).

GROUND:

- 1 It is too confusing for this Synod to work with rules still under discussion.

Acts

- 2 The rules for Synod should reflect its ecclesiastical nature as the Church Order does with providing general guidelines only.

ADOPTED

Article 16

Request to use Acts of Synod

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.3 Reverend G van Rongen, request to use Synod Acts

DECISION:

- 1 To grant the request of Reverend G van Rongen.
- 2 To thank Reverend G van Rongen for his work done in the past.

GROUND:

His efforts to prepare a book on the standing decisions of the churches is appreciated.

ADOPTED

Article 17 (cf. Articles 19, 20, 24, 25, 66, Appendix A1)

Relations with Sister Churches

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.1 Other Churches

(Cover letter introducing report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches)

DECISION:

- 1 Discharge deputies from their task.
- 2 Appoint new deputies to carry out relations with Sister Churches according to the adopted rules.

GROUND:

Deputies have completed their work.

ADOPTED

Tuesday 11th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 18
Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 138:1,4. For the benefit of the audience the chairman introduces the members of Synod by taking roll call.

Article 19 (cf. Article 17, Appendix A2)
Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.1 Other Churches (Reformed Churches in The Netherlands)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

- 1 To continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands according to the established rules.
- 2 To ascertain what progress there was in discussions about differences (beyond what is covered by Article 46 CO) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

GROUND:

- 1 The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- 2 Dutch deputies have repeatedly assured us that the differences between themselves and Presbyterian sister churches will be discussed after recognition.

ADOPTED

An additional proposal reads:

DECISION:

- 3 To converse with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands about the decision to allow sisters to vote in the election of office bearers.
- 4 To give support to the Canadian concern about the Dutch decision about the salutation/benediction by non-ministers.

Acts

GROUND:

- 3 The Rules for sister relations specify that we take care for each other, that there be no departures from Scripture and Confession. In the event of a concern, it is proper to discuss this.
- 4 The Rules for sister relations specify that we take care for each other, that there be no departure from Scripture and Confession. There is the possibility that with this decision of the Dutch churches about the salutation/benediction by non-ministers, the distinction between the office of the minister and the office of the elder is blurred.

DEFEATED

Article 20 (cf. Article 17, Appendix A3)

Canadian Reformed Churches

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.1 Other Churches (Canadian Reformed Churches)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

- 1 To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules.
- 2 To send a delegation to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches subject to available finance.

GROUND:

- 1 The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- 2 The degree of common interests we have with the Canadian Reformed Churches makes face to face contact desirable.

ADOPTED

Article 21

Adjournment

Reverend Veldman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 122:2,3 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Wednesday 12th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 22

Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Hymn 64:1,2,4, reads and meditates on Philippians 1:12-18, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 23

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 1 to 17 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 24 (cf. Article 17, Appendix A4)

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.1 Other Churches (Free Reformed Churches of South Africa)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.

GROUND:

The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 25 (cf. Article 17, Appendix A5)

Presbyterian Church in Korea

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.1 Other Churches (Presbyterian Church in Korea - Koshin)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

Acts

DECISION:

To continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) according to the established rules.

GROUND:

No evidence has arisen suggesting that the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) has departed from the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions or the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 26 (cf. Appendix H)

Archives and Library

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.7 Deputies for Archives and Library of Synods

Agenda item 11.9 Deputies inspection Archives of Synods

DECISION:

- 1 To receive the report of the deputies for the archives and library of synods, as well as the report of the deputies for the inspection of the archives of synods.
- 2 To thank the church of Bedfordale for the care of the archives and library and to discharge them.
- 3 To accept deputies' reasons for:
 - a not photocopying flimsy documents, and
 - b not microfilming documents.
- 4 To urge the respective Synod deputies to forward copies of the Acts of synods of sister churches to the Archivist.
- 5 To appoint new deputies to care for the archives and library of synods according to the current instructions for the Archivist (Appendix K, Acts Synod 1992), with the added instruction to endeavour to acquire the minutes of closed sessions of Synods 1990 and 1994.

GROUNDS:

- 1 Deputies report that the expense of microfilming most of the documents is not justified for the following reasons:
 - a the few documents that would warrant such preservation are still legible and in good condition. Some documents are flimsy because of the poor quality of paper used at the time, but on the whole they are still intact and very legible. In cases of illegibility it is more because the print was light or the quality of photocopying poor at the time. Re-photocopying them today would make little improvement,

- b the documents contained in the archives do not show signs of aging. They receive minimal handling, are safely stored in a fire-proof cabinet and are well protected from the elements, and
 - c deputies question whether microfilm is still an acceptable long term storage medium.
- 2 Deputies report that copies of Acts of Sister Churches have not been forwarded to the Archivist whereas past Synods have urged the respective synod deputies to pass on the documents that are in their keeping (cf. Article 27, Acts Synod 1980, Article 52, Acts Synod 1992).

ADOPTED

Article 27 (cf. Article 78)

Edifying Word for Theological Students

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.6 FRC Armadale, edifying word for theological students

DECISION:

- 1 To grant permission to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches to theological students who satisfy the following set conditions:
- a the theological students shall present such a request to Classis (Synod or extra-ordinary Synod),
 - b they shall have completed at least two years of theological studies at one of the theological colleges of our sister churches (not including the introductory year, that is, they still complete three years of training at the theological college). The faculty of the theological college shall give a certificate that they have successfully completed two years of theology proper (or three years),
 - c they shall present a good attestation from the church to which they belong,
 - d they shall deliver a sermon at Classis (Synod or extra-ordinary Synod) and shall be examined on reformed doctrine, and
 - e if the result is satisfactory Classis (Synod or extra-ordinary Synod) shall grant permission to speak an edifying word (sometimes called preaching consent) for a period not more than twelve months.
- 2 To accept the decision of classes of sister churches to grant theological students the right to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches here and to allow these students to deliver an edifying word in the churches. They must present a certificate from the Classis of the sister church.

Acts

- 3 The student shall submit his sermons to a minister appointed by Deputies for the Training of the Ministry who in turn will give a report to the Professor of Diaconiology at the theological college.

GROUND:

- 1 The reason for extending preaching consent to theological students is to give the students practical experience. More accent is placed on this today. Even as teachers and others are required to have practice in their fields, so also theological students undergo practical experience during or after their formal training. Thus far consistories can ask them to teach catechism classes, but preaching consent has not been offered.
- 2 The FRCA have decided to accept the preparatory classical examinations which theological students undergo in our sister churches. This would imply that the FRCA should also accept the classical examinations of our sister churches in which theological students are given permission to speak an edifying word in the churches.

ADOPTED

Wednesday 12th June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 28

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 19:1,3.

Article 29 (cf. Articles 32, 36, 59, Appendix E)

Bible Translation

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.14 Correspondence J Byl, Bible translations

DECISION:

- 1 To accept brother J Byl's submission for information.
- 2 To request deputies for the revision of Synod Procedures and Rules to investigate more thoroughly this matter of receiving submissions from individual members (cf. 5.6 of Kelmscott's Draft Regulations for Conduct of Synod).

GROUND:

- 1 The current Rules for Synods do not prohibit submissions from individual members.
- 2 Brother Byl has addressed his consistory on this issue. His submission is not formulated as an appeal or as a proposal. Therefore we receive it for information only.
- 3 Deputies should study this matter because until Synod 1994 it was the custom to receive submissions from individual members, whereas Synod 1994 decided (Articles 37 and 60) that submissions from individual church members are inadmissible because such submissions are *"an attempt to participate in Synod discussion. That is not the prerogative of individual church members, but only of the delegates to Synod. Submissions from individual church members should come via their consistories."* It is not clear what conclusions we can draw from Article 30 Church Order in this matter.

ADOPTED

Wednesday 12th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

**Article 30
Reopening**

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 19:4,6.

Article 31 (cf. Articles 41, 42, 43, 47, 49, 53, 91, Appendices B3, B6, L1, L2)

Address by Reverend B Hoyt

The chairman introduces Reverend B Hoyt, of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and gives him the opportunity to address Synod.

**Article 32 (cf. Articles 29, 36, 59, Appendix E)
Bible Translation**

The remainder of the evening is spent in discussion on Bible Translations.

Article 33

Adjournment

Elder B Veenendaal invites all present to sing Psalm 135:1,9 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Thursday 13th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 34

Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 56:4,5, reads and meditates on Philipians 1:19-26, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 35

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 18 to 29 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 36 (cf. Articles 29, 32, 59, Appendix E)

Bible Translation

The discussion on Bible Translations is continued.

Thursday 13th June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 37

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 122:1.

Article 38 (cf. Appendix M)

Proposal for Formation of Classes

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.9 FRC Kelmscott, proposal, formation of classes

DECISIONS:

- 1 To thank the church of Kelmscott for its elaborate proposal.
- 2 At this time not to adopt the proposal of Kelmscott to form three classes.
- 3 To appoint deputies to:
 - a study this whole matter of forming classes, using Kelmscott's materials and past submissions to and decisions of Synods,
 - b to invite comments from the churches, and
 - c report to the churches at least six months before next Synod.

GROUND:

- 1 The proposal to form three classes with two floating churches poses practical difficulties and it would be unwise to adopt this one possibility out of a variety of possibilities.
- 2 The need for classes has been demonstrated by the church of Kelmscott and prompts Synod to appoint deputies to study this whole matter.

An amendment is proposed to Decision 3 as follows:

- 3 To appoint deputies to:
 - a study this whole matter of forming classes, using Kelmscott's materials and past submissions and decisions,
 - b invite comments from the churches, digest these comments in a draft report and return to the churches for more thoughts before finalising their report, and
 - c report to next Synod.

DEFEATED

The proposal as presented is then voted upon.

ADOPTED

Thursday 13th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 39

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 87:3,4,5.

Article 40 (cf. Articles 52, 66, Appendices B2, B6, L3, L4)

Address by Reverends P Hawu and M Radjah

The chairman introduces Reverends P Hawu and M Radjah of our sister churches the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia and gives them the opportunity to address Synod. Reverend Hawu first presents the address in the Indonesian language followed by Reverend Radjah who presents an English language translation.

Article 41 (cf. Articles 31, 42, 43, 47, 49, 53, 91, Appendices B3, B6, L1, L2)

Response to Address of Reverend B Hoyt

The chairman remarks that responses to addresses to Synod are personal. Brother J van Dijk, in his capacity as deputy for church relations, is given the opportunity to respond to the address of Reverend B Hoyt.

Article 42 (cf. Articles 31, 41, 43, 47, 49, 53, 91, Appendices B3, B6, L1, L2)

Observer from Reformed Churches of New Zealand

The chairman rules, in accordance with the decision of Acts Synod 1994 (Article 78), that Reverend B Hoyt be given the opportunity to speak in the discussions regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. There is no objection.

Article 43 (cf. Articles 31, 41, 42, 47, 49, 53, 91, App. B3, B6, L1, L2)

Reformed Churches of New Zealand

The evening is spent in discussions on the church of Kelmscott's appeal against Article 123, Acts Synod 1994, and relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Article 44
Adjournment

Reverend van Hulst invites all present to sing Hymn 40, and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Friday 14th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 45
Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Hymn 19:1,2,3, reads and meditates on Philippians 1:27-2:5, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 46
Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 30 to 38 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 47 (cf. Articles 31, 41, 42, 43, 49, 53, 91, App. B3, B6, L1, L2)
Reformed Church of New Zealand

Discussion is continued on relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Friday 14th June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 48
Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 40:3,4.

Acts

Article 49 (cf. Articles 31, 41, 42, 43, 47, 53, 91, App. B3, B6, L1, L2)
Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Discussion is continued on relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Friday 14th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 50
Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 108:2,4.

Article 51 (cf. Articles 64, 67, 70, Appendices B2, B6, L5, L6)
Address by Reverend E Fangidae

The chairman introduces Reverend E Fangidae of the Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir in Timor, reads out his credentials, and gives him the opportunity to address Synod.

Article 52 (cf. Articles 40, 66, Appendices B2, B6, L3, L4)
Response to Address of Reverends P Hawu and M Radjah

The chairman gives brother J Bosveld in his capacity as Deputy for relations with other churches, the opportunity to respond to the address of the Reverends P Hawu and M Radjah of our sister churches the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia.

Article 53 (cf. Articles 31, 41, 42, 43, 47, 49, 91, App. B3, B6, L1, L2)
Reformed Churches of New Zealand

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.2a Other Churches (Reformed)

Agenda item 11.8.2b Other Churches (Supplementary Report)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

Two proposals are presented. The first proposal reads as follows:

DECISION:

- 1 To thank the deputies for their work done.
- 2 To express thankfulness that the RCNZ has acknowledged the FRCA as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 To recognise, according to our Confessions, the RCNZ as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4 To strive for sister relations with the RCNZ.
- 5 To encourage the RCNZ to continue to exercise their sister relations faithfully.
- 6 To instruct deputies:
 - a to continue the mutual contacts with the RCNZ,
 - b to convey Synod's decisions to RCNZ,
 - c to use our mutual contacts to address the sister relations between RCNZ and RCA so that the offer of sister relations can soon follow;
 - i) to encourage the RCNZ to use their sister relations to remonstrate with the RCA,
 - d to attend the next Synod of RCNZ, if invited,
 - e to invite the RCNZ to the next Synod of the FRCA, and
 - f to investigate the developments leading to the formation of the Geneva Reformed Church of Auckland.

GROUND:

- 1 The deputies have given a full report and even went beyond the call of duty in showing how the marks of the true church are found in the RCNZ.
- 2 Deputies have demonstrated that the three marks of the true church are found in the RCNZ. According to our Confessions we may therefore not withhold recognition of the RCNZ.
- 3 Article 67 of the 1985 Synod declares that recognition of churches as true has as a direct consequence that sister relations can be established (point II). At the same time this Article 67 shows that "historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity (pt III)." This means that the FRCA could already now offer sister relations to the RCNZ. Or there may be some practical problems to overcome. The latter is the case. Practically speaking, to offer sister relations with the RCNZ could bring us by implication into triangular contacts with the RCA, since the RCNZ has sister relations with the RCA, though these are "under strain". Also, sister relations between FRCA and RCNZ would mean the RCNZ would have two sisters in Australia, two sisters who cannot find unity of faith. Thus from the side of the RCNZ mutual sister relations between the FRCA and RCNZ would

Acts

pose practical problems for them. This means that while recognition of the RCNZ as true churches should be made, practical problems need to be addressed and discussed mutually before sister relations are entered. Mutual, intensive communication on this matter needs to take place.

- 4 There remains the question whether their sister relations with the RCA must remain an impediment toward recognition and sister relations as was stated by past Synods (cf Article 53, Recommendation 5 of the 1990 Synod). Firstly, the 1994 Synod (Article 78) considered that "in the light of the changes occurring on the ecclesiastical scene, there is a need to reconsider expectations (cf Article 53, Recommendation 5 of the 1990 Synod)." Therefore it asked deputies to see "how the relation of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ." The deputies found that the RCNZ exercises sister relations with RCA (and CRCNA) with Biblical principle and with decisiveness even though it causes them pain. The FRCA cannot expect the RCNZ just to break off these relations. That would be against the Rules for such relations. The FRCA must show understanding for this. Thus we may not view their sister relations with the RCA as an impediment to their recognition as true churches. Nor can the FRCA say that their sister relations with the RCA are exercised in an unbiblical and unprincipled fashion. Quite the contrary is true. Thus one may not conclude that it is an impediment towards sister relations with the FRCA. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that the situation is unwholesome and abnormal. Efforts need to be made to correct it.

Thus the FRCA should encourage the RCNZ to continue to remonstrate with their Australian sister. On this score our deputies rightly refer to their report re the RCA which, along with the RCNZ, warns against current, unreformed trends in the RCA. Our deputies indeed wish to send a letter of appeal to the RCA. Thus this practical problem is being addressed by both the RCNZ and FRCA.

- 5 Just before this Synod deputies received a request from the Geneva Reformed Church of Auckland for ecclesiastical ties. They included information leading to their formation as a church separate from the RCNZ. This needs to be investigated properly.

DEFEATED

The second proposal is presented as follows:

DECISION:

- 1 Synod notes with thankfulness that the recent Synod of the RCNZ could acknowledge the FRCA as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2 Synod declares its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the RCNZ.

- 3 Synod declares its appreciation for the principled approach which the RCNZ have shown in dealing with third parties by their encouragement and establishment of relations with faithful churches and by their admonition and if necessary breaking of ties with unfaithful churches.
- 4 To strive for a sister church relation with the RCNZ.
- 5 Synod mandates deputies to:
 - a to encourage the RCNZ to continue with their admonitions to the RCA, and to terminate relations with the RCA if these admonitions continue to go unheeded,
 - b clearly explain to the RCNZ the reasons for this Synod's decisions, taking into account comments in paragraph 5.3 of Deputies report and the decision of Synod Launceston 1985 (Article 67),
 - c to investigate the developments leading to the formation of the Geneva Free Reformed Church of Auckland,
 - d attend the next Synod of the RCNZ if invited, and
 - e invite delegates from the RCNZ to attend the next Synod of the FRCA as observers with the privileges mentioned in Acts Synod Bedfordale 1992, Article 19, Recommendation 2b.

GROUNDINGS:

- 1 Deputies have indicated that in doctrine, worship and church government the RCNZ must be considered a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2 Seeing that the matter of how the relations of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ has not yet been resolved, it would be premature to offer a sister relation at this point of time.
- 3 Deputies have reported on new relations which the RCNZ have entered into with faithful churches, and their willingness to suspend or break ties with churches which deviate from Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. Although it cannot be expected that the RCNZ suddenly break ties with an errant sister without first exercising brotherly admonition, the deformation within the RCA has been evident for a considerable time, shown by their delay before finally breaking relations with the GKN(S) and their continuing membership of the REC. Deputies should encourage the RCNZ to act consequently if the admonitions of the RCNZ continue to go unheeded.
- 4 Synod 1985 decided that our declaration of another church as being "true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ ... has as direct consequence that a sister-church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well

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give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity" (Article 67, Acts Synod 1985).

- 5 Contacts with the RCNZ have proved fruitful and should be fostered by further visits to each others synods. Privileges given to RCNZ delegates should be similar to that extended to churches with which we have Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact.
- 6 Deputies have received correspondence from the Geneva Free Reformed Church of Auckland requesting affiliation with the FRCA. The minister and members of this church were formerly members of the RCNZ.

ADOPTED

Article 54

Publication of the Church Order

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.2 Deputy Publication of the Church Order
Report of Deputy for Publication of the Church Order

DECISION:

- 1 To adopt the report from Deputy for Publication of the Church Order.
- 2 To express appreciation to brother J Eikelboom for the work done.
- 3 To discharge the Deputy.

GROUND:

The Deputy has fulfilled his mandate.

ADOPTED

Article 55

Days of Prayer

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.10 Deputies Article 66 Church Order
Report of Deputies for Church Order Article 66

DECISION:

- 1 To thank the church of Launceston.
- 2 To discharge deputies.

GROUND:

The church of Launceston has fulfilled its mandate.

Article 56

Adjournment

Elder B vander Velde invites all present to sing Psalm 35:1,4 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Monday 17th June, 1996

MORNING SESSION

Article 57

Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Hymn 21:1,2, reads Isaiah 53:1-9 and Philippians 2:5-7a, meditates on Philippians 2:5-7a, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 58

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 39 to 49 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 59 (cf. Articles 29, 32, 36, Appendix E)

Bible Translation

The first proposal reads as follows.

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.7 FRC Armadale, Bible translation

Agenda item 8.14 J Byl, Bible translations

Agenda item 11.1 Deputies Bible translation

Report of Deputies for Bible Translation

DECISION:

- 1 To thank deputies for the work done and discharge deputies.
- 2 To also recommend the NIV as a faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches.
- 3 To strive for the use of one Bible translation in our Australian churches.
- 4 To appoint new deputies with the mandate:

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- a to inform the Canadian Reformed Churches of this decision and to maintain contact with their Committee on Bible Translations for jointly determining passages in the NIV in need of improvement,
- b to make the report of the Committee for Bible Translation to the Synod of Abbotsford 1995 available for the churches,
- c to solicit comment from the Australian churches on possible improvements to the NIV,
- d to monitor developments in the NIV paying attention to the matter mentioned in Grounds 7, and to pass onto the NIV Translation Centre suggested improvements for future reprints,
- e to maintain the archives, and
- f to report to next Synod.

GROUND:

- 1 The reports of deputies over the last years have shown in increasing trust in the NIV as a faithful and reliable translation. This trust is reflected in the decision of Byford 1994 to allow the NIV to be used in the church services.
- 2 Synod 1994 withheld final endorsement of the NIV in order to evaluate its reception in the churches. Since that time the NIV has been well received in some of the congregations in the federation.
- 3 On the basis of the extensive report of the Committee for Bible Translation, the Synod of Abbotsford 1995 decided to recommend the NIV as the translation to be used in the Canadian churches.
- 4 The Book of Praise which both the CanRC and the FRCA adopted and use relies heavily on the Bible translation used (wording of psalms and hymns as well as Scripture quotations in Catechism and Forms). As these books come to us from Canada we should consider the implications if we use a different translation in Australia than in Canada.
- 5 The FRC of Armadale requests this Synod to "aim for the recommendation of ONE Bible translation in our Australian churches."
- 6 In light of the reception of the NKJV and the NIV in the churches and in light of CanRC decision to recommend the NIV it would not be wise to now already determine which translation will ultimately be the official one to be used in our churches. This is a goal to aim for.
- 7 The Executive Director of the NIV Translation Centre has indicated that some time after the turn of the century an updated text of the NIV will appear which will use a balanced approach to inclusive language. It is not clear what a balanced approach to inclusive language means and what implications this has for the reliability of that future edition.

DEFEATED

The second proposal reads as follows.

DECISION:

- 1 To thank deputies for the work done and discharge deputies.
- 2 To retain the archives.
- 3 To aim for one Bible translation in the Australian churches.
- 4 To recommend the NKJV as the translation for use in the churches.
- 5 To recognise the NIV as a faithful and reliable translation which may be used by churches which prefer this translation.
- 6 To alert the churches to the uncertain future of the NIV, as regards an updated text to be published some time after the turn of the century.
- 7 To instruct deputies for contact with sister churches to inform the Canadian sister churches of this decision, together with the grounds.

GROUND:

- 1 Past synods have judged the NKJV acceptable for use in the churches and endorsed this translation. Six churches are currently using the NKJV in the church services.
- 2 Past synods have allowed use of (the present edition of) the NIV in church services. Deputies indicate in their report that the last Canadian Synod has judged the NIV to be a faithful and reliable translation. Currently two of our churches are using the NIV in the church services.
- 3 Synod Byford 1994 expressed in its grounds for the Bible Translation decision that "it is highly desirable that all the churches in the bond use the same translation of the Bible. However, since the question of which Bible translation to use is not one of principle but rather one of preference, room should be left in the churches for a degree of variation" (Acts Synod 1994, Article 55, Ground 3).
- 4 The church at Armadale requests this Synod to "aim for the recommendation of ONE Bible translation in our Australian Churches". Armadale brings forward a number of legitimate reasons for the use of a single translation in the churches. To wit:
 - a the physical proximity of congregations, combined with the transience of the members, means that one Bible translation is highly desirable,
 - b "Using one version builds unity whereas two or more versions can have the effect of dividing the churches",
 - c the use of multiple versions in the churches complicates memory work amongst catechism students, and
 - d the same version should be used in both the home and at school.

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- 5 A letter signed by the Executive Director of the NIV Translation Centre (dd 10th May, 1996) states that "it is true that some time after the turn of the century an updated text of the NIV will appear. It will use a balanced approach to inclusive language. Such language will not be applied to references to the three persons of the Trinity. Only the publishers can answer the question about whether a non-inclusive NIV will be published alongside the inclusive edition. The NIV will be updated about every 25 years." The NIV was initially published in complete form in 1978.
- 6 It is not clear what the phrase "a balanced approach to 'inclusive language'" means and what implications this has for the reliability of the upcoming edition. However, it must be noted that the concept of 'inclusive language' is rooted in feminist theology.
- 7 The current edition of the NIV has a short life span. As the proposed 'inclusive language' edition is not yet finalised, there is an element of uncertainty concerning the future of the NIV.
- 8 It is not desirable that the churches change translations frequently. We have changed from the KJV to the RSV (1983), and again from the RSV to the NKJV or NIV (1994/5). It would not be desirable to be in a position wherein we may need to make another change within the foreseeable future.

ADOPTED

Article 60 (cf. Article 68)

Appeal against Article 123 Acts Synod 1994

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.1 FRC Kelmscott, appeal against Article 123 Acts Synod 1994

Two proposals are presented. The first one reads as follows:

DECISION:

To uphold Kelmscott's appeal that Article 123 (Acts Synod 1994, Ground 3) contains a decision which is in conflict with the adopted Church Order.

GROUND:

Synod placed a new matter on Synod's agenda whereas Article 30 of the Church Order says that new matters should be prepared by the minor assemblies (consistories) and not by deputies (cf. Acts Synod 1992, Article 144, Recommendation 2 and Consideration 3).

DEFEATED

The second proposal is presented as follows:

DECISION:

To uphold Kelmscott's appeal since Synod 1994 (Article 123, Ground 3) erred in instructing deputies themselves rather than the minor assemblies to place this (unfinished) new matter on the agenda of the next Synod.

GROUND:

Synod was in conflict with Article 30 of the Church Order and with previous Synod-decisions by instructing that a new matter could be prepared by deputies rather by the minor assemblies (consistories) (cf. Acts Synod 1992, Article 144, Recommendation 2 and Consideration 3).

ADOPTED

Article 61 (cf. Appendix B1)

Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.2a Other Churches (Reformed)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

- 1 To discontinue the contacts with the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.
- 2 With regret to inform the ERCS that the contacts have not made progress towards mutual recognition and official relations.

GROUND:

There is no improvement in contacts and there does not seem to be a desire from the ERCS to develop the contacts towards possible mutual recognition and relations with each other.

ADOPTED

Monday 17th June, 1996

AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 62

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 141:1,23.

Acts

Article 63 (cf. Appendix J)

Civil Registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.11 Civil Registration of the FRCA
Report of Deputies for the Civil Registration of the FRCA

DECISION:

- 1 To discharge deputies with thanks for the work done.
- 2 To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a attend, on behalf of the bond of churches, to the nomination and correspondence matters that shall be required when the requested registration is effected, and
 - b finalise and implement the formal registration of the FRCA.

GROUND:

- 1 The deputies have done their work as far as it could be done so far.
- 2 The deputies are as capable of attending to the requirements of the requested registration as a Synod secretariat would. Further, reformed church polity does not know a permanent "Synod secretariat".

ADOPTED

Article 64 (cf Articles 51, 67, 70, Appendices B2, B6, L5, L6)

Observer from Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir

The chairman rules that Reverend E Fangidae be given the opportunity to speak in the discussions regarding the Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir in Timor. There are no objections.

Article 65

Expression of Appreciation

Synod decides to present a bouquet of flowers to the kitchen staff and Synod administrator as an expression of appreciation for the time and effort they have given.

Article 66 (cf. Articles 40, 52, Appendices B2, B6, L3, L4)

Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (Reformed Churches of Sumba, Savu, Timor)

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.2a Other Churches (Reformed)

Agenda item 11.8.2b Other Churches (Supplementary Report)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISIONS:

- 1 To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.
- 2 To instruct deputies:
 - a to continue to visit the Synods of the GGRI,
 - b to coordinate the support offered to the Indonesian Churches by way of sponsoring visits, provision of literature and other aids in order to build up the reformed character of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia,
 - c to support a student from the sister churches once Yonson De-
than has completed his studies at the Theological College in
Hamilton, and
 - d to encourage the individual Free Reformed Churches and their
members to provide the finance needed to support Decisions 2b
and 2c.

GROUND:

- 1 The GGRI give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- 2 The FRCA are in a position to support their sister churches in training future leaders and building up the congregations. For this reason visits to the GGRI are in place also.

ADOPTED

Article 67 (cf. Articles 51, 64, 70, Appendices B2, B6, L5, L6)

Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir (Reformed Churches of Timor, Savu)

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.2a Other Churches (Reformed)

Agenda item 11.8.2b Other Churches (Supplementary Report)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

Acts

DECISION:

- 1 To express thankfulness that a number of churches in the GGMM have decided to remain reformed in the face of hierarchy.
- 2 To assist the GGMM in their continuing desire to remain reformed.
- 3 To instruct deputies:
 - a to visit the GGMM as need and opportunity arise,
 - b to report on progress towards an eventual recommendation to recognize the GGMM as sister churches,
 - c to continue to support the theological training undertaken by Yonson Dethan, and
 - d to encourage the individual Free Reformed Churches and their members to provide the finance needed to support Decision 3c.

GROUNDS:

- 1 Since the GGMM have just gone through a reformation, it is worthwhile to stand beside these churches in their struggles.
- 2 The GGMM request assistance and contact.
- 3 The FRCA have taken it upon themselves to support Yonson Dethan's training. This training should be completed.
- 4 Supporting the GGMM is in line with the decision of the churches in Synod 1990, Article 58.

ADOPTED

Article 68 (cf. Article 60, Appendix B4)

Free Reformed Churches in the Philippines

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.2a Other Churches (Reformed)

Agenda item 8.11 FRC Launceston, proposal FRC Philippines

Agenda item 8.12 FRC Albany, Article 123 Acts Synod 1994, proposal FRC Philippines

Agenda item 8.13 FRC West Albany, Article 123 Acts Synod 1994, proposal FRC Philippines

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

To instruct deputies to continue to gather information regarding the FRCP e.g. received via Acts of Synod of our sister churches or via correspondence, with the aim of seeing whether official contacts should be opened with them.

GROUND:

- 1 These churches have a sister relationship with our sister churches in The Netherlands, and are geographically close to us.
- 2 These churches are young in the reformed faith and would undoubtedly benefit from the heritage of churches long standing in the reformed faith.
- 3 Three churches have asked to seek contact with the FRCP.

ADOPTED

Monday 17th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 69

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 29:1,2.

Article 70 (cf. Articles 51, 64, 67, Appendices B2, B6, L5, L6)

Response to Address of Reverend E Fangidae

The chairman gives brother JL van Burgel, in his capacity as Deputy for Church Relations, the opportunity to respond to the address of Reverend E Fangidae of the Gereja Gereja Musehi Musyafir.

Article 71 (cf. Appendix B5)

Reformed Churches of Australia

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.2a Other Churches (Reformed)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

- 1 To accept the decision of the 1994 RCA Synod that their sister relations with the GKN(S) seen in the historical light of the doctrinal and church-political controversies and the subsequent Liberation of 1944, were unjust, inconsequential and the express cause for lack of unity; this ends the discussion concerning the events of the fifties and sixties.

GROUND:

- A All the doctrinal and church-political matters leading to the Liberation have been acknowledged.
 - B They thus consider the Liberation 'legitimate'. This acknowledgment allows them to understand our objections against their sister relations with the GKN(S).
 - C They acknowledge their neglect of Biblical justice and their inconsequential manner in dealing with the important matter of sister relations, and that they placed 'serious obstacles in the way of union with the FRCA'.
- 2 Not to enter official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the RCA at this time.

GROUND:

- A The current trends in the RCA, which have been in part imported by their past sister relations with the GKN(S), give alarm, and show that they and we travel in a different direction (the decisions by the RCNZ confirm this). Further contact would thus not be meaningful but frustrating for both parties.
- 3 To authorise deputies to send a letter of appeal to the 1997 RCA Synod and to all their sessions, appealing to them to return to a distinctively reformed direction so that future contact may become possible and can be meaningful.

GROUND:

- A The gains made thus far should be used and not wasted.
- B Synod has not given a mandate thus far to address the current trends in the RCA. To write such a letter of appeal requires a mandate from Synod.
- C A letter of appeal, rather than official contacts which already mean we are working towards the goal of sister relations or union, seems the best route at this stage.

ADOPTED

Article 72

Pulpit Exchange

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.13 Deputies Pulpit Exchange
Report of Deputies for Pulpit Exchange

DECISION:

- 1 To thank the church of Albany for coordinating and monitoring the roster of pulpit exchange.
- 2 To appoint a church to coordinate and monitor the roster of pulpit exchange for the period 1996-1998.
- 3 To accept the following schedule of pulpit exchange:

Minister of:	1996	1997	1998
Albany		Tasmania	
Armadale	Tasmania		
Launceston	Metro		Albany/Metro
Legana	Metro	Albany/Metro	
West Albany			Tasmania

GROUNDS:

As long as no classes have been formed, it is still advantageous for the well-being of the bond of Churches to have pulpit exchange, particularly for those churches and ministers who reside in comparative geographic isolation.

ADOPTED**Article 73****Adjournment**

Reverend vander Jagt invites all present to sing Hymn 19:1,3,4,6 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Tuesday 18th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 74**Reopening**

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 6:1,2,6, reads Psalm 6 and Philippians 2:7b,8, meditates on Philippians 2:7b,8, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 75

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 50 to 68 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 76 (cf. Articles 77, 85, 95, Appendix D)

International Conference of Reformed Churches

Synod enters a general discussion regarding the appeals and Deputies Report dealing with the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Tuesday 18th June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 77 (cf. Articles 76, 85, 95, Appendix D)

International Conference of Reformed Churches

Discussion is continued regarding the appeals and deputies report dealing with the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Article 78 (cf. Articles 27, 79, Appendices A5, F)

Training for the Ministry

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.6 Deputies Training for the Ministry

Report of Deputies for the Training for the Ministry

DECISION:

- 1 To thank deputies for their work and discharge them.
- 2 To request the churches to contribute \$38.00 per communicant member per annum, for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton as from 1st July 1996.
- 3 No longer to encourage the churches to collect for the Theological Seminary in Pusan.
- 4 To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the churches,
 - b continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen," in order to maintain contact and obtain information,

- c publish relevant information concerning the Training of the Ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students,
- d continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 of the Church Order,
- e request the churches supporting a student of theology to provide financial details to the deputies so that they can assess the churches in such a way that the burden of supporting theological students is spread over all the churches,
- f look into possibilities to invite guest lecturers from Hamilton, and
- g to report to the next Synod, without publishing the financial details relating to individual students.

GROUND:

- 1 Students from the FRCA attend the Theological College in Hamilton, and the contacts with Hamilton are extensive.
- 2 The Korean churches are able to support their own theological seminary (see Report of Deputies for Sister Churches).
- 3 Support for students of theology should continue in accordance with Article 18 of the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 79 (cf. Article 78, Appendix F)

Audit of Books for Training for the Ministry

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.12 Audit of the books of Deputies Training for the Ministry
Report of Deputies for the Audit of the books of Deputies Training for the Ministry

DECISION:

- 1 To note that the books have been audited, and found in good order.
- 2 To thank the deputies for auditing the books of Training for the Ministry, and discharge them.

GROUND:

The deputies have fulfilled their mandate.

ADOPTED

Tuesday 18th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 80
Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 68:2,3.

Article 81 (cf. Appendix N)
Ecclesiastical Documents

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.10 FRC Kelmscott, revision of ecclesiastical documents

DECISION:

- 1 To adopt the amended form of the following ecclesiastical documents:
 - a Certificate of Admission to the Office of Minister of the Word,
 - b Certificate of Release of Minister (by the Church),
 - c Certificate of Release of Minister (by the Classis),
 - d Regulations for the Financial Aid of Students, and
 - e Rules for the Fund for the Support of Needy Students.
- 2 That the Rules for a Colloquium Doctum and for the repeated calling of the same minister be deleted from the Ecclesiastical Ordinances.
- 3 That Synod appoint deputies:
 - a to propose an update to the language of the Rules for Church Visitation and propose amendments so that they reflect current practices in the Churches, and
 - b to serve the Churches with a proposal regarding the inconsistency between the Form for the Emeritus Declaration and the Church Order, Article 13.
- 4 That Reverend van Rongen be thanked for his submissions.

GROUND:

- 1 It is expedient to have harmony between the Ecclesiastical Ordinances and the Church Order.
- 2 Rules made superfluous by later decisions should be deleted from the Ecclesiastical Ordinances.
- 3 Rules for Church Visitation should reflect existing practices in the Churches and be phrased in up-to-date language.

- 4 Reverend van Rongen supplied Kelmscott with a valuable submission and formulated the appendices to this decision in his "Church Order of Dordrecht", 1995.
- 5 The Form for Emeritus Declaration as proposed by Kelmscott is not consistent with Article 13 of Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 82

Adjournment

Reverend van Delden invites all present to sing Psalm 67:1,3 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Wednesday 19th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 83

Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 22:1,3, reads John 19:1-16 and Philippians 2:8b, meditates on Philippians 2:8b, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 84

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 69 to 79 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 85 (cf. Articles 76, 77, 95, Appendix D)

International Conference of Reformed Churches

Discussion is continued regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Wednesday 19th June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 86
Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 141:4,5,7.

Article 87
Closed Session

Synod goes into closed session in order to deal with church visitation reports.

Wednesday 19th June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 88
Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 75:1,2,4.

Article 89 (cf. Appendix P)
Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.8 FRC Armadale, proposal, Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons

Two proposals are presented. The first proposal reads as follows:

DECISION:

- 1 To delete the quotation of Galatians 6:10 from the charge to the deacons and insert it at the end of the charge to the congregation.
- 2 To instruct deputies for Relations with Sister Churches to inform the Canadian sister churches of this decision.

GROUNDS:

- 1 The offices within the church were instituted by God for the benefit of the church.

- 2 Galatians 6:10 specifically addresses the congregation and not the deacons.
- 3 Though this is not a substantial change to our liturgical Forms (see Acts 1992, Recommendation 3, Number 7) it is wise to inform our Canadian sister churches since we jointly use one Book of Praise.

DEFEATED

The second proposal is presented as follows:

DECISION:

- 1 To add the words "Encourage the congregation to" so that the charge to the deacons reads: "Encourage the congregation to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith."
- 2 To instruct Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches to inform the Canadian sister churches of this decision.

GROUND:

- 1 The deacons are office bearers in the church and have the task of working in it.
- 2 The Believers have the task "to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith". It belongs to the task of the deacons to encourage and stimulate the congregation to fulfil its responsibilities in this regard (Ephesians 4:11,12).
- 3 This formulation of the charge to the deacons reflects the description of the ministry of mercy earlier in the Form.
- 4 Though this is not a substantial change to our liturgical Forms (see Acts Synod 1992, Article 95, Recommendation 3, Number 7) it is wise to inform our Canadian sister churches since we jointly use one Book of Praise.

ADOPTED

Article 90 (cf. Article 15)

Synod Meeting Place

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.4 FRC West Albany, Synod meeting place proposal

Three proposals are presented. The first proposal reads as follows:

DECISION:

That the roster of convening churches be changed from the present alphabetical mode to a cycle of two synods in the Perth metropolitan area, then one synod in Tasmania followed by two in the Perth metropolitan area then one in Albany and so on.

GROUND:

- 1 Instead of four synods being held consecutively in one locality, it is better for the churches that there be a systematic rotation of churches responsible for hosting Synod.
- 2 There is a minor cost saving involved in the proposal from West Albany.
- 3 In the future the probable area of growth for church institution is in the area of Metro-Perth.

DEFEATED

The second proposal is presented as follows:

DECISION:

Not to grant the request of the church of West Albany.

GROUND:

- 1 West Albany's proposal that "the roster of convening churches be changed from the present alphabetical mode to a cycle of two synods in the Perth metropolitan area, then one synod in Tasmania followed by two in the Perth metropolitan area then one in Albany and so on" involves that the churches not receive equal opportunity to convene Synod. Given the responsibilities that come with being calling church for a major assembly, it is expedient that the various churches have equal opportunity to serve as calling church.
- 2 A privilege that belongs with being calling church for Synod is the option of hosting the major assembly. It is not imperative that the calling church convene the major assembly in its own locality.

DEFEATED

The third proposal is presented as follows:

DECISION:

Not to accept the request of West Albany but instead to pass on the proposal to Deputies for the Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod.

GROUND:

- 1 It is good that each church would receive equal turns to convene Synod.
- 2 The rules and procedures of Synod will be reviewed for the next Synod. Churches may send submissions.
- 3 The proposal of West Albany is not to the advantage of the churches in Tasmania and Albany.
- 4 There is no problem for the convening of next Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 91 (cf. Articles 31, 41, 42, 43, 47, 49, 53, App. B3, B6, L1, L2)
Farewell to Reverend B Hoyt

Because Reverend B Hoyt is leaving for New Zealand tomorrow morning, the chairman expresses appreciation for his presence and wishes him a safe journey home. Reverend Hoyt is given the opportunity to speak a few words in farewell.

Article 92
Adjournment

Brother JL van Burgel invites all present to sing Psalm 86:1,2,4 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Thursday 20th June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 93
Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 2:3,4, reads Revelation 1:12-20 and Philippians 2:9-11, meditates on Philippians 2:9-11, and leads in opening prayer.

Article 94
Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 80 to 87 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 95 (cf. Articles 76, 77, 85, Appendix D)
International Conference of Reformed Churches

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.2 FRC Bedfordale, appeal Article 83 Acts Synod 1994
Agenda item 8.15 FRC Byford, appeal Article 83 Acts Synod 1994
Agenda item 8.16 FRC Rockingham, proposal, ICRC

The following proposal is voted upon:

Acts

DECISION:

- 1 To terminate our membership in the ICRC.
- 2 With a view to Decision 1, not to deal with the appeals of Byford and Bedfordale.
- 3 To immediately inform all member churches of the ICRC of this decision, indicating our withdrawal of the proposed constitutional amendment and apologise for any inconvenience caused.
- 4 Not to appoint new deputies for the ICRC.

GROUND:

- 1
 - a The membership of the FRCA in the ICRC has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches. This is evident in the divided deputy reports and the repeated appeals to Synod,
 - b Synod has not been able to reach a consensus on whether or not Scripture forbids participation in the ICRC, and
 - c The Church of Rockingham asks Synod not to bind and compel the conscience of those churches who believe that their participation in and support of the ICRC is contrary to Scripture. The churches of Bedfordale and Byford have expressed the same belief that participation in the ICRC is contrary to Scripture, Confession and Church Order.
- 2 The appeals of Bedfordale and Byford request Synod to terminate membership in the ICRC. Thus there is no need for Synod to deal further with these appeals.
- 3 In the light of the past history it would be unrealistic of Synod to expect deputies to come forward with an agreed conclusion or recommendation.

ADOPTED

Article 96 (cf. Appendix C)

Presbyterian Churches

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.8.3 Other Churches (Presbyterian)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

DECISION:

- 1 To renew the same mandate as given by Synod 1994 and to encourage deputies to fulfil their mandate for the next Synod.
- 2 To mandate the deputies to incorporate in their study the progress there has been in the synod reports and decisions by our sister churches.

FOUNDATIONS:

- 1 Deputies have only started their task. Though one could have expected more, Synod 1994 did not expect them to finish their mandate by this Synod.
- 2 For the benefit of the churches and our contacts, the study of these concerns should be finalised by the next Synod.
- 3 The sister churches in The Netherlands, South Africa and Canada have studied and assessed these "areas of concern". Our sister-relations should be exercised "mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world" (Rule 1, Rules for Exercising Sister Relations). It is thus proper to incorporate these studies in the deputies' mandate.

ADOPTED

Article 97 (cf. Appendix Q)

Acts of Classis Kelmscott

The Acts of Classis Kelmscott held on 6th December 1995 are received.

Article 98 (cf. Appendix R)

Acts of Extra-ordinary Synods

Synod decides to include the Acts of extra-ordinary Synod Kelmscott 1995, held on 6th December, 1995 as an Appendix to the Acts of the next Synod.

Article 99

Closed Session

Synod goes into closed session in order to finish discussing the matters dealing with church visitation reports.

Thursday 20th June, 1996

AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 100

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Hymn 32:1,3.

Acts

The timetable for remaining items on the agenda is discussed and decided upon.

Article 101

Adjournment

Brother LA 't Hart invites all present to sing Psalm 92:1,6 and closes in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Article 102

Mind over Matter!

MATERIAL:

Ten days of Reports

Ten days of Meals

DECISION:

To adopt the following:

Action	Mind	Matter
Open	Synod - with a hammer	meal - with a bell
Decide	which proposal?	which type of soup?
Accept	reports	what you get served!
Adopt	acts	cake-eating habit
Choice	NKJV or NIV translation	Pumpkin or Chicken soup
Listen	to long speeches	to "enter the Ministry" stories
Exercise	church relations	walking, ping-pong
Get lost	in discussions	along Grovelands Drv (who was that?)
Promote	unity	J Eikelboom to Reverend?
Instruct	deputies	in English language (who said visitator?)
Farewell	Reverend Hoyt	the cooks - Frances and Liz
Recuperate	sleep	waistline

GROUND:

- 1 To cheer us up in the latter days.
- 2 To set our mind straight before we return to our normal routine.
- 3 To check if you will read this far! ☺

ADOPTED

Article 103

Appeal against Article 102

MATERIAL:

Appeal against Article 102 Acts Synod Kelmscott 1996

DECISION:

To rescind Article 102 of Synod Kelmscott 1996.

GROUND:

- 1 The decision was made with undue haste.
- 2 We're tired of this nonsense.
- 3 The decision will be repeated in Synod Launceston 1998!

UNADOPTED (!)

Friday 21st June, 1996
MORNING SESSION

Article 104

Reopening

The chairman requests the meeting to sing Psalm 138:3,4, reads Romans 6:5-14 and Philippians 2:12-13, meditates on Philippians 2:12-13 and leads in opening prayer.

Article 105

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 88 to 103 are adopted. The Press Release thus far is approved.

Article 106 (cf. Articles 76, 77, 85, 95, Appendix D)

ICRC Report and Regional Mission Conference

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.5 FRC Albany, ICRC Regional Mission Conferences

Agenda item 11.8.4 Other Churches (ICRC)

Report of Deputies for Relations with Other Churches (ICRC)

DECISION:

- 1 To thank and discharge deputies.
- 2 To note the Report of Deputies for ICRC.
- 3 Not to accede to the request of the church of Albany concerning the organisation of regional conferences of the ICRC.

GROUND:

In a previous decision, Synod terminated membership in the ICRC, and so no action is required on Deputies' Report and the request from Albany.

ADOPTED

Article 107 (cf. Appendices K1, K2, S)

Treasurer's Report and Budget

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11.4 Synod Treasurer

Agenda item 11.5 Auditors Synod Treasury

Agenda item 11.14 Synod Treasurer - draft budget

Agenda item 12 Audit of Treasurer's books, and discharge of Treasurer

Agenda item 13 Calculation of the percentage of the churches' share of Synod costs

Financial Report of Synod Treasurer

Draft Budget

DECISION:

- 1 To accept the Treasurer's statement of receipts and expenditures for the period of 23rd February 1994 to 31st January 1996.
- 2 To thank the Treasurer for work done and to discharge him.
- 3 To receive the Report of the Auditors for Synod Treasury (Church of Kelmscott as deputies).
- 4 To thank deputies for the work done and to discharge them.
- 5 To accept the draft budget and cost sharing arrangement for the individual churches as proposed by the Synod Treasurer.
- 6 To appoint a "sound-man" to care for the audio equipment of Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 108

Questions according to Article 41 Church Order

Each of the churches is given the opportunity to answer the questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order.

Article 109

Closed Session

Synod goes into closed session in order to deal with appointments.

Friday 21st June, 1996
AFTERNOON SESSION

Article 110

Appointments

- 1 Publishing of the Acts
First Clerk
- 2 Archives and Library of Synods - Acts, Article 26
Church of Bedfordale
- 3 Inspection of Archives and Library - Acts, Article 26
Church of Byford
- 4 Treasurer of Synod - Acts, Article 107
Ad. Hordyk
JG Versluis - Alternate
- 5 Auditors for Synod treasury - Acts, Article 107
Church of Kelmscott
- 6 Deputies for Relations with Other Churches
General Convener: Reverend A Veldman
General Secretary: JL van Burgel

Acts

6.1 Sister Churches

The Netherlands, Canada, South Africa, Korea - Acts, Article 17, 19, 20, 24, 25

Convener: Reverend C Bouwman
AMC Bruning
HJ Dekker
PO Posthuma
Alternate: GB Veenendaal

6.2 Other Churches (Reformed)

New Zealand, Reformed Churches of Australia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia - Acts, Article 53, 61, 66, 67, 68, 71

Convener: Reverend W Huizinga
J Bosveld
JL van Burgel
Reverend van Delden
J van Dijk
Alternate: GM Spyker

6.3 Other Churches (Presbyterian)

PCEA, Ireland, Scotland - Acts, Article 96

Convener: Reverend A Veldmam
J Bruning
H Olde
Reverend J Poppe
A Slobe
Reverend W vander Jagt
Alternate: A Plug

6.4 All deputies will work under one umbrella. The various deputies will do their own work and are responsible for their own report to Synod. The three deputyships will meet together regularly to inform and consult with each other regarding their work. The frequency of the combined meetings will be decided by deputies. Deputies shall present their final report for interaction and consultation by the full deputyship before sending them to Synod.

The duties of the general secretary will be:

- a to take care of the central post box,
- b to distribute the mail,
- c to act as recording clerk for the combined meetings, and

- d to acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies,
and if necessary to pass it on to the churches.

7 Deputies for Training for the Ministry - Acts, Articles 27, 78

Convener: Reverend Bouwman
Murray Plug
AT Schiebaan
A van Leeuwen

Alternate: R(ichard) Heerema

8 Deputy for the Nicene Creed - Synod Acts 1994, Article 124

Reverend A van Delden

9 Pulpit Exchanges - Acts, Article 72

Church of Albany

10 Deputies for the Civil Registration of the FRCA - Acts, Article 63

Convener: SC Fokkema
S Herbert

11 Deputies for the Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod -
Acts, Article 15, 90

Church of Bedfordale

12 Deputies for the Formation of Classes - Acts, Article 38

Churches of Launceston and Legana

13 Deputies for Ecclesiastical Documents - Acts, Article 81

Church of Kelmscott

14 Deputy for Synod Audio Equipment - Acts, Article 107

E t Hart

Acts

- 15 **Classis Church:** the next church in alphabetical order
Second-appeal Church: the preceding church in alphabetical order.
It is understood that if another church is instituted, this new congregation takes its place according to its alphabetical order in the list below:

	Classis churches	Second-appeal churches
for Albany	Armadale	West Albany
for Armadale	Bedfordale	Albany
for Bedfordale	Byford	Armadale
for Byford	Kelmscott	Bedfordale
for Kelmscott	Launceston	Byford
for Launceston	Legana	Kelmscott
for Legana	Rockingham	Launceston
for Rockingham	West Albany	Legana
for West Albany	Albany	Rockingham

- 16 **Deputies for Church Visits - Article 44 Church Order**
The ministers (Convener: Reverend A Veldman)
Alternates - the convener may request the consistory of the church neighbouring the one to be visited to appoint an experienced elder from its midst.
- 17 **Deputies for Article 48 and 76 Church Order**
Convener: Reverend A Veldman
Reverend C Bouwman
PO Posthuma
- 18 **Deputies for Article 66 Church Order - (Days of Prayer) - Acts, Article 55**
Church of Launceston
- 19 **Deputies for auditing the books for Deputies for Article 17, 18 Church Order - Acts, Article 79**
Church of Bedfordale
- 20 **Convening church for the next Synod:**
Church: Launceston
Place: Launceston
Time: June 1998

Article 111

Censure according to Article 47 Church Order

Article 47 of Church Order requires that at the close of the major assemblies censure shall be exercised over those who during Synod have done something worthy of reproof. The chairman announces there is no need for this censure.

Friday 21st June, 1996
EVENING SESSION

Article 112

Reopening

The chairman reopens Synod and invites all present to sing Hymn 2:1,2.

Article 113

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

The Acts Articles 104 to 111 are adopted. The Press Release is approved.

Article 114

Personal Question Time

Some of the delegates make use of this item. The Acts will be available on diskette. A request was made to update the Glossary to include both English and foreign language acronyms.

Article 115

Closing Address

The 1996 Synod of Kelmscott, the nineteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is about to become history. But before we put down the gavel on this Synod, brothers, delegates, I would like to address some closing remarks, as is customary.

On behalf of all the officers of Synod, we thank you for the confidence placed in us. Some of us were rather surprised by the positions you gave to us - I for one had not expected to chair Synod at all! We hope that your confidence in us was not ill-placed or abused.

Acts

Some comments as chairman might be in order. At the start of this Synod we again dealt with rules and procedures for Synod. Though Synod did not adopt the proposed rules we tried to proceed in the spirit of those rules and procedures. It is up to new deputies to review our rules. Meanwhile we worked with the rules and procedures adopted at the 1994 Synod. Again, Synod did not last as long as they have previously. This time we needed only eight full days of Synod. We made more use of committees to draft decisions for us once a consensus had emerged on the floor of Synod. Hopefully that has bred better and more mature decisions. The Rules for Synod stipulate we aim for unanimity, especially on matters of Biblical principle. Generally speaking we did that. For example, on Bible Translations we had various proposals but by means of consensus and fairness we reached a decision.

In the rounds of discussion I detected that members of Synod have learned to respect each other. At the beginning of Synod we all rose to demonstrate our agreement with the Word of God, our reformed Forms of Unity and our Church Order. That displayed our essential unity. In my view delegates spoke candidly on controversial items without the tension experienced in previous Synods. We have matured somewhat. I thank you for the brotherly atmosphere that could continue during Synod. If I as chair have been subjective or if I have dealt with anyone unjustly, please accept my apologies.

The chair also wishes to thank you as fellow delegates. We have worked hard together, struggled and prayed together. We really became acquainted with each other. That develops a bond between us. We became acquainted with the two new ministers, Reverends W vander Jagt and J Poppe. One likes a 'version' of humour and other has an infectious laugh - someone should teach him a Kookaburra version! One of the satisfying features of a Synod, at least for me personally, is the privilege to work together with one's colleagues and with elders from the other churches.

The decisions of Synod now go to the churches. They can read and scrutinise them, deciding whether our work was well-founded or not. Mind you, these decisions are settled and binding on the churches, unless the churches find them to be against the Word of God or the Church Order (Article 31 Church Order). We will not review all the decisions themselves. They were made with prayer and out of love for Biblical truth. We begun Synod and every morning of Synod with singing, Scripture, meditation and prayer. Scripture reminded us to be servants, to be humble, harmonious and helpful; yes, to exhibit the mind of Christ. Yes, the prayers for God's guidance, for Christ's Spirit of truth and for brotherly kindness prevailed.

Yet on one major issue we remained painfully divided. One consistory asked for freedom not to be bound by the past, definitive decision re the ICRC. Two consistories appealed the same decision. Synod could not, within the time parameters, deal with the appeals. A number of proposals surfaced. We took the farthest reaching proposal first. It passed by the slimmest of majorities. It means our membership in the ICRC is terminated. Some who

had conscientious objections to our membership agreed with this. Others who prized membership in the ICRC but lamented the ongoing divisions and the inability to convince each other also sadly agreed. On the other side, some members are left demoralised. The appeals were not judged; yet a past decision, binding and settled, has been undone for pragmatic reasons. It leaves them with great dissatisfaction - "where is the decency and order?". Still, the matter of the ICRC has disappeared. Will that bring unity and peace? In my mind, it might bring more peace but the underlying differences have not been resolved. In my view, unity on the question of relations with other churches will only come as a hard-earned product.

We do not wish to part on a negative note. In our meditations on Paul's letter to the Philippians we dealt with Chapters 1 and 2. Allow me to read from Chapter 3:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenlyward in Christ Jesus (3:12-14).

The Church is not perfected yet. We do not believe in the possibility of perfection on this earth. Yet the Church and its members must constantly press on toward the goal of full maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must press ahead, in the comfort that Christ goes with us. But what if we face differences which seem irreconcilable? Then I think of the words which immediately follow the above quote, words which the churches of the Great Reformation used when they could not agree:

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained (3:15-16).

Let us go forward in that assurance and with that mandate to hang on to the Biblical, reformed heritage which the Lord has given to us.

I would like to thank my fellow officers. The vice-chairman has been a great help for me. You will have noticed that I consulted him often. Thank you, colleague. Thank you too for the prompt, daily press releases which modern technology sped on their way to the presses. Was it fair to elect as first clerk a younger elder who comes to Synod for the first time? Well, this Synod has shown what an admirable task he has done. On behalf of all of Synod I express our thanks for your skills and efficiency. You leave a hard 'act' to follow. The second scribe also faced a screen. While some talked his fingers worked. Already we received correspondence from him. Also to you we express our thanks for your efficiency and service for the churches. We should not forget sister Sandra Slobe, our busy administrator. She is becoming an old hand at these Synods. You have made the tasks of the first and second clerk much less frightening. No longer do they need to work two full weeks

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after Synods to complete their tasks. Also, thank you for all the help for the whole Synod. Thank you.

The kitchen staff deserves generous thanks, as generous as the service and meals they lavished on us. I was told the lunches would be modest! I tell you modestly that you have spoiled us. How you prepared all those meals and cakes is a marvel. It is even more unbelievable how some delegates could consume one plateful and bowlful after another without any serious consequences! Ladies, we thank you heartily. It will take a number of weeks for us to come back to normal.

It is now time to say farewell to each other. After two weeks of intensive work, it is time to unwind and to resume our normal labours. May God go with you, and may He bring you safely home to your wife and family who have missed you. God strengthen you all for your respective offices.

We also think of the many brothers appointed to serve the next Synod. God grant wisdom to them all that the workload of the next Synod, D.V., may be lightened by good reports.

God bless our bond of nine churches here in Australia. May the exalted Christ who walks up and down among those nine lampstands continue to gather, defend and preserve us.

Thank you.

Article 116

Presentations

The chairman expresses the appreciation of the delegates for the excellent organisation and care by the convening Church. He presents two of the organisers with a gift, and the kitchen staff and Synod administrator with bouquets of flowers.

The chairman then thanks the deputies from Indonesia for their presence and wishes them a safe journey home and the Lord's blessings in Indonesia.

Article 117

Closing

The vice-chairman thanks the chairman for his capable leadership in chairing the sessions in a brotherly and impartial manner. He invites all present to sing Hymn 46:1,2 and leads in thanksgiving.

The chairman closes the 19th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CO	Church Order
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Churches of North America
EPCI	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
ERCS	Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FCS	Free Church of Scotland
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCP	Free Reformed Church of the Philippines
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (VGKSA)
GGMM	Gereja Gerja Masehi Musyafir - Timor
GGRI	Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timor-Savu (RCSTS)
GKN	Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) (RCN)
GKN(S)	Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Synodical) (RCN(S))
GKSA	Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Africa
GMMT	Gereja Masehi Musyafir di Timur
GRCA	Geneva Reformed Church in Auckland
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCK	Presbyterian Church in Korea - Koshin
PRCA	Protestant Reformed Churches of America
RCA	Reformed Churches of Australia
RCJ	Reformed Churches of Japan
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RPCI	Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland
RSV	Revised Standard Version
VGKSA	Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (FRCSA)
WCC	World Council of Churches

