

ACTS OF THE 2006 SYNOD

and

Reports to the 2006 Synod

of the

***FREE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA***

**West Kelmscott, Western Australia
10 – 20 July 2006**



Delegates to Synod West Kelmscott 2006

Back Row: Br J Numan (Classis North), Rev J Smith (Albany), Rev W Huizinga (Armada), Rev J Kroeze (Legana), Br J Bruning (Classis North), Br M Bruning (Classis South), Br F Bosveld (Classis North), Rev R Eikelboom (Launceston), Rev E Rupke (Bunbury)

Middle Row: Prof Yoo, Hae-Moo (PCK), Rev Y Parimalanya, Br H Leyenhorst (CanRC), Br P Witten (Classis South), Rev M Retief (FRCSA), Br H Hoogstra (CanRC), Br J Houweling (RCN (R)), Br P Drijfhout (RCN(R))

Front Row: Rev J Plug (RCN), Rev P Niemeijer (RCN), Br H Hamelink (Classis North), Rev A van Delden (Rockingham), Rev A Veldman (West Kelmscott), Rev PKA deBoer (Mt Nasura), Br B Veenendaal (Classis South), Br W Amoraal (Classis South)



Moderamen

Br B Veenendaal (First Clerk), Rev PKA deBoer (Second Clerk), Rev A Veldman (Chairman),
Rev A van Delden (Vice-Chairman)

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Belgic Confession
BoP	Book of Praise
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CGK	Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken
CO	Church Order
FRC	Free Reformed Church
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
GKV	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt). See also RCN(L)
GKVc	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt)(Continuing). See also RCN(R)
NGK	Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken
RCN(L)	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). See also GKV
RCN(R)	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored). See also GKVc
GKSA	Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika (often referred to as the Dopperkerk). See also RCSA
GGRC	Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin
GGRI-NTT	Gereja Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia – Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur
LRC	Lanka Reformed Church
RCSA	Reformed Churches in South Africa. See also GKSA
PCEA	Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia
PCK	Presbyterian Churches in Korea (Kosin)
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand

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EVENING SESSION
Monday 10 July 2006

Article 1 - Opening of Synod by Convening Church of West Kelmscott

The Synod is convened in the Armadale church building. Rev A Veldman, on behalf of the convening church of West Kelmscott, invites all present to sing from Hymn 40:1, 2 and 4. He then reads from Scriptures 1 Corinthians 2:1 - 3:15 and meditates particularly on the verses 5 to 9 of chapter 3 (refer Appendix 1a).

The Chairman then invites all to sing from Psalm 133:1 and 2 and leads in opening prayer.

He then speaks his opening address (refer Appendix 1b), after which he declares the 23rd Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened.

Once again the Chairman invites all to sing, this time from Psalm 122:2 and 3 and invites all the brothers delegates to the Synod table.

Article 2 - Examination of Credentials

All delegates sign the attendance list. The Chairman of the convening church, Rev Veldman, examines the credentials of the delegates and notes that all primi delegates from Classis South and Classis North are in attendance.

Classis North

Reverend P K A DeBoer
Reverend R Eikelboom
Reverend J G R Kroeze
Reverend A Veldman
Elder F Bosveld
Elder J Bruning
Elder H Hamelink
Elder J Numan

Classis South

Reverend W Huizinga
Reverend E Rupke
Reverend J Smith
Reverend A VanDelden
Elder W Amoraal
Elder M Bruning
Elder B Veenendaal
Elder P Witten

Article 3 - Election of Officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman
Vice Chairman
First Clerk
Second Clerk

Rev A Veldman
Rev A VanDelden
Elder G B Veenendaal
Rev P K A DeBoer

Article 4 - Constitution of Synod

The Chairman declares Synod duly constituted.

Article 5 - Delegates Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity

The Chairman, Rev Veldman, asks delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

All delegates rise.

Article 6 - Adjournment

The Vice Chairman, Rev VanDelden, requests all present to sing from Psalm 127:1 and 2, and leads in closing prayer. The Chairman adjourns the Synod meeting.

MORNING SESSION

Tuesday 11 July 2006

Article 7 - Reopening

The Chairman, Rev Veldman, invites those present to sing Psalm 33:1, 3 and 6 and reads from Psalm 33, highlighting that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

Article 8 - Time Schedules

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

Monday to Fridays:	9.00am to 10.30am	Break
	10.45am to 12.00pm	Lunch
	1.30pm to 3.00pm	Break
	3.15pm to 5.00pm	Dinner

Evening Sessions: 7.30pm to 9.30pm

Saturday Sessions: 9.00am to 12.00pm (No Lunch)

Article 9 - Adoption of Agenda

The final draft agenda is presented.

1. Opening by the Convening Church – West Kelmscott
2. Signing of 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:
 - a. Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Articles 149 and 150 (Closed Session) Acts 2003
 - b. Letter FRC West Albany Appeal re Article 78 Acts 2003
 - c. Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

- d. Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Article 140 Acts 2003
- e. Letter Classis South re Indexing Synod Decisions
- f. Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Article 88 Acts 2003
- g. Letter FRC Kelmscott Appeal re Article 140 Acts 2003
- h. Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Articles 132, 153, 155, 160 Acts 2003
- i. Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Article 67 Acts 1985
- j. Letter FRC Darling Downs Appeal re Articles 44, 62, 67, 68, 69, 72 Acts 2003
- k. Letter Br G Spaanderman, Albany Appeal re Article 120 Acts 2003
- l.
 - i. Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Article 106 Acts 1998
 - ii. Report Re: Lanka Reformed Church (Byford)
 - iii. Supplementary Reports FRC Byford re Lanka
- m. Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal Classis South 10/03/06
- n. Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal Article 72 Acts 2003
- o. Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal Article 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003
- p. Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Article 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003
- q. Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Article 14 Acts 2003
- r. Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Article 138 Acts 2003
- s. Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Article 140 Acts 2003
- t. Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Article 128, 152, 166 Acts 2003
- u. Letter Brs Reitsema/VanBurgel Appeal Article 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003
- v. Letter FRC West Albany re Deputies Expenditures
- w. Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Forgiveness of sins Acts 2003
- x. Letter FRC Kelmscott re Reports Relations with Sister Churches
- y. Letter FRC Rockingham re Forgiveness of Sins Acts Synod 2003
- z. Letter re Appeal decisions Classis North
- aa. Letter re Appeal Classis North Oct 2004
- bb. Letter re Appeal FRCK and Article 146 Acts 2003
- cc. Letter FRC Byford re Deputies Report PCEA
- dd. Letter FRC Byford re Deputies Report Korea
- 9. Instructions
- 10. Reports Classis North:
 - a. Credentials Delegates to Synod
 - b. Overture, request clarification Article 30 CO
 - c. Overture, from FRC Mount Nasura dated 17 June 2003
 - d. Overture, re relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands
- 11. Reports Classis South:
 - a. Credentials Delegates to Synod
 - b. Overture re change the name of the FRCA to ARC
- 12.
 - a. Report Deputies Nominating Authorities – Marriage Act 1961
 - b. Report Deputies for Contact with the PCEA
 - c. Report Deputies for Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents

- d. Report Deputies Australian Book of Praise
- e. Report Deputies for Training for the Ministry
- f. Report Deputies Relations:
 - i. Indonesian/Philippines Churches (see also 12i)
 - ii. Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia
 - iii. Reformed Churches New Zealand
 - iv. Relations with Sister Churches:
 - Canadian Reformed Churches
 - Presbyterian Church of Korea
 - Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands
 - Supplementary report from Deputies Sister Churches
 - vi. Letter to Deputies Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
 - vii. Letter to Deputies Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored)
- g. Report Deputies Relations with other Churches:
- h. i. Report Deputies Article 48 and 76 Church Order
- ii. Report Deputies Article 48 CO (Br Jacob)
- i. Report Deputies Relations with Sister Churches (Indonesia/Philippines)
- j. Report Deputies to Investigate a Second Appeal Court
- k. Report Synod Treasurer
- l. Report on Archives and Library of Synod and Audit
- 13. a. Audit of the books of the Synod Treasurer and discharge of the Treasurer
- b. Audit of the Books of the Training for the Ministry (Hamilton)
- c. Audit of the Books for Needy Students and Library Funds
- 14. Draft Budget and Calculation and sharing of Synod costs
- 15. Appointment of Deputies
- 16. Appointment of Convening Church, and place and time of next Synod
- 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

Article 10 - Homepage on Internet

A proposal from the executive to place Acts of Synod also on the Internet is adopted, on the proviso that the matters of personal nature are excluded and that in matters relating to other churches discretion will be used.

ADOPTED

Article 11 - Welcome to Overseas Visitors

The delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) are accorded privileges in accordance with Rule 6.2 of the Rules for Synods as per delegates from churches with temporary ecclesiastical contact.

These two delegates, Br P Drijfhout and Br J Houweling are invited to be seated at the table.

The Chairman reads the letter sent by our Deputies (for Relations with Sister Churches) to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored).

Article 12 - Credentials

The Chairman reads out the credentials from the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT) for Rev Umbu Hapu Pariamalinya (Rev Yan), from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN (L)) for Rev J Plug and Rev P Niemeijer, and from Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) (RCN(R)) for Br P Drijfhout and Br J Houweling.

Credentials are also received for Professor Yoo, Hae-Moo and Rev Jun, Tae from the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK).

All these delegates rise to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

A letter of greeting from Reformed Church of New Zealand is read out. They will not send a delegate.

Article 13 - Synod advisors

Rev J Poppe and Rev J VanderJagt are invited to be advisors of Synod, particularly because this is the first time in the history of our churches that some ministers in the bond are not delegated to Synod.

Article 14 - Advisory Committees

Two advisory committees are formed to put forward a recommendation regarding some appeals.

Committee A:

Rev R Eikelboom (convener)
Elder H Hamelink
Elder P Witten
Elder M Bruning

For items: 8a, 8d, 8g, 8s, 8r

Committee B:

Rev E Rupke (convener)
Elder W Amoraal
Rev J Smith
Elder J Numan

For items: 8t, 8z, 8aa, 8bb

Article 15 - Reports of Deputies Article 48 and 76 CO

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12h – Report Deputies Article 48 and 76 CO for Classis South

Agenda Item 12h – Report Deputies Article 48 and 76 CO for Classis North

II. Reports:

- i. Rev deBoer and Rev Veldman, as Deputies Article 48 and 76 CO report on the concurring advice they gave regarding the colloquium held by Classis South for Rev E Rupke and the examinations of Rev I Wildeboer and Rev J Smith.
- ii. Rev VanderJagt and Rev Huizinga as Deputies Article 48 and 76 CO, report on the concurring advice they gave to Classis North regarding the special examination (ad Article 6.A) of br Jacob so that he could be ordained as missionary for the work in Chennai and Karennai, India.

NOTED AND ACCEPTED

Article 16 - Appeal from West Kelmscott re Article 88 Synod Rockingham 2003

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8f – Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Article 88 Acts 2003

II. Appeal:

1. to rescind Article 88 of the Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003; and
2. to instruct deputies to forward the money collected thus far to the library fund of the Hamilton Theological College.

Grounds:

1. The Australian Churches have supported the Hamilton College for many years. That support consists of:
 - a. financial support in the order of \$40 per communicant member; and
 - b. sending students from our churches to Hamilton to study.Synod 2003 concedes that *“It is good to continue our contributions for the Theological College in Hamilton. They indeed appreciate our support and in a way depend on it”* (page 56 Synod Acts 2003). Therefore commencing our own theological training in Australia or the commencement of a possible library contradicts the above statement.
2. We would do our Canadian Churches a great disservice if we were to withdraw that support from them by starting our own college. The Australian Churches contributed around \$200,000 during the period February 2000 to February 2003.

3. Prior to Synod Rockingham, the deputies spent a considerable amount of time and effort investigating the long-term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library. They served Synod well by submitting a very comprehensive and detailed 13 page report on this aspect of their mandate (Appendix C of the Deputies report). The deputies have come to the conclusion NOT to propose to Synod to start theological training NOR commence a library. Under Recommendations to Synod Page 5 of their report, we read:

“Deputies recommend that Synod decides to:

1. *Recognise that establishing an own seminary is out of reach for both the present time and the foreseeable future.*
2. *Recognise that establishing a library should occur simultaneously with the establishment of a seminary.”*

Deputies, having researched this aspect of their mandate thoroughly, have come to the conclusion that it is *simply irresponsible*. Doesn't the LORD teach us in the parable about the talents that we have to exercise good stewardship, also when it involved moneys collected by the churches?

Deputies, considering the various aspects of a possible theological library such as purchasing of books, housing of the books, accessibility of the library etc., are unanimous in their conclusion that these issues are to be addressed along with the implementation and planning of a Theological College, not in isolation.

III. Admissibility:

To declare this request inadmissible.

Ground:

On the basis of Article 33 of Church Order “Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds”.

ADOPTED

Article 17 - Training for the Ministry (Refer Appendix 12)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12e – Report Deputies for Training for the Ministry

II. Recommendation:

Deputies recommend that Synod decide to:

1. Reconsider the amount and manner of collections for our own theological library and training.
2. Request the churches to contribute A\$50 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2007.
3. Set aside \$6,000 for the costs of a visit to Australia by a guest lecturer from Hamilton or Kampen, together with his wife.
4. Set aside \$3,500 for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2007.
5. Discharge Deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - b. continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
 - c. collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
 - d. continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological library and to do so if possible;
 - e. ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 - f. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 CO, and as agreed in Article 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Article 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
 - g. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" once every three years;
 - h. be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
 - i. consider the practical implications of including the Australian churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and, if considered feasible, advise the Australian Churches accordingly.

Amendment 1:

Recommend that Recommendation 1 be replaced by the following:

1. Request the churches to contribute \$20 per communicant member per annum for our own theological library and training.

Grounds:

1. Replace collections with a levy because it must be left to the local churches to determine the causes for their collections.
2. A levy is more demanding than a collection.
3. A levy makes it easier to work with in terms of future planning and outlook.

DEFEATED

Amendment 2:

Recommend that first part of Recommendation 5 be amended to read:

Discharge Deputies and appoint new deputies, including a Minister of the Word, with the mandate to:

Ground:

Accept the recommendation of Deputies (refer Appendix 12, Page 427) which reads: "Deputies note and support the usual practice that the convener of Deputies is a Minister of the Word to allow Deputies to have actual experience of training for the ministry".

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

1. To continue to request three full collections from the churches for our own theological library.
2. Request the churches to contribute A\$50 per communicant member per annum for theological training. Any expenses for theological training here in Australia will be taken out of this amount. The remainder goes to Hamilton.
3. Set aside \$3,500 for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies for Training for the Ministry to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2007, combining it with a visit to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Church (this coordination means that this time a deputy for training for the ministry goes to Canada in both capacities and next time a deputy for sister churches attends in both capacities).

4. Discharge Deputies and appoint new deputies, including a Minister of the Word, with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - b. correspond with "Hamilton", "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
 - c. collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
 - d. continue with our own theological library and start obtaining basic materials;
 - e. continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry, including the possibilities of theological training by extension (using Information Technology - IT);
 - f. ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 - g. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 CO, and as agreed in Article 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Article 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
 - h. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from one of the theological seminaries of our sister churches once every three years;
 - i. be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
 - j. consider the practical implications of including the Australian churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and report to the Australian Churches.

ADOPTED

Article 18 - Appeal from Mount Nasura re Article 14 Synod Rockingham 2003

I. Material:

Agenda item 8q – Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Article 14 Acts 2003

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

This submission is from the churches and allowed by the Church Order.

ADOPTED

III. Appeal:

The consistory of the Church of Mount Nasura finds the decision of Synod Rockingham 2003 in Article 14 to appoint an *advisory committee* which has authority to hear *the appellants and those appealed against* contrary to Reformed Polity as found in Articles 31 and 80 CO and as practised in the Free Reformed Churches. While realizing that this decision cannot be undone, we request that:

Synod recognize an error was made so that future synods do not appoint a committee with this kind of authority.

Grounds:

- a. Any appeal made to a synod can only be an appeal made against a decision of classis. After classis has finished its work, it no longer exists making it impossible for an advisory committee to hear those *appealed against*.
- b. The synod appointed committee in fact heard the consistory against whom the appeals originated while synod has no authority to impose such a committee on the consistory without that consistory's request (Article 80).
- c. No new matters may be added to the agenda of the major assembly and therefore the practice in Reformed Churches has always been that in a judicial matter the major assemblies only determines whether an aggrieved member has been wronged by a written decision of a minor assembly. The synod only hears the written objection(s) to the ecclesiastical decision.

IV. Decision:

Not to accede to this appeal.

Grounds:

1. The use of committees and of hearing appellants and those appealed against is a biblical custom (confer Deut 1:16-18). It is not proved to be against Scripture and the Church Order.
2. Though it is true that a classis cannot be consulted after it finishes its agenda, yet appeals often go back to submissions and appeals to consistories.

3. Hearing all parties in an appeal case can help the cause of justice. Also, very often the context of a decision and of an appeal is important. Hearing all parties can help to understand this context. Limiting the consideration on appeals to written materials only, means that this context is less easily understood.
4. No committee was imposed on consistories. All parties who wanted to be heard were offered this opportunity.
5. It is true that new matters (which are not in the appeals or decisions) cannot be considered.

ADOPTED

AFTERNOON SESSION
Tuesday 11 July 2006

Article 19 - Appeal of Br P 'tHart against Classis South 10 March 2006

I. Material:

Agenda item 8m – Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal Classis South 10/03/06

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

This submission responds to a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly and is allowed by the Church Order.

ADOPTED

III. Appeal:

In keeping with Article 30 of the Church Order which in its last sentence says, "A new matter may be put on its (the major assembly's) agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it", I appeal a decision by Classis South held 10 March 2006. Classis deemed my Appeal regarding a Consistory decision inadmissible. Classis did so on the grounds that essentially I was appealing a synodical decision.

I appeal this decision on the following grounds:

1. Synod decisions are binding upon the churches unless they are against Scripture, Confessions, or the Church Order. In the latter case Consistories should appeal those decisions.
2. Where a Consistory, upon a proposal, decides not to appeal a specific decision, that Consistory accepts the synod decision as being not against Scripture, the Confessions, and the Church Order. In the case of a doctrinal matter, it accepts that it must

and will teach in accordance with the synod decision. The doctrine so accepted becomes the doctrine of the local church.

In the case of West Albany the doctrine concerned has already been preached from the pulpit.

3. Church members who are convinced that this doctrine is against the Word of God have the duty to appeal that Consistory decision to the major assemblies. The fact that they also have the opportunity to appeal the next Synod to set aside the decision of the previous Synod is an action to be considered.
4. However, the decision of the local church can be appealed only to the first major assembly.
5. Classis is the first major assembly to which decisions by the minor assembly can be appealed.
6. Appeals of this kind, properly addressed and in good time, cannot be deemed inadmissible. To declare that “your appeal is actually against a decision made at Synod 2003” is incorrect and a denial of the responsibility of the local church for its acceptance and teaching of doctrine determined by synod.
7. The Classis South decision to declare that “Classis therefore deemed your submission (sic) inadmissible” sets a dangerous precedent as it will preclude any future appeals on ratification of doctrine that have originated from synod decisions to be heard by Classis.
8. In this case it was an appeal clearly worded as being an appeal against Consistory's doctrinal decision and not against the doctrinal decisions of last Synod.
9. The present Appeal then has no reference to the matter appealed as such but rather to the denied proper procedure.

IV. Recommendation:

Not to accede to the appeal.

Ground:

Br 'tHart was appealing against a decision made by General Synod. This decision did not concern the West Albany congregation and so the West Albany consistory was not called to make a judgment on the matter.

DEFEATED

V. Decision:

Not to accede to the appeal.

Grounds:

1. Classis South was correct in deciding that Br. P. t'Hart was appealing a synodical decision and that therefore his appeal should have been directed to Synod.
2. The appellant must first show that Synod Rockingham erred for only if Synod erred did consistory err in implementing Synod's decision. Therefore an appeal to Synod logically precedes an appeal to classis for implementing Synod's decision.

ADOPTED

Article 20 - Request of Church at Mt Nasura for Clarification of Article 30 CO

I. Material:

Agenda Item 10b – Overture FRC Mt Nasura Request Clarification Article 30 CO

II. Overture:

The Free Reformed Church of Mt Nasura requests Synod to clarify the interpretation and application of Article 30 *Church Order* by deciding that the final sentence of Article 30 does not nullify how in this article we agree that matters for the churches in common are to be dealt with by the churches in common at their major assembly. Thus the churches are to direct matters for the churches in common directly to the appropriate assembly in agreement with the adopted rules for Synods.

Grounds:

- a. There has been no conscious decision made among the Churches to add a sentence to this article by which the then present interpretation and application has effectively changed.
- b. The interpretation of some commentators in practice nullifies the intention of this article – that major assemblies are to deal with both matters that could not be finished in the minor assemblies and matters that are for the churches in common. In fact, with the newly introduced interpretation this second point may as well be deleted from this article.
- c. Classis cannot do anything with a 'matter for the churches in common' but pass it on to the major assemblies. Classis is not authorized to make a decision on it.

III. Recommendation:

Synod decides to clarify the final sentence of Article 30 by specifying that the churches are to direct matters for the churches in common

directly to the appropriate assembly in agreement with the adopted rules for synods.

Grounds:

1. There has been no conscious decision made among the Churches to add a sentence to this article by which the then present interpretation and application has effectively changed.
2. The interpretation of some commentators in practice nullifies the intention of this article – that major assemblies are to deal with both matters that could not be finished in the minor assemblies and matters that are for the churches in common. In fact, with the newly introduced interpretation this second point may as well be deleted from this article.
3. Classis cannot do anything with a ‘matter for the churches in common’ but pass it on to the major assemblies. Classis is not authorized to make a decision on it.

DEFEATED

IV. Decision:

To deny the request.

Ground:

While it may be true that the last sentence of Article 30 was inadvertently added to the Church Order without considering its impact, the way to remedy the situation is not to make a synod decision which overrides the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 21 - Overture to Synod from FRC Mount Nasura

I. Material:

Agenda Item 10c – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura (dated 17 June 2003)

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

This submission is from the churches and allowed by the Church Order.

ADOPTED

III. Overture:

Synod decide that in considering relations with other churches:

1. The church pluriform practice of permitting guest ministers of non-sister church to proclaim God's Word and to permit guests of such churches to the celebration of the Lord's Supper is an obstacle to entering into sister-church relations.

Grounds:

- a. In Article 28 of the *Belgic Confession* we maintain from God's Word that *no one ought to withdraw from it* (i.e. the church), *content to be by himself, no matter what his status or standing may be. But all and everyone are obliged to join it, maintaining the unity of the church.* It is inconsistent with this confession to invite office-bearers to proclaim God's Word, and to invite as guests to the celebration of the Lord's Supper those who do not practice this unity.
 - b. It is impossible to maintain the above-named confession (of Ground a) should churches that do not apply it be received as sister churches.
2. It is essential to maintain the confessed Scriptural comfort that the Lord has made His covenant with the believers and their children.

Grounds:

- a. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 27, Q&A 74 we confess that infants (i.e. of believers) must be baptized because they, as well as adults belong to God's covenant and congregation. In the Belgic Confession, Article 34, we confess that children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to children. This confession is based on what the Lord teaches in Acts 2:39.
- b. The Westminster Larger Catechism brings the place of children within the covenant into doubt when it says in Q&A 31: Q. *With whom was the covenant of grace made?* A. *The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam and in him with all the elect as His seed.* In its adopted statement Synod 1998 (Article 93, see page 49) recognized this problem and refers to how from Q&A 166 of that same Catechism it may be deduced that all children of believers are considered members of the covenant when saying that *infants descending from*

parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and, to be baptized. Although this deduction may be made from Q&A 166, so long as Q&A 31 remains in the Westminster Larger Catechism, the words of Q&A 166 in that respect leave an opening to consider the children of believers to be in the covenant only in a certain respect. It is clear from Scripture that Esau was just as truly and fully a covenant child as Jacob even though in the end Esau proved to be a covenant breaker and not elected.

- c. In its statement synod 1998 rightly shows how important this confession is by pointing at the practical conclusion that the church must exhort and assist parents in fulfilling *their duty to instruct their children in the doctrine of the Old and New Testament as soon as they are able to understand.*

IV. Decision:

Not to accede to this overture.

Ground:

This matter has already been addressed by previous Synods (confer Article 157, Synod 1992).

ADOPTED

Article 22 - Appeal from West Albany re Article 78 Synod Rockingham 2003

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8b – Letter FRC West Albany Appeal re Article 78 Acts 2003

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

ADOPTED

Ground:

This submission is from the churches and allowed by the Church Order.

III. Appeal:

The Acts of the 2003 Synod Article 78 records the decision and grounds as follows:

Decision:

1. Not to accede to the request of Mt Nasura.
2. To request deputies to investigate this matter further and report back to the churches.

Grounds:

The material presented to Synod was not sufficient for Synod to make a judgement on this matter and therefore needs further investigation.

We appeal this decision of Synod on the basis of the following grounds:

- a. This decision is contrary to a decision made by Synod 1998 with respect to a similar request from Mt Nasura (see Acts of the 1998 Synod, Article 72). Since that decision has never been appealed, it stands as settled and binding upon all the churches. The decision of Article 78 Synod 2003 is contrary to that.
- b. We should make judgements with respect to the faithfulness of other churches based on their official doctrines and practices, not on the basis of the writings of one of their ministers.
- c. The supervision of the doctrine of a minister of the Word serving in another bond of churches is the responsibility of his session/presbytery. For our Synod to instruct deputies to investigate Dr Ward's teachings is contrary to our own Church Order, which forbids churches to lord it over other churches.
- d. In the grounds of the adopted decision, it states that "the material presented to Synod was not sufficient for Synod to make a judgement on this matter and therefore needs further investigation". Scripture teaches us to be very careful with accepting a charge against an office bearer. 1 Timothy 5:19 says, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses". Since Mt Nasura has not come forward with sufficient evidence to support their claim, their request should have been rejected.

IV. Decision:

Not to grant the appeal.

Ground:

The grounds are insufficient.

- Re their ground 1: Article 72 Synod 1998 does not oblige Synod 2003 to follow the same path. Further the situation of the two people involved and the relation to the churches in which they served was different.

- Re their ground 2: the principle expressed in this point means that the church which is not faithful in disciplining errant ministers is not fully faithful in its practices.
- Re their ground 3: this was no lording it over the PCEA, but simply an investigation of the teaching of Dr R S Ward, which was germane to the ongoing effort towards unity.
- Re their ground 4: Dr R S Ward had publicly promoted his views in his book *Foundations in Genesis: Genesis 1-11 Today*. He thus testified to his own convictions.

ADOPTED

Article 23 - Nominating Authorities (Refer Appendix 13)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12a – Report Deputies Nominating Authorities – Marriage Act 1961

II. Decisions:

1. To thank the deputies for having completed their mandate and for their report.
2. To discharge the present Authorities noting that unlike a Synod the Nominating Authority is a permanent entity.
3. To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961.

ADOPTED

Article 24 - Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents (Refer Appendix 14)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12c – Report Deputies for Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents

II. Decision:

Synod thanks the *Deputy to have Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents Prepared/Published* for his work and discharges him.

ADOPTED

Article 25 - Indexing of Synod Decisions (Refer Appendix 18)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8e – Letter Classis South re Indexing Synod Decisions

II. Recommendation:

That Synod appoints a deputy or deputies to continue the work of Rev G VanRongen for the churches with the mandate:

To continue the work of Rev G VanRongen in collating the decisions of Synod as they relate to articles of the Church Order:

- i. To publish updated versions in the best format (eg, binder style) to allow more additions from future Synods.
- ii. To have the Synodical Treasurer pay the initial cost of publication.
- iii. To authorise the selling of these books, at a normal cost, to the churches and to its members.

Grounds:

- a. This project is really designed for the churches for easy access to synodical decisions. Thus it makes sense to have the churches together responsible for it. Appointing a synodical deputy or deputies seems the best way to continue this worthwhile project.
- b. The deputy or deputies can decide with Pro-Ecclesia Printers on the best format in which to publish such a book, which will continue to grow.
- c. The initial cost might be expensive. It seems best that the Synodical Treasurer be asked to pay this.
- d. The appointed deputy(ies) can arrange for the sale of the booklets to the consistories and church members. A normal cost means the churches will recover the initial costs. In future the costs should be minimal.

III. Amendment:

Insert the following in Decision i):

- i) "...and on the official web page of the FRCA..."

ADOPTED

IV. Decision:

To continue the work of Rev G VanRongen in collating the decisions of Synod as they relate to articles of the Church Order:

- i. To publish updated versions in the best format (eg, binder style and on the official web page of the FRCA) to allow more additions from future Synods.
- ii. To have the Synodical Treasurer pay the initial cost of publication.

- iii. To authorise the selling of these books, at a normal cost, to the churches and to its members.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday 11 July 2006

Article 26 - Reopening

The Chairman opened the evening session of Synod and invited all present to sing Psalm 48:1, 3 and 4.

Article 27 - Addresses of delegates from the Netherlands

The Chairman gives Rev J Plug the opportunity to address synod (refer Appendix 1c) on behalf of the RCN. He is thanked for it.

Br P Drijfhout is then given the opportunity to address synod, on behalf of the RCN (R) (refer Appendix 1d). The Chairman thanks him.

Br Anton Breen, on behalf of deputies, responds to these two addresses (refer Appendix 1e).

Article 28 - Welcome to Advisor

Rev VanderJagt is welcomed to the Synod and is seated as Advisor, as per synod's decision (Article 13).

**Article 29 - Appeal from FRC Byford re Article 106 Acts Synod 1998
(Refer Article 34, Appendix 17)**

I Material:

Agenda item 8I(i) – Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Article 106 Acts 1998

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Grounds:

This submission is from the churches and allowed by the Church Order.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

III. Discussion:

Some rounds of discussion take place.

Article 30 - Adjournment

Br P Witten invites all present to sing Psalm 97:1 and 6 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday 12 July 2006

Article 31 - Reopening

Br Numan invites those present to sing Psalm 25:2. He reads from 1 John 1:1-2:6 and leads in prayer.

The Chairman requests Rev W vanderJagt, as advisor, to rise to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Rev vanderJagt rises.

Article 32 - Deputies Report on Appeal Court (Refer Appendix 15)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12j – Report Deputies Appeal Court

II. Recommendations:

Recommendation 1 of the Deputies:

Note: This proposal goes beyond our mandate because here we do not propose an assembly between *Classis* and *General Synod* but do give the possibility for a second appeal.

Synod decides: to appoint “appeal churches” from within the classical regions as the first appeal court. Those that are not satisfied with the decision of the *appeal church* may appeal to *classis* and, if necessary, then to *synod*. Thus *classis* becomes the second appeal court.

Grounds:

- a. The neighbour church as an appeal body worked for both first and second appeals in the past.
- b. In agreement with Article 28 of the Church Order, no other assembly is established besides the three agreed upon.
- c. Although not entirely in agreement with Article 31 of the Church Order, for the appeal first moves from one minor assembly to the next, after that it does move from minor to major assemblies.
- d. Only ordained office bearers deal with appeals.

DEFEATED

Recommendation 2 of the Deputies:

Note: This proposal goes beyond our mandate because here we do not propose an assembly between *Classis* and *General Synod* and is not in agreement with Article 31 of the Church Order which rules that appeals are to move from minor to major assemblies, but does give the possibility for a second appeal.

Synod decides: to return to the system whereby we appoint appeal churches and second appeal churches. This means that classis will no longer deal with appeals.

Grounds:

- a. In the past it has been proven that this system regarding appeals works.
- b. Only ordained office bearers will be involved.
- c. Only a small number of office bearers that may subsequently be appointed to a General Synod have also become involved with the matter (here we think especially of ministers – for while there are only two classical regions, at least half the number of ministers at synod would have dealt with the matter).
- d. Classis meetings do not come under strain with the danger that an unbalanced decision is made when complicated appeals have to be dealt with under the pressure of time (due to the distance some of the churches are apart, it is not always easy nor financially prudent to adjourn Classis for any length of times so that some work of investigation can be done).

DEFEATED

Recommendation 3 of the Deputies:

Note: This proposal is in agreement with our mandate but goes beyond Article 31 of the *Church Order*, which says that appeals move on from minor to major assemblies.

Synod decides: to appoint an “appeal church” from both classical regions as a second appeal court. (Every Synod would appoint new “appeal churches” so that, for example, for a three year period between synods, Armadale is the appeal church in Classis South to serve the churches of Classis North, next synod appoints Byford, etc. It could be done in this alphabetical order to avoid any indication of bias.)

Grounds:

- a. The neighbour church as an appeal body worked for both first and second appeals in the past.
- b. In agreement with Article 28 of the Church Order, no other assembly is established besides the three agreed upon there.
- c. Only ordained office-bearers deal with the appeals.
- d. By using the appeal church system the least number of office-bearers that may subsequently be appointed to a General Synod have also become involved with the matter.

DEFEATED

III. Decision:

1. Not to adopt any of the proposals put forward by deputies.
2. To thank the deputies for the work that they have done and to discharge deputies.

Ground:

The need and advisability of such a second appeal court has not been demonstrated.

ADOPTED

Article 33 - Appeal from Legana re Article 67 Synod Launceston 1985 (refer Articles 41, 59)

I. Material:

Agenda item 8i – Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Article 67 Acts 1985

Discussion on admissibility and decision is made (recorded in Article 59).

Article 34 - Appeal from FRC Byford re Article 106 Acts Synod 1998 (refer Article 29, Appendix 17)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8l - (i) – Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Article 106 Acts 1998
(ii) – Report re: Lanka Reformed Church (Byford)
(iii) – Supplementary Reports FRC Byford re Lanka

II. Appeal:

The Free Reformed Church at Byford requests Synod 2006 to overturn the decision of Article 106 of Synod West Albany 1998 and to decide:

To give the Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches [section Asia] the mandate:

1. To investigate whether it is possible to enter into a sister church relationship with the Lanka Reformed Church.
2. To visit the Lanka Reformed Church during which visits the deputies will organise workshops, lectures, courses, etc., for both (potential) office bearers and church members to strengthen the Reformed character of the churches; these visits are subject to available finances.
3. To ask the consistories within the FRCA to make their ministers available to assist the Lanka Reformed Church.
4. To investigate the opportunities for mission projects the FRCA can undertake in support of the Lanka Reformed Church

5. To discuss with the Lanka Reformed Church the way the FRCA can organise the support for the Lanka Reformed Church and their financial accountability.
6. To encourage the congregations to give the Lanka Reformed Church financial support to continue with their mission project of Reformed education in a similar way as the support of the Indonesian churches has been organised pending the outcome and report of deputies mentioned under (a).
7. To ask Mission Aid Australia to investigate the possibilities to support the educational project of the Lanka Reformed Church.
8. To encourage members of the congregations (especially teachers and graduates) to assist the Lanka Reformed school in short term mission projects in teaching at their Reformed mission school.
9. To report back to Synod 2009 according to the rules.

Grounds:

- a. The Lanka Reformed Church has shown itself to be reformed. It has adopted the Three Forms of Unity, as well as the Westminster Standards, as its confessional standard. The Church Order of the Lanka Reformed Church is based on the Church Order of Dort.
- b. The Lanka Reformed Church has been recognised by the government of Sri Lanka as an instituted church. That the church has become very small does not alter the fact that Christ is gathering His people in Sri Lanka (Rev. 3: 8: "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name." Belgic Confession Article 27: "This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects. This holy church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world, although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man.").
- c. The FRCA have decided to "concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility." (Acts Synod 1990, Article 58).
- d. The Canadian Reformed Churches have, according to this principle, brought the Lanka Reformed Church to our attention.
- e. The financial problems of such a small church as the Lanka Reformed Church are a Scriptural reason to offer assistance (Exo 23: 11; Lev 19: 10; Lev 25: 25; Deu 15: 4.7f; Ps 10:2.9; Ps.

12: 5; Ps. 41: 1; Ps. 68: 10; Ps. 72: 12; Prov 14: 21; Prov 21: 13; Prov 22: 9; Jer 22: 16; Amos 2: 6; Matt 19: 21; Matt 25: 36; Rom 15: 26; 1Cor 16: 1; Gal 2: 10; Jas 2: 16).

- f. That the Reformed school project is seen by the Lanka Reformed Church as a mission project is one of the points of which our Church Order says that "On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected" (CO Article 46).
- g. Via private initiative within the FRCA the Lanka Reformed Church and its mission project has already been supported for several years, so the argument of the submission of West Albany 1998 is not valid. Especially also now the deputies sister churches (section Asia) come with the proposal to terminate the contacts with the churches in the Philippines.

III. Recommendation:

- 1. Not to mandate deputies to determine whether we might enter into sister church relations with the LRC.
- 2. The Churches have the opportunity to lend help to the LRC as a possible mission post.

Grounds:

- a. Although the Lanka Reformed Church may be a church according to Article 27 of the Belgic Confession, the attached documentation shows that it is no longer an instituted church according to Articles 1 & 36 CO. Therefore it is not possible to enter into sister church relations, since such relations require an established assembly.
- b. It would be prudent to extend help to brothers and sisters who are obviously in need of spiritual and material aid (cf James 2:14-16 [ESV]: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them: "Go in peace, be warmed and filled!", without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?").
- c. Mission work is done by the churches and not the broader assemblies

DEFEATED

IV. Decision:

The appeal of FRC Byford cannot be sustained.

Grounds:

- a. It is not possible to enter into a sister church relationship with the Lanka Reformed Church since they are not a church according to Articles 1 and 36 CO.
- b. Since this matter is one of mission work, FRC Byford is at liberty to continue and expand the work there if it so desires.

ADOPTED

AFTERNOON SESSION
Wednesday 12 July 2006

Article 35 - Reopening and welcome to delegate from South Africa

The Chairman reopens the afternoon session of Synod and welcomes Rev M Retief from the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika (FRCSA).

The Chairman asks Rev Retief to rise to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Rev Retief rises. The Chairman also receives credentials for Rev Retief.

Article 36 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 1 to 30 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 37 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN) (1) (Refer Articles 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12f(iv) – Relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

Agenda item 10d – Overture re relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands

Agenda item 8x – Letter FRC Kelmscott re Reports Relations with Sister Churches

II. Admissibility:

1. To declare Item 10d admissible.

Ground:

This submission responds to a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly and is allowed by the Church Order.

ADOPTED

2. To declare Item 8x admissible.

Ground:

This submission responds to a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly and is allowed by the Church Order.

ADOPTED

III. Discussion:

A general round of discussion takes place in which all delegates as well as the Dutch visitors are given the opportunity to speak.

Then a round of discussion occurs on specifically the deputies' report regarding the Fourth Commandment and the Sunday.

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday 12 July 2006

Article 38 - Reopening

The Chairman reopens the evening session of Synod and invites all present to sing of Psalm 87:1-5.

Article 39 - Address of Delegate from Sister Churches in Korea

The Chairman gives Rev Jun, Tae from the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) the opportunity to address synod (refer Appendix 1f). The Chairman thanks him.

Br M Bruning responds to this address (refer Appendix 1g).

Article 40 - Presbyterian Churches in Korea (Kosin) (Refer Article 80, Appendix 4)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f(iv) – Presbyterian Church in Korea
Agenda Item 8dd – Letter FRC Byford re Deputies Report Korea

II. Admissibility:

To declare Item 8dd admissible.

Ground:

This submission was received too late for the agenda.

DEFEATED

III. Recommendation from Deputies:

1. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules.

2. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in improved lines of communications as well as a visit from a delegation of our Korean sisters.
3. To accept the assessment of deputies that since there is agreement for better communications, there is also reason to be more optimistic about the viability of continued sister relations.

Grounds:

- a. No evidence has arisen suggesting that the PCK departs from the Word of God, the reformed confessions or their Church Order.
- b. Visits to Korea in the past three years have helped to build better lines of communication.
- c. For the first time in our history we may be able to welcome a delegation from our Korean sisters to our synod.
- d. Pledges have been given for a good line of communication as well as regular English summaries concerning their annual general assemblies.

After discussion, this recommendation from the deputies was amended.

IV. Decision:

1. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules and to publish the fruit of these relations for the churches.
2. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in improved lines of communications as well as a visit from a delegation of our Korean sisters.
3. To accept the assessment of deputies that since there is agreement for better communications, there is also reason to be more optimistic about the viability of continued sister relations.
4. To authorise deputies to send one delegate to visit the PCK once in the next three years subject to available funds.

Grounds:

- a. From more recent contacts there is evidence that the PCK abides by the Word of God, the reformed confessions and their Form of Government.
- b. Visits to Korea in the past three years have helped to build better lines of communication.
- c. For the first time in our history we may be able to welcome a delegation from our Korean sisters to our synod.

- d. Pledges have been given for a good line of communication as well as regular English summaries concerning their annual general assemblies.

ADOPTED

Article 41 - Appeal from Legana re Article 67 Synod Launceston 1985 (refer Articles 33, 59)

I. Material:

Agenda item 8i – Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Article 67 Acts 1985

II. Discussion:

A round of discussion takes place regarding the submission of the Free Reformed Church of Legana.

Article 42 - Adjournment

Br B Veenendaal invites all present to sing Psalm 149:1 and 2 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION
Thursday 13 July 2006

Article 43 - Reopening

Rev Kroeze invites those present to sing Psalm 23:1. He reads from Phil 1:27-2:11 and leads in prayer.

Article 44 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (2) – Fourth Commandment and Sunday (Refer Articles 37, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12f(iv) – Relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

Agenda item 10d – Overture re relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands

Agenda item 8x – Letter FRC Kelmscott re Reports Relations with Sister Churches

II. Discussion:

Discussion continues on the Fourth Commandment and Sunday.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Thursday 13 July 2006

Article 45 - Reopening

The Chairman opens the afternoon session of Synod and invites all present to sing Psalm 92:1, 2 and 6.

Article 46 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 31 to 42 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 47 - Relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (3) – Fourth Commandment and Sunday (Refer Articles 37, 44, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12f(iv) – Relations with Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Agenda item 10d – Overture re relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands

Agenda item 8x – Letter FRC Kelmscott re Reports Relations with Sister Churches

II. Recommendations:

1. To acknowledge with thanks that the mandates to stay informed about developments and decisions in the RCN about the Sabbath/Sunday issue and to continue the discussions with the RCN on this matter have been amply fulfilled.
2. To acknowledge with thanks the progress made in our Dutch sister churches on this pressing issue, and to accept this definitive decision as a satisfactory answer to our concerns.
3. To make the English translation of the report of the Dutch deputies along with the synodical decision available for our churches on our church website.

Grounds:

- a. The deputies have had to study long reports from the Dutch deputies and interacted with intensive discussions, both by letters and by personal meetings, with our Dutch sister churches on this issue.
- b. The decision adheres to the Scripture and our reformed confessions, especially LD 38 HC.
- c. This decision brings together the various views by stressing the authority of Scripture, by following our reformed confessions, by

applying the hermeneutic of following the line of fulfilment in the history of redemption, and by applying the doctrine in a practical way for our time so that Sunday can indeed be a glorious day of rest and worship.

- d. Our churches can benefit from such a comprehensive study of this important matter. It seems prudent to use our FRCA/deputies website for this.

III. Decision:

The recommendation of the deputies is amended and put to the vote. The final text of this decision is found in Article 94.

ADOPTED

Article 48 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (4) – Divorce and Remarriage (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12f(iv) – Relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

II. Decision:

After several rounds of discussion regarding Divorce and Remarriage, a decision is adopted. The final text of this decision is found in Article 94.

Article 49 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (5) – Liturgy and Hymns (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12f(iv) – Relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

Agenda item 10d – Overture re relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands

II. Decision:

After several rounds of discussion regarding Liturgy and Hymns, a decision is adopted. The final text of this decision is found in Article 94.

Article 50 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (6) – Sacraments in Military Situations (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda item 12f(iv) – Relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

II. Amendment:

Recommend to add two further decisions using the same grounds of the decision:

1. To express disappointment that our previous concerns have not been adequately addressed by the RCN.
2. Instruct deputies to investigate whether the last decisions by Synod Amersfoort on this issue are in conflict with Scripture, Confession and Church Order.

III. Decision:

The original recommendation of the deputies is put to the vote. The final text of this decision is found in Article 94.

EVENING SESSION
Thursday 13 July 2006

Article 51 - Reopening

The Chairman opens the evening session of Synod and invites all present to sing Hymn 46:1 and 2.

Article 52 - Address of Delegate from Sister Churches in Indonesia

The Chairman gives Rev. Umbu Hapu Pariamalinya from the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT) the opportunity to address synod (refer Appendix 1h). The Chairman thanks him.

Br B Bosveld, on behalf of deputies, responds to this (refer Appendix 1i).

Article 53 - Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur (Refer Articles 54, 55, 58, Appendix 9)

I. Material:

12f(i) – Deputies Report on Indonesian/Philippines Churches

II. Recommendation:

Some rounds of discussion take place on the proposal of Deputies (refer to Appendix 9).

III. Amendment:

An amendment to the deputies recommendations is proposed, namely to insert a new recommendation after Recommendation 5.

- 5.1 To investigate the need, the desirability (from our sister churches in Sumba, Savu, Timor) and the possibility of sending a minister to them with the mandate:

- 5.1.1 generally to help at the seminary,
- 5.1.2 specifically to help train better students at a senior level of theology, and
- 5.1.3 to assist in the development of reformed leadership.

DEFEATED

Article 54 - The Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines and the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines (Refer Articles 53, 55, 58, Appendix 9)

I. Material:

12f(i) – Deputies Report on Indonesian/Philippines Churches

II. Discussion:

A round of discussion takes place on the proposal of Deputies.

Article 55 - Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC) (Refer Articles 53, 54, 58, Appendix 9)

I. Material:

12f(i) – Deputies Report on Indonesian/Philippines Churches

II. Discussion:

A round of discussion takes place on the proposal of Deputies.

Article 56 - Adjournment

Rev J Smith invites all present to sing Hymn 5:1 to 4 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION

Friday 14 July 2006

Article 57 - Reopening and welcome to Canadian delegates

Br H Hamelink invites those present to sing Hymn 38:1-4. He reads from Romans 12 and leads in prayer.

The chairman welcomes the delegates from Canada, Br H.E. Hoogstra and Br H. Leyenhorst who arrived last evening.

A letter of credentials for the brothers is read out.

The chairman requests the two brothers to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. The brothers rise.

Article 58 - Reformed Churches in Indonesia and the Philippines (Refer Articles 53, 54, 55, Appendix 9)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f (i) – Deputies Report on Indonesian/Philippines Churches

II. Recommendations from Deputies for Relations with Churches in Indonesia and the Philippines

The recommendation of the deputies is put forward (refer to Appendix 9).

III. Decision:

1. To thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:

A. Regarding GGRI:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
4. To continue the financial support of the church at Kataka for the support of Rev. Pila Njuka and to reconsider this support after the theological seminary has been established;
5. To support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause;
6. To financially support evangelist Benyamin Rohi to come to Australia to study English and to familiarize himself with the Australian churches for three months subject to a financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches and if possible Rev. Yawan Bunda of the GGRC;
7. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
8. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to

encourage these churches to fully practise the unity they already recognise

9. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 4,5,6,7 above.

B. Regarding GGRC:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC;
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available;
4. To monitor and report on developments regarding the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise. This includes urging them to be united in theological training which also includes encouraging them to utilize the study Rev. Yonson Dethan completed at the Theological College in Hamilton;
5. To financially support Rev Yawan Bundi of GGRC to study English in Australia and familiarize himself with reformed church life for three months, but not in the same year as others students. This will be done according to the financial agreement with our Dutch sister churches and is subject to available funding from the churches;
6. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
7. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 3, 5 and 6 above;

C. Regarding Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines and the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines:

1. To discontinue attempts to contact both Reformed Churches of the Philippines;

2. To maintain deputies as an address so that if these churches are still interested in contact they can contact deputies.

Grounds:

- a. The GGRI continue to show faithfulness to the Lord as He teaches in His Word and as has been upheld by the Reformed Confessions.
- b. Seeing that the GGRI and GGRC are sister churches of each other, relations with the one makes contact with the other mandatory. Moreover, these churches have show faithfulness to God's Word and the Reformed confessions in many ways.
- c. Deputies need to be appointed to maintain the sister church and contact relations:
 - i. Visiting the conferences and synods has proven to be especially helpful in order to establish and maintain personal contacts.
 - ii. These churches have very little means to build up and hold fast to the reformed faith. They have expressed a lot of gratitude for the support they do receive and were particularly thankful for the support and integration of Rev. Njuka. When visiting conferences and synods the topic of theological training in their own country has always been a very important matter to them.
 - iii. A request has been made from the deputies for support for further training in the English language and in church life for one of their evangelists, and a possible student to go to Hamilton for training, to be a lecturer at their own college.
 - iv. Regular communication remains very important. These churches do not have the means to sustain them. Previous synods agreed that a certain person be supported to keep communications possible. Deputies consider it better (without increasing the amount) to spread this support over more than one person.
 - v. Past synods have agreed that to support these churches, deputies should encourage the churches to contribute to this important work.
- d. Concerning the Philippines, deputies report that *in the past period it was impossible to get in contact with these churches. Telephone calls were not answered. Addresses were not available. The people do not respond at all.* In case that these

churches still respond, they need an address to which they can direct their correspondence.

ADOPTED

Article 59 - Appeal from Legana re Article 67 Synod Launceston 1985 (refer Articles 33, 41)

I. Material:

Agenda item 8i – Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Article 67 Acts 1985

II. Appeal:

The church at Legana asks Synod to repeal Article 67 of Synod Launceston 1985 as counter-productive, confusing and binding beyond our confessions.

Grounds:

- a. The article is not helpful in the process of coming to sister-church relationships in a scriptural way. In the past years we have refused to admit that churches such as the RCNZ and the PCEA with whom we were in discussion were a true church of the Lord, yet we have been forced to admit that we do tacitly recognise them as true churches of the Lord, because else we wouldn't be talking with them. This tacit recognition was made to the PCEA by letter from the last synod and was seen as de facto recognition of them by the PCEA. In practice this article forces the churches into withholding recognition of a church as a true and faithful church of the Lord until all points of disagreement are removed, when the points of disagreement are not of sufficient weight to deny the recognition, but of sufficient weight to frustrate or slow down progress to unity. This fosters resentment, frustrates communication and ultimately the union of the Church of Christ which it seeks to promote.

- b. It is badly worded.

It is not a declaration regarding the meaning of "true and faithful church" as the title claims, but a declaration of the implications of declaring a church true and faithful.

Point 1 is unclear in its intention, for recognition of a church as true and faithful will depend on doctrinal agreement over the whole range of confessed doctrine, of which Articles 27-32 are only a small part.

Point 2 is unclear about:

- i. the process towards unity: "can be established" does not mean must or may be established. Are we talking about a possibility, an obligation or permission?

The confusion extends further, for it is unclear if this point is saying that we can enter into sister church relations while practical difficulties still keep us apart.

It is also unclear whether the "practical realisation of unity" is perceived as a confessional obligation or a desirable outcome. It is not the former for BC Articles 27-32 nowhere speak of the obligation to federational unity of churches. In the catholicity of the Church there is a spiritual and not an organisational unity.

- ii. historical developments: All differences of doctrine and praxis are the result of historical developments. Which are meant or are all meant? The language says the latter.

Due to the lack of clarity this point can be interpreted to mean that we can, may or must enter into sister-church relations with other churches without resolving the difficulties first, or that differences of doctrine or praxis which arise from historical developments have no bearing on the question.

Point 3 goes beyond our confessions in asserting that one must join the nearest true church.

III. Decision:

Proposal 1:

Not to accede to the appeal.

Grounds:

- a. Legana has not shown convincingly that Article 67 is counter-productive.
- b. Article 67 need not be confusing as previous synods have made clear that Article 67 was written in the context of the contacts with the PCEA and was not intended to be used as a principle statement applicable to every potential sister church relationship. (cf Synod 1983 (Article 96) and in the Considerations of appeals to Synod 1985 (Article 67) and Synod 1987 (Article 41)).
- c. Article 67 does not bind beyond our confessions when stating that one must join the nearest true church because the article (declaration 3) refers to a true church which has become a sister church.

DEFEATED

Proposal 2:

Not to accede to the appeal.

Grounds:

- a. No evidence has been provided that this article has not been helpful in coming to sister relations.
- b. If the article is badly worded, it should be revised, but not repealed.
- c. This article applies our confession regarding other true churches, and does not go beyond our confession.

ADOPTED

Article 60 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) (Refer Articles 61, 62, 63 102, Appendix 10)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f (iii) – Reformed Churches of New Zealand
Agenda Item 8j – Letter FRC Darling Downs Appeal re Articles 44, 62, 67, 68, 69, 72 Acts 2003
Agenda Item 8n – Letter P ‘tHart Appeal Article 72 Acts 2003

II. Decision:

That Synod decide to begin first with discussion on the Deputies’ report before dealing with the appeals.

ADOPTED

Article 61 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) (Refer Articles 60, 102, Appendix 10)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f (iii) – Deputies Report on Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

II. Discussion:

A round of discussion takes place on the report of Deputies for Relations with Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Friday 14 July 2006

Article 62 - Article Admissibility of Appeals re RCNZ (Refer Articles 60, 63)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8j – Letter FRC Darling Downs Appeal re Articles 44, 62, 67, 68, 69, 72 Acts 2003
Agenda Item 8n – Letter Br P ‘tHart Appeal Article 72 Acts 2003

II. Admissibility

Proposal 1:

Synod declares the appeals from FRC Darling Downs admissible.

Grounds:

- a. This appeal was submitted according to Article 31 of the Church Order and the rules for Synod.
- b. Even though this appeal addresses decisions of appeals made by others, it argues that a proposal regarding interchurch relations that affects all the churches was dealt with contrary to Article 30 CO.

DEFEATED

Proposal 2:

Synod declares the appeal from Br P. 'tHart against Article 72 admissible.

Ground:

This appeal was submitted according to Article 30 of the Church Order and the rules for synod.

DEFEATED

Proposal 3:

Synod declares the appeals from FRC Darling Downs against Article 72 inadmissible.

Ground:

It is the duty of the appellants to demonstrate that there are new grounds. They have not done this.

DEFEATED

Proposal 4:

Synod declares the appeal of Br P 't Hart against Article 72 inadmissible.

Grounds:

- a. While it is true that past synods considered the sister relations of the RCNZ as an impediment or obstacle to reaching sister relations with the RCNZ, there is also a development in this regard. For instance, the 1994 Synod, Article 78, specifically the amendment and the decision, shows this. From then on deputies had to study *how the relation of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ*, and this *in the light of the changes occurring on the ecclesiastical scene, earlier*

expectations needed to be reconsidered (ground). From then on it is to be investigated. Deputies could still argue that the past conclusion was valid or they could come to a new conclusion (as some deputies did in their 1998 report).

- b. It is wrong to argue that no one appealed against the past conclusion (that their relation with the RCA is an impediment) at a classis or synod. In the first place it is the jurisdiction not of a classis but of the synod. Moreover, churches did make submissions about deputies' reports and have tried to argue against recognition of the RCNZ and against the offer of sister relations to the RCNZ.
- c. The matter of recognition and the offer of sister relations was not a new matter, but concerned the handling of our contacts with the RCNZ. In process of doing so synods use policies (cf Article 67 of the 1985 Synod) and rules for entering sister relations.

DEFEATED

Proposal 5:

Synod declares the appeals from FRC Darling Downs against Articles 44, 62, 67, 68 and 69 are inadmissible.

Ground:

It is the duty of the appellants to demonstrate that there are new grounds. They have not done this.

ADOPTED

Proposal 6:

Synod declares the appeal from FRC Darling Downs against Article 72 inadmissible.

Ground:

The triangular relationship is not a new matter.

DEFEATED

Proposal 7:

Synod declares the appeal from FRC Darling Downs against Article 72 inadmissible.

Ground:

Darling Downs' appeal against Article 72 occurs within a collection of different appeals against various articles. The other appeals have been declared inadmissible. This appeal refers to grounds found in the other appeals. Hence this appeal is unsubstantiated.

DEFEATED

Proposal 8:

Synod declares the appeal from FRC Darling Downs against Article 72 admissible.

Grounds:

The appeal comes from one of the churches and deals with a decision of the previous Synod (Article 31 CO)

ADOPTED

Proposal 9:

Synod declares the appeal of Br 'tHart against Article 72 admissible.

Grounds

The appeal comes from a member of one of the churches and deals with a decision of the previous synod (Article 31 CO).

ADOPTED

Article 63 - Appeal from Br 'tHart re RCNZ (Refer Articles 60, 62)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8j – Letter FRC Darling Downs Appeal re Articles 44, 62, 67, 68, 69, 72 Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8n – Letter P 'tHart Appeal Article 72 Acts 2003

II. Recommendation:

Not to accept the appeal of Br P 'tHart against Article 72 of the 2003 Synod.

Grounds:

- a. While it is true that past synods considered the sister relations of the RCNZ as an impediment or obstacle to reaching sister relations with the RCNZ, there is also a development in this regard.
 - i. For instance, the 1994 Synod, Article 78, specifically the amendment and the decision, shows this. From then on deputies had to study *how the relation of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ*, and

that in the light of the changes occurring on the ecclesiastical scene, earlier expectations needed to be reconsidered (ground). From then on it is to be investigated.

- ii. In 1996 synod stated that this investigation has not come to a resolution (ground 2, Article 53).
 - iii. In 1998 Synod phrased the triangular relations as a “difficulty” (Article 89, Dec 3.a) and again mandates deputies to strive for sister relations.
 - iv. Deputies could thus still argue that the past conclusion was valid or they could come to a new conclusion (as some deputies did in their 1998 report, cf pp 189-191). Synods 2000, 2003 and especially 2006 indeed wrestle with this matter.
- b. It is wrong to argue that no one appealed against the past conclusion (that their relation with the RCA is an impediment) at a classis or synod. In the first place it is the jurisdiction not of a classis but of the synod. Moreover, churches did make submissions about deputies’ reports and have tried to argue against recognition of the RCNZ and against the offer of sister relations to the RCNZ.
- c. The matter of recognition and the offer of sister relations was not a new matter, but concerned the handling of our contacts with the RCNZ. In process of doing so synods use policies (cf Article 67 of the 1985 Synod) and rules for entering sister relations.

DEFEATED

III. Decision:

Synod denies the appeals against Article 72 from Br ‘tHart and from FRC Darling Downs.

Grounds:

- a. The triangular relationship is not a new matter. The ongoing discussion whether the RCNZ's relationship with the CRCA is an impediment has been recorded by deputies and synods (cf. Acts 94, Article 78 / Acts 96, Article 53, Ground 2 / Acts 98 Deputies report).
- b. Past synods and also Synod 2003 have upheld that the relationship between the RCNZ and CRCA has been regarded as an impediment for the relationship between the RCNZ and the FRCA.

- c. The relationship of the RCNZ and CRCA is in constant flux and the possibilities for closer approximation change. At the time of the decision the RCNZ placed its relationship with the CRCA under strain and Synod Rockingham saw the opportunity for closer relations.
- d. It is within the scope of the authority of Synod to mandate deputies to investigate this.
- e. Synod Kelmscott 1996 Article 53 Decision 2 and based on Grounds 1 (p32-34) expresses with gratitude the faithfulness deputies have found in the RCNZ (p102-104).

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Friday 14 July 2006

Article 64 - Reopening

The Chairman opens the evening session of Synod and invites all present to sing Hymn 2:1, 2 and 3.

Article 65 - Approval of Acts and Press Release

Articles 43 to 56 of the Acts of Synod are approved as well as the first Press Release of Synod 2006.

Article 66 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (7) – Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) and Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 67, 89, 92, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f (iv) – Relations with The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)

II. Recommendation of deputies:

A decision is adopted. The final text of this decision is found in Article 94.

Article 67 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (8) – Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) (RCN (R)) (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 89, 92, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f (iv) – Relations with The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) (RCN (R))

II. Discussion:

One round of discussion takes place on deputies' recommendations on the RCN (R).

Article 68 - Adjournment

Rev E Rupke invites all present to sing Hymn 41:2 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION
Monday 17 July 2006

Article 69 - Reopening

Rev Eikelboom invites those present to sing Psalm 128:1 and 3. He reads from Psalm 128 and leads in prayer.

Article 70 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 71 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 72 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 73 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 74 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 75 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 76 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 77 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 78 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 79 - Dealt with in Closed Session

OPEN SESSION
Monday 17 July 2006

**Article 80 - Appeal FRC Byford re Deputies Reports PCEA and Korea
(Refer Article 40)**

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8cc – Letter FRC Byford re Deputies Report PCEA
Agenda Item 8dd – Letter FRC Byford re Deputies Report Korea

II. Admissibility:

Synod declares the submissions inadmissible.

Ground:

The submissions came in too late (6 July 2006).

ADOPTED

Article 81 - Overture from Classis South re Name change for the FRCA

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11b – Overture re change the name of the FRCA to ARC

II. Recommendation:

Classis South makes an overture to the Synod to change the name of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to the Australian Reformed Churches.

Grounds:

- a. This name more accurately portrays our status as Australian Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and removes the confusing addition which is not readily understood by our fellow citizens without extensive reference to the history of our sister churches in the Netherlands.
- b. It is felt that this name will go a long way in removing the perceived stigma of "Dutch" church which many feel could be a stumbling block for effective outreach work amongst our fellow citizens.
- c. This name is also more in harmony with the name of our sister churches in English-speaking countries overseas, eg. Canadian Reformed Churches, further removing confusion regarding our status.
- d. Investigation with the Department of Consumer and Employer Protection has revealed that this name is readily available for registration.
- e. Recent moves by the Reformed Churches of Australia to change their name to Christian Reformed Churches of Australia removes any confusion there might have been with our proposed name if their name had still been Reformed Churches of Australia.

DEFEATED

Recommendation:

Not to change the name of the bond of the churches.

Grounds:

- a. The churches have used the name *Free Reformed Churches of Australia* ever since their first institution and have already become well known by this name in this country.
- b. The present name reflects the history of the churches.
- c. There is insufficient evidence to prove that a different name would rid the churches of the “*Dutch*” stigma.
- d. By changing the name a burden would be imposed on the churches to change their incorporation act.

Amendment 1:

Add “perceived” to Ground (c) to read “perceived Dutch stigma”.

ADOPTED

Amendment 2:

Delete Ground (b).

DEFEATED

Amendment 3:

Delete Ground (d).

DEFEATED

III. Amended Decision:

Not to change the name of the bond of the churches.

Grounds:

- a. The churches have used the name *Free Reformed Churches of Australia* ever since their first institution and have already become well known by this name in this country.
- b. The present name reflects the history of the churches.
- c. There is insufficient evidence to prove that a different name would rid the churches of the perceived “*Dutch*” stigma.
- d. By changing the name a burden would be imposed on the churches to change their incorporation act.

ADOPTED

Article 82 - Archives and Library (Refer Appendix 20)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12I – Report on Archives and Library of Synod

II. Decision:

1. To accept the report from the FRC Mt Nasura responsible for the Synod Archives and Library.
2. To thank the Deputies for their work and discharge them.

Ground:

The archives and library were well cared for.

ADOPTED

***EVENING SESSION
Monday 17 July 2006***

Article 83 - Reopening

The Chairman opens the evening session of Synod and invites all present to sing Hymn 57:1 and 2.

Article 84 - Address by Canadian delegate

The chairman gives Br Henk Hoogstra from the Canadian Reformed Churches the opportunity to address Synod (refer Appendix 1j). The Chairman thanks him.

Rev Huizinga, on behalf of deputies, responds to this (refer Appendix 1k).

Article 85 - Canadian Reformed Churches (Refer Appendix 3)

I. Material:

Agenda 12f(iv) – Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches – Canadian Reformed Churches

II. Decision:

1. To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules.
2. To monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to our rules.
3. To authorise deputies (in cooperation with the Deputies for Training for the Ministry) to send one delegate to the next General Synod (2007 in Smithers).

Grounds:

- a. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

- b. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and personal contact at the synodical level reinforces our contact with them (confer Article 17 – Training for the Ministry).

ADOPTED

Article 86 - Report of Deputies for the Book of Praise (Refer Article 98, Appendix 16)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12d – Reports Deputies Australian Book of Praise

II. Discussion:

A number of rounds of discussion takes place.

Article 87 - Adjournment

Rev W Huizinga invites all present to sing Hymn 23:5, 6, 7 and 8 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION
Tuesday 18 July 2006

Article 88 - Reopening

Rev PKA de Boer invites those present to sing Psalm 138:1 and 3. He reads from Ephesians 1 and leads in prayer.

Article 89 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands – RCN (R) (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 92, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f(iv) – Relations with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN)

II. Discussion:

A second round of discussion takes place on the report.

Article 90 - Farewell to Dutch delegates

The Chairman speaks a few words to the delegates of the RCN and the RCN(R), thanking them for visiting, and also for their taking part in the discussions regarding the RCN, and the RCN(R), and the split that occurred in 2003.

Rev J Plug then speaks in response, stating that they also are thankful for the opportunity they have been given to discuss this matter. Br P Drijfhout then similarly speaks words of thankfulness.

Article 91 - Adjournment

To farewell the delegates, the Chairman requests that before the lunch break, all those present stand to sing Psalm 121:1 and 4.

AFTERNOON SESSION **Tuesday 18 July 2006**

Article 92 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands – RCN (R) (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 93, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f(iv) – Relations with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN)

Agenda Item 10c – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura dated 17 June 2003

II. Recommendation of deputies:

Refer to Appendix 6.

Amendment 1:

Replace Recommendation 2 of the Deputies' Recommendations (majority) as follows:

- 2 To postpone a definitive judgment on the claims of the RCN (R) and to request deputies to investigate further whether or not the decision to "liberate" was lawful.

Grounds:

- a. Although we understand that the RCN (R) have concerns with decisions and directions of the RCN, the information provided to us by the RCN(R) does not adequately explain why the liberation had to occur at this time (ie. 2003) and in the manner that it did. In this further investigation the extensive work done thus far by deputies should be used as well as the decisions of this synod. These can be used to investigate further the separation in 2003 and the developments after 2003.
- b. Even though the liberation took place in 2003, subsequent events including that of Synod Amersfoort 2005 need to be discussed with the RCN (R) to ascertain whether or not their liberation is lawful. Now that our churches have made decisions about some of these crucial areas (refer Article 94 for fully collated decision) we should place them before the RCN(R) and discuss these with the RCN(R).

- c. It is a serious matter to allow deformation to go unchallenged, but it is also a serious matter to separate when it is not warranted. The injunctions to remain one in the Lord (eg. John 17 and Ephesians 4), sometimes even when serious problems arose, as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible (cf Paul's letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The letters of Paul and the other apostles constantly remind us of this.
- d. There is also the need for diligence in our sister relations with the RCN. Deputies in their submissions to the GS of Zuidhorn and Amersfoort have specified their concerns as they related to the reports about the fourth commandment, reports about marriage and divorce, the decision re the blessing as given by a non-elder, the liturgical changes and proposals about the same, including the proliferation of new hymns, as well as the decisions re the chaplaincy and celebration of the Lord's Supper in war zones. We thus have registered our concerns as well. Such diligence will need to continue, in accordance with the rules for sister relations.
- e. Deputies have shown that diligence in discussing developments and trends in the RCN churches has led to some good results. This should be continued. For there continue to be some trends within our Dutch sister churches that do cause concern.
- f. Scripture teaches that a tree is known by its fruit and therefore the faithfulness of the RCN (R) and the RCN will become apparent over time. In the interim we must urge our brothers in the RCN(R) to leave justice to the Lord.

Amendment 2:

Amend Recommendation 2 as follows:

- 2 To postpone a definitive judgment on the claims of the RCN (R) and to request deputies to investigate further whether or not the decision to "liberate" was lawful, and to defend the honour and reputation of our Dutch sister Churches.

ADOPTED

Amendment 3:

Add the following to the end of point e of the amended Recommendations 2:

- e. The matter of church discipline and mutual discipline among the churches also requires further information since discipline from consistories and churches among themselves will provide evidence of adherence to or deviation from the official statements of Synod.

ADOPTED

Amendment 4:

Insert the following in the amended Recommendation 2:

“(as made in their letter dated 4 February 2005)”

ADOPTED

Amendment 5:

Total amended Recommendation 2 (of deputies' recommendation):

- 2 To postpone a definitive judgment on the claims of the RCN (R) (as made in their letter dated 4 February 2005) and to request deputies to investigate further whether or not the decision to “liberate” was lawful and to defend the honour and reputation of our Dutch sister Churches.

Grounds:

- a. Although we understand that the RCN (R) have concerns with decisions and directions of the RCN, the information provided to us by the RCN(R) does not adequately explain why the liberation had to occur at this time (ie. 2003) and in the manner that it did. In this further investigation the extensive work done thus far by deputies should be used as well as the decisions of this synod. These can be used to investigate further the separation in 2003 and the developments after 2003.
- b. Even though the liberation took place in 2003, subsequent events including that of Synod Amersfoort 2005 need to be discussed with the RCN (R) to ascertain whether or not their liberation is lawful. Now that our churches have made decisions about some of these crucial areas (refer Article 94 for fully collated decision) we should place them before the RCN(R) and discuss these with the RCN(R).
- c. It is a serious matter to allow deformation to go unchallenged, but it is also a serious matter to separate when it is not warranted. The injunctions to remain one in the Lord (e.g. John 17 and Ephesians 4) sometimes even when serious problems arose, as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible (cf Paul's letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The letters of Paul and the other apostles constantly remind us of this.

- d. There is also the need for diligence in our sister relations with the RCN. Deputies in their submissions to the GS of Zuidhorn and Amersfoort have specified their concerns as they related to the reports about the fourth commandment, reports about marriage and divorce, the decision re the blessing as given by a non-elder, the liturgical changes and proposals about the same, including the proliferation of new hymns, as well as the decisions re the chaplaincy and celebration of the Lord's Supper in war zones. We thus have registered our concerns as well. Such diligence will need to continue, in accordance with the rules for sister relations.
- e. Deputies have shown that diligence in discussing developments and trends in the RCN churches has led to some good results. This should be continued. For there continue to be some trends within our Dutch sister churches that do cause concern. The matter of church discipline and mutual discipline among the churches also requires further information since discipline from consistories and churches among themselves will provide evidence of adherence to or deviation from the official statements of Synod.
- f. Scripture teaches that a tree is known by its fruit and therefore the faithfulness of the RCN (R) and the RCN will become apparent over time. In the interim we must urge our brothers in the RCN(R) to leave justice to the Lord.

ADOPTED

Amendment 6:

Synod proposes Recommendation 3, Ground b. be deleted.

Grounds:

- 1. The proposed grounds accurately reflect the discussions.
- 2. The proposed grounds give a clear statement without judgement.

ADOPTED

Amendment 7:

Change Recommendation 1 to:

- 1. To express grief that some members felt the need to separate from the RCN and formed the RCN(R).

Ground:

Clarifies the recommendation of the deputies.

DEFEATED

Amendment 8:

Change Recommendation 1 to:

1. To express grief that a separation has occurred in 2003.

Grounds:

Such a separation always causes much grief as it divides believers who used to sit around the same Lord's table. It especially grieves our Lord who prayed fervently that the apostolic witness would build one, apostolic church.

DEFEATED

III. Decision (Recommendation incorporating all amendments):

1. To express grief that some members separated from the RCN and formed the RCN(R).

Grounds:

- a. Such a separation always causes much grief as it divides believers who used to sit around the same Lord's table. It especially grieves our Lord who prayed fervently that the apostolic witness would build one, apostolic church.
 - b. It also means that brothers who all want to keep the church on a strongly reformed basis now stand divided. Some are in the RCN (R) and some in the RCN. This is both a pity and a grievous hurt.
- 2 To postpone a definitive judgment on the claims of the RCN (R) (as made in their letter dated 4 February 2005) and to request deputies to investigate further whether or not the decision to "liberate" was lawful and to defend the honour and reputation of our Dutch sister Churches.

Grounds:

- a. Although we understand that the RCN (R) have concerns with decisions and directions of the RCN, the information provided to us by the RCN(R) does not adequately explain why the liberation had to occur at this time (ie. 2003) and in the manner that it did. In this further investigation the extensive work done thus far by deputies should be used as well as the decisions of this synod. These can be used to investigate further the separation in 2003 and the developments after 2003.
- b. Even though the liberation took place in 2003, subsequent events including that of Synod Amersfoort 2005 need to be discussed with the RCN (R) to ascertain whether or not

their liberation is lawful. Now that our churches have made decisions about some of these crucial areas (refer Article 94 for fully collated decision) we should place them before the RCN(R) and discuss these with the RCN(R).

- c. It is a serious matter to allow deformation to go unchallenged, but it is also a serious matter to separate when it is not warranted. The injunctions to remain one in the Lord (e.g. John 17 and Ephesians 4) sometimes even when serious problems arose, as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible (cf Paul's letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The letters of Paul and the other apostles constantly remind us of this.
 - d. There is also the need for diligence in our sister relations with the RCN. Deputies in their submissions to the GS of Zuidhorn and Amersfoort have specified their concerns as they related to the reports about the fourth commandment, reports about marriage and divorce, the decision re the blessing as given by a non-elder, the liturgical changes and proposals about the same, including the proliferation of new hymns, as well as the decisions re the chaplaincy and celebration of the Lord's Supper in war zones. We thus have registered our concerns as well. Such diligence will need to continue, in accordance with the rules for sister relations.
 - e. Deputies have shown that diligence in discussing developments and trends in the RCN churches has led to some good results. This should be continued. For there continue to be some trends within our Dutch sister churches that do cause concern. The matter of church discipline and mutual discipline among the churches also requires further information since discipline from consistories and churches among themselves, will provide evidence of adherence to or deviation from the official statements of Synod.
 - f. Scripture teaches that a tree is known by its fruit and therefore the faithfulness of the RCN (R) and the RCN will become apparent over time. In the interim we must urge our brothers in the RCN(R) to leave justice to the Lord.
3. We cannot at this time positively respond to the request of the RCN (R) to acknowledge them as "the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands".

Grounds:

As decided at Synod Rockingham 2003, we as FRCA acknowledge the RCN as giving “*evidence of continuing faithfulness*”. At the same time the FRCA want to “*discuss and to continue to discuss with the RCN deputies the concerns as to the development within the RCN and as outlined and recommended in the report of deputies*” (Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003, Article 41).

4. Not to accede to the request to enter sister relations with the RCN (R).

Ground:

Not being able to recognise them as the continuing RCN means that we cannot enter sister relations with them.

5. To maintain official contact with the RCN (R) so that we can work for reconciliation between them and the RCN, on the basis of truth and love.

Grounds:

- a. We hear in the voice of the brothers of the RCN (R) a strong desire to remain reformed. One cannot but appreciate this desire to remain reformed. Thus we need to continue to have contacts with them so that we can speak to them and continue to urge them, as well as our Dutch sister church, to work for reconciliation on the basis of truth and love.
 - b. Indeed, unwarranted separation is against Christ's prayer for unity, and we need to address this in these contacts.
 - c. Visits can be made to the RCN (R) at the same time as those to the general synods of our sister churches.
 - d. There are those in the RCN who share similar concerns and have openly and publicly indicated their concerns.
 - e. The RCN (R) seceded in 2003. Much has occurred since then. There is a need for up-to-date contacts, especially after the GS of Amersfoort and its decisions, including its attempts to re-open official contacts. Also, we must take into consideration the synod which the RCN(R) will hold (as yet) in 2005, D.V.
6. To have synod respond to the letter of the RCN (R).

Ground:

After a decision is made by synod, only then can an official response be sent. Synod should send such an official answer to the RCN (R) in accordance with this decision.

ADOPTED

Article 93 - Reformed Churches in The Netherlands – Overall Recommendations (RCN) (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 94, Appendix 6)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f(iv) – Relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)

Agenda Item 10c – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura dated 17 June 2003

II. Recommendations:

1. Overall recommendations concerning the RCN (from deputies):

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations.
2. To discharge Deputies and to appoint new Deputies with the mandate:
 - a. To exercise sister-relations with the RCN according to the adopted rules;
 - b. According to the rules, to discuss and to continue to discuss with the RCN Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the RCN, and as outlined and recommended in the report of deputies (see Appendix 6);
 - c. To urge the RCN to continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with the “new liberated” Reformed Churches, having an understanding of their concerns and grievances, and addressing these concerns Scripturally and confessionally in truth and love;
 - d. To instruct deputies to send two delegates to the next general synod of the RCN (subject to available finances);
 - e. To report to next Synod.

Grounds:

- a. The RCN gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- b. Deputies have pointed out and given evidence about some specific concerns. These should (continue to) be addressed, according to the rules.
- c. The 2005 GS Amersfoort sent an appeal to the newly liberated Reformed Churches (RCN (R)) and has thus initiated contact with these churches. This contact should be encouraged to continue, from both sides.
- d. Personal visits to synods is often more helpful than correspondence from a distance. As deputies have shown, it improves relations. Delegates should use the opportunity to visit the RCN (R) as well.

DEFEATED

2. Alternate Recommendation of Deputies (refer to Appendix 6):

3. Amendment 1 (to amended alternate recommendation):

Replace Decision 3 with:

3. To express thanks that the RCN attempted to engage in meaningful dialogue with the RCN(R) churches, showing a greater understanding of their concerns and grievances, and Scripturally and confessionally addressing these concerns in humility and love and to monitor the responses from the RCN(R).

And to replace 5d in the mandate for the new deputies as follows:

- 5.d. To encourage the RCN to continue to work toward reconciliation with the RCN(R).

DEFEATED

4. Amendment 2:

To delete 5 c 2+3

Grounds:

- a. These are covered by the Rules.
- b. Trying to see underlying causes is also very subjective.

- c. Investigating trends in churches does not belong to the official task of deputies. Deputies already read broadly and try to acquaint themselves as broadly as possible.

DEFEATED

5. Amendment 3:

Add a new point to Decision 5c2 with a new ground

3. the admission of non-sister church members to the use of the sacraments.

Ground (to be inserted after existing Ground c):

- d. Synod Amersfoort decided that non-sister church members, under certain circumstances, may be admitted to the use of the sacraments

DEFEATED

II. Recommendation:

A decision was adopted. The final text of this decision is found in Article 94.

Article 94 - Relations with The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN) – Fully collated decision (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 89, 92, 93, Appendix 6)

I. Fourth Commandment and Sunday (Refer to Article 47)

Decision:

1. To acknowledge with thanks that the mandates to stay informed about developments and decisions in the RCN about the Sabbath/Sunday issue and to continue the discussions with the RCN on this matter have been amply fulfilled.
2. To accept Amersfoort's decision as largely allaying our concerns.
3. To have deputies monitor the application of this decision, seeing there are still concerns about its application and clarity of *Sunday, Lordly Day. A Pastoral Guideline*.

Grounds:

- a. The deputies have had to study long reports from the Dutch deputies and interacted with intensive discussions, both by letters and by personal meetings, with our Dutch sister churches on this issue
- b. In distinction from synods Leusden and Zuidhorn, Synod Amersfoort took the view that "no matter how you approach Sunday rest, both lines take their starting point in a

commandment to rest on Sundays". This means that the RCN have come to the conclusion that the New Testament Church's obligation to cease working on Sunday is based on God's command.

- c. General Synod Amersfoort acknowledged the need "to endeavour, while looking upward in prayer to God, to come to renewed conviction regarding the celebration of the Sunday and its place within a Christian style of life as a whole" (Decision 3). This gives the impression that our Dutch sister churches are determined to insist – on the basis of God's Word – that church members should not work on Sunday.
- d. According to the adopted rules for Sister Relations it is our task to "assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world".

II. Divorce and Remarriage (Refer to Article 48)

Decision:

1. To express thankfulness that our Dutch sister churches could take a strong Scriptural stance regarding God's teachings against divorce and remarriage.
2. To express regret that, while the issue regarding the approval of divorces for reasons beyond the Scriptural reasons of adultery and wilful desertion was not endorsed by synod and thus implicitly excluded, synod did not explicitly state this.

Grounds:

- a. Synod Amersfoort in the "Principles and Guidelines" that it approved, gives strong Scriptural guidance showing how divorce and subsequent remarriage are a serious evil and must be so dealt with by consistories.
- b. Synod Amersfoort gave no explicit guidance regarding the danger of moving in a direction that allows divorce for reasons beyond adultery and wilful desertion (Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7).

III. Liturgy and Hymns (Refer to Article 49)

Decision:

1. To express appreciation for not developing a separate order of worship on the basis of the *Ordinarium* texts.
2. To express appreciation for not releasing for use in the churches the order of worship for the "leerdienst" (teaching-service) as presented by the deputies.

3. To express concerns about the continuing proliferation and the contents of the hymns from the “*liedboek voor de kerken*”, and to continue to suggest more time be spent on the Psalms and on songs based directly on Scripture.
4. To keep monitoring RCN's decisions in accordance with our Rule b (to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in liturgy) and to become more acquainted, in a selective manner, with the hymns that are approved and are being approved.

Grounds:

- a. Although GS Amersfoort stated that GS Zuidhorn has added to GS Leusden that a hymn should not be in conflict with the Reformed Confession, GS Zuidhorn decided not to change Leusden's criterium into “a good hymn should not be in conflict with Scripture and Confession”.
- b. The contents of hymns should be unambiguously biblical and reformed. There are too many hymns in “*Liedboek voor de kerken*” which are not unambiguously biblical and reformed.
- c. Deputies have asked that the Psalms, the Book of Praise in the Bible, receive more attention. Without replacing the present rhymings and tunes of the Psalms, to work on new rhymings which are more Christ-centred and on tunes other than Genevan ones. Thus more attention can be given to the Psalms.
- d. More than once Deputies have asked the RCN, in line with John Calvin, to put to rhyme Bible texts and passages. It is better to spend time and energy in composing hymns directly derived from Scriptures than in dealing with appeal upon appeal to unbiblical thoughts that have crept into the hymns. And probably those hymns can be sung if the congregations, by singing, every time translate the ambiguous sentences in a reformed way, but always those hymns shall be found inferior to the faithful Cantica which are based on God's own reliable Word.

IV. Sacraments in Military Situations (Refer to Article 50)

Decision:

To express our concerns to the Dutch sister churches that GS Amersfoort's decision regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel goes beyond the common consent of the Church Order and leads to the danger of interdenominational (against Article 28, Belgic Confession) administration of sacraments.

Grounds:

- a. GS Amersfoort has not alleviated our concerns that were sent to deputies. We are still not convinced that there is no danger in making exceptions to the commonly agreed regulations of the Church Order and then apply them in exceptional circumstances within the military environment.
- b. GS Amersfoort should have referred to Belgic Confession, Article 28, where we confess that it is everyone's duty to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church.
- c. The possibility of administering the Lord's Supper, under certain conditions, to those who are not members of the RCN (or sister churches) has been expanded to the sacrament of baptism (again under certain conditions). Baptising children of believing servicemen who are not members of the RCN (or sister churches) is now also possible.
- d. The exceptional situations, which previously referred to "war zones" and "areas of crisis" have now been broadened to include all military zones where the RCN servicemen are isolated for lengthy periods of time.

V. Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) and Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) (Refer to Article 66)

Regarding CGK:

1. To encourage our sister-churches in their pursuit of unity with the CGK to do so on the proven basis of God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and as practiced by the Church Order of Dort.
2. To monitor further developments and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

- a. These churches have the same basis. The Union of 1892 should have seen both within one federation. Though this did not occur then, the mandate of our Lord and His prayer to be one obliges us to seek this unity.
- b. Since these developments are ongoing, it is good to keep the churches posted.

Regarding NGK:

1. To encourage the RCN in their contacts with the NGK to continue to insist on the need within the NGK for binding to God's Word as confessed in The Three Forms of Unity, and also to insist on the proper place of the Church Order to counteract independentism.

2. To express thanks that the RCN carefully assessed the request to reconsider the decisions of GS Amersfoort-West (1967) and Hoogeveen (1969/70).
3. To encourage the RCN to pursue the recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity.
4. To keep in close contact with the Dutch Deputies and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

- a. The binding to the Scriptures and confessions as well as the proper place of the Church Order for the bond of churches are the crucial points of division. We should encourage our sister churches in these matters.
- b. The subject of the split in the 1960s has been carefully investigated. It was decided that it is not necessary to change the decisions of previous General Synods.
- c. The declaration of the NGK to justify women in the offices of minister and elder indeed sets a barrier to unity. Our sister churches need to address this with the NGK.

VI. Overall Recommendations (RCN) (Refer Article 93)

Decision:

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations.
2. To express our thankfulness to the RCN churches regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.
3. To urge the RCN to engage in meaningful dialogue with the RCN(R) churches, having a greater understanding of their concerns and grievances, and Scripturally and confessionally to address these concerns in humility and love.
4. To express our concerns regarding the directions being taken, particularly in regard to the manner in which Scripture and the commandments are interpreted and applied to today's circumstances, taking into account decisions made by our synods.
5. To discharge Deputies and to appoint new Deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. exercise sister-relations with the RCN according to the adopted rules;

- b. discuss with the RCN the nature and cause underlying the directions being taken by their churches as expressed above;
- c. discuss with the RCN Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the RCN, including:
 - i. those that deputies have already been busy with, and the decisions already made by Synod West Kelmscott 2006, so that this work does not need to be done all over again;
 - ii. the RCN dealings with views on hermeneutics, work of the Holy Spirit and the application of church discipline;
 - iii. the influence of the charismatic movement on the RCN;
- d. implement Decision 3;
- e. report to next Synod;
- f. send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN.

Grounds:

- a. The RCN give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- b. Our deputies have been able to correspond with Dutch deputies in a good and brotherly way, and their deputies have brought our concerns to their Synod table. This is in the spirit of the rules for sister church relations to which both our church bonds have committed themselves.
- c. FRCA deputies express concern about a subjective interpretation of Scripture in relation to the RCN considerations about marriage and divorce that was not expressly denied by the RCN synod. Via books, the media and websites, members from within the RCN have raised matters of concern including the work of the Spirit and the application of church discipline. These matters of concern need to be investigated.
- d. Synod has made decisions on fourth commandment, divorce and remarriage, sacraments in military situations, liturgy and hymns.
- e. In order to pave the way towards reconciliation, it is important that the RCN be urged to work towards reconciliation with the RCN(R) on the basis of truth, love and humility.
- f. Deputies need to continue to address the concerns in accordance with the rules of sister church relations.

- g. Personal visits to synods are often more helpful than correspondence from a distance. Delegates should use the opportunity to visit the RCN (R) as well.

ADOPTED

Article 95 - Overture of Mount Nasura re relations with the RCN (Refer Articles 37, 44, 47)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 10d – Overture re relations with Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

II. Proposal:

To defeat the proposal of Mt Nasura.

Ground:

Mt Nasura in effect asks for greater awareness and diligence in considering members and ministers from the RCN that come here. Synod regards this adequately covered in the tasks the consistories already have in the exercise as overseers of the church.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday 18 July 2006

Article 96 - Reopening and Greetings from the GGRC

The Chairman reopens the evening session of Synod and invites all present to sing Hymn 61:1, 5 and 6.

The chairman reads out a letter of greetings from the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC) churches in Indonesia (refer Appendix 9).

Rev M Retief is given the opportunity to address Synod (Refer Appendix 1l) and Br B Veenendaal responds on behalf of Synod and Deputies (Refer Appendix 1m).

Article 97 - Relations with Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (Refer Appendix 5)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f(iv) – Relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

II. Recommendations of Deputies:

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

2. To instruct deputies to send one delegate to their next synod (2008).

Grounds:

- a. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- b. Our visits to South Africa and their visits to us have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

ADOPTED

Article 98 - Report of Deputies for the Book of Praise (Refer Article 86, Appendix 16)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12d – Reports Deputies Australian Book of Praise

II. Recommendation of deputies:

1. Deputies are discharged.
2. Synod acknowledges the Churches' desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise and decides on the following timetable to publish the Australian Book of Praise, namely:
 - a. Have deputies report on all material matters, such as use of Bible Translation, You vs Thou, copyright negotiations, consider opportunity to compose/use alternate tunes, revised budgets/quotes, production timelines, for Synod 2009 to determine.
 - b. The following Synod can then instruct deputies to commence the work of publishing the Australian Book of Praise.
3. Synod considers instructing the deputies to commence work on having alternate psalms/hymns composed, as this is likely to be a time consuming process.

Recommendations:

The recommendations of the deputies were amended as follows:

1. To discharge the Deputies.
2. To acknowledge the Churches' desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise.
3. To appoint deputies to come with more detailed recommendations on how to proceed with an Australian Book of Praise.

4. To report on the issues to be presented to the churches at least one half year before Synod 2009 is due to start.
5. To appoint deputies with the task to:
 - a. investigate if copyright holders can commit to long-term permission of copyright material also in the event that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decide to publish their own version of the Book of Praise;
 - b. ascertain an up-to-date costing of printing an Australian Book of Praise, incorporating copyright and printing costs;
 - c. report to Synod 2009 with a more detailed plan/proposal incorporating the wishes of the churches;
 - d. stay informed of the developments with the Canadian Book of Praise and indicate how this might impact on producing our Australian Book of Praise.

Grounds:

- a. The majority of the churches have indicated a preference to publish our own Australian Book of Praise.
- b. If the churches indicate a desire to start our own Australian Book of Praise further work needs to be done.

Amendment 1

Amend Recommendation 3 to read:

3. Synod appoints deputies to come with more detailed recommendations on how to proceed with an Australian Book of Praise.

Amend Recommendation 5d to read:

- 5d. Stay informed about developments with the Canadian Book of Praise and indicate how the Canadian work may be shared and impact on producing our Australian Book of Praise.

ADOPTED

III. Decision (on amended recommendation):

1. to discharge deputies;
2. to acknowledge the Churches' desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise;
3. to appoint deputies to come with more detailed recommendations on how to proceed with an Australian Book of Praise.

4. to present a report on the issues to the churches at least six months before Synod 2009 is due to start.
5. to appoint new deputies with the task to:
 - a. investigate if copyright holders can commit to long-term permission of copyright material also in the event that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decide to publish their own version of the Book of Praise;
 - b. ascertain an up to date costing of printing an Australian Book of Praise, incorporating copyright and printing costs;
 - c. report to Synod 2009 with a more detailed plan/proposal incorporating wishes of the churches;
 - d. stay informed about developments with the Canadian Book of Praise and indicate how the Canadian work may be shared and impact on producing our Australian Book of Praise.

Grounds:

- 1 The majority of the churches have indicated a preference to publish our own Australian Book of Praise.
- 2 Since the churches indicate a desire to start our own Australian Book of Praise further work needs to be done.

ADOPTED

Article 99 - Adjournment

Rev J Kroeze invites all present to sing Psalm 134:1, 2 and 3 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday 19 July 2006

Article 100 - Reopening

Br J Bruning opens with Scripture reading from Romans 3:9-20 and Psalm 32 and leads in prayer. He then invites those present to sing Psalm 32:1 and 5.

Article 101 - Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Articles 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8c – Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003
Agenda Item 8h – Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Articles 132, 153, 155, 160 Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8k – Letter Br G Spaanderman, Albany Appeal re Article 120 Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8o – Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8p – Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8u – Letter Brs Reitsema/VanBurgel Appeal Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8w – Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins Acts 2003

Agenda Item 8y – Letter FRC Rockingham re Forgiveness of Sins Acts 2003

II. Discussion:

Several rounds of general discussion take place.

Article 102 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) (Refer Articles 60, 61, Appendix 10)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12f(iii) – Report Deputies Relations – Reformed Churches of New Zealand

II. Recommendations from Deputies:

The recommendations A and B from deputies are put forward for discussion (refer Appendix 10).

1. Amendment 1:

Amend Recommendation 1.3 in Version A to read:

- 1.3 Reassure the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into sister relationship with them but the matter of their relationship with the CRCA remains unresolved.

Grounds:

1. We have no relation with the CRCA and thus it is incorrect to speak of triangular relations.
2. Past synods have mandated deputies to encourage the RCNZ in their principled approach to sister relations and to continue sisterly admonitions toward the CRCA where needed (cf Article 89, Decision 3a, Acts 1998; Article 53, Decisions 3 and 5a, Acts 1996; while the 2003 Synod asked deputies to assess how their relation with the CRCA needs to be an impediment for entering sister relations (Article 72, Decision 6b).

3. Putting it this way may unnecessarily blockade the way to sister relations in the future.

DEFEATED

2. Amendment 2:

To delete Recommendation 2 in Version A.

DEFEATED

3. Amendment 3:

Amendment to Version A of deputies' report:

New Recommendation 1:

Thank the deputies for the work done and declare that their mandate has been completed.

Grounds:

Deputies have reported to Synod in a manner that satisfies the mandate.

ADOPTED

Amended Recommendation:

1. Thank the deputies for the work done and declare that their mandate has been completed.
2. To renew the mandate of deputies to strive for relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:
 - a. Monitoring the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA, and to encourage the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA where necessary.
 - b. Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest.
 - c. Reassuring the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them but the matter of a triangular relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.
 - d. Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in rules 6 of our "Rules for Synods" (Acts 1998, Appendix 12).
 - e. Providing information to the membership of our churches about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
3. To encourage consistories to take note, and act on, Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ in regard to practical support

and interaction where these are not restricted to those between sister churches only e.g. application of membership from former members of the RCNZ, matters pertaining to the mission field and theological and Christian education.

4. To convey Synod's decisions to RCNZ.

Grounds:

1. Deputies have reported to synod in a manner that satisfies the mandate.
2. See Deputies Report (Appendix 10).

ADOPTED

Article 103 - Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia (PCEA) (Refer Article 107, Appendix 11)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12b – Report Deputies for Contact with the PCEA

II. Discussion:

Several rounds of discussion take place on the recommendation from Deputies.

Article 104 - Farewell to Canadian Delegates

Br Leyenhorst, on behalf of the Canadian delegates, wishes Synod well in its further deliberations, making reference to Psalm 23.

The Chairman bids farewell to the Canadian delegates.

The Chairman invites all those present to sing from Psalm 23:1 and 2.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Wednesday 19 July 2006

Article 105 - Report of Treasurer and Budget (Refer Appendices 19 and 21)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12k – Report Synod Treasurer

Agenda Item 8v – Letter FRC West Albany re Deputies' Expenditures

Agenda Item 13a – Audit of the Books of the Synod Treasurer and discharge of the Treasurer

Agenda Item 14 – Draft Budget and Calculation and sharing of Synod costs

II. Recommendation from a committee appointed by Synod to come with a proposal:

Observations:

This committee was not given a mandate for its work. Further, it has not had the time to confirm whether some of these matters have been raised, worked on and decided upon previously.

Our Treasurer has highlighted a number of concerns, which this committee has chosen to address. At the same time we have also considered the submission from the FRC West Albany. Br Hordyk advises: *"Synod must analyse whether the cost benefits are really there for each and every Synod expenditure. That is not the task of the Treasurer"*.

There is no question that Synod and Deputies spend a lot of time on their work, often during their own time and at their own expense. In doing so they incur loss of income, which they do not claim on Synod, and they either fully cover or share the travel and accommodation costs with their personal or business expenses. However, our Treasurer expresses concern over what he believes to be the *unrestrained spending of Synods and Deputies*. The FRC of West Albany also *urges Synod to show restraint in allocating funds*. It also asks that the Churches not be burdened unnecessarily. The focus on the concerns centres on the increasing costs - particularly for IT, sound and travel. This committee finds it difficult to address these concerns properly, as the term 'restraint' is difficult to determine in financial matters and our time to deal with it was limited.

There seems to be a lack of procedural guidelines for the Treasurer, Synod, the Deputies and this committee to follow. This creates confusion and may even give the impression that Synod and the Deputies pay little attention to financial matters. Some examples:

- some deputies have not provided any draft budgets to the Treasurer;
- both the convening church and the auditors had to be followed up in order for the Treasurer to complete his work.

It would be good practice that, where possible and convenient, the Synod Treasurer presents the financial reports and draft budget directly to Synod. This has not been done in the time that Br. Hordyk has been Synod Treasurer.

Clarification:

On page 2 of the draft budget, our Treasurer mentions that he sought but did not receive direction on the matter of the tokens of appreciation to host families. Further he asks that the amount be capped and that delegates claim a refund from the Treasurer.

In response, we refer the Treasurer to Article 99 of Synod 2003, Decision 6, which reads “To adopt the Synod Treasurer’s recommendation that gifts to host families up to the value of \$50 may be reimbursed by the Synod Treasury”.

Recommendations:

1. To accept the Synod Treasurer’s Financial Report which comprises a Statement of Receipts, a Statement of Expenditure and a Statement of Funds for the period 5 March 2003 to 11 April 2006.
2. To receive the Report of the Auditors for the Synod Treasury (Church of Kelmscott as deputies).
3. To adopt the Budget for 2006 to 2009 as may be amended by Synod.
4. To thank our retiring Treasurer, Br A. Hordyk, for the work done, provide him with a token of appreciation for over 18 years of service to our synods, and to discharge him. (Synod Rockingham 2003 also thanked *deputies* for the work done and discharged them. As br A. Hordyk was and is the only deputy and has already been discharged, we propose that we don’t adopt the same resolution.)
5. To consider the appointment of a Synod Treasurer and an alternate.
6. To include in the Acts both the Treasurer’s Financial Report and the adopted Budget.
7. To adopt the cost sharing arrangement as proposed by the Synod Treasurer.
8. To invite, where possible and convenient, the Synod Treasurer to a Synod session to present the financial reports and draft budget material in consultation with the appointed advisory finance committee. This should only occur when this can be arranged without cost, ie when Synod is held in the city where the Synod Treasurer resides.
9. To encourage Deputies to present their proposed budgets to the Synod Treasurer well before the next synod convenes. The budget can then be easily adjusted as may be required following any synod decision.
10. To remind the convening church that as part of its preparation, it should request the Synod Treasurer to provide a Financial Report and Draft Budget at least 3 weeks prior to Synod.

11. To reaffirm the practice that the churches are to order and pay for the Synod Acts themselves.
12. To appoint, in light of the comments of our Treasurer and the FRC of West Albany, two deputies to prepare a proposal for the next Synod that:
 - clearly defines the task and responsibilities of the Synod Treasurer and the advisory Synod finance committee;
 - provides guidelines on how, why, and when Synod expenditure should be authorised and processed;
 - provides guidelines on the interaction between the convening church, the Synod Treasurer, the Synod Deputies and Synod on financial matters and reports. This should include guidelines on ways that expenditure might be monitored and controlled, and a timeline for the submission of financial material. Consideration should be given to the appointments, process and mandate for two Synod delegates to the finance committee during each Synod to study Synod's financial papers. This is particularly important should the Treasurer be unavailable. This finance committee should be appointed early in Synods sitting. Amongst other things this committee can then monitor any decisions made during the course of the Synod that may impact on the Synod budget, and, have sufficient time to prepare any required material when they report with the Treasurer.

To instruct the moderamen to consider appointing Br A. Hordyk, if he would be available, as one of these deputies.

Budget considerations

That Synod adopts the following as proposed by the Treasurer:

1. **Loss of Income** – an increase from \$160 to \$180 per day.
2. **Reimbursement of travel costs for travel between Albany and Perth** – an increase from \$240 to \$280 per round trip.
3. **Treasury Operating funds 2006** – an increase to \$45,000. This is based on the assumption that Legana is the convening church for Synod 2009. Most of the delegates travel costs will fall within the time before revenue for budget 2006-2009 is received from the Churches.
4. **Deputies contact with other churches** – budget amounts to be confirmed by available deputies and Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 106 - Deputies for Synod Venue and Infrastructure Coordination

I. Recommendations:

1. To discharge the Deputies for Synod Technical Equipment from their task.
2. To appoint two deputies as Synod Venue and Infrastructure Coordinators with the mandate to:
 - a. Provide and operate a sound system which includes the ability for both delegates and audience to hear the discussion clearly;
 - b. Provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which includes but is not limited to:
 - i. central data storage;
 - ii. convenient printing;
 - iii. secure internal email facilities;
 - iv. data backup;
 - c. Liaise with convening committees and coordinate the organisational matters of the Synod venue preparations;
 - d. Be present and able to assist at all Synod sessions;
 - e. Provide full computer and sound support;
 - f. Provide a general logistical support role during Synod for delegates.
3. To allow for a budget for one deputy to attend the next Synod in Tasmania.

Grounds:

1. Synod must be able to do its work with a minimal amount of fuss and stress through the provision of technical equipment:
 - a. Delegates must be able to clearly understand each other;
 - b. The audience must be able to hear the delegates;
 - c. There must be flexibility to expand as the number of delegates changes;
 - d. Synod needs a computer system that can service synod with:
 - i. email facilities;
 - ii. central storage so that all delegates can access documents/reports they require;

- iii. printing service to print documents and reports;
 - iv. central backup system.
- 2. Current deputies already do this work behind the scenes for the benefit of synod delegates.
- 3. This role will enhance the smooth preparation and operation of synod:
 - a. It is the responsibility of the convening church to care for the venue and infrastructure of synod;
 - b. Synod delegates have enough to concentrate on without concerning themselves with the general day to day operations of running a Synod;
 - c. Synod has become more and more complex in its technical equipment requirements.
- 4. Synod 2009 is scheduled to be in Tasmania.
- 5. Extra equipment may need to be hired locally at commercial rates, which requires a larger allowance in the budget.

ADOPTED

Article 107 - Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia (PCEA) (Refer Article 103, Appendix 11

I. Material:

Agenda Item 12b – Report of Deputies for Contact with the PCEA

II. Decision:

1. Recommendation:

To thank the PCEA for the discussions which our deputies could have with their deputies, but to regretfully inform them of our decision to discontinue contact with them.

Ground:

After more than a decade of discussions with the PCEA, no progress has been made in overcoming the impediments highlighted by past synods that prevent us offering sister church relations to the PCEA. Furthermore, the PCEA's toleration of the views expressed by Dr. Roland Ward with respect to Genesis 1-11 forms a further impediment.

2. Amendment:

To replace the ground as follows:

After more than a decade of discussions with the PCEA, no progress has been made in our discussions with them.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

The amended recommendation is put forward as follows:

- 1 To thank the PCEA for the discussions which our deputies could have with their deputies, but to regretfully inform them of our decision to discontinue contact with them.
- 2 To discharge the deputies.
- 3 To inform the PCEA of this decision.

Ground:

After more than a decade of discussions with the PCEA, no progress has been made in our discussions with them.

Article 108 - Pizza

I. Considerations

It is the habit of delegates to Synod to scatter to different locations in order to be nourished. It would be a good idea if delegates could decide to stay together for once in order to indulge in less nutritious food than usual. It will also help delegates to adjust again to the home situation where they will go back to after Thursday.

Proposal:

Synod delegates decide to consume pizzas together as a last meal on Thursday and if at all possible, an alternative meal will be provided for those who require a higher level of dietary purity.

II. Decision:

To accept this proposal even though it has not come through the minor assemblies.

Grounds:

1. It is a free meal and there is no further cost to Synod.
2. Although not the most nutritious, none of the churches have presented evidence of any health risk if we adopt this proposal.
3. In a combined meal of this nature unanimity can be expressed for junk food that will remain unrivalled by any of the other proposals Synod has had to vote on this Synod.

4. The different toppings available on pizzas will accommodate many of the different flavours of opinions into one combined statement of desire for this food.
5. Synod could go into closed session if it so desires in order to cover up this indulgence.

ABSORBED

Article 109 - Adjournment

Br Amoraal invites all present to sing Psalm 84:3 and 6 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION
Thursday 20 July 2006

Article 110 - Reopening

Br F Bosveld opens with Scripture reading from Isaiah 40:1-15 and invites those present to sing from Hymn 11:1, 2 and 3. He then leads in prayer.

Article 111 - Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8c – Letter FRC West Kelmscott Appeal re Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

FRCWK requests synod to rescind various articles of Synod Rockingham and revise those decisions. The decisions under appeal are Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160.

FRCWK argues that Synod Rockingham's decisions concerning the forgiveness of sins leads to the unscriptural conclusions that:

1. man is unable to forgive fellow man in the absence of repentance;
2. man's forgiveness means to pardon sin and remove guilt.

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin’s definition): “receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God” (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin’s definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): “seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)” (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).
 - d. Synod Rockingham’s statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that “The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us” should be understood as

applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.

- e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: "It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)" (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word 'forgiveness' is used in what Synod Rockingham called the 'primary' sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the 'secondary' sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).
5. The FRC West Kelmscott does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 112 - Letter FRC Byford Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8h – Appeal FRC Byford

FRC Byford asks synod to judge the Scriptural and the confessional accuracy of three statements made by Synod Rockingham 2003 in response to various appeals.

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin's definition): “receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God” (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin's definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): “seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:9), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)” (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).
 - d. Synod Rockingham's statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that “The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us” should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.

- e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: “It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)” (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word ‘forgiveness’ is used in what Synod Rockingham called the ‘primary’ sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the ‘secondary’ sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).
5. The FRC Byford does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 113 - Letter Br G Spaanderman Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8k – Letter Br G Spaanderman, Albany, Appeal re Article 120 Acts 2003

Br. Spaanderman appeals Articles 120 & 132 of Synod Rockingham 2003.

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin's definition): “receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God” (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin's definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): “seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:9), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)” (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).
 - d. Synod Rockingham's statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that “The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us” should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.

- e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: "It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)" (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word 'forgiveness' is used in what Synod Rockingham called the 'primary' sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the 'secondary' sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).
5. Br Spaanderman does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 114 - Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8o – Letter Br P 'tHart Appeal Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

Br. 'tHart appeals articles 132, 153, 155, 156 & 160 on the grounds that:

- 1. the statements concerned go beyond the teaching of the Confessions;
- 2. the synod was never asked by the churches to make doctrinal statements;
- 3. Scripture does not teach repentance or forgiveness as a process.

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. Synod Rockingham's statement that forgiveness may well be a process was intended not as a doctrinal statement but as an application of doctrine for victims of sexual abuse.
2. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It "does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly" (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154.)
3. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
4. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
5. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin's definition): "receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God" (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin's definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): "seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)" (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).

- d. Synod Rockingham's statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that "The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us" should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.
 - e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: "It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)" (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word 'forgiveness' is used in what Synod Rockingham called the 'primary' sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the 'secondary' sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).
6. Br 'tHart does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 115 - Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8p – Letter FRC Mt Nasura Appeal Articles 132, 153, 155, 156, 160 Acts 2003

FRC Mt Nasura appeals Articles 132, 153, 155, 156 & 160 on the grounds that it is in conflict with the teaching of Scripture. FRC Mt Nasura argues that "Synod Rockingham made a number of pronouncements on what forgiveness is and elevated its application to a particular Scriptural norm" Consistory expresses concern because "it now appears all these statements made by synod in its grounds along with everything written in the appeals that were upheld are binding on the churches".

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin’s definition): “receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God” (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin’s definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): “seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the

offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)" (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).

- d. Synod Rockingham's statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that "The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us" should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.
 - e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: "It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)" (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word 'forgiveness' is used in what Synod Rockingham called the 'primary' sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the 'secondary' sense, repentance does not need to come first. (Article 132, ground 1, page 85).
5. The FRC Mount Nasura does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 116 - Letter Brs Reitsema/VanBurgel Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8u – Appeal brothers Reitsema and VanBurgel:

The Brs. Reitsema and VanBurgel appeal Articles 132, 153, 155, 156 and 160. They allege that Synod Rockingham 2003 made doctrinal statements which are contrary to Scripture and Confession. The appellants argue that "synod doctrinal statements have the strength that our Confessional documents have".

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin’s definition): “receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God” (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin’s definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): “seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the

offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)" (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).

- d. Synod Rockingham's statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that "The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us" should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.
- e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: "It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)" (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
- f. In summary: when the word 'forgiveness' is used in what Synod Rockingham called the 'primary' sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the 'secondary' sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).

- 5. Brothers Reitsema and VanBurgel do not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 117 - Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins (Refer Article 101)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8w – Letter FRC Legana Appeal re Forgiveness of Sins Acts 2003

FRC Legana alleges that Synod Rockingham (2003) made doctrinal statements which are wrong, and that synod's decisions, based on these doctrinal statements, are also incorrect. The appellant specifically finds fault with Synod Rockingham's exegesis of Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60.

FRC Legana requests synod to rescind the Articles 132, 153, 155 and parallels.

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:
 - a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin's definition): “receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God” (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin's definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): “seeking no

revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21)” (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).

- d. Synod Rockingham’s statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that “The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us” should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.
 - e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: “It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)” (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word ‘forgiveness’ is used in what Synod Rockingham called the ‘primary’ sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the ‘secondary’ sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).
- 5. The FRC Legana does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.
 - 6. In reaching its decisions Synod Rockingham 2003 does not impose the exegesis of a Bible text upon the churches. The texts of Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60 are used to reach a Scriptural conclusion.

ADOPTED

**Article 118 - Letter FRC Rockingham re Forgiveness of Sins Acts 2003
(Refer Article 101)**

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8y – Letter FRC Rockingham:

FRC Rockingham appeals Articles 132, 153, 155, 156 & 160. The appellant alleges that the articles concerned contain a number of controversial statements. The appellant proposes to replace the grounds, on the grounds that

1. the existing grounds go beyond Scripture and Confession; and
2. have caused considerable controversy in the churches.

II. Admissibility:

To declare this request admissible.

Ground:

There is a widespread perception that Synod Rockingham made doctrinal decisions that were binding on all the churches. For the wellbeing of the churches it is necessary to deal with this appeal.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal.

Grounds:

1. The statements on the forgiveness of sins were made by Synod Rockingham in response to an appeal related to a specific pastoral situation. It is therefore not binding on every local congregation or individual member of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia. It “does not constitute a general pronouncement by which all the church members are bound (...) [but] concerns only the one who appealed to the major assembly” (WWJ Van Oene, *With Common Consent*, 154).
2. The decisions made by Synod Rockingham were intended to give direction to the Kelmscott consistory and various appellants in the circumstances which they were in at the time of the appeal. Since none of those parties have requested revision of decisions which pertain to them, synod would do them injustice if we would now revise these decisions.
3. Synod Rockingham 2003 made lengthy statements which caused confusion in the church.
4. The following observations clarify the matter:

- a. Synod 2003 made a distinction between the primary and secondary meaning of forgiveness.
 - b. The primary meaning is this (the second aspect of Calvin's definition): "receiving a brother into favour (Mt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God" (Article 132, Ground 6, page 87 and Ground 3b, page 86).
 - c. The secondary meaning is this (the first aspect of Calvin's definition, i.e. unconditional forgiveness): "seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Mt 5:43,44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Mt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12, 21)" (Article 132, Ground 3a, page 86).
 - d. Synod Rockingham's statement in Ground 9 of Article 132 (and parallels) that "The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin but also of us forgiving those who sin against us" should be understood as applying specifically to what Synod Rockingham called the primary meaning of forgiveness, not to the secondary meaning.
 - e. While Synod 2003 emphasised the primary meaning of forgiveness, it should not be read as though it excludes the secondary meaning as is clear from this statement: "It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51)" (Article 132, Ground 7, page 88).
 - f. In summary: when the word 'forgiveness' is used in what Synod Rockingham called the 'primary' sense, repentance must come before forgiveness. But when it is used in the 'secondary' sense, repentance does not need to come first (Article 132, Ground 1, page 85).
5. The FRC Rockingham does not show that the conclusions are contrary to Scripture and Confessions.

ADOPTED

Article 119 - Article Adoption of Acts

Synod adopts Articles 69 and 80-109 (all open session) of the Acts of Synod.

In closed session, the Articles 70 – 79 are adopted by Synod.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Thursday 20 July 2006

Article 120 - Closed Session Acts and Press Release

Acts of closed sessions will remain in Closed Acts.

ADOPTED

The second Press Release of synod is adopted.

Article 121 - Appointment of Deputies

I. Material:

Agenda Item 15

Agenda Item 12 f(iv) – Deputies relations for sister churches - supplementary report

In Closed Session the Executive proposes nominations for synod appointments. Synod decides on the following appointments.

Publication of the Acts

First Clerk

General Secretary Deputy

JL VanBurgel

The duties of the general secretary deputy are to:

- take care of the central post office box;
- distribute the mail;
- be responsible for the website of the FRCA; and
- acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary to pass it on to the churches
- collate all deputies reports (apart from that of the Treasurer) and have them printed in a bound format similar to that for the Acts. Deputies' reports are to be submitted in an appropriate format six months prior to the next synod so that they can be printed and distributed to the churches as per the Rules of Synod.

Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

***Sister Churches - Canada, The Netherlands, Korea, South Africa
(Refer Articles 40, 85, 94, 97)***

Rev W Huizinga (Convener)
A Breen
AMC Bruning
Rev PKA DeBoer
GB Veenendaal
Rev A Veldman
Alternate: J Bruning (sr)

***Other Churches (Reformed) - Reformed Churches of New Zealand
(Refer Article 60)***

Rev J Poppe (Convener)
JL VanBurgel
Alternate: A Plug

Indonesia (Refer Article 53)

Rev W VanderJagt (Convener)
B Bosveld
J(ohn) Bosveld
W Guerts
Rev A VanDelden
Alternate: P VanDyke

Deputies for Australian Book of Praise (Refer Article 98)

Rev J Smith (Convener)
W Amoraal
E Swarts

Deputies for Training for the Ministry (Refer Article 17)

Rev E Rupke (Convener)
H Faas
R Heerema
M(urray) Plug
Rev J Poppe

Deputies for Indexing of Synod Decisions (Refer Article 25)

J Numan (Convenor)
W VanderVen

**Nominating Authorities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
(Refer Article 23)**

T Houweling
W Spyker (Primary Responsibility)

Deputies for Synod Venue and Infrastructure Coordination (Refer Article 106

E 't Hart
A van der Wal

Deputies for Article 48 and 76 of the Church Order (Refer Article 15)

For Classis South:

Rev PKA DeBoer
Rev A Veldman
Alternate: Rev J Kroeze

For Classis North:

Rev W Huizinga
Rev W VanderJagt
Alternate: Rev A VanDelden

Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order - (Days of Prayer)

The Church of Launceston

Deputies for auditing the books for Deputies for Article 17 and 18 of the Church Order

The Church of Mount Nasura

Archives and Library of Synods

The Church of Mount Nasura

Inspection of Archives and Library

The Church of Byford

Deputies for Synod Treasury

E Eikelboom (Treasurer)
A Hordyk
C VanDyk

Auditors for Synod Treasury

The Church of Kelmscott

Convening church for the next Synod in 2009

The Church at Legana
June 2009

ADOPTED

Article 122 - Personal questions

No one has any questions.

Article 123 - Censure according to Article 47 CO

The Chairman states that there is no need for censure in this sitting of Synod.

EVENING SESSION
Thursday 20 July 2006

Article 124 - Reopening

The Chairman reopens synod and invites all to sing Hymn 38:1 to 4.

Article 125 - Adoption of Acts

Synod adopts Articles 110 –127 of the Acts.

Article 126 - Closing Address and Farewell

The Chairman reads his closing address (refer Appendix 1m).

The delegates from Indonesia and South Africa are farewelled.

Article 127 - Closing

The Vice Chairman thanks the Chairman for the admirable job he has done throughout the course of Synod. He then reads from Psalm 122 invites all to sing Psalm 133:1 and 2 and then leads in closing prayer. The Chairman declares the 23rd Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia closed.

ACTS OF THE 2006 SYNOD APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Speeches at Synod

Appendix 1a: Meditation text of Rev A Veldman, Chairman of the convening church of West Kelmscott

Esteemed Delegates and Overseas Guests, Brothers and Sisters in the audience,

In this evening's opening's address, I would first like to focus on the passage of Scripture we have just read, in particular the verses 7 – 9 of 1 Corinthians 3. We must read these verses against the background of Satan's attack on this newly instituted church. The congregation in Corinth was instituted during Paul's second missionary journey, when the apostle stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, which was some two to three years before the apostle wrote his first letter to this congregation. As I have already mentioned, this congregation was under severe attack by Satan, not only by way of enmity from outside, but also by strife from within. What kind of strife was this?

From this letter, we learn that after Paul's departure factions had formed and divided the congregation. One had sided with this preacher and the other with someone else. In doing so, they looked at people rather than on high to Christ, something that happens more often in the church, when, for example, some speak highly about a certain minister with special gifts, or are siding with his view on certain matters, whilst at the same time they criticize other ministers very negatively.

Well, this was exactly what was happening in Corinth. Some members of the congregation no longer saw the Lord at work, at work also in the variety of gifts distributed to particular office bearers, each having his own special gifts. Satan was busy among the membership, using this variety to destroy the unity within the congregation. Factions had developed. Personality cults were emerging, each member of the congregation rallying support for the person he favored. Some favored Paul. Others liked Apollos, whilst a third group supported Peter. When the apostle Paul hears about this, he takes up his pen and writes the Corinthians a letter, in which amongst others he admonishes them also about this divisive group forming. In Ch. 3:5 he writes, *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one."* In other words, Paul, Apollos, or Peter, they are merely servants who came to you on behalf of their heavenly Sender. His word they spoke and through that word, you came to faith. The fact that you came to faith was not their doing, but Christ's doing. So don't look at people, because the church is neither Paul's nor Apollos', but Christ's. The church is a plant from His hand. We as preachers of the gospel are merely servants in the service of Christ. The same applies equally as much to ministers and elders today. They are merely servants, through whom God wants to build His church.

In 1 Cor. 3, the apostle Paul thus puts the office bearer in his proper place. As a servant of God, the office bearer is allowed to plant and to water, but

ultimately only God can give the growth. Within this process, some servants do the planting, whilst others are called to give the plants water. That's how the Lord distributes the work among the office bearers assigning to each his specific task. In Corinth, it was Paul, who had planted, whilst Apollos had watered. In most of the newly instituted churches, Paul had done the pioneer work, preaching where no one had ever preached before, whilst Apollos followed later to work in the established church edifying those who had come to faith under Paul's preaching. Both of these activities were equally important to Christ's congregation at Corinth. On the other hand, both activities were useless unless God would give growth. In other words, both Paul and Apollos had done their work in the midst of the congregation of Corinth simply being servants of God.

In vs. 9, the apostle Paul writes, "*We are God's fellow workers.*" This term 'fellow worker' has often been misinterpreted, since the original Greek allows for two different translations. The first words of vs. 9 do indeed allow for a reading that means, Christian workers are co-laborers with God. They are God's fellow workers. However, these words can also be translated, "Christians who are co-laborers with one another belong to God." Comparing Scripture with Scripture and comparing Paul's other use of the expression 'God's fellow worker', he speaks here in 1 Cor. 3:9 about himself and the other workers as 'co-laborers who belong to God'. He does so in response to the question he is dealing with in this chapter, viz., how the congregation should view the relationship between himself and Apollos. Says Paul, we are no rivals who are competing with each other, but fellow workers in the service of Him to whom we belong, not as co-laborers with God, but together servants of God. We each must fulfill our own specific task, but at the same time, we might differ in character. Paul was a person totally different to Apollos. Furthermore, Apollos came from a totally different background than the apostle Paul. Yet both came with the same Word, the same gospel. And that's just what counts, today as well.

Brothers delegates, we likewise are servants of God, as we constitute synod. We have been delegated by the churches to make decisions on the matters that are set before us. It's quite an agenda we have to deal with. Some of the issues may even cause heated debate, which in itself is not wrong, as long as in such a heated debate we guard against fighting to establish our own opinion. We are here to fulfill our mandate and not to represent the voice of a certain number of people within the bond of churches.

Later on this evening, we shall rise to show our agreement with Scripture and the confessions based on Scripture, as well as the adopted Church Order. That's the basis on which we do our work and this binds us together in Christ, even though on certain matters we may not agree regarding the direction that should be taken. In the unity of faith that binds us together, we are here as servants called to seek the well-being of Christ's churches here in Australia, and as regards our contacts/relationships with other churches, we should think of the furtherance of God's kingdom in this world. Working together on the

basis, which I mentioned before, we are bound to respect each other's viewpoint. Therefore, we should guard ourselves against hastily branding a different point of view, for example, as being no longer Reformed. We should respect each other's integrity, even when disagreeing on certain matters.

Let us remember throughout the coming fortnight, also here at synod, we are merely servants in the service of our heavenly Sender. This should make for a spiritual attitude, which differs from a worldly attitude that one may find, for example, in parliament, where members lobby and put pressure on other members to vote a certain way. Nothing like this should be found among us. I mention this, because such dangers are always present.

We are called to serve, to serve in faithfulness towards God. It's with this attitude that we are called to defend the truth, each of us in his own place with the task God has given him around the synod table. Having carried out that task faithfully, we may also confidently leave the outcome of this synod in the hands of Christ, the King of the Church. As long as we are faithful in the place where God has set us, He will preserve His church, also at those times when decisions might not be taken in the direction we would like them to go.

During synod, as delegates we should daily remind each other of this. First of all, this will keep us humble. Secondly, it will also provide inward rest and harmony among the delegates, knowing that as long as in the place that the Lord has given me, I am faithful towards the Lord also here at synod, I may leave the outcome of the decisions that will be taken in His almighty hands.

It is with these words that I open the twenty third Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Let us now ask the Lord for His blessing upon this synod.

Appendix 1b: Opening address by the Chairman of the convening church of West Kelmscott

On behalf of the convening church of West Kelmscott, it's my privilege and pleasure in the first place to extend a hearty welcome to those who have been delegated to this synod both by Classis North as well as Classis South. With the increased number of churches within the region of Classis South in particular and with some of the vacancies filled, this will be the first synod, at which not all ministers will be present. Next, for three ministers within the bond, this synod will be a first. Therefore, we extend a special welcome to Rev. R. Eikelboom, Rev. E. Rupke, and J. Smith.

Next to the 16 delegates representing the churches, we also extend a hearty welcome to all our overseas guests, who create quite an international mix. I welcome them all, even though some will arrive later during the course of this synod.

Going through the list of these overseas guests, for the first time in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, we may welcome two Korean

delegates. In the past, many synods have expressed the desire to improve contact with the PCK and to strengthen ties. As result of mutual endeavors, Br. Maurice Bruning on behalf of the FRCA, could attend the 54th General Assembly of the PCK in 2004, whilst today we may welcome as representatives of the PCK, Prof Yoo and Rev. Jun. Prof Yoo is fluent in his English and even in Dutch. For his doctor thesis, he studied at the Theological University of our sister churches in Kampen, in The Netherlands. Again, a hearty welcome Prof. Yoo. Rev. Jun hopes to arrive tomorrow, the Lord willing.

From South Africa, we would have liked to welcome Rev. M. Retief, not only as a representative from the FRSA, but he also has been found willing to serve in the vacant church of Kelmscott for at least three months. Unfortunately, at present Rev. Retief has still difficulties in obtaining a visa for him and his family. Hence, he has not arrived yet.

Going down the list of overseas guests, we are accustomed to having delegates from our sister churches in The Netherlands. They attend quite regularly. This time we welcome Rev. J. Plug, who is true Aussie by blood and Rev. P Niemeijer. For Rev. Niemeijer, it's his first time down under. He was the chairman of the last General Synod of our sister churches. Also the Reformed Churches continuing have sent a delegation to this synod, namely the brothers P Drijfhout and J, Houweling. We welcome them as well.

From our sister churches in Canada, the Brothers H. Hoogstra and H. Leyenhorst have been delegated, the Lord willing they will join us later during the course of this week. Finally, as representative from our sister churches in Indonesia we welcome Rev. Yan, who is in Australia already for quite some time, to familiarize himself with the English language as well as with church life within the Free Reformed Churches. He also follows some theological studies with some of the ministers.

This is quite a list of overseas guests. We hope that we may benefit from your presence, especially when reports regarding the churches you represent are discussed. May the Lord grant that when discussing these reports also then true unity is found, based on Scripture and the Confessions to which we mutually have subscribed..

When the church of West Kelmscott was appointed as convening church, at Synod Rockingham 2003 we had the strong hope that by the year 2006 we surely would have been able to welcome all of you in our own church building. Yet it turned out differently. We are thankful though that after many obstacles have been overcome the building project has finally started. For those who are interested, you can either go there in person or look at the Web Page of the FRCWK to see just how this project is progressing. Meanwhile, we thank the Free Reformed Church of Armadale for making their church building available, including the Gong, to host this synod. We have had a committee working hard behind the scenes to prepare this synod, coping well with all the logistics involved. It's a hard working team, that wants sincerely to care for all the delegates and guests as best as they can during the coming fortnight.

One more I extend a hearty welcome to all delegates and overseas guests. Let us now begin the actual work of synod and let us do so in harmony, the harmony as expressed in Psalm 133. Let us sing the rhymed version of this psalm.

Appendix 1c: Speech by Rev J Plug on behalf of the Committee on Relations Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ

My mother has changed, in the past decade. She has learned to say 'I love you'. I don't want you to misunderstand me. She always loved me. And I never doubted it. Those of you who remember her will know what a wonderful person she is. A life of devoted, hard work, with a very clear view of the Lord who called and enabled her, proves it. But she has continued to grow, as I like to think I have. Perhaps it has something to do with her diminishing ability to do things for others. But she has learned to express in words what she used to show, primarily, in deeds: 'I love you.' And that change signals, to my mind, a shift in our relationship. There's something more balanced about it. When I was young, I measured who I was and whether that was good enough, largely by what she did, by what she thought. There were times that I especially sought her approval to be sure that I was okay. There were also times when I measured who I was by what I did, by what I thought, differently than her. Those times have passed. I think that's called growing up. She'll always be my mother. And I'll always be her son. But our relationship has also grown up. There is now something of a sharing. As equals. Of this thing called love. Learning to say it to each other. For us that's relatively new. But also really, really important. There's a *reciprocity* in our relationship which means a lot. Even though we see each other rarely.

Reciprocity. That concept has been surfacing often in discussions within our deputyship for relations with churches abroad (BBK). You will be aware that those relations have expanded exponentially in the past decades. My section, for instance, one of three within BBK, now manages relations with 23 churches in countries from the Middle to the Far East, from Pakistan through Indonesia and the Philippines to Australia and New Zealand. In many of those relations financial and other aid has been a significant factor: largely one-way traffic flowing from the Netherlands to countries with developing churches. In others the traffic flow has been a little more complicated. With yourselves, for instance. There has been, on the one hand, a sharing of resources in joint mission projects. There has been cooperation, to some extent, in areas of common interest. But it seems to me that the relationship has been fairly one-sided on the level of what we *mean* to each other: marked from your side by a level of apprehensiveness, of concern about developments you question, and the quite explicit expression of that concern. Your deputies have done an excellent job of managing that traffic flow, they have come to our synods well-

prepared, and as their report to you indicates, their input has been welcomed and put to productive use. In that respect I think it would be fair to say that we truly see and treat you as sisters, as equal and valued partners in a family relationship. We would very much like that relationship to continue, and I think it goes without saying that we believe it *should*, not under stress, but under the thankful recognition that it is a gift of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Sister-church relations are not something we establish or call into existence. We can only recognize and acknowledge and honour and apply to his glory and our mutual benefit what He has given us.

But that mutual benefit demands more than the formal exercise of relations, cooperation in areas of mission and aid, and correspondence on issues and developments which have – rightly or wrongly – raised concern among you. It demands true reciprocity, an expression of love in a mature relationship which accepts that we need one another to be whole, but that we do not need to be identical, that our growth and development are and must be from Him, through Him and to Him, but not necessarily according to the same pattern. We are family. We are sisters. But we are not identical twins.

I believe that means two things. First: we should always seek to *understand* before *being understood*. We would like to compliment your deputies' report and their majority recommendation in that respect. They have worked hard at understanding what the churches have been saying, and why they have been saying it. And we trust that your synod will recognize the validity of their conclusions and act accordingly. If our input during your deliberations will help to supplement their work: that is why we are here.

Second: you, our sister, should consider sharing with us more openly the challenges facing *you*. And in that respect, I suggest, our relationship has been somewhat lopsided. Not deliberately, we are convinced. But does it not call for a rethink when you consider how much of our time and energy in our mutual discussions for the past ten years has been devoted to 'developments in the Netherlands', and how little time and energy has been devoted to 'developments in Australia'? I'd like to challenge you today to consider whether that lop-sidedness is justified.

It could be. The simple answer might be, and probably some of you would give that answer, '*the Dutch have changed, we haven't*', '*there is reason for concern there, our biggest concern here is that we don't get infected by what's happening in Holland*,' or even '*I'm okay mate, you've got the problem*.'

In my experience, the simple answer, while attractive, is usually inadequate. Yes, the Dutch have changed. There have been developments there. No question. And we thank you for being among those who continue to bring that to our attention. It compels us to reflect on those developments. Constantly to be monitoring them. Applying Scripture and confession to see whether those developments are valid. But I would suggest to you that reciprocity is a two-way street. And that it involves you, our sister, sharing with us the challenges

you are facing, the worries you have about yourselves, the concern that you yourself may be more influenced – in other ways than we are – than you realize, by the circumstances in which you find yourselves. If you more openly share with us those things, you may find that we can help: we may have been there, and found a way of dealing with it. You may sometimes find that we haven't the foggiest idea of what you're talking about. You may find that we are facing some the same challenges, but hadn't realized it until now. You will definitely find that we are willing and able to listen, and what is more, to bring your needs concretely before the throne of God's grace. That's what sisters do.

Some of you may be thinking: but where do we begin? May I offer a few observations to get you on your way. In love. But also in all honesty.

1. As a church federation, you are unusually *issues*-oriented. My memory of church life here goes back only to the 1980's, but since then at least it seems to have been that way. Church matters, but some church matters matter more than most, it seems. They get a disproportionate amount of attention in the church press and elsewhere. Don't get me wrong: the issues are real. And they need discussion. But they sometimes seem to take over. To overshadow the simple life and joy of faith. And they are discussed in ways which are not necessarily to the edification of the reformed way of life. Which leads me a second observation.
2. There is sometimes an unusual *vehemence* to your discussions. I'm not talking about the firmness with which people hold to their convictions. But about the apparent assumption that when others hold different convictions, there is something *wrong* with them. As I read the church press, and as I listen to discussions, I sometimes sense a harshness, a bitterness which really, really concerns me. I may be oversensitive. You may not recognize what I am describing. But if you do, have you considered reflecting on why this is so? And whether this is the way you ought to be church? And this leads me to a third observation.
3. People in the FRCA often say to me: *what do you think of the situation in Holland? Isn't it hard to live with such division in the churches?* And then I just don't know what to answer. In my experience – and I've been minister in a small village in Overijssel, an inner city congregation in the most cosmopolitan city of the Netherlands, and now in a large working class, by all accounts conservative, congregation just to the east of Groningen – there is such a deep felt consensus about what it means to be Reformed churches in an secular world. I may be wrong, I hope I am, but you seem to be much more at risk of polarization. Unusually so. Do you recognize this?
4. A fourth observation: you are struggling, I think, to define your relationship with the world around you. Recent discussions on 'friendship with the world', on the right and duty of ordinary church members to evangelize, on the 'antithesis', are indicative. A, to my

mind, interesting phenomenon: you are determined not to be known as a 'Dutch church'. Rightly so. But when you speak of 'Australians' as in: 'she married an Australian', what do you mean? Are you reflecting, deeply, and Biblically, on what you are, as church and as individuals: 'in the world, but not of the world'?

5. A final observation. You will agree with me that if anyone, it is the youth of the church which are in the front lines, when it comes to that contact, who need to be equipped to make their way in an increasingly complex world. It strikes us, as we visit the schools, that you are light-years ahead of us in some respects. But *out* of the schools: how are the churches engaging those youth in their struggle to live as Christians? And particularly: as Reformed Christians? Are you ensuring that the discussions here on the Synod floor and in the church press are truly relevant to them, and that they are also perceived to be such? Your most involved young people are buying their Christian reading at Koorong Books. This is creating a whole new set of expectations among them. Are you reflecting on how you need to respond to these? If I may refer to the Dutch experience for your benefit: I am convinced that much more than the issues which have led to the new liberation, the battle lines for the next decade and beyond are on the cutting edge of Reformed and Evangelical/Charismatic. And your young people are going to be involved in that process, if they are not already.

Talk to us about that. Tell us about what's happening. And how we can help each other. Is that not what the Lord is calling you to: to struggle together with us, in very different circumstances, but with the same goal and the same intention? To seek out the will of God in a mutual sense of vulnerability? In true reciprocity?

Brothers and sisters: I need to come to a close. You've changed. We've changed. Change is a sign of life. Not all change is good. Some change is necessary. But we're bound together in a covenant relationship with a faithful God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. On behalf of your Dutch sister we greet you and we look forward to sharing with you every spiritual blessing. We join in your prayers for God's blessing upon your deliberations here at Synod, and upon your life as churches. And we are learning to say what in Christ can never be said enough: 'we love you', we truly do.

Appendix 1d: Speech by Br P Drijfhout on behalf of the Committee on Relations Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored)

Beloved brothers (and sisters) in our Lord Jesus Christ.¹

On behalf of the Synod of The Reformed Churches (restored) in Holland, I wish to express our thanks for your kind invitation. Our preparation had to be done in a hurry because your invitation reached us unluckily two weeks before your synod-sessions would start.

On behalf of our Synod I would like to extend our sincere en heartfelt greetings to you.

More than 40 years ago the first Dutch emigrants, maybe your ancestors, were confronted with the unwillingness of the Australian Reformed Churches' to choose between the Dutch Reformed Churches and the Dutch Reformed Churches Liberated. We learned that in those years the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have still frequently impressed upon the same Reformed Churches the necessity to recognize the reformation and liberation of 1944 as a work of God.

Now, more than 60 years later you are again confronted with a reformation. Now **YOU** have to choose. And now you have to answer the question: was the reformation of 2003 a work of God or not? Although the question is the same, the grounds are different. Different because theological constructions about baptism are not involved this time but the main issue now is: how do we interpret Scripture in every days life?

During the past 15 years we were confronted with changes in our churches. Changes regarding the interpretation of Scripture, the confession and the Church Order. Changes, which may have an impact on your churches too. You will find that many of our points of controversy are mentioned in the report of your deputies.

In our letter to your deputies for contact with Churches abroad we wrote about some of the most important grounds for our liberation.

We mentioned our repeated appeals regarding:

- the decision about the fourth command
- ecclesiastical unity with the Christian Reformed Church and the PCEA
- Scriptural criticism
- the songs from the interdenominational Liedboek (hymnal)
- the interpretation of 1 Cor. 7 concerning marriage and divorce

¹ Toespraak tot Synode FRCA te Kelmscott, 2006

- Lords Supper and the army
- the blessing by a non-elder

All the above mentioned issues were tabled at two synods by the way of appeals.

These two synods disregarded the many warnings and many objections based on Scripture against the decisions, repeated in many letters of appeal, tabled on ecclesiastical meetings, and despite so many warnings published in articles of Reformanda, brochures and brought forward in many public meetings.

In the end, all requests for revision of the major decisions were rejected by the Synod of Zuidhorn. And according to Art. 31 of our Church Order, appeals cannot be brought forward again after two synods have dealt with them. Except, of course, when they are substantiated by new grounds.

In our appeals to the different synods we gave evidence from Scripture that different decisions were contrary to Gods Word. Not Scripture changed but a new interpretation of Scripture caused the above mentioned decisions. We asked the local churches of which we were members not to ratify Synods decisions, but in many cases church-councils were unwilling to investigate our objections. Time and again they answered that we should direct our objections to the synods. In their defence they answered that they trusted the members of the synods and that they did not have the professional experience to deal with our objections. In this way the church-councils evaded their responsibilities. The unity of Christian life, clearly seen in the unity between doctrine and life in accordance to the doctrine, was broken.

Evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the confession and the Church Order is not only found in spoken words, but also and explicit in our practical way of living.

Therefore, according to Art 31 CO the end of the ecclesiastical way was reached for these issues.

In February 2003 a call for reformation, entitled "Let us repent", was made and distributed to all churches, together with a brochure and letter.

We hoped and prayed that church members would request their church councils in the Netherlands not to ratify the contested decisions, causing a return to Scripture, confession and church-order within our beloved church.

Unfortunately, no single positive response from the church-councils followed these requests. Therefore, it had to be concluded with great sadness, that the possibilities to serve the Lord in obedience to his Word was no longer permitted without sharing responsibility to all these unscriptural decisions.

According to the Belgic Confession Art. 29, the Reformed Churches Liberated could not meet the criteria of the true church any more. **They did not reject all that is contrary to God's Word but legalized NO as well as the YES of the**

Word of God in many issues. They declared openly to continue on this road as they deem it reformed and ecumenical.

In obedience to God's Word, formulated in Art. 31 of the Church Order, the only way that was left to us was to liberate from a church that had become pluriform, where everybody has his own truth. To observe the maintaining of the unity of the church more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those, who do not belong to the church. We have to join the assembly wherever God has established it (Art. 28 Belgic Confession).

We continued the Church according to Article 28 of the Belgic Confession by re-instituting the Church and calling away our brothers and sisters from the Liberated Reformed Churches. We did so for the first time seven months after the deadline for ratification was passed. According to the new church order, churches could appeal against synod decisions within 6 months after the acts had been published somewhere (Website or publication on paper).

Therefore we now come to the following questions:

How can you declare unity with churches which testify that resting on Sunday from all unnecessary labour is not based on a divine command but on an ecclesiastical and human institution? A church that declares: under what circumstances (professional) labour is necessary shall be determined in Christian liberty.²

How can you declare unity with churches that allow or even approve instructions that doubt the historical facts of Genesis 1 as stated by Rev. Doedens: "on exegetical grounds we should leave room to read this overture of the Scriptures as a story from the aspect of the Sabbath week, well-known in Israel? Genesis 1 is not written as a literal-chronological report but as a logic-thematic description from the Sabbath-aspect as God gave Israel later on" (102).

How can you declare unity with churches that admit that distinction exist between Word and Scripture? Not a difference of content, but the Word in the form of writing is not the same as the word that dwells in and sounds amidst people. In the latter we see the Holy Spirit working. What the Holy Spirit said in earlier days, he will now sound in the mutual presence within the congregation and use it so to re-create the people in the imitation of Jesus after the image of God (225,226)³.

How can you declare unity with churches that admit an interpretation of 1 Cor. 7 as given by the deputies, suggesting that the church (that means the elders) has the right and the duty of making their own decisions? By analogy the church has the ability, through the Holy Spirit, to form their own conclusions as Paul did.

² Report *Zondag, Heerlijke dag, een handreiking*.

³ "Navolging en verbeeldingskracht, De bijbel in beeld 3, in *Woord op Schrift*, red. C.Trimp Kok, Kampen 2002

Many possibilities for divorce are possible because our situation and our culture differs from the situation in the days of Jesus Christ and Paul. We need other solutions, based on Scripture in the style of Gods kingdom. We are entitled to new decisions. There is no reference to the covenant between man and wife as a reflection of the bond, the covenant between Jesus Christ and his bride, the church. It seems that the starting-point in this whole discussion is not the Scripture but the sin of human beings and his problems in modern civilization.

How can you declare unity with churches which made no objection against Prof. De Bruijne's (who teaches at Kampen) introduction that it is possible that writers of the Scriptures could have used incorrect information⁴. He states *that it is not unthinkable that the writer of the Scripture according to his resources could not in all situations present a uniform picture* (187). And *the author of Scripture with his power of imagination has his own contribution in his writing of biblical history* (184).

How can you declare unity with churches which declares that: Assen 1926 pointed merely to a concrete point of view of Dr. Geelkerken, not based on Scripture, with respect to a number of elements in describing the fall into sin in Genesis 2 and 3; the synod wanted to say no more concerning the authority of Scripture than maintain what the Belgic Confession confesses on this point. The Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches Liberated have contact on the basis of this confession; private expressions of ministers and others within the Christian Reformed Church do not have the character of ecclesiastical fixed position and are therefore no reason for discussion with the Christian Reformed Church; because the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches Liberated have discovered each other in the communal acceptance of the confession also with respect to what is said therein of Holy Scripture. It is not necessary to bind each other to declarations that have been made in a specific case.⁵ Here again we see that today's situation and today's culture changed our vision on decisions made by synods in earlier days (Assen, 1926 and Arnhem 1981). It is not necessary to withdraw these two decisions because they were taken in complete different situations and culture. The synod of Amersfoort took a further step than Zuidhorn.

On the one hand personal opinions (Gomarus, Coccejus, van Dijk, etc) were used to proof that within the Church in the past years the view that the Sunday as a day of rest is not based on the 4th commandment, while on the other hand deviations from Scripture by Dr. Geelkerken and Prof Oosterhof are called personal opinions of ministers and others.

Brothers, we find no pleasure in mentioning these things. The decisions are not merely theoretical. They have practical consequences! During the last years many of these decisions have been implemented in different churches.

⁴ " Er wordt verteld; er is geschied, De Bijbel in Beeld 2' in *Woord op Schrift*, red. C.Trimp. Kok, Kampen 2002

⁵ Synod of Amersfoort, art 134, Grounds 3, 4 of decision 5

The liturgy has changed in many ways. God's Word and the preaching are no longer the centre of the liturgy. Each part is viewed as of similar importance. The covenant-conversation is not anymore the starting-point of the liturgy. Sermons have little exegesis, but man-centered applications. The involvement of church-members is extended. Children and adults read Scripture passages in public worship services, discussions between ministers and children are being held in church service prior to the sermon. All sorts of attributes are used during the sermon to illustrate certain points. Special groups, like children, get special attention, worships for special groups are held (e.g. people with special needs, children). Normal worship services are used as special 'low step' services to accommodate for people with the purpose of evangelization.

Youth churches with an interdenominational character are being visited by teenagers with the consent of church-councils, parents and major assemblies. People from other denominations are admitted to Lord's Supper without attestation.

The elder and deacon visits are, according to the new church policy, extended or replaced by ward visits. Ward teams, consisting of minister, elder, deacon and a ward sister to discuss the problems in the ward. And these discussions are reported at the church council meetings.

In the worship services the demand to covenant obedience is replaced by an appeal to God's wonderful work in Jesus Christ which should appeal more to the heart of the people.

Is the work of the Holy Spirit still connected to the Word of God? Or does the Holy Spirit work independently without the Word of God?

Although the Reformed Churches Liberated confess that the church, according to Art. 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession is recognized by the certain marks, why then, did they in The Hague begin with a joint evangelization project with the Nederlands Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Churches?

Is it correct that a classis can advise a church council to resign, as happened in Kampen?

Is it correct that because of an evangelization project a church can be dismantled, as happened in Amsterdam? Do we, in obedience to God's Word, still believe in the independency of the local church as the highest authority? Which church order was used to make this possible?

Do I have to say more about our appeals for reformation? Do I have to say more about the reasons of our liberation?

Brothers, observe these aspects. We urge you to verify if these things are according to the truth.

Our struggle for the truth of God's Word in our everyday life, our struggle to obey God's Word only, is also your struggle. With this appeal we want to warn you.

In our struggle we need you. As true churches we are obliged to help each other in our struggle to main true according to Scripture and Confession in obedience to our covenant God.

We came here with the prayers of our congregations that the Holy Spirit may guide you and us in our struggle to remain faithful to our catholic and undoubted Christian faith. Without His guidance through Scripture and our obedience to Scripture, we will never gain victory over Satan and our sins.

Thank you.

Appendix 1e: Response to the address of Rev J Plug and Br P Drijfhout by Br A Breen

Thank you Rev Plug and Br Drijfhout for your addresses, your greetings, your information and your comments on behalf of the churches who have sent you as delegates to our synod 2006.

First I will respond to you, Rev Plug. We are thankful to have you and Rev Niemeijer, who was preses of the General Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005, in our midst.

Yesterday our Synod opened on a historical day: 10th July. It was July 10th that John Calvin was born in 1509 in Noyon. Isn't it striking: Rev Huizinga and myself, we visited your Synod in Amersfoort last year, and were welcomed on 27th May. It was May 27th that John Calvin died in 1564.

We extended a welcome to you here 10th July, Calvin's day of *birth*.

You welcomed us in Amersfoort 27th May, Calvin's day of *death*.

We have something in common, haven't we? John Calvin, the man of the true ecumene and founder of the Reformed Academy in Geneva, the cradle of Reformed preachers for all of Europe and from there for America, Africa, Asia and Australia. Where are the countries where Calvin was never known?

Yet, it's not Calvin who binds us together tonight. It's the Lord of the church who brings His children together by the Spirit of the Word, and around the Word of the Spirit. That is what our deputies sister churches have experienced when they were in Amersfoort last year. We were allowed to be advisors at your synod when you discussed matters in relation to Marriage and Divorce. We could find each other on the solid foundation of God's Word. All the foreign delegates stood up confessing their obedience to the Holy Scriptures and binding to the Reformed Confessions. We thank you for the excellent reception you gave our delegates.

In our speech to your Synod we said that we hoped from the heart that you would take our sympathetic-critical responses to heart. In the meantime, we know you did. And from your speech, Rev Plug, we hear, you do.

You really want to have a *mutual* relationship in which we respond sympathetic-critically to you, and *you* respond sympathetic-critically to us.

Sister church relationship is indeed a two-way traffic. Not two different ways which run away from each other, but one way on which we approach you and *you* us. *Sister*-churches; and the church as *mother*; and mother says to her children, "I love you." And the children should love each other in accordance to Scripture and *show* that.

Thank you that you want to think along with us. You did, when several members of your churches gave advice to our Synod Rockingham 2003 concerning forgiveness and repentance. And we know that you want to continue to do so whenever we ask you for advice. And *you* know that we down under just don't want to miss a thing, but want to be informed. And we confess matters thoroughly, indeed. Yes, *ad fontes*: back to the source. Please don't see this as meddlesome or suspicious behaviour, but as a sincere, genuine evidence of mutual relationship.

We see your large bond of churches living in a very secularized country, one of the most "progressive" countries in the world. Your country has really become multi-cultural, with all its attendant problems. We see you struggling to remain faithfully and thankfully reformed.

There are brothers and sisters who cannot live with you any longer saying that they want to stand on the basis of Scripture and Confessions.

There are also brothers and sisters who cannot live with you any longer saying that there is more than Scripture and Confessions.

And in your midst there are concerned people. You yourselves also have indicated that there are a lot of dangers in the churches. Satan tries to destroy the church also from inside out.

May the King of His church strengthen you to remain faithful showing what you have confessed this morning, namely to stay firm on the foundation of Scripture and Confessions. And that your developments will be *growth*. That also we stay reformed, attacking charismatism which comes to us via literature, and fighting against secularism which always should be attacked.

You know, this Synod will discuss the Overall recommendations concerning your churches, *and* the Alternate set of overall recommendations. It's not my task this evening to run ahead of that discussion. Tonight I will focus on what both recommendations of our deputies have in common, and that is "to continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations." May the Lord bless these contacts.

There is a second common aspect in the Overall recommendations and the Alternate set of deputies, and that is to urge you to continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with the restored Reformed churches, having an

understanding of their concerns and grievances, and addressing these concerns Scripturally and confessionally in truth and love.

And with this I will respond to you, brother Drijfhout. Thank you for your address tonight. You made clear to us why there are more than two delegates from the Netherlands. Of course I will not answer your questions tonight. Let *synod* speak, listening to *both* parties and respecting the names of brothers in the Netherlands.

When our two delegates visited Synod Amersfoort there was a delegate from the Free Church in Scotland and a delegate of the Continued Free Church of Scotland. They had not spoken with each other for many months. But in Amersfoort they were sitting next to each other, spoke with each other, looked each other in the eyes, and even went home in the same plane.

We know from your address that there is more necessary than to sit around the table and to fly together. You have mentioned many obstacles for you. But the Lord can do miracles.

Our deputies sister relations, all of us, have prayed many times after our long deputies meetings asking the Lord for reconciliation between brothers and sisters in the ecclesiastical tradition of John Calvin who all confess to make decisions on the basis of Scripture and Confessions.

This morning I sat behind four delegates from the Netherlands. The preses asked the brothers to rise showing that they will discuss matters at Synod in obedience to the Bible, bound to the Reformed Confessions, and in accordance with the Church Order. All four brothers rose at the same time.

Brothers, we continue praying that the Lord will bring you, restored reformed, and the churches you have left, together. May the Lord use us here in Australia to arrange contact in order to restore the bond. To discuss -as you said- different interpretations of Scripture.

It was Wednesday evening, 1st of June 2005, when Rev Huizinga and myself met with your deputies, the brothers De Marie, H Bos, H Griffioen and J vanderJagt (Hans). It was our task as deputies to be informed. Therefore we asked you questions in relation to your letter to our churches asking for a sister relation.

Because it is the Synod which has to *decide* regarding this request, we had to come with *recommendations*. But that was only possible after being informed.

We have read all the materials you have sent to us. On the basis of this and your letter we have formulated questions to you. In order to get a good overview the two deputies have written a report in 5 columns. In the first column aspects from your letter are mentioned. In the second column you find decisions from the Dutch synods Leusden and Zuidhorn and responses from BBK (the Dutch Deputies for sister relations). In the third column our questions in relation to the first and second column are formulated. In the fourth column

you find your answers. And in the fifth column our analysis. On the basis of this column recommendations were made.

What I've said earlier to the delegates from the GKV, I also say to you now: this Synod will discuss the Overall recommendations concerning your churches, *and* the Alternate recommendation number 2. It's not my task this evening to run ahead of that discussion. Tonight I will focus on what both deputies' recommendations have in common, and that is that we need to have contact with you so that we can speak to you and continue to urge you, as well as our Dutch sister church, to work for reconciliation on the basis of truth and love.

We can expect that this Synod will discuss matters in relation to especially the 4th, the 7th and the 9th Commandment. But all these commandments belong together. All these commandments tell us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind; and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Paul says in Rom 13:10: Love is the fulfillment of the law. And John says in his first Letter, chapter 4:

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

⁸ He who does not love, does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Brothers, let us confess together that Jesus is the Son of God and that there is no salvation but by Him. Let us draw near before the throne of God's majesty and mercy. We know that we abide in Christ and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit. May the Spirit, sent from heaven above, show us the way of truth and love. May the Promised One dwell in our heart. He, Who light and life to us imparts.

Thank you very much.

AC Breen
deputy sister relations

Appendix 1f: Speech by Rev Jun, Tae on behalf of the Fraternal Relations Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Korea

Esteemed members of the Synod, and all delegates from the sister churches!

I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad to be in your midst and to get acquainted with you and your churches.

Let me first introduce our churches in Korea. The Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin") is the true church of Jesus Christ, founded on God's Holy Word, and holds to the Reformed Faith as summarized in the Westminster Confession and its Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

Since the coming of Protestant missionaries to Korea in 1884, the Korean church has had an astonishing development unparalleled in mission annals. The Presbyterian Theological Seminary was founded in 1901 in Pyongyang, and by 1912, a General Assembly was organized.

For about half a century from the first entry of the Gospel, the Korean church grew steadily. But under Japan's imperialistic domination from 1905 on, the church underwent many difficulties. In this period two kinds of problems afflicted the Korean church: first, the infiltration of theological liberalism, and second, the Japanese Shinto shrine issue.

Finally, on September 10, 1938, the yet undivided Korean Presbyterian Church, at its 27th General Assembly meeting at the Pyongyang Westgate Church, broke down under this repression and approved the shrine observance. Both before and after this tragic decision, ministers, elders, deacons, and ordinary believers, who merely wished to live according to the Bible and so refused shrine worship, were arrested in large numbers. Eventually some fifty became martyrs of their faith under this terrible persecution.

On August 15, 1945, Japan was defeated and Korea was liberated. On August 17th, those who had been imprisoned for their opposition to Shinto shrine observance were released. Two among them, Rev. Nam-sun Joo and Rev. Sang-dong Han, founded the Korea Theological Seminary (KTS) a year later in Pusan, to train church leaders in order to reform the erring Korean church.

However, the still undivided church's General Assembly refused to acknowledge the newly founded KTS. The delegates from the Kyung-nam Presbytery which acknowledged and supported the KTS spent three more years in vain to normalize their relationship with the General Assembly. Accordingly, organizing its own General Assembly in 1952, the "Ko-ryo-pa (group)" or "Ko-sin" church was instituted. It is true that in December 1960, the church united with one of the mainline Presbyterian churches, the "Seung-dong" group (later called "Hap-dong") which is an anti-ecumenical group. But unfortunately this union did not last for very long and in September 1963, the church returned to its original form and continues until this day as the Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin").

Currently, the PCK continues the ongoing fight against the worship of idols and other 'gods' in Korean society. Especially the nationalistic indigenous religion, which worships Tan-gun (the ancient bear-man believed to be the founder of Korea) as a national god, has become a great challenge to the Korean churches. The worshipers of it have erected statues of Tan-gun at many public parks and schools in order to get people pay homage and worship it. Our churches play a central role in the Korean churches to fight against it and appeal to the Korean government not to allow the placement of 'idols' in public places.

We learn and discipline to practice the Reformed theology and faith in every sphere of our life, decisively opposing the liberalism, the secularism, and heterodoxies. We are assured of the fact that local churches are the communities of the blessed saints and are the implements of God to change the world. The KTS as our denominational institute is the centre where this Reformed heritage is studied to be transmitted to the next generations. It embraces some 400 students and 14 professors. The Missionary Training Institute (MTI) trains the prospective missionaries who are going to plant Reformed churches all over the world. We send about 230 missionaries to 40 countries. We dedicate to this mission, assuring that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can save the fallen mankind and change the depraved culture. Believing that Jesus Christ is the Lord of everything, we also dedicate our lives to make every domain of this earth confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

Dear brothers!

It is a great privilege for us to meet each other in this somewhat isolated country. We are thankful that our heavenly Father has blessed the Free Reformed Churches very much. I am convinced of the fact that your churches are sincerely faithful to the Word of God and to the Three Forms of Unity. Even though you are living in a secularized environment, you are steady to hold on to the rich tradition of our common Reformed heritage. May God help and lead you!

We feel sorry that the sister church relationship in times past was not actively exercised by us. First of all, the language barrier formed a great obstacle. Forgive us for this neglect! But we are determined to strengthen our relationship and fellowship in the future.

On this occasion we would like to thank the congregations of Armadale and Albany for their thirty year long financial support for the needy students of us. Many students in Korea were sponsored by it and they serve their own congregations sincerely.

Dear delegates to the Synod.

We become acquainted with the fact that there are many subjects on your agenda. Some of them are regular and seem to be handled easily. But some others are more sensitive and expected to be discussed intensively. We wish you the blessing of our God. May God grant His wisdom and endurance to all

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of you, so that you may understand each other carefully and consult together brotherly and in the end reach a spiritually mature unity. We know surely, dear brothers, that our enemy Satan can be more actively working when the people of God come together to achieve the spiritual unity visibly. All of us must be alert, lest Satan should take advantage of us. For we are not ignorant of his devices. Paul admonishes us: Let nothing be done through selfish ambition, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Brothers, be full of the wisdom, faith, knowledge and discernment, which the Holy Spirit promises us to equip with.

Dear delegates from other sister churches! It is also delightful to meet you. We'll taste the unity which is originally in the Triune God and is given us to enjoy in coming days. Let us enjoy it and hope to the fulfilled unity in the Kingdom of God.

Dear brothers of the Free Reformed Churches. Let me mention one thing in this context. We miss our Australian sister churches on the ICRC and the mission conferences organize by the ICRC. It makes us more curious, because your churches are actually one of the initiators.

We have been honored in 2004 to welcome br. A.M.C. Bruning who was delegated to our General Assembly by your churches. His visit and the informal visit of br. A.C. Breen saved our relationship with you from breaking off our relationship. We are very glad with that and want to request you to send your delegate to our coming General Assembly in October.

We pray for you and for this Synod. May God be with you and bless you!

I thank you.

Jun, Tae, minister.

Chairman of the Fraternal Relations Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Korea

Appendix 1g: Response to the address of Rev Jun, Tae by Br M Bruning

Dear Delegates of Synod, Visiting delegates, brothers and sisters,

Pastor Jun, Professor Yoo, (Mr Chairman, did I get the names right?)

Pastor Jun, Professor Yoo, It is my pleasure to respond to your address to our Synod.

Firstly thank you for your introduction to your churches in Korea, the PCK and its history and struggles. In **our** country we have been blessed with no physical persecution, and have our church history founded on a reformation that is now

centuries old and centuries free of such persecution your people had to endure, so recently as the 1940's.

To see your Church grow to over 1500 congregations and over 400,000 members in the 60 years since establishing the Korean Theological Seminary as one of the first acts after Church institution, is an amazing Blessing, and gives us something to ponder when we are only just now considering a Theological College!

You have, on the other hand, seen our Christian Colleges, which our parents set up in the form of a school association to educate our children, also an event done very soon after establishing our Churches here some 55 years ago!

Perhaps, we can learn from each other on these matters.

Pastor Jun, Professor Yoo, as you know, and as you alluded to in your address, the FRCA has had on its agenda the question of terminating relations. As pointed out by you, the relations were not actively exercised, there were reasons why this was so, for which you expressed sorrow. We accept those apologies with your promise of your determination to strengthen the relationship and fellowship. This will come with responsibilities from both of us. Obviously the Synod still needs to discuss the reports of Deputies and decide on that, and future deputies need to work within the mandate it will give to Deputies.

One thing that is of great benefit for the improved contact on your side was the appointment of Professor Yoo to the Fraternal Relations Committee, and it is our suggestion that the current Chairman, Pastor Jun and Professor Yoo continue in their respective positions for years to come as your understanding of us, your language Professor Yoo (confirmed by your first English sermons delivered last Sunday!) and your knowledge of and support for the Reformed Tradition are a good basis for working together.

One decision already agreed at this Synod is to have our deputies for "Training of the Ministry" to include your Theological Seminary in its source list for information and contact. So, Professor Yoo, be prepared!

Of interest is the Missionary Training Institute (MTI), you mentioned. We saw a photo of it last Thursday night, and having visited the institute on my visit I can give a small impression of that to any of our members, but I'm sure with the mission work done by the FRCA in PNG and other countries and your neighbouring country China, there could be questions relating to your work in the MTI too.

Pastor Jun, Professor Yoo, having now been in our country, our homes, Churches and attending our Synod, and I having been in your country to enjoy culture, attended your Church and seen your G.A. in action, I sense that there is still quite a lot yet to learn about and from each other.

It is our desire that we will have the time and right motivation for this and that the years to come may be beneficial, not for personal sakes, but for the furtherance of the King who rules over this His world, His dominion.

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Pastor Jun, you arrived here yesterday morning, and by the Grace of God, you were not affected by the Typhoon, to arrive here safely despite the closure of the domestic flights soon after your flight. We hear that there were 10 or more deaths, and your area of Pusan damaged badly by this storm. It is our prayer that your family and extended family are safe and that also the peoples of your country may be moved to stand in awe of the power of the creation of our God.

Tonight already you leave us for travel to Sydney and N.Z. We wish you safe travelling mercies, and a safe return home next week. Please pass on our greetings in the name of the Lord to your loved ones and as Chairman of the Fraternal Relations Committee to your Churches.

Professor Yoo, you will stay on with us today till Monday, and we thank you in advance for your willingness to also preach this Sunday. Your Canadian Sister Church delegates arriving tomorrow also wish to speak to you.

Mr Chairman, in conclusion, I'd like to thank the Korean delegates for their visit to us these days. For Professor Yoo, the time was not a major issue, being on 12 months sabbatical he managed 2 weeks on my insistence; for Pastor Jun, he obviously is doing some of Professor Yoo's work back home as he is here barely 1 full day.

Pastor Jun, Professor Yoo, Thank you again for being in our midst, and please take home to your Churches our warmest greetings.

We pray for the blessing of our Creator and upholder of all things,

The God of all grace be with all who confess him as the Triune God.

Thank you.

Maurice Bruning

On behalf of Deputies/ Synod of the FRCA 2006.

Appendix 1h: Speech by Rev Umbu Hapu Pariamalina on behalf of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur

First of all I want to pass on greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I have to apologize to you too, it is my first time that I speak in English. It is not fluent yet. I have been here about two month. Hopefully in another month my English will be better. As a delegate of Indonesian Churches, I have to explain to you several important points at this meeting. If you do not mind, I will continue with this information and try to explain to you in my simple English. I have translated some important points which I will explain, namely:

- GGRI-NTT, that is, the Reformed Churches of Indonesia send hearty greetings to your synod and pray along with you that your synod be successful. Without the blessing of the Lord our work is no good.

We pray along with you for the Lord to grant that your synod decisions are good and of great value for Christ's churches in Australia and your sister churches like the Indonesian Churches as well. We hope that the decisions of your synod will bring honour and praise to our Lord's Name.

On behalf of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia I give thanks for all the support we have received from your Churches by way of both the material aid and Spiritual help.

- The relationship of the Reformed churches in Indonesia and the Free Reformed Churches in Australia are close by and strong. At the moment our relation is not just by way of synod deputies but also between consistories. For example there is a relationship which the Rockingham Church has with two of our Churches in Sumba (the Kataka and Wera churches). The church of Rockingham is actively involved in the work of mission. This is a great blessing for our country. Besides this, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia along with our sister churches in Holland have supported several students to study theology in Hamilton, Canada. Besides this you have even helped finance some people from Indonesia to study English in Australia as shown by my presence here at your synod. We hope and pray that our relationship and your support can be continued by possibly financing some other brothers to study English or continue to study in Hamilton Theological College. It is important for the up-building of the reformed character of our church.

This relation is very beautiful and really shows that we are one body in our Lord Jesus.

- I also like to inform you, as synod, of an important development among Indonesian churches. If all goes as planned the Theology College of Reformed churches in Indonesia will be open again on the 1st of August 2006. The opening of this school really needs your attention. The planning and opening of the Theological Collage will not be successful without God's blessings. The Lord is using you and your support. With your help and our planning together, under God's blessing, this Collage will be successful. Therefore I express to you at this synod and pray that the opening of the Theological Collage will be close to your hearts and that you also remember us often in your prayers.
- It is really important to institute a Reformed Theology College in Indonesian because of the influence of the pluralistic thinking. A lot of Indonesian people are of the opinion that all of the churches in Indonesia are like a big house that has many rooms. The differences among the churches are understood like different rooms, which are all in

the same house. They are all considered true churches under one roof called Christians.

There are all kinds of churches in Indonesia and lot of them have unity in a committee with the name PGI. Until this time the GGRI Churches are not a member of them.

At the moment Reformed Churches of Indonesia have a very big struggle because charismatic, Pentecostal and Adventist doctrine is rising very fast. This is especially in and around our Churches in Sumba. Three new Theological colleges were instituted all of which teach the charismatic and Judaism doctrine. Therefore I have expressed to you that the opening of the Theological College is a very important point for us to support.

We hope that our sister church relations will continue to be strengthened also by way of this synod of the Australian Churches. The Reformed Churches of Indonesia invites you to attend the Theological college ceremonial opening on the 1st August 2006.

Finally we thank you for the opportunity address your synod on behalf of the Indonesian churches. May God bless you in your work here at synod.

Thankyou.

Appendix 1i: Response to the address of Rev Umbu Hapu Pariamalina by Br B Bosveld

I have the privilege on behalf of the deputies to give a response to the greetings from the GGRI, and I like to first of all express our thanks to Rev Pariamalina for addressing this synod, and for being brave enough to do this in English.

As was evidence from his speech, the time he is spending in our midst is helping him with the English language.

The purpose of his visit to Australia is two fold, one is to learn the English language and secondly to experience our church life. For this reason he has also joined in with some of the catechism classes and had some further instruction.

As you have mentioned in your address over the years our sister church relationship has grown stronger. Over the past three years we have been able to visit a number of your synods, and one conference. We have been able to report that the GGRI churches want to serve the Lord in obedience to His Word.

We often remember the Indonesian churches in our prayers, and it is our prayer that you also remember us in your prayer. We all need the blessing of the Lord

to remain a light in this world. Satan is doing his best to draw God's faithful churches to live in disobedience to God's word.

For this reason it is good that we can be there for each other.

In your address you also made a plea to the FRC of Australia to give support by prayer and also financially for the Theological College.

As Australian churches we recognise the importance of our sister churches in Indonesia having their own Theological College. It is for this reason that we supported the studies of brother Pila Njuka to Hamilton, who is now a minister called to work at the new College.

We have also included some funds on the budget these last few years in anticipation that our sister churches in Indonesia will again open the Theological College.

Supporting this work is not a burden but a blessing for us as churches, even if it means we may need to make some sacrifices, as the bible says in Acts 20:35: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

For us as deputies we have been looking forward to the day when the Theological College will open again. The Lord willing I will be in Indonesia at that time, so I have been asked on behalf of the deputies to pass on our greetings.

This synod will need to again appoint deputies for this work or re appoint deputies for this work. I have been working in the Indonesian deputies for only a three year period. The last synod decided not to reappoint me to the New Zealand deputies but instead appointed me to the Indonesian deputies. At first I was disappointed because I was in the New Zealand deputyship for only 3 years.

When I look back on the last 3 years I am thankful for this change. We have had a very good relationship together with our sister churches of Indonesia, they are a real family to me. I have also studied the Indonesian Language for 3 years and am able to communicate with them in their own language.

So when I address the opening of the Theological College on the 1st of August, I hope that I will be able to do that not just on behalf of the deputies, but also as a deputy. I'm not lobbying; just drawing your attention to a few things.

As a member of the Rockingham congregation and the mission committee, we have been able to support the mission projects of 2 different congregations, and as you mentioned we have a very good working relationship with these 2 consistories.

Rev Pariamalinya, as you mentioned in your address, a big temptation and a struggle for the churches is to remain reformed and not become puriform in your thinking and actions.

Up to now the GGRI have not joined the new movement call the PGI, and it is our prayer that the GGRI continue to remain faithful to God's word and only seek unity where there is true unity of Faith.

May God the King of the Church continue to protect and defend His Church as He has promised and bless our Indonesian sisters with faithfulness, that they continue to seek shelter under His wings.

Thankyou

Appendix 1j: Speech by Br H Hoogstra on behalf of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Mr. Chairman,
Members of Synod West Kelmscott,
Fellow Delegates,
Brothers and Sisters,

Two months ago, your Prime Minister, John Howard, visited our country and addressed the Canadian Parliament. He was only the second Australian high official to do so, following in the steps of Mr John Curtin in 1944. Both Mr Howard and our conservative Prime Minister, Steven Harper, are seen to revel in combating political orthodoxy. One of the most important issues on their agenda was finding an alternative to the Kyoto Pact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in fighting climate change. Mr Howard bluntly told his hearers, "This is an issue where you have people who are very doctrinaire. They think the only path to environmental salvation is the Kyoto path and we don't hold that view ... No developed country is going to sacrifice a significant amount of [its] economic development and jobs mindlessly or carelessly ..." (The Vancouver Sun, May 19, 2006, p. A5 and May 20, 2006, p. A10).

How insignificant it seems, that two months later two conservative Canadians are visiting your country and address a gathering of sixteen Australian delegates and approximately ten foreign representatives. A number of interested local church members, some fifty people in all, are assembled to tackle a number of issues you deem of great important. The cameras are not rolling; not even an official correspondent of the Nederlands Dagblad neither a representative for Una Sancta are here to collect information on the proceedings to email these to their offices. No dissidents are holding up their placards outside the church building. Instead, ignorance of the significance of the discussions and decisions of this assembly are lost on the passers-by. No police and security forces are here for crowd control and to stave off any possible attempt to disrupt the proceedings. Perhaps the best way for the evil one is to prevent publicity to this synodical work, and thereby to avoid bringing it to the attention of the common Australian. After all, of what importance is a

synod representing a church federation of fewer than 4,000 members in a country of just over 20,000,000 inhabitants?!

Brothers, you are here to do the Lord's work, to acknowledge the holiness of His Name and to promote the coming of His Kingdom. Several of the terms your Prime Minister used in his speech: orthodoxy, doctrinaire, salvation and sacrifice, are expressions we know well, and are labels which we are Reformed people do not mind to have attached to us. This sets us apart from the liberal mainline and Pentecostal denominations, their forward thinking and approaches to all matters religious. Sometimes we even pride ourselves on this designation, feeling that this judgment on our view of issues is a badge of honour. We should realize though, that our stated position must reflect the Biblical norm of expressing its teachings. The derived rules have to govern the style of our daily living and our congregational regulations and interaction. Gratitude must be the theme of our lives; thankfulness to God for choosing us to be His people, indebtedness for the redeeming work of His Son, our Saviour, and delight for the work of the Holy Spirit. There is thus no reason for pride in what we feel we stand for; only confidence in the all surpassing love of God. Therefore, with the apostle Paul we may encourage you with the words of Phil 2:12b, 13 (NIV), "... Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God Who works in you to will and to act according to His good pleasure."

We are happy to be in your midst. It has been a long time since delegates from the Canadian/ American Reformed Churches have been "down under" to extend their greetings and participate in the discussions at a synod of your Free Reformed Churches. Br Harold Leyenhorst and I feel privileged to have been appointed by our Committee for contact with Churches Abroad (CRCA) to bring you the greetings from our federation. Our churches, like yours, started from small beginnings, following the immigration waves after World War II. Presently we consist of 49 congregations spread across much of Canada and four in the northern United States of America. The federation is divided into eight Classes and the total membership hovers around 16,000. There are 44 ministers in active service, most of whom have been educated at our Theological College at Hamilton. Mission work is undertaken at home and abroad. Rev Frank Dong, well known to you; after all you sponsored his pastoral training, labours among the Chinese populations in the Vancouver area of Canada. We truly appreciate the close working relationship with the Church of Kelmscott in their sponsorship of his varied tasks. Rev Colin Macleod was recently installed to work with the aboriginal people of Babine, near Smithers, British Columbia. Street Light Ministries continues its activities in Hamilton, Ontario, in spite of the recent disappointing decline of the call which had signalled its next phase. Other missionaries and fields are found in Brazil – Rev Ken Wieseke, Rev Bram DeGraaf and a vacancy; in Indonesia – Rev Edwar Dethan; and in Papua New Guinea – Rev Stephen 'tHart. (How come many of these names sound so familiar? you may ask). Support for the Eglise Reformée du Quebec denomination of our French speaking Canada is channelled through the church of Owen Sound, Ontario. Numerous elementary and several secondary

schools as well as our own Teachers' College, three homes for the mentally handicapped and a number of homes for the elderly demonstrate the blessings God has entrusted to our federation.

Our relationship to the United Reformed Churches of North America may be of special interest to you. It is a young federation, founded in 1985. Its membership originated for the greater part from disenchanted members of the Christian Reformed Churches in the United States and Canada. The progressive liberalism in doctrine and church life caused many to leave, so faithfulness to the Scriptures and confessions would not be impeded.

The Canadian and American Reformed Churches have recognized this federation as true and faithful churches of our Lord and agreed to commence a three-step process of achieving ecclesiastical unity. Presently we are working at the Phase 2 level. Three joint Committees are working on matters of great importance:

- a. The Joint Church Order Committee's work is fundamental in the development of unity. Its work has progressed very well to date.
- b. The Song Book Committee also reports good rapport and progress. Different mandates from the respective synods are a real challenge for the committee. Our synod's mandate calls for the inclusion of the 150 Anglo-Genevan versions of the Psalms, with the allowance for alternate renditions. The URCNA will consider the Genevan tunes for inclusion along with the appropriate Psalm and hymn sections of their Psalter Hymnal. Thus, while there is agreement in principle, much time and energy is spent on the practical application.
- c. The Theological Education Unity Committee has reached an impasse. The URCNA draws candidates for the ministry from various institutions, and places the oversight on the theological training with the local congregations. We desire to maintain a federational seminary, at which the governance, staffing, funding and oversight is under the auspices of the churches through the General Synod. The members of this committee have not been able to convince each other of a solution that would bridge these different views and present an acceptable solution.

All three committees will soon prepare their progress reports for Synod Smithers 2007. It will be interesting to see the exact findings and recommendations when they are published four months from now.

Your federation and ours are sisters of approximately the same age and come from the same background. We have enjoyed the presence of delegates at our synods. As we reciprocate, we wish to express appreciation for the confidence you have often shown in the continuation of this ecclesiastical fellowship. Surely, as the sisters grow to further maturity, they tend to demonstrate distinct characteristics. These often develop on account of the geographical and cultural influences. Yet this may result in scrutinizing the variations of practices, and cause our committees to study such divergences. Your deputies

flagged our desire for additional hymns and the progress of our Joint Song Book committee with the URCNA. While they wish to maintain close contact with our Book of Praise committee, the deputies have also recommended to publish your own version. We understand your concern about the hymns and reassure you that it is not our intent to deny the primary place to the use of the Psalms in our worship services. Your desire for greater involvement in the training of your future ministers is commendable, and we express great appreciation for the solid support you have provided to the Theological College in Hamilton over the years. Your earlier concern that candidates for the ministry remain in Canada upon graduation was never seen as a negative in our federation; by now that complaint may no longer be valid!

Synod West Kelmscott has not been instituted for designing an alternative to environmental salvation to replace the Kyoto protocol. Surely, it would be interesting to see what you brothers would recommend if the topic had been placed on your agenda, especially since we as God's people have been charged to maintain and build our Creator's handiwork. Your charge for this august assembly is totally different, however. According to your calendar, you are in the middle of your winter. This season usually signifies a period of rest, dormancy if you like. The activity before us reflects anything but a time of tranquillity. Your Agenda reveals an ambitious plan, all to be covered in a matter of two weeks. Perusal of the reports that have been furnished by your deputies demonstrates the extensive amount of work that has already gone into the preparation for this major assembly. In addition, you must deal with several overtures and appeals; a veritable workload indeed! Your dedication to the task at hand, to be a willing worker in God's vineyard on this continent, is commendable and worthy of the prayerful support of your Free Reformed community.

A close examination of your recommendations and the discussions regarding the requests for Ecclesiastical Fellowship by three churches in your global area is of great interest to us. We have received identical requests, and as a result, are closely monitoring your reasoning and decision. As for your reports on sister church relations, we are grateful for your desire to continue your alliance with us. Several discussion points with other churches are similar to concerns that have been expressed in our federation. The occasional exchange of information on a number of matters is something to be stimulated for our mutual benefit. As sisters, yes, sisters – after all we're catholic, aren't we?! we need each other, both in providing mutual approval, and when the need arises, also constructive criticism. Therefore, let me paraphrase the expression of your Prime Minister and alter it somewhat to describe our situation: "no sister church is going to sacrifice a significant amount of ecclesiastical cooperation of this spiritual growth and development and then squander it mindlessly and carelessly to arrive at what others consider to be an acceptable road to salvation." We desire to stand shoulder to shoulder to promote the Kingdom of God.

Brothers, we express our most sincere wish that our gracious God will provide you with the wisdom and insight to carry out the tasks with which your member churches have charged you. May you receive these to do your work to the honour and glory of our Churches' King! The apostle Paul reminds us of this when he writes in the second letter to the Thessalonians Ch.2:15-17 (NIV):

“So then, brothers, stand firm
and hold on to the teachings we passed on to you,
whether by word of mouth or by letter.
May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father
who loved us
and by His Grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope,
encourage your hearts and strengthen you
in every good deed and word”.

Appendix 1k: Response to the address of Br H Hoogstra by Rev W Huizinga

Mr Chairman,
Delegates from our Canadian sisters, Henk Hoogstra and Harold Leyenhorst,
Members of synod,
Brothers and sisters,

It is my privilege to respond to the speech of Br Henk Hoogstra, delegate of our Canadian sister churches.

We met each other last year at the 2005 GS of Amersfoort, and we could share time and compare notes at that time. So it is good to see each other on this side of the world.

That you take the time and trouble to fly half way around the world, 36 hours in total you tell us, means you do not share the priorities of the world. What pollutes the world first and worst is not the emissions which the Kyoto protocol targets, but the wickedness of man. This corruption is so great in the earth that every intent of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually (Gen 6:5). As on the early earth this evil fills the world with corruption and violence as well as pollution. This is what the church must target in its preaching and teaching. It is not a popular message, and hence receives scant attention in this world.

But we are very happy that you have come to visit our synod and churches. Yes, it has indeed been too long since you paid us an official visit. We receive many visitors from Canada. There is a constant stream and the airlines do well as a result of our close ties. But it took me some time for me to recall the last time you sent a delegate to us. Was it not Rev E Kampen who visited our 1994 Synod?

The names you mentioned make us realise that many men who entered the ministry via the Theological College in Hamilton originally came from the Free

Reformed Churches of Australia. Of course, some ministers from the Canadian Reformed Churches now serve here, with yours truly being the first of them.

The Canadian Reformed Churches has indeed grown, and grown in maturity. We note that in the numbers you mentioned. But we also note that in the growing number of sister relations you exercise internationally. Nationally you support the reformed churches (L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec) in the French-speaking province of Quebec. On the North American continent you now work hard towards unity with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). This takes time. That is good, because it will be necessary to prepare not only the church assemblies, general synods especially, for this quest for unity, but you also need to prepare your church membership for it.

There are three phases in your quest for unity with these churches.

You have reached the second phase which includes much interaction and cooperation. One might compare it to privileges and responsibilities we enjoy with sister churches, according to the rules for sister relations. In the press and in our visits we consequently note how the ministers of the URCNA fill your pulpits at times and your ministers serve on pulpits of the URCNA. You can exchange attestations, and you even call each other's ministers.

Rev. Frederik A.V. Harms of the URCNA impressed on us at the 2005 GS of Amersfoort how disciplined and cautious they are in entering relations with other churches. They take their time. May the LORD bless these endeavours at unity. We in our history have experienced not only the need for separations in 1834, 1886 and 1944 but by the grace of God also experienced the joy of the unions of 1869 and 1892.

Throughout the Bible God calls his people to unity. After all, our time here on earth is not that long. Ultimately we will all be together in the one grand assembly of saints who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:9-14).

We too grow not only numerically but also in maturity. It means that we too seriously look at our own theological training and our own version of the Book of Praise. Mind you, let me immediately add our great appreciation for the privilege of supporting and using your Theological College and your Book of Praise. You have greatly helped us and we owe you a debt of gratitude.

I think it fair to say that we have not subjected you to the same intense scrutiny as we have our Dutch sister churches. Some may say that this is unfair to our Dutch sisters and too fair to you! I will let others judge that.

We are thankful that you wish to retain the Psalms, in rhymed versions, as central in your church services. We share that goal, and we have asked our Dutch sisters who have so much more manpower and expertise to focus more attention on the Psalms. May the LORD bless the efforts of your committee and that of the URCNA to resolve this issue of a common book of worship!

Appendix 1: Speeches at Synod

We appreciate your visit to us very much. It helps to build good bonds. May God bless your stay in our midst, and grant you a safe journey home.

In closing I would like to read a portion of Scripture:

Ephesians 2:11-22

I thank you.

W Huizinga

Appendix 11: Speech by Rev M Retief on behalf of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

Mr. Chairman,
Members of Synod,
Dear brothers in the Lord:

Your little sister in South Africa greets you with great love and warm affection. In a secular world, intoxicated with the spirit of post-modernism, we are inspired by your faithfulness to the Lord and His Word. We thank the Lord for your faith and steadfastness and pray that He may keep you and that you may also increase in the knowledge and the Love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the last 6 years, since Rev. Clarence Bouwman visited our Synod in Bethal as a delegate from your churches in the year 2000, we have come to appreciate you all the more as ties were intensified. We also received much help and support from you since then, not the least in our endeavours to reach out to the disenfranchised. We were glad to take the decision on our previous synod, Synod Pretoria of May 2005, to send delegates to your synods and to intensify our ties with you even more. We were also edified by and thankful for the warm greetings from your churches given by your delegate Bert Veenendaal. May the Lord continue to bind us together in the unity of faith and in His love, and to make our correspondence with you fruitful in His service.

Because we all have to fight the good fight of the faith, as the apostle Paul puts it to Timothy in 1 Tim.6:12, and as we have to enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation, as he puts it in Acts 14:22, and as no church is without the struggle to continue in faith, we want to encourage you to continue in the same faith as we have learned from the apostles. As you have many important and also some difficult decisions to make, we pray that the Lord may strengthen you with wisdom and knowledge so that the congregations may be served in love and be edified by your decisions. And dear brothers, as it is your intention to base all your decisions on the Word of God alone, we also pray that the peace of our Lord will be present, and that His blessing may rest on you.

In South Africa we are at present seven Free Reformed congregations: four in Pretoria, one in Bethal, one in Johannesburg and one in Cape Town. It was a

sad development when the small congregation in Springs continued to decline until it had to be dissolved. On the other hand the Lord comforted us with two new congregations as a result of many years of missionary work – one in Mamelodi and one in Soshanguve-North, both in the region of Pretoria. The Lord has opened a door for the gospel to be preached especially among the black and coloured people in South Africa. It seems that they are much more ready and receptive for the Word than many Whites who have grown up with the Word! Although much missionary work is done in the region of Pretoria and Cape Town by the three missionaries, there are also so much more promising possibilities for missionary work. The missionaries are loaded with work and a lack of manpower has become evident. In this situation the words of our Lord is very applicable where He says that the harvest is big, but the labourers few, and that we have to pray the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into the harvest (Mt.9:37,38).

At the moment our churches are also battling with the theological training of our students. At the moment our Black students receive their training at Mokhanyo Theological College which is interdenominational. Our White students prefer to go overseas to Hamilton or Kampen. And at the moment our Brown students receive yet another training which is under the oversight of the congregation in Cape Town. This is surely not a healthy situation and even dangerous for the unity of the bond of churches in future. We are now looking for one training for all, but as we don't have the means to do all by ourselves, we are still struggling and looking for answers.

The political and economic situation in South Africa is still not certain and a constant flow of Whites out of the country is still going on. There is already about 40 000 South Africans here in Perth! And even Afrikaans congregations! Also from our own churches in South Africa, many have left the country for various reasons and some are here in your churches. This reality also has the consequence that many members of our churches are visiting their family and friends here in you churches and travel back to South Africa with news of our Australian sister. It means that our correspondence with you is not only on a formal level, an item on the table of the synod, but also a general topic at the kitchen table. You may thus know that your decisions will also be in the hearts and mouths of our members in South Africa.

We pray that the words of Hebrew 13:20, 21 may guide you in your deliberations:

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

For the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
Rev. Mendel Retief

Appendix 1m: Response to the address of Rev M Retief by Br B Veenendaal

Thankyou Rev Retief for your words, your greetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, and indeed for even being here!

I have the pleasure to respond to your address to synod. We are certainly glad that you could make it here in person, given the delays that you were experiencing with visas for you and your family. Yet the Lord guided your way so that you could be here already last week in time for this synod. May He continue to bless the efforts to pave the way for a visa for you and your family, so that in due course you may be able to work among the church in Kelmscott as anticipated.

Yes the Lord is good in all His ways. He has led us, in our respective bonds of churches on either side of the Indian Ocean, closer together and the ties between us have certainly been strengthened. Your presence here is proof of that. There has been increasing contact between South Africa and Australia with a quite a number of people travelling back and forth between our churches and even a number of families moving into our midst, and I hear there are more to come! I'm sure that evidence is also apparent among the audience we have here tonight. Just look at all the Aussie South Africans! ...or is that the South African Aussies?

You mentioned the large influx of South Africans into Perth...40 000! That is a considerable number. I am aware of some informal discussions in our midst as to how to reach out to these persons, for obviously nowhere near that number has joined our churches. Your input and advice here may also be beneficial as we, together, continue to witness of God's church gathering work and find ways and means to call out to them to seek the assembly of God's people together with us, in faith.

As you are already aware from this synod, we struggle with the theological training as you also do. We have just extended the mandate of our Deputies for Training For the Ministry to also liaise with your deputies. Even though our contexts are not entirely the same, there is much that we can learn from your situation, for you have progressed much further than we in providing theological training for your students. Your bond of churches, although even smaller than ours, has had to train white, black and coloured students, and you have had to do so in multiple languages, including Afrikaans, Suthu and English. You are also considering the potential of online technologies as one complementary means to achieve this, and I'm sure there will be more discussions with our deputies on this. At your synod last year in May in Pretoria, and in the continuation of your synod this year in March, you struggled with how to move forward with your Training for the Ministry, and you have not yet come to a decision. May the Lord also give you the guidance and wisdom that you need

to decide how to proceed and may it be to God's glory for the equipping of those who proclaim the gospel of good tidings.

The Lord's ways are not always our ways....that is evident also among the events in your church life. Indeed it was a sad development to hear that the church at Springs had to be dissolved. We know that especially for you as God's servant called to that church, the whole matter was very dear to your heart and hurt very deeply. Even though you worked diligently and faithfully in difficult circumstances, yet the Lord in his infinite wisdom and sovereign good counsel decided to build the churches in South Africa in a different way.

This has occurred largely via the mission posts. And we are very thankful together with your churches that Mamelodi and Soshanguve North could be instituted as churches within the bond. And not only that, but the Church at Mamelodi could itself establish a mission post in Nelmapius. How marvellous and wondrous are God's ways. Nothing can stop His church gathering work...not culture nor colour, not language nor race, not political circumstances nor the leftovers of apartheid...all is subservient to Him, and Him alone!

We understand also that the work among the disenchanted in other reformed congregations (eg. Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk and the Doppekerk) continues, with persons and families joining your churches. Our South Africa Support Committee, which has been appointed by the church at Kelmscott, continues to have contact with some of your churches, and I understand that some real requests for assistance are forthcoming and imminent. May God bless all your endeavours in this regard.

As deputies, we have received from your deputies' information on your mission work and the opportunities for us to support this. As per your request, we have already passed this on to our churches and printed in our *Una Sancta* your introduction to the Mission Work in South Africa. May your churches receive the means, financially as well as in manpower, to be able to continue and expand this work to address the opportunities that arise, yes to respond to challenges that the Lord has placed right on your doorstep. We still hope to be able to have an information evening in which you, Rev Retief, will be able to present to us the situation in your churches in South Africa, and enlighten us regarding the mission work being undertaken.

We pray for God's blessings over your churches, also in the uncertain economic and political circumstances which South Africa faces. For above all is our sovereign God and King of the church, and He will use also those circumstances for the Glory of His Name and for the wellbeing of His church in South Africa.

With the words of Paul in Rom 16:25-27, *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according*

to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

Thankyou.

Bert Veenendaal

On behalf of deputies

Appendix 1n: Closing speech by Rev A Veldman, Chairman of the Synod

Dear Brothers delegates,

We have almost come to the close of the 23rd Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. In just over 8 working days, together we have worked through a lot of material that the churches had placed on the agenda of this synod. Next to the many appeals we had to deal with, there were the reports of the various deputies. Especially the discussion of the report that dealt with the relationship we have with our Dutch sister churches was very tense and emotionally at times, especially since with respect to certain sections in their report even deputies themselves had come with majority and minority recommendations. When dealing with these divided recommendations, it was quite remarkable that at synod in most instances we could find each other in a majority greater than I had expected it. The same applied to the decision we took regarding the contacts we have with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand. In this, I see a reflection of the brotherly harmony in which we worked together around this synod table, trying to make decisions as much as possible unanimously. At the beginning of this synod, as chairman of the convening church in my opening address I said, as delegates at synod we should respect each other's integrity, even when disagreeing on certain matters. I think we all have tried to do so, even throughout some tense debates. What is even more important, as regards our decision making process, in faithfulness towards God we sought the well-being of the churches, even in cases where appeals were denied or not upheld. With respect to the relationships/contacts with other churches, including our sister churches, we have tried to come to the most responsible decisions.

In this synod, we also enjoyed the fellowship with many overseas guests. It was for the first time in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that all our sister churches were represented. At this synod, we have experienced in the most literal sense of the word the unity of faith worldwide. Even though by now most of these overseas guests have left, we thank them for their input and advice, not only in the meetings of this synod, but also in the discussions, they had with the various deputies. As one of the delegates said it, nothing goes above face-to-face contact.

Synod has almost come to a close. All decisions have been made. The churches who delegated us now have to work with these decisions in the context of Art. 31 of the C.O., which amongst others reads, that decisions taken by a major assembly are binding, unless it is proved that they are in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order. The first part of this article of the Church Order also says, if someone feels that he has been wronged, he has the right of appeal. I note, it does not say that such a person must appeal. Last night when I was writing this closing address, I looked at what Rev. G. VanRongen had to say about this article of the Church Order in his little booklet, "Decently and in Good Order." I found it quite remarkable that the first sentence he writes as commentary on this article reads, *"This is an essential article in our Church Order. It is intended to serve peace and order in the churches."* Peace and order – that's not how we feel it at times. At present, I do not want to say more on this point. Yet I hope and pray that the decisions taken by this synod may indeed serve the peace within the bond of churches, not a false peace, but a peace based on the truth of God's Word.

During the course of this synod, every morning we prayed for God's nearness, for guidance and wisdom from above, and we indeed felt this nearness every day anew. Through His Spirit, the King of the Church was in our midst to help us in the task we had to fulfill. In own strength we would never have been able to do it. May the Lord through the same Spirit now also sanctify the work we have done, since from our side it was defiled with many sins and shortcomings. Yes, may the Lord use our work, done in weakness, for the upbuilding of His church and the glory of His Name.

Brothers, after tonight our ways will part. On behalf of the moderamen, we thank you for the confidence placed in us. As chairman, I want to thank you for not having made my task too difficult. I have enjoyed serving you and I have tried to do it in an unbiased way. In case where I have ruled unjustly, please forgive me and accept my apologies. Together it was our desire to serve the Lord, each one of us with his own talents and gifts. We came as brothers, we worked together as brothers, and we depart as brothers united in the one faith. That's how we rose at the beginning of this meeting and that's how we also say farewell to each other.

Finally, on behalf of all delegates, I want to express a word of gratitude to the hosting church. As minister of the hosting church, I might be slightly biased, when I thank the organizing team for a job well done. A lot of work went into preparing this synod. We surely did benefit from a manual passed on to us by the church of Rockingham, which in turn received it from the church of West Albany. In preparing this synod and in running the infra structure of this synod, there were various committees in which many brothers and sisters were active. We thank all of them for serving us so well, each one with his or her own specific talents. A special thanks goes to the kitchen staff, of which Sr. G.Diek was in charge. Many ladies helped her throughout the course of synod, but she was the one who was present on a daily basis. Hence the token of appreciation we presented her with earlier this day. Our particular thanks goes

out also to our IT staff, who made it possible for us to communicate with one another through the intranet, so that proposals that were to be dealt with no longer needed to be printed or photocopied, but came into the inbox of the delegates and from there on they were dealt with. The next step will be that also the audience will be able to view what the delegates see on screen by way of an overhead projector. In closing, I also like to thank Sr. Kina VanDuyn for her work in assisting the clerk. When we leave, your work continues in putting the Acts together, making them ready for the printer. We thank you and wish you strength for the work still to be done.

During the course of this synod we also said thank you to our synod treasurer, Br. A. Hordyk from Mount Nasura. It is not often that deputies receive a special thank you, let alone a token of appreciation. It's work, we do out of love for the churches. This surely applies also to Br. Hordyk. Yet having done this work for 18 years, at times with all the frustrations involved, as synod we thought it was appropriate to extend a special thank you to him, especially now he is retiring as treasurer. Br. Hordyk, once more we thank you for a job well done, for so many years.

Brothers it's time to say farewell now. After 8 days of intensive work, we may go back to our normal duties. May the Lord be with all of you. May He give in particular the delegates of Tasmania and Albany a safe journey home and a happy reunion with their families. May the King of the church strengthen those who have been appointed as deputies and may He enable you to do your work faithfully in His service.

Upon leaving, Brothers, I wish you all God's indispensable blessing, also in your work as office bearers in the local congregations. I do this with the same words as also one of the overseas delegates concluded his address, quoting Heb. 13, 20 + 21, *"Now may the God of peace, who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."*

Brothers, farewell and God bless you all.

Thank you!

Appendix 1o: Addresses and letters of Greetings to Synod

GEREJA-GEREJA REFORMASI CALVINIS (GGRC - NTT)

Acta Notary N0: 2

Registered in the Pengadilan Negeri Kupang No: 1/AN/AD/Lgs/2003

Jln. Timor Raya Km. 14,5 Noelbaki Kupang - NTT - Indonesia 85361

Telp: 0380 829172/8080324; E.mail. Y.Dethan@kupanq.wasantara.net.id

To the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

Kupang, July 11, 2006

Dear Esteemed Brothers:

On behalf of our federation the GGRC in NTT, we would like to thank you for your invitation to attend your General Synod. We wish that we could come to see you and be with you in the Synod but since we do not have enough funds for that purpose we just send this letter of greetings to you.

We wish you all a blessed and productive Synod for the sake of God's people. We pray that our Awesome, Amazing, and Almighty God, our Triune God, will be with you and bless you in this pivotal meeting.

We thank you for the cooperation, contact and communication that we have had so far. We thank you for helping the GGRC in facing the problems with Rev. Eli Fangidae. We thank you for your help through the Mission Aid. We thank you for your help for the schools in GGRC, specifically through the work of COL (Children of Light). Although this work has now shifted to Sumba and the GGRI, we must express our thanks for what was done up until now. So many kids could come to school and have a better education through this agency which was mostly run and organized by your youth.

We thank you for so much advice and attention in the years before when we were facing many struggles. We feel that the Lord allowed those struggles to help us develop and grow as a Reformed Church as it is mentioned in Phillipians 1:29 & 30: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for Him, since you are going through the same struggles you saw I had and now hear that I still have."(NIV)

We thank you for always coming and attending our Synods up until the last ones, in Bolok (2002) and in Tarus (2004). You always gave us so much wise, biblical advice in our Synods. Even though you are not our sister church yet, we feel that you have done to us just like a sister church should do and even more. You are not our sister church yet but you are always there and ready to help. Once again thanks so much for that.

We remember in our last synod in the year 2004 in Tarus, even though you were intimidated by some evil people who tried to do some bad things in the

airport to your deputies (Rev. Van der Jagt, Br. John Bosveld and Br. Brian Bosveld) you were still brave to come and help us. We were talking about it and then your deputies told us that they should not think about themselves but about God's kingdom. That was so wonderful to hear. You might remember that at that time when we as the Synod of GGRC needed so much advice and support you were there. Both of our sister churches the GGRI and the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands did not attend our Synod but you did. GGRI sent a letter of greetings to our Synod while the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands did not send any letter of greetings or attend our Synod even though they were here in Kupang at that time (to which your deputies were witnesses of). We thank the Lord for your wisdom and willingness to help us.

Since your deputies were at our Synod in Bolok (2002), we would like to ask you to please also explain to the GGRI, NTT and the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands that our Synod in Bolok in the year 2002 was a legal Synod and not an illegal synod as we were accused by Rev. Fangidae in court. You know that was a denial of the true fact. You may still remember that Rev. Fangidae and Br. Lody Mone personally attended that Synod of 2002 in Bolok. Rev. Mada Biha as the deputy of GGRI, NTT was also present at that Synod in Bolok. Only the brothers from the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands were not present, but only sent a letter of greetings. We mention this matter here for we know that the GGRI, NTT and the brothers from the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands will be at your Synod as well. You also know that in our last synod in the year 2004 in Tarus, you through Br. John Bosveld and Rev. Van Der Jagt and Br. Brian Bosveld encouraged us to invite Rev. Fangidae and his elders from the Galilea church to come to our Synod. He and his elders did not come to our synod but instead, decided to establish a different federation named "Gereja-Gereja Refomasi Musyafir", even though they only have one local church with not more than 100 members. They have women in office and have two other ministers who were not coming from reformed background but were ordained without any examinations by classis or synod deputies.

We were happy to hear through Rev. Van der Jagt and Br. J. Bosveld about two years ago that you now see us as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should let you know that as federation the Lord has blessed us in so many areas of our church life. We have many more mission posts in Rote, Sabu and Timor islands. We even now have one more mission post in the city of Kupang beside the Oeba market. We also have two new established Churches in Kupang and two other mission posts in the Kupang Region.

We also now have 6 schools for our students. We have two schools in East Rote (both kindergartens) and 4 schools in Kupang (one kindergarten, one elementary school, one Junior High and one Senior High plus life skills training). All of these schools are being helped by COL Canada, some personal help, and some donations from the people in Timor.

Adding to that we also now have theological training called IRTS (Indonesian Reformed Theological Seminar) which is being supported by "Immanuel" Canadian Reformed Church in Alberta, Canada. Through this IRTS we are training the leaders and future leaders of the church to be more qualified.

Please pray for us in facing the difficulties and struggles that the Lord allows to happen. In facing all these difficulties we see them as lessons of faith of our Lord to teach us to grow more and more in fear of Him and obey His commandments. Some people may see our struggles as an unstable condition but we think that is wrong for we are not unstable. The Lord allows all these things to happen in order to make us stable to make us stay reformed. We are happy that through these difficulties we can become more and more a reformed church, on the basis of the scriptures and the confessions.

Through this letter we do not want to push you and beg you to be our sister church as before. We give it to your wisdom. For we already feel a communion of sister church relationship with you. We are so happy for the deeper connection and relationship we may have with you. We only ask that you would keep the contact, connection, communication, and cooperation. May the Lord our Triune God bless our relationship and help us that we may be able to help each other for His name's sake and for the up- building of His people.

On behalf of the GGRC

Deputies for the relationship with the churches abroad,

Rev. Y.G. Dethan
(Chairman)

Elder Y. Adu
(Secretary)

Appendix 2: Deputies Relations with Sister Churches – General Report

1.1. Deputies

Synod FRCA 2003 (Article 101) appointed as Deputies:

Rev C Bouwman, Br AC Breen, Br AMC Bruning, Br HJ Dekker, Rev W Huizinga (convenor), Br GB Veenendaal with br N Louw as alternate.

During this term Rev C Bouwman accepted a call to Canada. Br N Louw was willing to take his place.

In general we divided our duties as follows:

Br AC Breen – RCN+PCK; Br AMC Bruning – PCK, Br HJ Dekker – RCN, Rev W Huizinga –CanRC+RCN; Br GB Veenendaal – FRCSA+CanRC.

1.2. Meetings

The Deputies for Sister Relations have met on twenty one occasions as deputies. One meeting will be held as yet to discuss and finalise the final report and/or any supplementary report.

1.3. Declarations

Ministerial Declarations were received by deputies from the following ministers:

Rev RC Janssen from the GKN
Rev C.J. Breen from the GKN
Rev G.Wieske from the CanRC
Prof J. Geertsema from the CanRC
Rev. R.J. Eikelboom from CanRC
Rev. E.Rupke from the GKN

Ministerial Declarations were issued by deputies to:

Rev I Wildeboer to CanRC
Rev PK de Boer to CanRC
Rev W Huizinga to GKN
Rev C. Bouwman to CanRC
Rev. E Rupke to GKN
Rev. A. Veldman to GKN

Delegate Declarations were issued to:

Br GB Veenendaal to CRC Synod Chatham
Br AMC Bruning to PCK General Assembly
Rev W Huizinga to RCN Synod Amersfoort

Br A C Breen to RCN Synod Amersfoort
Br B Veenendaal to FRCSA Synod Pretoria

Delegate Declarations were received for:

Br W. Pleiter from the CanRC.

1.4. *Invitations from Sister Churches*

Deputies of the FRCA received invitations to attend the synods of our following Sister Churches -

1. Canadian Reformed Churches, Chatham 2004. Visited by Br GB Veenendaal.
2. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Amersfoort 2005. Rev W. Huizinga and Br A.C. Breen attended.
3. Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, Pretoria 2005. Br GB Veenendaal attended.
4. Presbyterian Church of Korea (G.A.) Br AMC Bruning attended in 2004 and a further letter of greeting sent.

1.5. *Invitations sent to Sister Churches*

Deputies have sent out invitations for the FRCA Synod 2006 – West Kelmscott, to the four Sister Churches, RCN, FRCSA, CRC and PCK. Responses were received from South Africa, Korea and The Netherlands, who will send delegates to our synod, and we are awaiting a response yet from CanRC.

1.6. *Jumbo meetings*

Only one jumbo meeting was held on 24th March 2006 to discuss the prepared reports to Synod West Kelmscott.

Appendix 3: Deputies Relations with Sister Churches – Canadian Reformed Churches

1.1 Mandate

Synod Rockingham 2003 Article 28 made the following decision regarding our sister Canadian Reformed Churches:

Decisions:

1. To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to established rules.
2. To monitor developments with the CanRC for mutual benefit, according to our rules.
3. To authorise the deputies to send one delegate to the 2004 General Synod of Chatham

Grounds:

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Some developments with the CanRC parallel those in our Dutch Sister Churches. We should stay informed, monitor these developments and be of help to each other. In this way there is also consistency in the way we deal with our Sister Churches.
3. We value our bond with our American/Canadian Sister Churches; we can learn from each other; and should keep in good contact with them. Personal contact at synodical level reinforces this.

1.2 Activities

As deputies, we have maintained contact with the deputies in Canada in a number of ways. We have exchanged acts of our respective synods. In 2003 we received correspondence from the Canadian deputies requesting further information about the Reformed Churches in New Zealand as well as about the GGRI-NTT churches in Indonesia. We passed these requests onto the relevant deputies.

We received an invitation to attend Synod Chatham which was held on 10-24 February 2004. Rev Huizinga, as primary delegate, was unable to attend, and as a result br B. Veenendaal, as alternate delegate, attended this synod. The report of this Synod is attached as Appendix A and was published in the Una Sancta. The address of our deputies to this synod is attached in Appendix B and was likewise published in Una Sancta.

We were able to hold an informal meeting with one of the Canadian deputies who travelled to Australia to visit family in July 2005. Our deputies to the recent synod in Holland could also meet up with two delegates/deputies from Canada.

It is evident that we have many issues and concerns in common and can share that and support each other in dealing with them. For example, the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton and the Book of Praise remain two common ventures. We also share some sister relations, e.g. those with our common sister in The Netherlands. We have shared our work with them. It was a pity that their deputies had not been able to prepare themselves for GS 2005 in Amersfoort in interacting with the deputies of our sister churches in The Netherlands. We do share some common concerns which is evident in the decisions of the Synod of Chatham and in our contact with their deputies. It is important that we encourage and support each other by standing together on the foundation of God's Word.

At the same time there are also developments in our Canadian sister churches, e.g. re the URCNA, the OPC, the RCUS, new hymns, and the ICRC that do not parallel those in our churches. We should also continue to learn from each other in these areas.

1.3 Recommendations

Deputies recommend the following to synod:

Recommendations:

1. To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules.
2. To monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to our rules.
3. To authorise deputies to send one delegate to their next general synod (2007 in Smithers).

Grounds:

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and personal contact at the synodical level reinforces our contact with them.

Appendix 3a: Report of Visit to Synod Chatham 2004

The 2004 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) was held in Chatham on 10-24 February. Chatham is a large town (small city) over 200 kilometres west of Toronto and is nestled very close to the border with the United States. During this month, Chatham was carpeted with a layer of snow and ice with temperature ranges from above freezing point to well below –10 degrees Celsius. That was the scene for Synod Chatham 2004. Rev Versteeg of the convening church opened the synod. The elected officers were:

Chairman – Rev. C. VanSpronsen
Vice-Chairman – Rev. J. DeGelder
First Clerk – Rev. J. Van Vliet
Second Clerk – Rev. D. Agema

The agenda of synod dealt with a number of matters including Theological College, Bible translations, liturgy, Book of Praise, how to deal with appeals from individuals, a number of appeals, etc. The items that occupied by far the majority of Synod's agenda and efforts were relations with churches at home and abroad. An overview of some of the issues of interest to the Australian churches is provided in this report. Additional information and acts of synod can be obtained from the website of the CanRC at www.canrc.org.

Churches with whom the CanRC have Ecclesiastical Unity (sister church relations) include: Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (lib), Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, Free Church of Scotland, Reformed Church in the United States, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Igreja Reformadas do Brasil. The CanRC churches have contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America, L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec, and Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC). With the United Reformed Churches of North America, the CanRC are not simply exercising sister church relations, but are moving towards federative unity within one bond of churches.

The CanRC have received correspondence from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as well as the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) with the request to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The Synod decided to seek further information, including from us as Australian churches that have close contact with both federations. They will also consult our bond of churches regarding their existing contacts with the GGRC.

Theological College

Due to the illness of Professor J DeJong, he has been granted an indefinite leave of absence. To fill this vacancy, Synod appointed Rev AJ DeVisser as Professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology. He is currently a missionary/evangelist in the mission posts of Soshanguve Central and Soshanguve South of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (our sister churches).

Synod also expressed heartfelt thankfulness to our Australian churches for the support they continue to receive from us.

Bible translations

A number of churches requested Synod to investigate the suitability of the English Standard Version (ESV) which is a Bible translation released within the couple of years. Synod did ask deputies to do a preliminary investigation as well as continue to monitor developments with the NIV. This latter translation is the official one used by the majority of churches in their church federation while some churches do use the NKJV. The intention, however, is not to replace the NIV since many churches have finally only just begun to use it.

Book of Praise

The CanRC Book of Praise is, of course, the one we use in our churches in Australia. Synod Chatham recognised this and encouraged their committee to seek input from our churches. Further, Synod decided to mandate the committee to investigate how to incorporate the Apostles Creed into the Baptism Form, to prepare the prose section (not Psalms/Hymns section) with NIV Bible references, to identify and correct deficiencies/weaknesses in the Hymns section, select suitable Hymns as requested by some of the churches, and to publish a revised Hymn section proposed for testing by the churches. Note that Synod also set a limit of 100 Hymns since they recognised that “Psalms must have a predominant place in the liturgy of the Reformed churches”.

Appeals of Individuals to Synod

The previous synod decided to not admit appeals from individuals to synod, but rather to direct them to use the means available via their consistory. Although there were a number of appeals from churches to this decision, Synod upheld this decision. They indicated that “individual members must follow the way of the Church Order by addressing their concerns to their local consistory who, should they concur with the concerns, direct an appeal to a general synod. Consistory, unlike individual members, has the right to deal directly with the matters that belong to the churches in common. Consistory may do so because these decisions are to be considered settled and binding by the consistory” (Acts Article 20, Consideration 4.4).

United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

The Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) at their last synod in Neerlandia in 2001 offered the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) a relationship with the goal of federative unity. The URCNA at their Synod Escondido 2001 responded in like manner. The CanRC synod has appointed deputies as a Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity. This committee has three subcommittees that work together with their counterparts in the URCNA:

Theological Education Committee – The task is to evaluate the situation as to theological education within the CanRC and the URCNA. Synod has mandated them to develop a common proposal ensuring that the new federation will retain at least one theological school at which the board of governors, the professors and teaching staff are appointed by synod.

Church Order Committee – Has as a task to propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort. Considerable work has already been done and much agreement has already been reached among the two federations. The committee is also to formulate a draft proposal of regulations for General Synod.

Songbook Committee – Their mandate is to produce a songbook that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter Hymnal and other suitable metrical versions of the Psalms, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. The idea is to start with the Psalter Hymnal and the 150 Anglo-Genevan psalms and work together from there in a spirit of cooperation.

The process towards federative unity was agreed upon at the previous synod in 1998 and involves 3 stages:

- 1) Recognition and exploration – discussions should be exploratory and should concern a mutually agreed understanding of the confessional heritage of the church, specifically Articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession. This stage should also identify areas where differences of approaches exist and come to some agreement in which these differences can be overcome.
- 2) Acceptance and cooperation – a mutual acceptance by the 2 participating consistories (at the local levels) of each other's faithfulness to God's Word and the confessions. This phase includes some initial mutually agreeable provisions regarding theological education, song books, liturgical forms and customs, and Bible translations.
- 3) Advanced recognition to union – consistories should come to an agreement on the form of merger they wish to pursue. This will be done with assistance from the deputies for ecclesiastical unity.

At the moment, the contact is essentially in Phase 2 at the synodical level, with quite some variation in the level of contact at the local church level across the regions in Canada and the United States. In his address to synod, Rev H Zekveld did indicate that there is some hesitation among the URCNA churches to federatively unite with the CanRC. This is due to them needing to know more about the CanRC and the fact that they are yet quite a young bond and still uneasy about their own identity. The bond comprises some 80 churches throughout Canada and the United States, most of whom previously left the Christian Reformed Churches in the struggle to remain faithful to God's Word.

Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

At their previous synod, the Canadian sister churches decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS. Their deputies were instructed to continue dialogue regarding the issues that, although they were not a hindrance to ecclesiastical relations, did warrant further discussion. These issues included the way the Sunday observance is practised (they have one official worship service followed by Bible studies classes in the afternoon or evening), the administration of the sacraments to “shut-ins” (the practise of a minister and at least one elder celebrating the Lord’s Supper with individual congregation members who are “shut-in” and cannot attend the services) and the inconsistency between a paper on Church Unity and the Three Forms of Unity to which they subscribe. CanRC deputies did address these issues with them. Synod recognised that there is growing contact and considered that these issues warrant further attention. Deputies were encouraged to continue the discussions.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The OPC is a bond of 237 churches and 58 home mission works, with 425 ministers among more than 26,000 members. As with the RCUS, the Canadian Reformed Churches decided at their previous synod to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church which is located in the United States, apart from a couple of small congregations in Canada. In fact, the CanRC of Toronto is working together with the OPC to establish a mission among the Portuguese-speaking community of Toronto. A number of churches wrote to Synod Chatham regarding their disappointment with progress made in mutual discussions. Synod decided to continue the relations with the OPC and to continue discussions with them on existing differences in confession and church polity. In particular, the matter of supervision of the Lord’s Supper and confessional membership should receive priority, in addition to other matters. Synod expressly considered that “the goal of these discussions should be to determine whether this unity of the faith regarding the church, the covenant and the sacraments is adequately and faithfully expressed”. Rev J Fergusson, in his address to synod, did indicate that in the struggle to remain faithful, the OPC does face concerns such as the nature of preaching, the doctrine of creation, and revisions to their Directory for Public Worship.

Korean Presbyterian Churches of North America (KPCNA)

The Korean Presbyterian Churches of North America are a group of over 71 churches in North America that are part of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (CanRC and our sister churches). The CanRC deputies have attempted to contact them, but to no avail thus far. Synod encouraged deputies to use the contacts with the PCK to contact these churches.

Igreja Reformadas do Brasil (IRB)

Synod Neerlandia 2001 offered the IRB churches a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. The Canadian churches have close ties with the IRB

through mission work conducted in Brasil. Synod decided to continue relations with these churches.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

Synod decided to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCSA. They also encouraged the churches to aid the FRCSA with their mission work and their labours among the concerned (ie. Disenchanted; referred to as National Reformation work).

Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

For a number of years now, there has been a rift within this bond of churches which has not yet been resolved. One group now meets as the Free Church of Scotland (continuing). Synod considered that due to the lack of clarity in this situation it could not judge the division between the FCS and FCS(c) at this time. Synod decided to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS and FCS(c) under the adopted rules. The deputies were encouraged to continue the discussion on the existing differences in confession and church polity regarding the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN)

As instructed by the previous synod, deputies investigated a number of concerns with regards to developments in the Dutch sister churches, particularly in relation to: the Form for Solemnisation of Marriage, the large increase in the number of Hymns being recommended, the Fourth Commandment, the development of the Theological University as a “Knowledge Center” (as opposed to simply a training school for future Ministers of the Word), and the changing role of the Dutch deputies (ie. Passing on discussion papers from deputies directly to Synod as formal objections from a sister church). Synod decided to instruct deputies to: continue the discussion on the Marriage Form, study the results of the new Dutch deputyship on the Fourth Commandment and the Sunday, and express concern regarding the proportion of Psalms and Hymns. Regarding the recent Call to Reformation and “Vrijmaking” in The Netherlands, Synod decided to seek clarity on its legitimacy and in the meantime to inform both the GKN and these separated churches that they both have the prayerful support of the churches in the hope that they will, by God’s grace, come to reconciliation.

Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

Synod was thankful for the improved lines of communication between deputies and the PCK since there were previously concerns regarding little or no communication. Since this has also been a concern among us in Australia, we are encouraged by the progress that our Canadian sisters have made. Synod also mandated deputies to continue to discuss differences between the Westminster Confession and the Three Forms of Unity, and to pay particular attention to the fencing of the Lord’s Supper table.

Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

The CanRC also have contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA). Many of the FRCNA churches are in geographic proximity to the CanRC churches and many discussions have taken place at the local level, particularly in western Canada. The contact is good but is encountering some difficulties because of the FRCNA focus on experiential preaching (which they say is not generally done in the CanRC) and the FRCNA reluctance to enter federative unity. One of their delegates who addressed Synod Chatham pleaded for the CanRC to review the Scriptural requirement for federative unity. They do want unity, but not necessarily the “federative” unity that the CanRC have embarked on with the URCNA. Synod Chatham decided to continue meeting with the FRCNA to discuss the matter of federative unity.

L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec

The L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec is a small reformed bond of French-speaking churches located in the province of Quebec, Canada. They have been supported by some of the CanRC churches in nearby Ontario. Deputies are in discussion with them regarding fencing of the Lord's Supper, confessional accountability and pulpit supervision.

Conclusions

There was good evidence at Synod in the discussions as well as in the decisions made that the Canadian Reformed Churches want to remain faithful to God's Word and the Confessions. In their contacts with other churches, they maintain the desire to continue dialogue and discussions after building relationships of Ecclesiastical Unity (sister church relations). With churches of Presbyterian origin, Synod wanted to continue to discuss differences between the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity as well as other divergences, even after Ecclesiastical Unity was achieved. In some cases, Synod considered that deputies could have been even more diligent in their contacts and further encouraged them in that vein. May God bless the work done by the churches in Canada, and may we together be able to mutually encourage and support each other by prayer and via the means of our close ties.

On behalf of the Deputies for Sister Churches
B Veenendaal

Appendix 3b: Address of Deputies to Synod Chatham 2004

Esteemed chairman and brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a great privilege for me to be here in your midst. In the first place, I was the alternate delegate (you know, the one that usually gets put on the waiting list

but nothing comes of it?) but, Rev Huizinga as primary delegate was unfortunately unable to attend because of his pastoral commitments. Secondly, there is a law of gravity that says “what goes up, must come down”, or as we who are “down-under” might say “what goes down must come up”. Yes these ex-Canadians seem to rebound back once in a while. If it’s not the one, then it is the other. And this time it is my privilege to rebound back on Canadian soil. Yes it is good to be back here, although I must say it requires a dramatic climactic readjustment of over 50 degrees! I left Perth last week Thursday at 39 degrees Celsius!

I would first of all like to extend, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, our sincere and heartfelt greetings. We would like to thank you for the invitation and opportunity to be here. The hospitality that you have shown is no less than excellent. We pray that the Lord will guide and bless your endeavours at this meeting of synod and among the churches when the decisions are studied and implemented.

It is true that the Canadian soil and Australian soil have much in common. We have similarities in the founding and establishment of our churches as immigrants after the events of Europe in the middle of the century. We have had many common joys and struggles as the churches grew and schools were established. We share a similar language and culture. We have a common heritage and confessions. Many of our church members and even students and Ministers of the Word have moved between Australia and Canada/America over the years. Yes, we continue to face many of the same issues and challenges in our church and daily life today. That is what makes a bond between church federations so important, so valuable, and yes even necessary. Our last synod, Synod Rockingham 2003, recognised this as part of its decision regarding our relations with you, by saying: *“We value our bond with our American/Canadian Sister Churches; we can learn from each other; and should keep in good contact with them. Personal contact at synodical level reinforces this.”*. Hence our decision to send a delegate to your synod here.

Let me first fill you in on where our bond of churches is at. We are presently a bond of 12 churches comprising over 3500 members. This represents a 20% growth in the number of churches in just a few years, with Bunbury being instituted in November 2001 and Darling Downs in July 2003. Since our Synod West Albany 2000, we operate as two Classes: Classis North comprising 3 churches in the Perth metropolitan area together with the 2 churches some 4000 km away to the east in Tasmania, and Classis South comprising 4 churches of the metropolitan area together with Bunbury 150 km south and 2 churches in Albany 400 km south. A result is that our synod now meets once every 3 years instead of every 2 years.

At the moment, we have 3 vacant churches: Launceston, Albany and Darling Downs. Among these churches a number of calls to Ministers of the Word have been made, including several Canadian ones, but so far we have not been able to lure any away from the cold and snowy Canadian climate to the

warm and rugged sub-Mediterranean climate of the southern coast of Australia. Bunbury has recently been blessed with the arrival of a new minister, Rev Rupke, from Holland (in fact, he arrived two weeks ago!). His colloquium doctum will be held, the Lord willing, next week.

We continue to support and make use of your Theological College in Hamilton for the training of our students for the ministry. We are thankful for the opportunities that the Lord has provided through your college. Our last synod has instructed deputies to keep in contact with your college and to continue investigating possible avenues for training as well as for establishing our own theological library. We have further benefited from your college by the recent visit of Professor and Mrs Geertsema in our midst, which we very much appreciated. This gave us an opportunity to hear more of your work and to bring it closer to home for us. We hope to continue to invite guest lecturers from your college on a regular basis.

As a bond of churches, we continue to exercise sister church relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) churches in Indonesia. We have contacts with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines, the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC) churches in Indonesia, and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Because your deputies enquired specifically about our contacts with the churches in Indonesia and New Zealand, I will mention some more detail about them. In particular, I will quote from our Synod Rockingham 2003 decisions. With regards to the churches in Indonesia, our synod decided:

1. To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules,
2. To continue contacts with the GGRC, and
3. To thank deputies for their work and to appoint new deputies and give them the following mandate:
 - a. To continue to visit the conference/synods of the GGRI and the GGRC subject to available finance;
 - b. To support the GGRI and GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available;
 - c. To financially support br Pila Njuka (along with his family) to complete his studies at Hamilton, monitor his progress, and prepare for his return to Indonesia. To invite him to Australia on his way back to Indonesia. To ask the Indonesian churches how he could best be utilised in their midst, and to support him in the

mean time. Where necessary to support his reintegration into Indonesia and among the churches;

- d. To monitor and determine the best possibilities to train Indonesian theological students – by either supporting and helping in setting up a college for theological training (for eg., in Kupang) or sending another student overseas to study;
- e. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise;
- f. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
- g. To financially support Rev Yawan Bunda of the GGRC and in a different year Rev Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study English for three months in Australia. In the case of Rev Yan Pariamalinya, his is subject to an expected request from the GGRI deputies. Both requests are subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to the availability of funding from the churches;
- h. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in c, d, f and g above.

[Article 73, Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003]

With regards to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the synod decided:

1. Not to proceed with the decision in principle to offer fraternal relations.
2. To confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and the implications of an offer of sister relations with them, and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy.
4. To recognise that the only remaining difficulty with entering into a relationship with the RCNZ is the relationship of the RCNZ with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia.
5. To assess the situation with respect to this relation at an upcoming synod to see if this remains a difficulty to entering into full sister-church relations or not.
6. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To convey these decisions to the RCNZ

- b. To assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod
- c. To intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits, if the synodical budget allows
- d. To invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCNZ
- e. To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature and visits

[Article 72, Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003]

Further information is available in the Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003. The printed acts are still in press and your deputies for sister church relations only recently received the electronic version of the Acts. The synod did require two sessions to complete its work, one in July and the other in October. The last session was necessary in order to do justice to a number of appeals from churches and individuals. Thankfully, synod could complete its task in good harmony.

A glance over the agenda of your synod shows that you too have many items to deal with: relations with churches at home and abroad, Bible translations, hymns and liturgy, procedures for appeals, the Theological College, etc. In all of that, you too want to be faithful to God's Word and the Confessions and that is evident in the way you conduct your deliberations and business here at synod.

Last week you made an announcement regarding the appointment of Dr A. DeVisser as professor for your theological college. On behalf of the Australian churches, I would like to congratulate you as churches with this appointment! We pray that Dr DeVisser may see his way clear to take up the appointment in your midst. May the college receive in this new appointment, the blessings and guidance of our Heavenly Father in preparing men who are able to lead and teach the flock of Christ. We pray that your churches as well as ours may continue to benefit from the teaching and guidance of those at the college who have been entrusted with this beautiful task.

At the same time, we are reminded and saddened by the deterioration of the health of Professor DeJong. As I already mentioned, as churches we have greatly benefited from the college, and this includes the writings and support of Professor DeJong. The Lord has given us many riches through this servant of His, in the unveiling of the mysteries of His Word. May He continue to bless that work both here in Canada and beyond. We also trust that the way for our

brother is the Lord's path and that he is safe in God's hands. We have the comfort of Lord's Day 1 of our Heidelberg Catechism, that we belong to Christ our Saviour. May our Heavenly Father surround br DeJong and his family with His steadfast love and care, and may that comfort of Lord's Day 1 continue to give us all hope and joy.

May the Lord also guide you in your relations and contacts with other bonds of churches. You have a number of relatively new, in addition to the continuing, sister church relations that are occupying some of your time and concerns. May you continue to develop and nurture these relationships so that Christ's church may continue to be gathered, defended and preserved in this country. With regards to the sister churches in the Netherlands, we share some of the same concerns as you. May you be given God's wisdom and understanding to deal with these issues in a brotherly and caring, and yet forthright manner that pleases the Lord and that may be used to encourage and direct your sister churches in the paths of righteousness.

Continue to be guided by God's Word and Spirit and stand fast in the faith. Continue to be vigilant and withstand the attacks of Satan on the church. Continue to work with joy in the unity of the faith that has been entrusted to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. When we view it in that light, then the awesome work which the Lord places before us becomes a beautiful work that praises and honors our Heavenly Creator and the Head of the Church.

As your sister churches in Australia, we wish you God's indispensable blessing on your deliberations here at synod, and on your bond of churches in the struggle of faith. May our mutual contacts be used to edify each other to God's honour and glory.

May I end with the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-16:

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Thank you.

Appendix 4: Deputies Relations with Sister Churches – Presbyterian Church in Korea

1.1 Mandate (Article 30, Acts of Synod 2003)

Decision:

1. That the FRCA continue Sister Church Relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) according to the established rules.
2. That deputies are mandated to use the opportunity to improve contact with the PCK by direct dialogue with Dr S.G. Hur and the Fraternal Relations Committee.
3. In an endeavour to strengthen ties and communications with the PCK, that if we are invited, we accept the invitation to the next General Assembly of the PCK.
4. That deputies include in their report to next synod, an assessment about the viability of continued relations with the PCK on the basis of the adopted rules for sister relations, together with recommendations.

Grounds:

1. 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.
2. Dr. S. G. Hur has offered to assist in the contact and dialogue with PCK and sees that it is important to continue with this work.
3. The PCK has received the least amount of attention over the years and deputies have not been to the General Assembly of the PCK to pursue the task under the Rules for Sister Church Relations.
4. As Mt Nasura and Armadale rightly note, a sister relation that does not function should be recognised as such.

1.2 Activities by Deputies

Correspondence

Materials Sent

1. Deputies sent hard copies of the FRCA Synod Acts of the Synod at Rockingham 2003 to the Fraternal Relations Committee of the PCK.

2. Letter outlining a detailed request for dialogue and meaningful relationship, and a request for G.A. #54 information and or English summary of decisions; e-mail 08.03.2005.
3. Various e-mails to establish and request contact and information.
4. 06.06.2005; Letter of greeting to the PCK Fraternal Relations Committee for the 2005 General Assembly and a notification of invitation for the forthcoming FRCA Synod at West Kelmscott (sent in time for the 55th G.A. so that the G.A. could provide their Fraternal Relations Committee with a mandate if required).
5. Invitation to the Fraternal Relations Committee to the FRCA synod at West Kelmscott in 2006.

Material Received

1. During the year 2004 an invitation was received from the Fraternal Relations Committee of the PCK. to attend the 54th General Assembly.
2. Various e-mail responses to requests for information for contact details.
3. Publications and information booklet of the Kosin Church.
4. Letter by e-mail from Professor Yoo with a request from Fraternal Relations Committee inviting the FRCA to send a delegate to the 55th PCK G.A. in September 2005.

Actions

1. Several meetings were held with Dr S.G Hur to discuss the contact with the PCK, and the possibility to receive support to translate the address to the G.A.
2. Br AMC Bruning was nominated as delegate to attend the 54th General Assembly (G.A.) of the PCK.

Address to the G.A. is appended to this report as Appendix 1

The address was translated by Dr S.G. Hur and displayed on screen in the G.A.

During the visit as delegate to the G.A. a meeting was held with the new Fraternal Relations committee and a copy of the FRCA 2003 Synod acts and Deputies report (inadvertently omitted from the acts) was handed to the Fraternal relations Committee.

3. Report on the visit to South Korea and the G.A. was published in the *Una Sancta*.

Report is appended as Appendix 2.

4. Br AC Breen visited Korea on invitation by the reformed schools of the Independent Reformed Churches of Korea in his capacity as Support Officer for our Schools. Opportunity was taken to arrange a meeting with the Fraternal Relations Committee of our sister churches (PCK) which occurred in January 2006. See report as Appendix 3.

Observations

1. The contact with the PCK during the visit to the G.A. in 2004 was initially very good. Contact and discussion with the general secretary (Dr Ho Jin Jun) of the General Assembly was excellent and initially looked promising in the intent of strengthening ties with the FRCA.

Hospitality, discussions and interest was intense with some initial ideas of closer working together being evident. However, once the general assembly started and after the general secretary (Dr Ho Jin Jun) was voted out of his position the contact had to be re-established.

Owing to internal difficulties at the G.A. many opportunities were lost for any discussion with the new Fraternal Relations Committee. A new committee is appointed at each annual general assembly.

2. Professor Haemoo Yoo at their Seminary in Chon-an is the most readily available and most responsive to our communications. Professor Yoo has a strong reformed stance and a strong supporter for the reformed doctrine.
3. The difficulty in communication between the Deputies for Sister Churches of the FRCA and the Fraternal Relations Committee of the PCK has been overcome by the appointment of Professor Haemoo Yoo following the last G.A. of the PCK. He has been appointed to the committee as the continuing contact person with us. Also, the FRC of the PCK has delegated him and chairman Rev Jeon to visit our next synod.

Recommendations

1. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules.
2. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in improved lines of communications as well as a visit from a delegation of our Korean sisters.
3. To accept the assessment of deputies that since there is agreement for better communications, there is also reason to be more optimistic about the viability of continued sister relations.

Grounds

1. No evidence has arisen suggesting that the PCK departs from the Word of God, the reformed confessions or their Church Order.
2. Visits to Korea in the past three years have helped to build better lines of communication.
3. For the first time in our history we may be able to welcome a delegation from our Korean sisters to our synod.
4. Pledges have been given for a good line of communication as well as regular English summaries concerning their annual general assemblies.

Appendix 4a: Address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea

21 September 2004

Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour

It is with much thankfulness, gratitude and pleasure that I am able to be here to address so great a gathering. In my capacity as elder of the Free Reformed Church in Armadale I have frequently addressed congregational meetings, or led the worship services to read a sermon in our Minister's absence, but never before to an assembly as large as this.

As a member of the Deputies for Sister Church Relations (You have the Fraternal Relations Committee) of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, I wish to thank your Fraternal Relations Committee and also Rev. Dr. Ho Jin Jun, secretary of the PCK for the invitation to address your 54th General Assembly.

My first duty is to pass on to your General Assembly the greetings from the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia which we as deputies were delegated to do. It is our hope and prayer that this contact today, and message of greeting from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia may strengthen our Church Relations and so also lead to the increase of the great Church gathering work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please allow me present to you a brief explanation of our Australian Churches' life, it's history and also the contact with your PCK.

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia came into existence approximately 50 years ago. Our churches have a similar history to the Canadian Reformed Churches which some of you know really well. Migrants from Holland, escaping the ruins of war and wanting to migrate to countries which had better prospects for family life, and work, arrived on Australian soils in the early

1950s. They gathered in the West in Armadale, some in Albany and others some 3,500km to the East in Tasmania. All started gathering together as migrant members of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands and soon established their own congregations and churches. The Free Reformed Churches of Armadale, Albany and Launceston (Tasmania) all celebrated their 50 year anniversary in the past three years, as you did in 2000.

From small migrant family beginnings, the Churches have grown to a total of 12 Churches with between 3500 to 3800 members. The 12 churches are in one bond and currently function with 2 classes and meet at Synod every 3rd year.

The early migrants had at a very early stage of church life concluded that a very important task in the communion of saints and the survival and growth of the Church is the Christian teaching and education of their children in the ways of the Lord. The task of catechistical teaching belongs to the church, but the task of raising children is the task of parents. Parents, indeed, virtually all the members of the FRCA worked together and in 1957 established our own John Calvin Christian School/Colleges to educate their children. From Kindergarten to Year 12 (prior to tertiary education) some seven primary and three high schools exist. This working together has also kept our churches together in a close group in and around Armadale, Albany and Launceston, with a recent church and school starting in Bunbury.

Yes, indeed, the upbringing of our Covenant children in Reformed Schools is a very rich and important element in our responsibility and service to God, not controlled by the churches, but by the faithful working of the Communion of Saints. Separate, yet integral, on the basis of God's word, commandments and Christian mandate.

The 12 congregations of the FRCA all function in a similar way, and activities in bible study clubs, (younger youth, older youth, men's and women's clubs) , associations namely, for disabled/handicapped persons, retirement village and hostel, political party, emergency relief foundations are all examples of work being done by church people of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia

The FRCA has always been active in it's Mission mandate. In the past work amongst the indigenous people of Australia occurred which had been very difficult with very few results, and currently various of the churches support mission work, with some churches collectively and others individually active, in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia (various places) and India. Evangelism via radio broadcast segments is also done on a local basis.

Brothers, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia has a very rich Reformed heritage which has it's roots via the Reformed Churches in Holland in the Church reformation of Calvin and Luther. Due to the migrant population, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia members are mostly of Dutch origin, now into it's fourth generation for some families. This means of course that our ties with Holland are still quite strong, and with the opportunities of travel these days there is an increasing of ties with Canada and also South Africa. The Free

Reformed Churches of Australia has much in common with Canada and Holland and is currently served by 9 ministers, of which 5 come from our Canadian Sister Churches, and 3 from our sister churches in Holland. From within our churches we have had young men study for the Ministry, and some 5 are serving as ministers in our Canadian Churches and 1 in Holland. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia supports the Theological College in Hamilton, Canada and the students that study there. Many families have relations in the 3 countries, and just as I did myself in 1978, many young people find their spouses in or from these “sister” countries.

The contact with your PCK has not been at that level of intensity. Our historical development and the national differences between Australia and Korea having a lot to do with that. The first ecclesiastical contact came in the early 1970s with Sister Church status being reached in 1976. The congregation of Armadale, the only church in that area at that time had grown to over 600 members and extended a call to Dr S G Hur in 1977 to assist the late Rev K Bruning. Dr Hur and his family arrived in Australia in 1978 and became the minister of the second church established in the next suburb to Armadale, namely Kelmscott. He has as you know, retired and has now settled in Australia and has been of assistance to translate my address to you, for which I thank him wholeheartedly.

Brothers, if I am correctly informed, this is the first time that the The Free Reformed Churches of Australia has officially sent a delegate to your General Assembly, for that I feel honoured and thankful. However, it is a fact – and you may glean that from our last 2 to 3 Synod Acts – that I am here to re-establish contact, and to discuss with your Fraternal Relations Committee the feasibility, viability, and value of continuing meaningful Sister Church Relations. We as deputies have sent you the Synod Acts of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and received English summaries of your General Assembly decisions in the past, however, in recent years we have had very little contact at all. From our side we have not had many discussions with you on issues or activities we have in common and from your side we understand that you have dealt with some significant difficulties relating to the operation and management of your University, Theological College and hospital. For this we wish you much wisdom and patience.

Dr Ho Jin Jun has corresponded with us in the past year, and provided us with good and useful information and it is our hope and prayer that this can bear much fruit. It would be most beneficial for your Fraternal Relations committee to maintain continuity in it's secretary appointment so that a period of relationship building can be developed.

What we do share with you, and no border, culture or nationality can cut thru that, is the Word, the Son of God, and the worldwide mandate to spread His Church to the ends of the earth. We also share the attacks of Satan, individually as persons, within our families and indeed in our Churches. We

struggle with sin, and yet we know, that if we persevere in our work, then that struggle will end in Triumph for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brother delegates, we wish you God's Blessings in your work here at your General Assembly, in your Church life, in the raising and education of covenant children and in your struggles over the modern attacks on our Godly heritage, and His Church.

Thank you.

Appendix 4b: Press Release Deputies Sister Church Relations – Presbyterian Church of Korea

Mandate

The Synod of the Free Reformed Churches held at Rockingham decided to continue Sister Church relations with the PCK, and had given Deputies for Sister Church Relations the mandate to improve contact with the PCK Fraternal Relations Committee by way of direct contact with them and with the help of Dr S.G. Hur.

In an endeavour to strengthen ties with the PCK deputies were mandated to attend the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea if invited.

Following an exchange of letters of correspondence and receipt of general information on the Presbyterian Church of Korea and copy of an English summary of the 53rd General Assembly's major decisions and other information from Dr Ho Jin Jun, the then General Secretary of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, Deputies received an invitation to the 54th General Assembly beginning on Monday, 20 September 2004, to be held in the Seminary Complex at Chon-an, approximately 120km south of Seoul.

Brother A.M.C. Bruning was delegated to visit the General Assembly. His trip to Korea was over a 1 week period, starting on Saturday 18th September 2004.

His report includes as follows,...

... "that the 11-hour flight was quite relaxing and with the benefit of flying on virtually the same time line, I arrived quite refreshed and keen to "explore" the surroundings and make acquaintances that evening.

The hospitality and organisational skills of the Koreans was immediately evident upon my arrival, and despite the major language obstacles (on my part obviously) I found my personal car driver who was waiting for me at the Incheon Airport, which was some 100km from Seoul. This was to be my first place of stay for 2 nights.

My first impressions of Korea while travelling to Seoul, was the huge residential developments (all high rise villages) each easily seen in the dark by the lighting.

And in particular, the numerous red crosses illuminated on church spires. (More about that later)

On arrival at the Presbyterian Church of Korea's head office building in Banpo-dong, Sheocho-gu (a suburb of Seoul, now swallowed up in the greater metropolitan area, where over 12/14 million people live), I was immediately placed in the care of an English speaking (Welsh) Minister who came to teach English at the School of Missiology in the same building.

In the seven storey building which houses a church in the basement, function rooms, accommodation, libraries, printing shop, and a School of Missiology I also met Pastor No of that congregation, with whom I detected a Dutch accent. He (like many other Professors and Pastors I met had studied in Holland.

SUNDAY 19th

Sunday morning breakfast was in the School Canteen where I met more visiting "English teachers". Two were Australian (eating vegemite on toast!!) and one originally from Holland. These people are volunteers who can work up to three months at a time in Korea. These volunteers come from various different backgrounds and denominations, and respond to appeals for volunteers via agency advertisements. (Maybe this is an area we can explore for future assistance).

Sunday morning I was invited to worship at the 11am Church service, and with the aid of some interpretation by Dr Ho Jin Jun and a Korean/English songbook I could follow the general thrust of the service. This congregation had an active choir, which sang prior to and after the worship service and also led some of the singing during the worship service.

A number of interesting practices occur in their Sunday worship, (at least in this Congregation). Early morning prayer and study sessions are arranged for young people, infants to early teens, and another group of older youth. (Similar to our Youth Club and Catechism rolled into one). Their meetings are led by student pastors, who provide a very energetic leadership, and have a very attentive audience. (Perhaps my sitting in with the older youth made them more attentive! Sound familiar?) With the aid of a young student who could speak English I could provide them with a brief explanation of my visit.

Following these sessions, the Church worship service was held at 11:00am. After the worship service the whole congregation shared a hot cooked meal, and then the majority of the Church adults attended Bible study clubs, including singing and discussions.

The balance of the rest day was taken up by a city tour by a few ladies of the Congregation, who also arranged a Korean spread for dinner together with one of the Aussie teachers.

MONDAY 20th

On Monday morning we awoke to a drizzling, humid day. Dr Ho Jin Jun invited a few of us “foreigners” to a sumptuous breakfast in a local Hotel restaurant and then we travelled by car to the Seminary in Chon-an where the General Assembly would be held. Chon-an is located approximately 120 km South of Seoul. On arrival it was established that I could not stay at the Seminary as the Korean delegates occupied the student accommodation. (No mention was made of the fact that there were no beds , but floor mats to sleep on!!) A local Motel a few km’s away (which did have beds) was arranged, and a student from the Seminary doing assistance work to the General Assembly became my taxi driver.

The 54th General Assembly of the PCK was scheduled to open at 3:00pm that afternoon.

However a protest at the G.A. caused quite a delay to proceedings, which did not get under way till the following morning.

Professor YOO

On the evening of Monday 20th, whilst waiting for the outcome of the sit in protest, I spent over an hour with the professor of Dogmatics, Dr. Yoo (whom you will recollect from the visit/report of Br A Breen). I was invited to his office/study and could recognise the study as one of a reformed minister, including many German and Dutch Theological books and even a portrait of K. Schilder. Amid the many topics we discussed we touched on the worldwide Reformed Theology and the diminishing effect in the world churches, even in Korea. (Albeit the history of the PCK is not from a Reformed background but has a strong Methodist influence). Dr Yoo did express a desire for more effective penetration of the Reformed faith, and pleaded for support for this. He provided me with a paper on the Reformed tradition in the Korean Churches.

Dr Yoo had, prior to my visit already made arrangements to show me around the Chon-an district.

TUESDAY 21st

The General Assembly was eventually opened at approximately 10:30 on Tuesday morning, after a settlement of the protest issue. I was seated next to a Rev. Yu Ryang, Lee who is president of a Korean church Seminary in the USA whom could translate the important items and comments. The first agenda item was the election of President, General Secretary and other officers in the General Assembly. An eye opener for me was the method of electronic voting whereby 500+ delegates caste their vote. As the result was being calculated by the computer, it was displayed on a large screen. Within 20 mins all votes were cast and results known, (perhaps we can use this in our elections for office bearers!) A result of the elections was the non return of Dr Ho Jin Jun to General Secretary and thus loss of our contact which we had established over the past 12 months.

Due to the loss of time at the start of the G.A., I was informed at first that I would not be given opportunity to deliver my prepared address, however, after the Voting for the positions in the General Assembly, I could address the meeting. With the aid of modern technology my prepared address, already translated by Dr Hur prior to me leaving for Korea, was displayed in Korean on a huge overhead screen for all to read. My verbal address (interpreted by Dr Yoo) could therefore be limited to a greeting and word of appreciation, thanks and encouragement for the circumstances they found themselves in. For the rest of the time I had at the General Assembly the agenda was taken up on greetings by other foreign delegates, (mostly Koreans), from other countries, e.g. USA, Australia, N. Zealand, Kazakhstan, and the Japanese Reformed Church. Other business that day involved the adoption of financial and management reports.

WEDNESDAY 22nd

On the morning of 22 September I was met at the Auditorium by Rev. Yu Ryang, Lee who advised me that there was a change in plan in returning to the Airport at Incheon.

Being 150 – 200 km from the airport meant I would need to leave Chon-an before 6 am on the Thursday, to reach the international airport in time for my 11:30am flight departure. However it was felt that due to a festival long weekend commencing on Friday 24th, that the traffic on Thursday would already be very congested and hinder my return on time for my flight departure.

They had therefore arranged that Rev. Yu Ryang, Lee would accompany me back to Seoul and act as tour guide and interpreter, taking me to the Seoul markets and then on to a motel closer to the International Airport.

So instead of attending further sessions of the G.A., which would not have been of any value, I did manage to get the opportunity of a face-to-face meeting with the Fraternal Relations committee, now with Pastor Jun Tae as Chairman. This meeting was brief due to the changed travel plans, and their shortened G.A. due to lost time at the start. Our meeting was limited to an exchange of greetings and a formal request for good contact and discussing the background of the FRCA synod decisions and questions relating to Sister Church Relations. I left with them a copy of our 2003 Synod Acts and the separate deputies report.

Dr Ho Jun Jin advised me by e-mail after my visit that he would remain on the committee of Fraternal Relations as correspondent secretary for the foreign Churches.

My journey back to Seoul meant that I would not be spending any more time with Professor Yoo, with whom I wished to spend more time. Further contact with him direct has been planned.

The train journey back to Seoul took almost 2 hours and made it's way thru rural Korea although major cities every so often gave me the distinct impression

that if their wasn't any rice being grown, it was due to high rise accommodation, industry or infrastructure.

Besides experiencing more Korean food, crowds and the excellent transport system in Seoul, I had an uneventful return to my motel that evening and the airport the following morning....

Further contact

Communication has been taken up with the Fraternal Relations Committee, and with the aid of face to face contact and English speaking members on their Fraternal Relations committee, deputies are now awaiting responses to questions and requests for information and G.A. reports.

Discussions within the FRCA deputies meetings will continue once replies are received and visits to other synods have taken place.

Deputies are thankful for the help Dr S.G. Hur could contribute so far.

Appendix 4c: Report of the Meeting 18th January 2006 Kosin's Fraternal Relations Committee – FRCA Deputy AC Breen

Present:

Chairman FRC: Rev Jeon

Secretary FRC: Rev Shin

Treasurer FRC: Presbyterian Kim

Contact person: Prof Dr Yoo

Deputy FRCA: AC Breen

The main Agenda point was the difficulty in communication between FRCA deputies and the Kosin FRC. I told them what sister church relation means to us: to know each other; to be a hand and a foot to each other; to encourage and if necessary to admonish each other. If we don't know each other we don't know how to support each other, how to pray for each other, how to help each other. Sister relation shouldn't be keeping up a static but a dynamic contact.

In the past the relation / contact went via dr Hur who spoke both Korean and English. He also understood the cultural and ecclesiastical differences between Korea and Australia very well. But at the moment there is a lack of communication. Our e-mails simply don't seem to have been passed on or received any attention. And there is no Kosin contact person. What do we propose our General Synod West Kelmscott 2006? To stop relations because of the lack of communication?

Their response was crystal clear: "First of all, we feel so sorry for not answering your e-mails. We feel very sorry about this, although there are reasons for: a) there are all new FRC members with all new duties; b) there were difficulties with sending your e-mails to the right persons; c) within the FRC there are serious problems with the English language at the moment." "We really esteem

relationship with FRCA, and we have decided to appoint prof dr Yoo officially as contact person between Kosin and the FRCA. Further we have decided to visit FRCA Synod 2006 with two delegates: FRC chairman Rev Jeon, and contact person prof dr Yoo.”

During the meeting we decided that DV coming July we will speak with each other about the translation of their Newsletter and the Proceedings of their General Assemblies; their relations with the HapDong churches; mission work in China; and what we can do together for the Christians in North-Korea (e.g. supporting North Korean refugees at the border of China and North Korea).

At the end of the meeting I promised them to send prof Yoo asap an invitation for our coming Synod. They asked me to finish in prayer.

AC Breen

Appendix 5: Deputies Relations with Sister Churches – Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

1.1 Mandate

Synod Rockingham 2003 Article 59 made the following decision regarding our sister Free Reformed Churches of South Africa:

Recommendations

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To instruct deputies to continue to visit alternate synods of the FRCSA.

Grounds

1. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Our visits to South Africa and their visits to us have proven very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

1.2 Activities

Deputies have continued their contact with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) via their deputies. We do this via exchange of acts of synods, church magazines (ie. we receive the monthly Kompas via email), email and visits to synods. An extraordinary synod was held in March 2005 to address urgent issues related to the theological training. The regularly scheduled synod was held in Pretoria in May 2005. We received a delegate from the FRCSA to our previous synod, and they have decided to send a delegate to our forthcoming synod as well.

We received an invitation to attend Synod Pretoria-Maranata which was held on 23-26 May 2005. Arrangements were made with the South Africa Support Committee (SASC) to send a delegate to represent both them and us, and Br B Veenendaal was subsequently delegated to attend. Financial arrangements were shared with the SASC. The report of this Synod as well as the address delivered to synod were published in the *Una Sancta* in 2005. This report is attached as Appendix A, and the address as Appendix B. Br Veenendaal was also invited to address the congregation of the church at Capetown right after the afternoon worship service and to pass on the greetings from the Australian sister churches.

As a very small bond of churches, the South African sisters have a large task before them, as is evident from the report of synod. Consider for example the growth in the mission work and increasing number of mission posts, the national reformation work, the relations with churches and in particular the Dopperkerken, not to mention the challenge of integrating the newly-established (two) black churches, the Afrikaner churches, and the Dutch-background churches in one federation. Thankfully, as churches and coordinated via the SASC, we were able to support these churches in a very small way with the National Reformation work. May the Lord bless this bond of churches and our contact with them.

1.3 Recommendations

Deputies recommend the following to synod:

Recommendations:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To instruct deputies to send one delegate to their next synod (2008).

Grounds:

1. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Our visits to South Africa and their visits to us have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

Appendix 5a: Report of Visit to Synod Pretoria 2005 Held 23-26 May 2005 at Pretoria-Maranata

South Africa is a country of contrasts and variations, a country of beauty and danger, a country of mountains and plains, a country of cultures and languages. Towards the southeast corner of South Africa, Table Mountain in the center of Capetown slopes to the flats where many of the townships lie (including the mission work being done in Belhar and Wesbank) following by the beautiful Drakenstein and Hottentot Mountains towards Stellenbosch. About 1500 to 2000 kilometers to the northeast are the huge metropoli of Johannesburg and Pretoria surrounded by vast townships on the rolling highlands far above sea level. Travelling east across the Highveld, where Bethal is situated, you come across the beautiful Drakensburg Mountains and majestic valleys and canyons that give way to the Lowveld in which the internationally renowned Kruger Park together with all its beautiful wildlife is situated.

Across that vast topographic landscape you find languages and cultures ranging from English and Afrikaans to Northern Suthu in the northeast, to Zulu in the east, to Xhosa (to which Nelson Mandela belongs) in the south, back to Afrikaans in the west, not to mention the others of the 11 official languages of South Africa. The history and developments in South Africa have unfolded among the Africans (truly black population among numerous tribes), the Afrikaners (those descended from the Dutch settlers), English-speaking population descended from the British settlers (I asked someone on the bus if they were an Afrikaner and they politely corrected me by saying they were an English-speaking South African!), and the colored peoples (descended from the intermarriage of blacks and whites). Amidst that diverse culture you see the dangers of theft and burglary, insecurity and instability, extreme poverty and extreme wealth, and of course the killer disease AIDS of which South Africa has the highest rate (40% of blacks in South Africa are believed to be HIV positive!).

This is the environment in which our sister churches, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) held their synod hosted by the church at Pretoria-Maranata. The beautiful country and the rich diversity of cultures presents a challenge for the churches as they strive to serve their Heavenly Master, work among the mission fields at their own doorstep, and seek to reach out to those in other churches of reformed origin (the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk – NGK, the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk - NHK, and the Reformed Church of South Africa – RCSA; also referred to as the Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika – Dopperkerk). Among the high security fencing and homes, next to the townships and squatter settlements, in the midst of job losses to the whites as blacks expand their control of the country, the churches are aware of the fact that every day is a blessing from the Lord, and that they depend on Him for their daily needs and care. From visiting these churches, it is evident that they desire to glorify and serve the Lord in obedience and humbleness. Amongst the challenges of living for God, is the joy and happiness in the promises of God. The following sections highlight some of the topics and decisions of synod of interest to our churches.

Synod opening

A prayer service prior to the commencement of synod was held on Monday 23rd May 2005. While most other parts of the service were held in Afrikaans, the sermon was proclaimed in English for the benefit of the black brothers and sisters from the churches at Mamelodi and Soshanguve North, and the associated mission fields in that area. In his sermon, Rev P Nel, well-known to us in Australia, focussed on how Christ is the salt that must season each one of us, so that it forms the basis of our work and so that we can have peace with one another (Mark 9:49,50).

After the prayer service, synod commenced with opening words from elder br VanDyk of the church at Pretoria-Maranata. Chosen as moderamen were Rev C Kleyn as chairman, Rev P Nel as vice-chairman and Elder Paul Bouwman as

clerk. The synod matters were discussed over three days. On Thursday evening, synod was adjourned, and will meet again in a second session in January 2006, to give deputies for theological training sufficient time to do some work before a further decision can be made.

Theological training

The issue of theological training was the most controversial topic on the synod agenda. At the moment, the theological training occurs in three distinct ways: an own Theological Training for Afrikaans students in the Pretoria region, the use of Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC) for black Suthu-speaking students, and theological training for the colored students in the Capetown region organised by the church at Bellville. The 3-year MTC program is followed by a 4th year which is taught by the FRCSA ministers and is known as Mukhanyo Plus.

Some of the issues and difficulties facing the churches are the fact that there are fewer ministers to do the teaching (given that Prof DeVisser, Rev Boersema and Rev Visser have departed over the last few years), MTC is not of their churches (although they make use of the FRCSA ministers and have an FRCSA representative on their board) and has a lower standard in terms of the languages instruction, the Capetown student ministers have different requirements and are geographically distant from the Pretoria region, and currently there are no Afrikaans students for their own college.

Synod decided to appoint deputies with the mandate to develop plans and details for establishing a ministerial training institute (MTI) with a full-time director under the responsibility of a board appointed by synod. In the meantime, the Suthu-speaking students (there are currently 3 of them) will continue to use Mukhanyo followed by the 1 year Mukhanyo Plus program. White Afrikaans students will be advised to make use of theological training institutes overseas (ie. Canada, etc.). For the students in the Cape (three of them also) the mission church at Bellville will be asked to accept responsibility for the existing colored students until they are ready for a final year which will be organised by the MTI. The deputies will report back to the following session of synod in D.V. January 2006.

Mission work

Since attending the previous synod in 2002, there have been quite some developments in the mission fields. Two of the mission churches, Mamelodi and Soshanguve North, were instituted as churches and contribute together with the white churches in the same classes and ecclesiastical assemblies. The two black student ministers examined at the previous synod were also called and ordained to these two congregations, Rev T. Mogale to Mamelodi and Rev P. Magagula to Soshanguve North.

The church at Pretoria-Maranata still oversees the mission work at Soshanguve-Central, Soshanguve-South and Soshanguve-Southeast. Having successfully passed his classis examination in 2004, Rev Jerry Mhlunga works

as missionary in Soshanguve-South. Rev Peter Boon, who is originally from South Africa and previously served two congregations in The Netherlands, was called as missionary for the mission posts at Soshanguve-Central and Southeast, and was ordained for this work on the Sunday prior to the commencement of synod. Soshanguve-Southeast is also the location of a hospice for terminally-ill HIV/AIDS patients and occupies much time and effort by a number of ladies of the sister churches. In fact, every Sunday morning after the worship service, the members of the mission church in Soshanguve-Southeast go to the hospice, and after a short encouraging message given by the minister/theological student, they sing for the patients.

One of the newly instituted churches, Mamelodi, has taken over responsibility from the church at Pretoria-Maranata since 2004 for the mission work in Nellmapius, also near Pretoria. This mission post started about 3 years ago in a small shack in the backyard of someone's place, and has grown quite rapidly so that approximately 80 persons attend the worship services each Sunday.

The deputies responsible for mission coordinate the strategic planning and directions of the mission work, while the sending churches are responsible for carrying out that strategy in the mission work. The deputies are responsible for the strategic vision as well as for coordinating the work among the mission churches and managing the mission funds.

The financial responsibility for the newly-instituted churches as a result of mission work needs to be phased out to become the responsibility of the Deputies for Needy Churches. This creates a different need, not just one for mission work, but also for needy churches. With such a small bond, the churches need to look overseas for financial assistance to supplement their own resources.

Springs

Synod was informed by a Classis of some sad developments. The church at Springs was dissolved because of a lack of numbers. This church had joined the federation less than 10 years ago after leaving the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) because of disenchantment with their unscriptural directions, and after having remained independent for some 10 years. When the church entered the bond of our sister churches, they were just under 100 in membership.

Sadly, many of the members retained much of their past heritage and erroneous views. For example, they wanted to make sure that no blacks could be part of the church (ie. remnants of Apartheid), a view still held by members of the Afrikaans Protestantie Kerk (APK). This view became apparent when a black person attended a service in Springs. When the Springs consistory did not go along with their anti-black view, and tried to encourage and teach the congregation how the Lord gathers peoples from ALL nations and cultures, over half of the congregation withdrew themselves, including members of consistory. Some went to the APK and others back to the NGK or elsewhere.

Even with the hard work and efforts of Rev Mendel Retief, the congregation eventually dwindled to less than 10 persons so that a decision was made to dissolve it. The remaining members decided to join our sister church at Johannesburg, about 45 minutes drive from Springs. With advice from classis, Rev Retief was freed of his responsibility in Springs and is available for call.

It is sad to see such developments, but it reminds us of our dependence on the Lord in everything. Much work can be done in His service, but we realise that we are only tools in God's hands and only He can cause the growth. It appears that there was initial great joy from children of the Lord who were seeking the truth among a bond of churches that shows evidence of faithfulness. But the seed appears to be sown among rocky or thorny ground, so that when confronted with a decision, many of these people chose to remain blinded in their old sinful ways, rather than seek the truth of Scripture and the Lord's command of obedience and humbleness.

Liturgical music

Among the churches there is some variation in the music used in the church services. The churches with dutch background at the moment utilise the psalms and a small selection of scriptural rhymings (hymns).

The churches with Afrikaans background have been used to a much broader selection of hymns, but have grown to appreciate the psalms and hymns and have moved towards using them in their church services. For example, the church at Bethal, having used the NGK hymnbook not even three years ago, now use the same psalmbook as the rest of the churches. In fact, they have a chart posted at the back of the church that shows 3 columns: the psalms they don't know, the psalms they are presently learning, and the psalms they already know. The latter column contained 75% of the psalms – probably exceeds many of our congregations in Australia!

The black churches have a very different background, and utilise a wide range of hymns (very few psalms) which have historically been obtained via Lutheran missionaries and translated into Suthu, the language of their church services. These churches would love to have more psalms and have them translated into their own Suthu language, and this plea was expressed at synod.

At the same time, the churches are wary of opening up to large numbers of hymns, although extending their current number of hymns is desired by some. Synod renewed the mandate of deputies to do a thorough study on the songs in the worship service and to select songs according to the criteria stipulated by a previous synod.

What is interesting to note is that, among the churches that have come from a broad liberal or evangelical background and have become more reformed, there is a trend towards focussing more and more on the Psalms and moving away from a wide selection of Hymns. This is in sharp contrast to many churches with a traditional reformed heritage (and I think not only of churches in

South Africa) that are trending towards a greater selection of hymns (and hence less focus on the Psalms)!

Church relations

The synod of the FRCSA decided to continue sister relations with the Canadian/American Reformed Churches, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKV), and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Regarding the GKV, synod mandated their deputies to accurately record and keep an eye on developments, since there is cause for concern regarding the developments there. With respect to the newly liberated GKV-continuing (GKVC) churches in The Netherlands, synod decided to decline their request for sister relations and call on them to reconsider their withdrawal since their request is “based on an erroneous presentation of the situation and an incorrect interpretation of synod decisions”.

They decided to continue limited contact with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and to remain informed regarding developments in the churches in North America, namely the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) and the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS) – both sister churches of our sister Canadian Reformed Churches.

With regards to churches in Africa, the decision was to only maintain contact primarily via the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). This includes the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, two churches in Kenya, and one church in Nigeria. The FRCSA continues to be a member of the ICRC and is hosting the next conference to be held in October 2005. They will also attend the next ICRC mission conference to be held in Kenya in 2007.

The Free Church of South Africa is a result of the mission work done by the Free Church of Scotland, and they exist in South Africa in geographic proximity to the FRCSA. They have bonds with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA). Synod decided to continue contacts with them and to attend each others ecclesiastical assemblies.

The PCEA asked the FRCSA if they were interested in establishing a more formal relationship with them. Synod Pretoria decided to decline their request and simply remain informed regarding developments in these churches.

The synod decided to intensify contact with the Johannesburg Korean Church (JKC) which maintains a bond in South Africa and whose ministers (1 minister and 2 missionaries) are under the supervision and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

Two delegates from the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA-Dopperkerk) were present at Synod Pretoria. Rev Ben Fourier addressed the synod and spoke about their churches and the importance of contacts and relations. Presently, there is a link via the theological training in Potchefstroom and Mukhanyo which have trained ministers from both bonds. The RCSA have

decided at their synod to allow women in the office of Deacon. One of the RCSA delegates at the synod confirmed that this indeed did refer to the full office of Deacon which was contrary to what their own deputies (RCSA) had previously officially stated. The RCSA delegates perceived that the approach of the FRCSA was negative with a view to separation rather than unity. However, the synod indicated that the intention of the FRCSA is positively to seek clarification on matters of concern in order to understand the RCSA better. In particular, they would like to seek further clarification on the views of the RCSA with respect to whether they view the NGK and the NHK churches as true or false churches, their view on the doctrine of the church, their stance on the socio-historical hermeneutic applied by professors at their theological college, the nature of their commitment to the reformed confessions, and their decision to admit women to the office of Deacon.

Important to note is that, on the Saturday following the synod, the sister churches in Holland extended a sister-church relationship to the RCSA, much to the disappointment of the FRCSA, who at their synod were expecting such a decision. The FRCSA deputies, realising that the intention of the GKV was to extend a sister-relation to the RCSA, had already indicated that they had difficulties with such a decision, but wanted to be kept informed and be part of the process.

Work among the disenchanted

The work that is being done among the disenchanted (ie. the national reformation work) has shifted somewhat to focus less on members in the NGK and more on members in the RCSA. Synod decided not to reappoint deputies specifically for this task, but to leave the contact with the RCSA members to the Deputies for Contact with National Churches (who have already been dealing with the RCSA). They also recommended the work to consistories who see opportunities and are willing to take up a task in working among the disenchanted.

As you are aware, many of our Australian churches support this work which is coordinated via the South Africa Support Committee (SASC) appointed by the church at Kelmscott. In practical terms, this means that any cooperation regarding this work will continue in conjunction with local consistories rather than with deputies. Finalisation of the “deputies” work including finances will be completed by the church at Bethal. Presently, the SASC is working with the church at Bethal to consider possibilities to progress this work.

Financial model

It is interesting to note the new financial model that was adopted for cost-sharing of synod expenses among the churches. Deputies were given the mandate to develop a financial model which is based on the budgeted income of the churches rather than just a fixed amount per church member. The latter does not take into consideration the huge differences between the poor and the well-off that exist among the various congregations of different cultures: those

with dutch background, Afrikaners and blacks. This way, churches that are less able to contribute will not be overly burdened, and those that are better off, will be able to contribute more.

Synod will reconvene in late January 2006 in order to finalise the decision on theological training. The next synod will be held D.V. end of May 2008 in Capetown.

What a privilege it was to be able to experience the Lord's church gathering and preservation work among the sisters in South Africa! Seeing the work there adds perspective to the fact that Christ redeems His Church "...out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). May God bless our sister in South Africa and so also encourage us in obedience and humbleness before Him.

B Veenendaal

On behalf of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches

Appendix 5b: Address of Deputies to Synod Pretoria 2005

Esteemed Chairman and Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It was a short three years ago that we, as the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, were present in person at your synod Jo-burg 2002, and an even shorter less-than two years ago that Rev Nel represented your churches at our Synod Rockingham 2003. Even though the time between your synods since 2002, and our own synods since 2000, has lengthened from 2 to 3 years, yet the amount of contact between our bonds of churches has increased, and thankfully so! It is a pleasure to be here and to represent our churches here at your assembly once again. Your invitation, the warm welcome and the hospitality is very much appreciated.

And that is a very rich blessing, the fact that we can have contact and that we can support and encourage each other. After all, we don't have many sister churches entirely in the southern hemisphere, and who share the same seasons at the same time – all our other sister churches are different. And yes, we also share many people who fly across the Indian Ocean to share their expertise and experiences between us.

But more importantly, we face many of the same struggles and challenges. We live in a post-modern era in which "man" has taken center stage, yes, in fact has attempted to displace God, push God aside and become the supreme ruler. And when such acts of secularisation, yes even revolution, take place in the world, then we in the church need to be very much on guard in fighting these attacks. That means we are engaged in warfare. As Paul says to the Ephesians in chapter 6:17: *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;..."*. Yes we have the armour, the means by

which we can triumph, namely: the Word and the Spirit. Paul then continues in verse 18, “...*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...*”, yes for ALL the saints, that includes you here in South Africa, and us in Australia, and those wherever the Lord gathers His church.

However, just having you here, and we back home, and others in this world, to give each other support and encouragement, is not, in itself, going to give success to the struggle of faith in the church; rather, it is the fact that we have a Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the same Head for you in South Africa as well as for us in Australia. That is our hope, the fact, that (as we confess in Lord’s Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism) “...*the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life...*”. What a rich confession that is! We are part of Christ’s church-gathering work. And we know that this work continues, despite the attacks on the church, despite the shortcomings of the church...yes this work continues here in South Africa, and at home in Australia, and beyond. And together, we may confess that! Together, we may stand beneath our Head, waging the warfare against all those who oppose God, and fighting the good fight of faith.

In that light, I may, on behalf of our churches, extend our greetings to you as our sisters in South Africa. We thank you for the support and encouragement that you have offered to our churches and which Rev Nel, on behalf of your churches, extended to us at our last synod. It is assuring to know that we do not stand alone, but do receive the prayers and encouragement from you as our sister. It is comforting to know that the Lord also uses you as instruments to encourage us also in the way of faithfulness and obedience to His Word.

Your churches here in South Africa certainly are on the radar screen of our churches in Australia. Many of our churches actively support the work among the disenchanteds, or National Reformation work as you chose to call it. We have a South Africa Support Committee appointed by the church at Kelmscott that enlists and coordinates the support received by our churches. Many of our churches hold regular collections and you will also, as a result, quite regularly hear the work here in South Africa being mentioned in the prayers from the pulpits! Yes, you yourselves, and God’s work among you as churches, receive regular exposure and are alive in our thoughts and prayers.

The Lord has indeed blessed you in many ways. The mission work that you have been busy with for so many years has born rich fruits in the institution of two new churches, that at Mamelodi and at Soshanguve-North. Not only that, but the Lord has blessed them with shepherds of the Word through Rev Mogale and Rev Magagula. And that mission work and outreach continues to grow! We stand in awe at how the Lord works in your midst. May He continue to bless the work that continues among your churches, in this region here as well as in Capetown. At the same time, we understand that a number of your ministers

and missionaries have departed overseas, leaving some vacancies, most of which have also subsequently been filled. We pray that the Lord will bless your efforts as you continue to proclaim God's Word among the churches and the preaching points that you have. At the same time, you also have experienced difficulties with the dissolving of the church at Springs. We are reminded of our weaknesses and can only humble ourselves before God's sovereign good will. May the Lord work in the hearts of those that have left and cause them to seek His Will in complete obedience and humbleness. May He also continue to be near to those who remain, that they may continue to be a blessing and willing instruments in God's church gathering work.

And so, we encourage you as churches to stand strong in the faith and be faithful and obedient in the calling and commands that the Lord has set out before us. You have particular issues and challenges that you face, many of which you are dealing with at this synod. I think of the challenges that you face in the work of training for the ministry, the efforts to reach out to those in other churches who recognise deformation in their church, your relations with churches in this country as well as abroad, and even working together effectively and fruitfully, yourselves, as churches with different backgrounds and cultures.

As you deliberate and come to decisions and actions, continue to be mindful of the fact that this is the Lord's work that you are busy with, that beautiful task of church-gathering which God continues in and through us. What is impossible with us, is possible with God. Let us never underestimate the fact that this is His work, and that He is pleased to use us as stewards in His service. His work will continue.

In Australia, your sister churches have also experienced the Lord's blessings and guiding hand in church life. Since our last visit to you, we have grown by one church to 12 churches. Our newest arrival is the church at Darling Downs, instituted on 6 July 2003 and located between Armadale and Byford. She has, on numerous occasions, been affectionately called our little "Darling"(!). A quick scan of our Yearbook, reveals that our total membership has increased from 3480 in 2002 to 3650, an increase of almost 5%.

The last three years has also seen some movement among the ministers of the Word in our midst. Our church in Launceston sadly experienced difficulties when Rev Zuiddam withdrew from the Free Reformed churches in September 2002. However, thankfully, Launceston has just received a new minister of the Word in the person of Rev Eikelboom who was ordained only just two months ago. Rev Eikelboom came from Calgary, Canada, but originally hails from Western Australia, and so it is good to get one of the Aussie ministers back again! Bunbury received a minister just over a year ago, Rev Rupke who came to Australia from The Netherlands. Rev Bouwman, who, you may recall, visited you at your Synod Bethal in the year 2000, accepted a call to Yarrow in Canada, and he and his family departed just this past April. The church at Albany, after being vacant for quite some time, will now, the Lord willing,

receive a shepherd in the person of Candidate Smith from Canada, who hopes to arrive next month with the installation expected shortly after. That leaves vacancies in the churches of Darling Downs and Kelmscott. However, we are very thankful for those who labour in the ministry, so that almost all of our churches have their own pastor and teacher. Yes, every one of our churches is blessed with the proclamation of the gospel twice every Sunday!

On the mission scene, our churches are busy on a number of fronts. The work in Papua New Guinea, in particular in Lae, is organised by the church at Armadale with a number of cooperating churches including Byford, Darling Downs and West Albany, and a further number of supporting churches. We have been able to call a minister for this work, Rev Wildeboer, who graduated last year from the theological college in Canada, was installed last year November, and is currently undergoing a training program in Canada in preparation for commencing his duties in Lae. In addition we have br Justin Bolhuis who is currently the mission worker there, and br Andrew VanderHeide who is undergoing training presently. You may be interested to know that the two brothers currently being trained are under the tutelage of Professor de Visser who is no stranger to you! Further mission activities include the work of Mount Nasura in supporting mission work in India, and the work by Rockingham in supporting a number of indigenous evangelists among the churches in Indonesia.

As churches, we continue to maintain sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands, the (Kosin) Presbyterian Churches of Korea, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia, and, of course, yourselves. Although we recognise the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches, we have not yet recognised them formally as sister churches because of their third party sister relations with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. Our contact with the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia had stalled over the past years, so our last synod made an extra effort to “re-engage the PCEA in effective discussions about the matters of concern using the statements of [prepared by our synod of] 1998...” regarding the fencing of the Lord’s table, the supervision of the pulpit and the place of children in the covenant. We also continue to have contacts with the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin churches in East Timor, and the Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines. As you can see, we too have many things to be busy with. God has indeed richly blessed us and given us much to be thankful for, and at the same time has also given us many challenges. Continue to pray for us that we too may be faithful and obedient in our God-given task and may continue to be a blessing in His service and for His church-preservation work.

In conclusion, may the Lord bless your endeavours and deliberations here at your synod, that the decisions you make may be according to God’s revealed Word, to the praise of His honour and glory, and a blessing to the churches here and abroad. May the Lord continue to be with you as churches and may His Word continue to be proclaimed and witnessed in this part of God’s world.

Thankyou.

On behalf of the Australian Deputies for Sister Church Relations
Bert Veenendaal

Appendix 6: Deputies Relations with Sister Churches – Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

1.1 Mandate

In Article 41 the 2003 Acts Synod decided:

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations;
2. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a) Exercise sister-relations with the GKV according to the adopted rules;
 - b) According to the rules, discuss and to continue to discuss with the GKV Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the GKV, and as outlined and recommended in the report of the deputies;
 - c) Report to next Synod;
 - d) To instruct deputies to send two delegates to the next general Synod of the GKV.

Grounds

1. The GKV gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
2. Deputies have pointed out and given some evidence about some specific concerns. These should continue to be addressed, according to the rules.

1.2 Progress Report

Since our last synod and the publication of the Acts of the 2002 General Synod of Zuidhorn, another general synod has been held in Amersfoort by our Dutch sister churches. This means that your deputies interacted with material from the General Synod of Zuidhorn but also had input into the discussions of the General Synod of Amersfoort. Thus it will be good to report on both at the same time. Yet for the sake of clarity we will report on the 2005 General Synod of Amersfoort, referring back to that of Zuidhorn in 2002.

After this general section we report about specific concerns and issues relating to our relations with our Dutch sisters.

We do append a report on the visit made to our Dutch sisters at the time of their 2005 GS.

As well, we also include a report about the continuing GKV (GKVC) which has officially sent letters asking for sister relations. A report on a visit made to their delegates is included in that report.

We did receive a visit from Rev J Plug, one of their deputies assigned to exercise relations with us. We could exchange information and give updates.

1.3 The Blessing by a non-Elder

Deputies were asked to ascertain whether or not our concerns were alleviated and to relay their findings to the Dutch deputies.

Our concerns were handed over to the Dutch deputies.

In brief, our concern was that the blessing, unaltered from the biblical texts, can now be pronounced not only by elders, but also by anyone appointed by the consistory.

The Dutch deputies were not able to do more than repeat the last decision (of the GS Leusden of 1999). GS Zuidhorn (2002) did not uphold appeals against the previous decisions and this issue has not surfaced again either address this matter further by responding as follows:

General Synod Leusden 1999 decided not to grant any requests appealing against previous synod decisions that allow an elder to lay the unaltered blessing, with the raising of hands, upon the congregation. In addition, GS Leusden went farther and extended this authorisation to pronounce the blessing to every brother, irrespective of whether they are an elder or not, who is appointed by consistory to lead a worship service.

Deputies examined this decision and concluded that since the blessing given by God in the assembly of His people is an important part of the liturgy, we must be careful not to diminish its significance. The blessing is to be spoken only by the minister or elder (those called to the office) on behalf of God using the words of Scripture. We outlined our concerns in a paper that was sent to the Dutch deputies and was subsequently tabled at General Synod Zuidhorn 2002.

GS Zuidhorn also received submissions from within their own bond, but decided not to accede to the requests. They made this decision on the grounds that no new aspects were raised which were not already considered by previous synods. They also decided to plead with the churches to let this discussion rest in peace. They stressed that the final decision as to who leads the church service and who can pronounce the blessing is left to the local church council.

It is obvious that Synod Zuidhorn wants to put this matter to rest. It would be difficult to bring up any new information that has not already

been considered by a past synod. In the end, synod makes clear that the ultimate decision is left up to the local church council.

Although we understand and appreciate synod's decision we want you to consider appointing deputies Office and Liturgy who will study on the relation between the special office and the office of all believers in relation to the church service and all its elements. This is different from the request for a deputyship considering the relation between the office and the benediction. We conclude from the Acts (art 47, Materials nr 5, fourth dot point) that the synod was not in favour of such a deputyship. Neither are we. What we have in mind is a deputyship concentrating on questions like:

- *What is the task of the special office bearers in the church service?*
- *What is the meaning of the office of all believers, that is of all men and women, in the church service?*
- *How do we express the meaning of the office of all believers in the church service?*
- *Which liturgical elements are required in every church service, and what is the relation with the office? (cf our section B and C-re 2)*
- *What is the task of the special office bearer in war zones in relation to a local church?*
- *What is the relation between the special office and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper? (cf our questions regarding your synod's decisions in art 101)*

We did not pursue this matter any further. Other more pressing issues demanded our time.

We recommend that this concern, which was not finished satisfactorily, be shelved for the time being.

1.4 Report On The General Synod Of Amersfoort (2005)

Work-method of the general synod

The Dutch too have opted to discuss many of the reports of their deputies directly, without using the intermediary of a synodical advisory committee. They continued to use internet connections to work on the agenda from Monday to Thursday. This allowed them to work through a very extensive agenda. Synod met in open, full sessions on Fridays and Saturdays.

Discussions held during synod

Before synod your deputies sent a number of letters/submissions to their Dutch counterparts. These concerned decisions of the 2002 GS of Zuidhorn as well as the reports of deputies to the 2005 GS of Amersfoort. These letters were acknowledged, passed on to the appropriate deputies and many of them were included in the agenda of the 2005 GS of Amersfoort. They will be appended to the reports on these specific matters.

Our two delegates held a number of discussions during synod. They included:

1. With the BBK (sections 1+3) along with other delegates; with deputies re marriage and divorce; and with GS Amersfoort about the report concerning marriage and divorce.
2. With the BBK (section 1 alone).
3. With deputies re the Fourth Commandment.
4. With ministers who signed the *Manifest*.
5. With deputies of the newly liberated GKVc
6. With ministers who signed the *Manifest*.
7. With deputies of the newly liberated GKVc

The reports about these meetings will be included in the various sections dealing with these specific matters. The report of the delegates to the 2005 GS Amersfoort is appended.

Decisions on other matters of interest

Synod dealt with many issues in church life. Some of the major decisions have been translated into English and made available on their synodical website (<http://synode.gkv.nl/>). We have used these translations as well as the decisions as published on their website. For your information, a number of our members have been busy in doing this translating work, not only for our benefit but also for other English-speaking churches

Relations with churches abroad

The GKV deputies submitted a large report (83 pages) on relations with churches abroad, including a report about us. They informed synod of their visit to our 2003 Synod of Rockingham. They explained how they had encouraged us to rejoin the ICRC, to avoid isolationism, to engender better contacts with the PCEA and to make progress with the GKVZ.

GS dealt with the reports from their deputies in the various sections with in a quick, efficient manner. Little discussion took place. Most of the contacts or relations were dealt with on the one day our delegates attended synod. The issue of entering sister relations with the GKSA did not cause discussion this time.

New sister relations

The General Synod Amersfoort entered sister relations with five more bonds of churches:

1. Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika (GKSA) or the 'dopperkerken'.
2. The Presbyterian Free Church Council (PFCC) in northern India.
3. The Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) in Kalimantan Barat.
4. The United Reformed Churches of North America (UGKVA).
5. Nongu u Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv (NKST) in Nigeria.

Our appended report about the visit to the 2005 GS of Amersfoort gives more information.

The newly liberated Reformed Churches (GKVC)

The report of our delegates who visited The Netherlands in 2005 included discussions with the Dutch deputies about the GKVC. The visit to the regional (high) school in Rotterdam also addressed this question, namely, whether the students of families of the GKVC were allowed to attend, and whether they do. Also, the two delegates met with ministers who started the web-forum of Manifest (<http://www.gereformeerdbleiven.nl/>). Since these ministers do not officially represent the GKV, they asked that the meeting remain unofficial and unreported. We have honoured their request. Yet our delegates tried to understand the situation, the climate, and asked about any efforts at reconciliation.

It was gratifying to hear that the GS Amersfoort decided to approve a letter of appeal to the GKVC. This appeal has been printed in our church magazine and is appended to this report. Thus our sister churches have taken the initiative in opening contacts with these former members.

In our report re the GKVC it is recommended that we encourage them to open contacts with the GKV. We should continue to do the same with our sister churches, and in the attempt try to build an understanding of the concerns of the GKVC. A proposal to this effect is found in the overall recommendations.

Overall recommendations concerning the GKV

General

- 1) To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations;
- 2) To discharge Deputies and to appoint new Deputies with the mandate to:
 - a) To exercise sister-relations with the GKV according to the adopted rules;
 - b) According to the rules, to discuss and to continue to discuss with the GKV Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the GKV, and as outlined and recommended in the report of deputies (see below);
 - c) To urge the GKV to continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with the “new liberated” Reformed Churches, having an understanding of their concerns and grievances, and addressing these concerns Scripturally and confessionally in truth and love;
 - d) To instruct deputies to send two delegates to the next general synod of the GKV;
 - e) To report to next Synod.

Grounds:

- i. The GKV gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- ii. Deputies have pointed out and given evidence about some specific concerns. These should (continue to) be addressed, according to the rules.
- iii. The 2005 GS Amersfoort sent an appeal to the newly liberated Reformed Churches (GKVC) and has thus initiated contact with these churches. This contact should be encouraged to continue, from both sides.
- iv. Personal visits to synods is often more helpful than correspondence from a distance. As deputies have shown, it improves relations. Delegates should use the opportunity to visit the GKVC as well.

Two deputies could not accept these overall recommendations and asked that their alternate set of recommendations be passed on to synod as a minority proposal. They see the need to take a stronger stance, specifically to have synod address the GKV directly and to

indicate that unless things change our sister relations may come under strain.

Your deputies struggled with this because we would have liked to present one set of recommendations. In the end the meeting approved the request to send the alternate set, which now follows.

Alternate set of overall recommendations re GKV

1. Express our thankfulness to the GKV churches regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.
2. Express our concerns regarding the directions being taken, particularly in regards to the manner in which Scripture and the commandments are interpreted and applied to today's circumstances. These concerns involve especially the matters that we have already raised with the GKV, and include:
 - a) The 4th commandment and the reluctance to acknowledge that the rest on the Sabbath is indeed a command of God as required by this commandment and the fulfilling work of Christ,
 - b) 7th commandment and the directions of deputies towards the approval of divorces for reasons beyond the Scriptural reasons of adultery and willful desertion, which, although not endorsed by synod were not explicitly rejected
 - c) The administration of the sacraments in military situations to persons who are not members of the church or its sister churches, and goes beyond the common consent of the Church Order (eg. not under supervision of consistory),
 - d) The proliferation and content of the new hymns being adopted, and
 - e) The decision to allow non-officebearers to give the blessing, unaltered, in the church services.

We are thankful where GS Amersfoort has accepted and adopted some changes and suggestions, however, these do not address the core of our concerns.

3. Urge the GKV to engage in meaningful dialogue with the GKV(continuing) churches, having a greater understanding of their concerns and grievances, and Scripturally and confessionally addressing these concerns in humility and love.
4. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations.

5. To discharge Deputies and to appoint new Deputies with the mandate to:
 - a) Exercise sister-relations with the GKV according to the adopted rules
 - b) To discuss with the GKV the nature and cause underlying the directions being taken by their churches
 - c) Discuss and to continue to discuss with the GKV Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the GKV, including:
 - i. Those that deputies have already been busy with, and
 - ii. Additional concerns such as, supervision of the Lord's Supper, entering into sister relations with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (Dopperkerk) and their continuing discussions with the NGK in spite of these churches opening all the special offices to women,
 - d) Report to next Synod
 - e) To instruct deputies to send two delegates to the next Synod of the GKV.

Grounds:

1. Our deputies have been able to correspond with Dutch deputies in a good and brotherly way, and their deputies have brought our concerns to their Synod table. This is in the spirit of the rules for sister church relations to which both our church bonds have committed themselves.
2. Our deputies have already written to Dutch deputies expressing our concerns with respect to the 4th and 7th commandments, military chaplains, new hymns and blessing by non-officebearer. Some of these concerns have been the subject of discussion between deputies over quite some time, and have been expressed in multiple correspondences over the last number of synods.
3. There is an increasing trend in the GKV to administer the sacraments (Lord's Supper table as well as Baptism) to those who are not members of the church or of sister churches. This is evidenced, for example, by synods decisions on the celebration of the Lord's Supper by military personnel and asylum seekers whereby they have deviated from the Church Order (Art 57 of

Australian) by giving a broader interpretation to it than it was meant to have.

4. GS Amersfoort has extended a sister church relationship to the Reformed Churches of South Africa (dopperkerken) who, at their synodical level, have allowed women into the office of deacon.
5. In order to pave the way towards reconciliation, it is important that the GKV be urged to work towards reconciliation with the GKV(continuing) on the basis of truth, love and humility.
6. The GKV strives to remain faithful to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order and we need to encourage them in this regard with respect to the concerns that we do have.
7. Deputies need to continue to address the concerns in accordance with the rules.

1.5 General report on the visit to our Dutch sister, GKV, in 2005

General matters

Rev J Plug, a member of Section 1 of the Dutch deputies for relations with churches abroad (BBK), picked us up at Schiphol airport and took us to Kontakt der Kontinenten (KdK Conference Hotel) in Soesterberg. This is right next to Amersfoort, where the general synod is being held. At this beautiful conference centre we were each given a room. All meals were provided by BBK. Approximately 22 delegates from other countries came here to meet with the various sections of the BBK. It might be interesting to list the delegates (besides ourselves) to depict the international flavour:

Rev S Abraham	SIRC (India)
Rev MH Subba	PFCK
Br Henk Hoogstra	CanRC
Rev J Huijgen	CanRC
Br John Heerema	RCUS
Rev Fritz Harms	UGKVA
Rev Mark T Bube	OPC
Rev Jack J Peterson	OPC
Rev Andrew J Lucas	EPCI (Ireland)
Rev Richard Holst	EPCEW
(England/Wales)	
Rev Peter Naylor	EPCEW
Rev (Prof) Dr John R Mcintosh	FCS
Rev Donald N Macleod	FCS(continuing)
Rev Kishimba N Kasantika	ERCC (Congo)
Rev Illubnga N a Kuibondo	ERCC
Br Yumba Musoya	ERCC

Rev Dr Mbanonghon K Antiev	NKST (Nigeria)
Rev Jacob T Orkuma	NKST
Rev Cesar Rodriguez	IRV (Venezuela)
Rev Anthony Torres	IRC (Curaçao)
Rev José de Segovia Barron	IRE (Spain)
Rev Alexander Makeev	ERCUR (Russia)

During our time at the KdK we enjoyed the opportunity to meet with these delegates at meals and over coffee. We learned more about these churches. We collected material about the churches of the Tiv in Nigeria (NKST), about the ERCC (Congo), about the churches in Spain and about the churches in India for whom the DVN asked us for assistance.

On Wednesday afternoon the DVN (De Verre Naasten or The Distant Neighbour) gave a presentation, which was very helpful in gaining more insight into their work and setup. They gave us a packet of information, one piece of which was The Candlestand Statement. This is a joint statement by 14 church leaders made on Pentecost 2004. These leaders were concerned about the growing influence of the Charismatic Movement around the world, and the unpreparedness of our churches to meet its impact. Copies were given. It can also be found on the web: (<http://www.candlestand.nl/index.php?eng>). In the evening of the same day the BBK made a presentation for all the delegates.

The BBK hosted an outing to Dordrecht. BBK members and wives along with us, their guests, were taken in a bus to this historical city. We enjoyed a speech by Mr A Kamsteeg about the significance of Dordrecht, and we heard Rev D DeJong introduce the Canons of Dort. We were able to tour the historical sites, especially De Grote Kerk. This was a memorable visit. A packet of information about Dordrecht and the Synod of Dort will keep this visit memorable. On the way home we travelled via Kinderdijk (the canals with all the windmills) and the high roads on the dykes along the canals. It was a very full and enjoyable day.

Meetings

We had meetings with Section 1 of the BBK (Rev R TerBeek-chair, Rev JA Boersema-convenor, Rev J Plug, Rev JPD Groen, and Mrs E Ensing-Maatkamp). One meeting was combined with Section 3 (English speaking churches), since some of these churches shared our concerns and asked to be included.

All in all we had the following meetings:

1. With the BBK (sections 1+3) along with other delegates.
2. With the BBK (section 1 alone).
3. With deputies re marriage and divorce.

4. With GS Amersfoort re marriage and divorce.
5. With deputies re the Fourth Commandment.
6. With ministers who signed the *Manifest*.
7. With deputies of the newly liberated GKVc

We will report separately about these meetings.

North East India

We had a mandate to investigate whether the assistance requested for Indian churches was still applicable. We made inquiries and found that Ben Bolt, who works and travels for DVN, and who had been there in India, and who was present at KdK, could give the required information.

- Re NE India emergency case. One unchristian tribe attacked another tribe made up of Christians, many of whom belong to sister churches of GKV. It was that bad that the Christians had to flee and start all over. All their homes, their churches and infrastructure had been pillaged and burned. After the hostilities settled and the refugees were able to return home, all the infrastructure needed to be rebuilt. It would take 900,000 euros!
- Since DVN does not really address emergencies such as these but leaves it to other organizations, they appealed to sister churches. DVN itself has 50,000 euros per year for such emergencies in which churches involved in their mission projects or sister churches are involved. Thus they collected the 50,000 euros. 'Redt een Kind' (Help a Child) offered 250,000 euros; relief organizations within the churches helped and in total 600,000 euros were collected. At present most of the emergency seems to have disappeared. However, further help would be appreciated.
- For their information, I told them of our relief organization, e.g. for the areas stricken by the tsunamis. They will remember this.
- Ben Bolt would follow up on our conversation and ask the secretary to send a detailed report. This letter is attached to this report (appendix 1).

Recommended action

- Send the request to our relief organisation and ask them to collect funds for this area where ethnic clashes have brought so much devastation to brothers and sisters in the faith.
- Ben Bolt also gave information about volunteers who wish to work on mission sites. They received more and more requests and thus have spent some time to organise this. He asked whom

they might pass this information on to. Since we do have some members who volunteer for such projects and who do so for interdenominational mission agencies, it might be worthwhile to print this in a press release about our visit.

- Young persons can apply to DVN if they wish to volunteer out on mission fields in certain areas of service, e.g. teaching, nursing. They never paid much attention to this in the past, but since there is a call for it, they have started to coordinate such requests.
- The idea is that young persons serve in areas of reformed missions instead of having such volunteers go to various interdenominational efforts, no matter how helpful that may be. For a variety of reasons, e.g.s. being in reformed churches and helping our own projects that offer from a scarcity of manpower, it is much more advantageous to have such willing persons serve reformed missions.

GS Amersfoort

On Friday and Saturday, 27-28 May, we attended open sessions of the synod. These two days were devoted to reports from the BBK about relations with churches abroad. The reports of the various sections, one by one, were dealt with. But before the report from each section was dealt with, delegates from churches in that section were given the opportunity to address synod. We are in section 1 and thus were the first to address synod. We distributed to members of the synod, BBK, press, and others the 100 copies of our booklets which included the address and the summary of concerns, in both Dutch and English. No copies were left! Br Breen delivered the address in Dutch. It was well received, as was evident from the response. We submit our address and the summary of concerns as an appendix.

In addition, we also attach as appendices, the addresses by the br Henk Hoogstra of the CanRC and Rev Fritz Harms of the UGKVA (a real model of a good address).

The reports of the deputies were tabled (directly and not via advisory committees), discussed, answered by the relevant section of BBK, and then decided on during those two days.

Five offers of sister relations were made by the synod. They were to:

1. Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika (GKSA) or the 'dopperkerken'. Our Dutch sisters have worked towards sister relations with the GKSA for many years. At the 2002 GS Zuidhorn our South African sister churches pleaded strongly and at length to postpone entering sister relations with the GKSA at that time.

Since then tripartite discussions among the GKV, GKSA + FRCSA in South Africa have seen some progress made. The Dutch deputies asked the sister churches in South Africa (FRCSA) how they would react to sister relations between the GKV and the GKSA. The FRCSA appreciated being asked, and they understood the ongoing desire of the GKV to enter a sister relation with the GKSA, and understood the pressures on the GKV because of the passage of time and because good progress in discussions among the three churches. However, the FRCSA still see problems in the GKSA. One problem related to the decision of the GKSA to introduce women deacons. At the above-mentioned tripartite meeting the delegates of the GKSA assured the meeting in writing that female deacons were not part of the consistory. Owing to this the deputies of the FRCSA wrote to the GKV that they had misrepresented the GKSA on this point and had reacted improperly (in the GKSA women deacons have no place in the consistory and thus do not have a ruling office).⁶ But the FRCSA see other problems as well (e.g. lack of discipline) that in their view prevent (federative) unity with the GKSA at this point. Sister relations would not be the choice of the FRCSA, but they certainly would not terminate their sister relations with the GKV, if the GKV entered sister relations with the GKSA. They would much rather appreciate being kept informed and involved in the actual exercising of the sister relation, especially as this relation between the GKV and GKSA would help to promote the truth of the Gospel in South Africa. In the end, on the basis of a full report, this proposal for sister relations was adopted unanimously.

2. The Presbyterian Free Church Council (PFCC) in northern India.
3. The Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) in Kalimantan Barat. These are churches borne from mission efforts of our Dutch sisters. Help is still given to these churches (e.g. by Rev

⁶ However, later on at the 2005 Synod of Pretoria and elsewhere (at the 2005 Synod of the GKVZ) the same delegates of the GKSA said the opposite, namely, that female deacons were normal and full deacons who also had a place in the consistory. This was confirmed by one of the delegates of our SA sister church at the tripartite meetings. Your deputies found out about this afterwards (after some research), and have had discussions with Rev J Plug when he visited here and are sending our findings to our Dutch counterparts for their information. Our Dutch sisters of course acted on good faith according to the information supplied and verified.

As a further update we can report that the most recent 2006 National Synod of the GKSA (Dopperkerken) at Potchefstroom decided (art 258) to annul their previous decision on procedural grounds. Many ministers in a combined submission had voiced their displeasure at the previous decision. A deputyship has been appointed to investigate this whole matter and to report to next synod. But for the time being the decision is annulled.

Jonkman who goes there regularly). We should pass this information on to our deputies who deal with Indonesia. Since it may take quite some time before the three bonds of reformed churches in Indonesia unite, it might be good for us to do the same as the Dutch sisters have done. However, we as deputies cannot recommend this to synod. It needs to come from the churches. Thus we should put it on the agenda of a jumbo meeting, and have that meeting send it to the churches.

4. The United Reformed Churches of North America (UGKVA). The delegate from these churches informed synod that they have a detailed protocol for entering sister relations, and that it might take some time before they can accept this offer of sister relations.
5. Nongu u Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv (NKST) in Nigeria. We received the report about these churches, which are very numerous and large, extending over a wide territory.

Delegates from all these churches came forward, received the handshake of brotherhood, after which we sang the Apostles' Creed and prayed.

On Friday evening, from 7-9:30 p.m., a general discussion was held on the report about marriage and divorce. The foreign delegates, seated as advisory members (we had to stand to indicate our agreement with our reformed confessions), were invited to speak first. A separate report is submitted about this.

Second Week

The BBK had only allotted accommodation for the foreign delegates for the first week. They offered accommodation in Amersfoort, if we wished. We appreciated that. However, Rev JA Boersema, convenor of deputies of section 1, offered us accommodation at his home in Apeldoorn. This was much appreciated.

With him and Rev CJ Breen (our guest for that day) we made a trip to Amsterdam, the following day we went via train to Rotterdam (see below); the following day to Ede (via Boersema's van) for a meeting with the GKVc; and the following day to Utrecht via train for a meeting with deputies for the Fourth Commandment. Three ministers who signed the Manifest travelled quite some distances to meet with us in Apeldoorn.

We travelled via train early on Friday morning back to Schiphol. The costs for transport have been submitted to the synodical treasurer.

Rotterdam

We were invited to visit Rotterdam, the Gereformeerde Scholengemeenschap Randstad (GSR), the local GKV and the inner

city mission projects. This allowed us to visit important parts of church life.

Br Huib van Leeuwen, who has visited Australia, gave us a tour of the GSR in Rotterdam. One delegate kept wandering away!!

He gave an oversight of reformed education in the GKV in The Netherlands. He introduced the various streams with reformed education in the upper levels.

In a discussion he informed us that in that area a number of church members had separated and formed the newly liberated GKVc. What impact does this have on the schools? He answered that teachers need to be members of the GKV (or CGK). Teachers who join the GKVc thus know that their employment will be terminated. Students who come from families who are not members of the GKV (or CGK) have their applications processed individually and if parents wish reformed education, this is accepted. However, the parents cannot become members of the association.

This year some students from the GKVc do attend, but next year the parents have decided not to send them to the GSR. Instead, they will send them to other Christian schools or even public (openbare) schools. He lamented this. The association has not at all discouraged these parents from sending them, and indeed encourages the parents to send their children to the GSR.

We also toured the neighbourhood of the inner city church. In the evening Rev M deVries, who has a ministry among the Moslems in that area of Rotterdam, took us along with him to a meeting with Moslems from the neighbourhood. Some church members of the GKV (Rotterdam Stad) met in a hall where Moslems meet to discuss issues. Many of these Moslems had attended the special church service of the previous Sunday when young people had professed the faith. They were asked for their impressions of the church service. The replies were very positive and polite. Many would attend again.

Then a member of the GKV introduced how reformed churches view the relation between church and state. It was a very good and practical introduction. Then a professor at the Islamic University told how Moslems view the relation between the faith and the state. It was hard to follow, since his Dutch was not great. After this an interval with coffee and tea, and abundant cakes baked by Moslem ladies, went down well during the many discussions. At this point we had to leave in order to get back to Apeldoorn on time (it was very late when we arrived home!). The two papers were then to be discussed by the whole group. The approach is to get to know the Moslems and for the Moslems to get to know the church people and their faith. This leads to invitations to attend church. It is not a confrontational approach but rather the approach of

exercising friendly, christian relations so that doors open to present the gospel.

This opened the eyes of at the least one delegate as to how The Netherlands have changed, i.e. its multicultural citizenship with the result that we were in the minority in that suburb!, and how our sister churches respond to that challenge.

Conclusion

Your delegates enjoyed a full, intensive but satisfying visit. Much was learned, much was discussed and much was accomplished. We were thankful that as deputies we had done so much preparation. It paid dividends. In the future the same amount of preparation will have to be made to make such a trip worthwhile.

Our Dutch sisters respect and esteem us. They know we watch them carefully, if not critically. Yet they also experience how we value our sister relation. We from our side could experience that they value and respect us. As a result we received invitations to learn more about them. They welcome us, not in spite of our sympathetic criticisms, but indeed also because of them. As Rev LE Leeftink wrote in *De Reformatie*, 4 juni 2005, blz 643:

"De zusterkerk die ons het meest kritisch volgt, zijn de *Free Reformed Churches of Australia*. Zij hadden de synode al een brief gestuurd op 17 februari 2005. Daarin lieten ze weten zich bezorgd te maken over 'een zekere subjectieve geneigdheid in sommige rapporten en beslissingen' en dat toonden ze ook met acht concrete voorbeelden. Maar in zijn toespraak maakte br AC Breen duidelijk, dat het sympathetisch kritisch commentaar voortkomt vanuit een bewogen hart, namelijk als kerk die van haar grote zuster houdt."

(The sister church which follows us most critically is the FRCA. They had already sent a letter to the GS on 17 Feb/05. In it they let us know how they are concerned about a certain subjective tendency in some reports and decisions. They illustrated this with eight concrete examples. But in his address AC Breen made clear that the sympathetic/critical commentary arises from out of a heart that is stirred with love and care for its big sister.)

We see a large bond of churches living in a very secularised country, one of the most 'progressive' countries in the world. Their country has really become multi-cultural, with all its attendant problems.

We see them struggling to remain thankfully reformed. There are streams in the church that cause considerable concern, as our reports make clear. But the bond of churches as a whole indeed cherishes the Scriptures and the reformed confessions.

It is thus sad to see brothers and sisters separating from our sister churches and forming new, 'continuing' reformed churches. Was this really necessary? Our report addresses that, and concludes that we would prefer to see these members strengthen our sister churches in the struggle to remain reformed.

We can learn much and receive much from our bigger and older sister. Yet at the same time a younger and smaller sister can hopefully also contribute to their life as reformed churches.

We will have to see what decisions the GS Amersfoort makes, and weigh them in the scales of Scripture and the reformed confessions.

May the LORD use this visit to keep our sister relations fruitful and to keep us both faithful! May these reports serve the truth, the unity and the love we share in our Lord Jesus Christ!

It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

I am not writing you a new command, but one we have had from the beginning.

I ask that we love one another.

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.

It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

(from 2 + 3 John)

AC Breen

W Huizinga (reporter)

Letter from DVN (De Verre Naasten or The Distant Neighbours) re Request for Aid for North East India

9 June, 2005

Mr. Ben Bolt told me that you had approached him with some questions and one was about the situation in North East India. I am working as regional coordinator for DVN and am maintaining the contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of NE India, concerning all cooperation. Among others the rehabilitation after the ethnic clashes in 2003. In 2004 a rehabilitation programme was carried out. As not enough funds were available it could not be carried out fully as planned. I understood from Ben Bolt that you were

wondering whether support is still needed. Indeed extra financial support would be very helpful.

Especially in the beginning of the rehabilitation programme, there was a lack of funds and priority was given to direct aid (food). Despite problems however the main purpose was reached and people did resettle back in the villages. However taking up again their agricultural activities for livelihood could not be done as hoped for. Partly due to lack of enough seeds and materials, and also because last year there was heavy rain and the newly planted fields were partly washed away.

This means that their harvest was not enough to survive the next season until the next harvest. For this year 2005, food aid is very necessary to enable the people to stay in their villages, continue to work at the fields and ensure future livelihood possibilities. If no assistance is given, many farmers will have to leave their families temporarily or even leave their places as a family and migrate to nearby towns, to look for work, to earn some daily income. As they can't feed the families at this moment.

So we saw the need of organising a follow-up on the rehab-programme and have planned on giving out food assistance in the months June-September. This is seen as so urgent, that we decided to give this priority. Any contribution from your side will be very much appreciated and be very welcome.

Now other work had to be postponed, until money is available again, as this activity must be done.

Besides that some families still live in temporary shelters and will need better housing. Also the component of water and sanitation was not carried out as hoped for because of lack of money.

As you see assistance is most welcome and I can assure you it will be used for the needy.

If you have any questions, please let me know. I hope your churches can make a contribution for this work and look forward to your reply,

Yours sincerely,

Janneke de Vries-Wiersma
Regional coordination DVN

Copy of this mail is sent to:
Mr. Ben Bolt, depute BBK, Headoffice RPCNEI for their information

Meeting with Section 1 of BBK (General)

General

It should be reported that during the discussions with sections 1+3 of BBK (with other delegates) that the Canadian delegates requested that the protocol for making submissions on major items before general synods needs to be clarified.

Also, we stressed that we would like to be proactive right at the start on these important issues, instead of being reactive later on. In the past many things that are decided in The Netherlands end up later on in the Book of Praise in Canada. Later on we need to review these changes whether we can adopt them too. We would like to be more proactive.

We reiterated our desire to see more possibility for our delegates to interact with important issues on the floor of general synod. At present, only matters of the BBK's reports are dealt with while delegates attend a general synod. We would like to see this expanded. We have recommended that in a second week gs meet more often and that there be opportunity for delegates to attend and to participate at gs on some of these issues.

BBK (section 1)

After the meeting with section 3 and other delegates we met in an afternoon about general matters re our sister relations. We wanted to use this time for regular matters such as updating each other about our relations.

Korea

We gave a brief outline of our experiences and goals with the Kosin PCK and our recent visits by AMC Bruning and AC Breen to Korea. A Breen related his experiences in Korea. There is a need for catechetical instruction. Some professors encourage it, but it is not a practice in the PCK. The Independent Reformed Church has introduced it with good benefits. We especially pointed to the various streams inside our Korean sister churches and the dangers that we should be alerted to. We informed them of our attempts to have Prof Dr Yoo come to visit us and to speak to us. Also what we learned from Dr SG Hur about the finances and troubles in the PCK re their university and associated hospital were highlighted. The BBK appreciated this information.

Dick VanderZwaag will visit Korea on behalf of the GKV in Aug/Sept/05.

Australia And New Zealand

Rev J Plug will be in August in Australia. A delegate from CGK will come along with him. They would like to meet with us possibly in August.

The delegate from the CGK will visit the CRCA (a sister church of the CGK) and then he and Rev J Plug will go to GKVZ.

They asked us if there was any progress in our contacts with the PCEA. Fortunately, before our departure Rev Veldman informed us that deputies from the PCEA had met with our deputies in Launceston, Tasmania in a face to face meeting. That in itself is progress.

They also asked about progress with the GKVZ and we informed them that two of our deputies just visited the GKVZ (an acquaintance visit, not a visit to their synod). The GKV deputies informed us that the GKVZ will visit Burma re mission work.

Indonesia

They informed us that their deputies, including Rev J A Boersema (he travels there four times per year for church support work and especially theological training), visited Indonesia. They attended the synod of the GGRI. BBK has good relations with GGRI.

The GGRC (on West Timor) has had a split and they were not able to go to their synod, but they knew that our delegates from FRCA did. This is still a matter of concern to them.

Sri Lanka

Wietse Tolsma, on behalf of GKV, gives help to reformed churches in Sri Lanka. They inquired about what we do in Sri Lanka and also in India. We told them about the mission work of FRC Mt Nasura near Chennai, India (not via deputies but done by the local church of Mt Nasura). Also we related how Rev PKA deBoer in his travels to India also frequently came to Sri Lanka and how he became acquainted with reformed churches there. He has written a report, but this matter has not come on the table of our synods.

Continuing GKV

We asked what if anything the GKV has done to renew contacts, discussions, etc with the GKVC. We were told that officially such contacts can only be at local and personal levels since this matter has not been dealt with by one of their general synods.

We then asked if they could give some information about local initiatives to have contact..

Rev Ruurd ter Beek explained how he tried endlessly to approach Rev P van Gorp on issues discussed in *Reformanda*. These initiatives were thwarted and not answered.

The organization, *Reformanda*, took the stand that members from GKV and GKVC could not be together in an interdenominational venture. Thus they brought the organization, *Reformanda*, to an end. The BBK informed us that all the persons working for the magazine, *Reformanda*, must be from the GKVC.

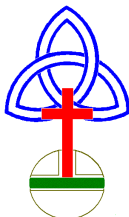
Then the BBK asked us how they could help us with GKVC?

We encouraged them to rewrite the booklet, NOT BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN, in certain sections, e.g. liturgy, and, e.g. make the quotes their own instead of quoting various leaders in the GKV. They replied that the booklet was intended for the Dutch situation and not outside its boundaries. Yet they have distributed it, also to us, and thus we asked them to re-write certain sections. This had also been said to them by delegates from Canada and from UGKVA. Make the booklet more informative rather than too polemical and especially redo the section about liturgy.

We ended in prayer and committed our relations to the Head of the churches who gathers, defends and preserves, by his Word and Spirit, his chosen congregation from all over the world in the unity of true faith.

AC Breen

W Huizinga (reporter)



Deputies of the

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

for Relations with Sister Churches

27 May 2005

Address to General Synod of Amersfoort, 2005

Esteemed members of synod, deputies, delegates from all over the world, fellow brothers and sisters,

Calvin – Reformation

You couldn't have chosen a better day to give the floor to international deputies. 27th of May is a historical day, and 2005 is a historical year. It was 27 May 1564, exactly 441 years ago today, that the LORD took to Himself a man who had devoted himself to keep God's Word because of the *sanctity* of God's church, and to spread the Word because of the *unity* of God's church. We speak about John Calvin, the man of the true ecumene. No, not Calvin Klein (Dutch word for "little"), but Calvin the Great. Neither the Kelvin of the absolute zero, but the Calvin of the absolute "zenith": the Reformed Academy in Geneva, the cradle of Reformed preachers for all of Europe and from there for America, Africa, Asia and Australia. "Where are the countries where Calvin was never known?"¹⁾ And if we talk about Geneva anyway, this year it's exactly 400 years ago that Theodore Beza passed away: the successor of Calvin in Geneva.

Yet it's not Calvin who binds us together today. "According to Calvin's own wish no stone marks his final resting place. No one knows where the great reformer

has been buried.”²) It’s the Lord of the church who brings His children together by the Spirit of the Word, around the Word of the Spirit. The Reformation worldwide can be characterized by obedience to the Word for which Tyndale had to burn, and by binding to the Reformed confessions for which De Bres had to hang. And worldwide Reformation should always be obedience to God’s inspired Word, which we *love* so much, and thus also binding to the dynamic confessions which love to keep us to the Word. That’s what brings us together at this anniversary.

Schilder – Una Sancta

We already told you that you couldn’t have chosen a better day to let deputies from all over the world speak to you. For isn’t it striking that exactly 70 years ago today, statements about the church³) were published in the magazine *De Reformatie*. They were written by a man whose gravestone *has* been preserved, but then because of the beautiful words of the King of the church: “that they all may be one...”. It was Klaas Schilder who explained this prayer of Christ as a *commandment* for Christians.

And because we will talk with you about Australia anyway, we are not able to get around his Bible meditation “Una Sancta”. You should know that our fortnightly family journal for the edification of the Scriptural way of life is called: *Una Sancta*, the first two words of “*one holy catholic church*”. That’s what we believe. Under the title of “Una Sancta” Schilder wrote about the tragedy of the two armies, each attacking the other. The one army proclaims a holy *war* in order to protect the sanctity, the *sancta*, of the church. The other army proclaims a holy *peace* in order to promote the unity, the *una*, of the church. But Christ links “una” to “sancta”. Jesus says, *whoever does the will of My Father* – here you see the sanctity, the obedience – *is My brother, My mother, My sister* – here you see the unity, the community.⁴) Useful words from the past, warning words for today, for you and for those who have seceded from you, and, yes, for all of us.

FRCA

Australia. We don’t need to introduce ourselves. We live Down Under your floor. It means we follow your footsteps carefully! And we did not let you forget it. We responded in some detail to the work of your past synod and to the work of your present deputyships. In that we resemble each other; but you don’t expect something else from sisters, do you? We down under just don’t want to miss a thing, but want to be informed about everything. We hope from the heart that you take our sympathetic-critical responses to heart. Attached to this speech you find a written summary of our concerns. Instead of taking your and our valuable time repeating what we said in our letters to you, we have summarized our concerns. May this assist you, esteemed delegates. We want to see you and us sail on the compass of God’s Word and the confession of *sola* and *tota Scriptura*. Yes, safely between the Scylla of absolutist sectarianism, which wants us to run onto the rock of the smallest differences,

and the Charybdis of relativistic ecumenism with its attraction to the largest numbers.

Speaking about numbers, *The Free Reformed Churches of Australia* (FRCA) are small. Yes, we are humble before God when we realize how great His blessings were during the last 50 years of the FRCA in Australia. The not more than 50 members in the early fifties could grow to 3650 today, of which about 50% are communicant members. The two churches could grow to 12, divided into two classes, with a general synod every three years. Our last General Synod 2003 was held in Rockingham, where we welcomed your deputies the Rev Boersema and Rev Plug. We support the rapidly growing Reformed Church in Madras, India, where Rev Jacob shepherds a missionary congregation. We also stand beside our South African sister churches in their National Reformation project among the disenchanted people in their country. Further, last year Rev Wildeboer was ordained as a missionary for the work in Lae, Papua New Guinea, north of Port Moresby, where Rev S 't Hart preaches the Gospel in service of the Canadian sister churches.

Regarding our contacts with the *Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia* (PCEA), our last General Synod Rockingham 2003 declared that, on the basis that we believe the PCEA to be true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, the FRCA will make a sincere effort to re-engage the PCEA in effective discussions about guarding the pulpit and the Lord's Supper table (GS 2003, art 81). Rockingham 2003 also recognized that the *Reformed Churches of New Zealand* (GKVZ) are true churches of Christ and declared that the only remaining difficulty with entering into a sister relation with the GKVZ is their relation with the *Christian Reformed Churches of Australia*, with whom we don't stand on the same foundation at the moment (GS 2003, art 72).

Regarding our task in education, already half a century the LORD has blessed us with Reformed schools. Starting with a few primary schools, today we have increased. Today there are about 7 schools including both primary and secondary schools/colleges. The John Calvin – here he is again – the John Calvin primary schools in the metro Perth go from pre-school to Year 6, middle school includes Years 7-9, and senior high school the Years 10-12. The John Calvin Schools in Albany and Tasmania go from pre-school to Year 10. The Support Office of the John Calvin schools works on two main tasks, namely, curriculum development and teacher training. Concerning the latter, the two-year REDC course (Reformed Education Diploma Course), academically accredited by University of Notre Dame, Fremantle, is growing into a CORE (College of Reformed Education). Further, we support the Theological College in Hamilton, Canada, and are also working towards a library for a possible Theological College of our own in the future. But you will understand that this is not to boast about our activities, because it's Jesus Christ, the King of the church and the Lord of the world, who gathers, defends and preserves His church in His world. That dominates our evangelism, *The outreach*, and our radio work *The Voice of the Church*.

Concerns

Brothers, we want to come back for a moment to our sympathetic-critical responses to your deputies' reports and synod's decisions. We thank you for accepting our submissions as part of your agenda and we hope that our summary of concerns as part of this speech will not be forgotten. In it we have given you an overview of our concerns related to what we believe are subjective inclinations in some of the reports and decisions. For instance in the Report *Marriage and Divorce* your deputies leave too much room for a subjective approach by which we *add* permissible reasons to divorce to the Bible, instead of to *apply* what is revealed in the Bible (by Jesus and Paul). We are of the opinion that the church which *in line* of Scripture makes ethical pronouncements doesn't *shift* the track to extra-Biblical grounds for divorce, but *follows* this track on Biblical grounds so that it doesn't lose the track. Let's hold on to what is represented *within* the canon, not paving the way for an official divorce which hasn't been caused by adultery or the willful departure by an unbeliever. Against what the same deputies say about the Sunday rest and worship as a *further specification* of an existing rule, we insist that the Sunday rest and worship are the *inevitable application* of the whole of the Bible. Further we have expressed our concern regarding the multiplication of hymns which inevitably comes at the cost of the psalms.

But, as said, we do not repeat what we have already said in what you have in front of you. Also time is precious today. On the other hand, you will gladly agree with us that we have to explain a bit to our treasurer if we report that we needed the two tickets for two times 20 hours of flying each for just one speech of not more than 10 minutes. Therefore still a few words about 1905, and if your chairman allows me, also about how the church has been *Protected* and has *Continued* since 1925. Yes, you hear the title of his thorough study about Assen-1926 and the sixties. Ten to one that he will not silence me.

1905

One hundred years ago, in 1905, the General Synod of the United Reformed Churches met nearby in Utrecht. And what happened there still means a lot to us today. Particularly in the light of the Liberation 1944 and the new Liberation today. The pacification-declaration of 1905 gave room to the then so-called A- and B- understanding of baptism. "A" considered the baptized child as sanctified in Christ, whereas "B" presumed the baptized child to be regenerated. Eventually it became "the seed of the covenant by virtue of the promise of God is to be held to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ." B Holwerda, in 1944, considered the 1905-declaration as a "B-formula with an A-foundation."⁵) "1905 could be very broad," he said, "because the churches remained standing on the basis of the confession; then the necessary theological freedom occurred automatically."⁶) The problem arose when, again in Utrecht, the General Synod 1943 took sides with the B-view, and showed the A-partners the door.

Let's learn from it by not unbiblically chopping off what doesn't fit our theology, because then the church becomes a sectarian group which puts at risk its unity – the *una*. But let us not, on the rebound, embrace theologically what doesn't fit Scripture, because the church then becomes a ecumenical movement which puts at risk its sanctity – the *sancta*. We in Australia pray that the Liberated and New Liberated people may find and bind each other on the foundation of the not-bound Scriptures which the Liberated brothers and sisters would keep in 1944 over against unscriptural restraint of conscience (1 Cor 4:6,7). What the Word has to say has the first and last say, and the truth requires precision. The concern of those who have left you should still be a source of concern to you. And this we pray “that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent” (Phil 1:9,10).

What really matters is our answer (“ans-word”) to the Word, in particular where the Bible doesn't give the answer directly. What matters is the Scriptural application of Scripture, including what it teaches us about the position and duty of men and women in the church. With their dismaying decision to open the special office of supervision and discipline for women, the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* (NGK) have firmly locked the door of dialogue. In this situation it really comes down to an application of what the universally applicable Scriptures teach us about the unique office of women. And that is something else than having women in the special offices. May the stranded NGK-ship convince you all the more of the need today for a Reformed hermeneutics-lighthouse, a lighthouse which also sends out the light of Assen-26!

27 May 1925

It is today, 27 May, exactly 80 years ago that classis Amsterdam questioned dr Geelkerken with regard to his sermon about Lord's Day 3, which he had held a year before⁷). Geelkerken's answers to the classis, in June and September 1925, proved how he expressed his doubts about the actual reality of Gen 2-3 by asking himself whether Gen 2-3 describes facts which have happened in reality, or, God's revelation *about* these facts. He didn't justify his answers to these questions from the text, context and the whole of Scripture. On 4 March 1926 the General Synod of Assen condemned this hermeneutic.

Assen-26 is popular again today, not least because of church unity with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) who along the rails of their church history don't have a railway station *Assen-26*. As far as church polity is concerned, they are to be congratulated with that, because a switch has shifted towards hierarchy, has it not? But the train stayed on the hermeneutical rails. Therefore keep on studying Assen-26 together with the CGK, as long as you do not ask too much. For Assen didn't come with a fixed exegesis of Gen 1-3, but rejected an un-reformed hermeneutic which in advance doubted a Scriptural exegesis of Gen 1-3 by leaving room for the possibility that continued scientific understanding would overthrow such an exegesis.

Esteemed delegates, national and international deputies, brothers and sisters present,

Speratus

We really must stop. Our ten minutes are long gone. But that was already the case even before I started, because we are hours ahead of you there in Australia! Aren't we? Anyway, we round off with a few beautiful lines of poetry from our Canadian / Australian Book of Praise, namely from Hymn 24. The poet was condemned as a heretic to die by fire, by the bishop of Olmutz, Germany, but got the opportunity to flee to Wittenberg. This Paul Hoffer, who latinised his German name to Speratus (what also means "hoffer" or "he who hopes") 470 years ago in Wittenberg, where he was allowed to live and work, wrote his famous hymn: *Es ist das Heil uns kommen her von Gnad' und lauter Güte*. Or, as in our Book of Praise: *Salvation unto us has come by God's free grace and favour*. Luther shed tears of joy when he heard it sung by a street singer outside his window in Wittenberg. It was extremely dangerous in those days to sing this hymn! And it's still dangerous in so many countries in the world where millions of people are picked up and finished off because they have in their house the Word of grace in Jesus Christ. But the Word of God is not bound.

Why do we single out this hymn for attention? To highlight that many hymns in the *Liedboek* have become translated or changed in such a manner as to make them unsuitable for use in church. We suggest to you to concentrate on biblical cantica or to take up our request to make new rhymings of the Psalms that are more Christological, with tunes other than Genevan ones. In this case unfortunately the original German hymn has been changed by Ad den Besten in the Dutch *Liedboek voor de kerken* in such a way that you really couldn't select this song (344). But in German and English it lives on, and hopefully also in Dutch as soon as possible, if a Dutch poet does his or her best. It lives on in the hearts of all those who, together with you, praise the Triune God for His grace in Christ.

All blessing, honour, thanks, and praise
To Father, Son, and Spirit,
The God who saved us by His grace;
All glory to His merit!
O Triune God in heaven above,
Who hast revealed Thy saving love,
Thy blessed Name be hallowed.

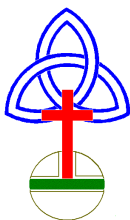
Thank you so much!

On behalf of the Australian deputies sister church relations
AC Breen

NOTES

- 1) K Schilder, "Calvijn als profeet". In: *K Schilder (1890-1952) – Een keuze uit zijn werk* (ingeleid door G Harinck). Kampen 1989, blz 151.

- 2) W.F. Dankbaar, *Calvin zijn weg en werk*. Nijkerk 1982, blz 210.
- 3) K Schilder, "Stellingen inzake de kerk". In: *K Schilder (1890-1952) – Een keuze uit zijn werk* (ingeleid door G. Harinck). Kampen 1989, blz 63.
- 4) K Schilder, "Una Sancta". In: *K Schilder – Schriftoverdenkingen II*. Goes 1957, blz 127-128.
- 5) RJ Dam, B Holwerda, C Veenhof, *Rondom "1905" – Een Historische Schets*. Terneuzen 1944, blz 102.
- 6) aw blz 138
- 7) see P Niemeijer, *Bewaard en voortgegaan – '1926' en 'jaren zestig': om de helderheid van de Schrift en de binding aan de belijdenis*. Uitgeverij Woord en Wereld 2002 (cahier nr 53).



Deputies of the

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

for Relations with Sister Churches

11 February 2005

Written Response of the Australian deputies to the delegates of General Synod Amersfoort 2005 regarding Dutch Deputies' Reports and Synod's Decisions

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,
members of the General Synod Amersfoort 2005,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you via this writing on matters we feel need to address. At our General Synod Rockingham 2003 we decided to continue sister church relations with you and to continue to discuss matters of concern with your deputies. With thankfulness we declared that you have given evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed confessions and the Church Order. It's on the basis of this conviction that we raise some concerns. Please receive our comments in the knowledge that we are in the same mind and mood to praise God's name, to celebrate His day and to promote a Christian lifestyle in which we follow Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. And, please, also see to it that we remain your faithful sister. We too need your ongoing support.

To your deputies we have sent several responses to deputies' reports and previous General Synod's decisions. Please read this written Address in the context of our responses which will be on your Agenda anyway. We grew more and more convinced that you and we need Scriptural principles for Scripture explanation in order to use the freedom of exegesis normatively rather than subjectively. Our experience with the Bible may never substitute our obedience

to the Bible. No *sola fide* without *tota Scriptura*. But because of the different redemptive historical layers in Scripture and the difficult application of Scripture we need Reformed hermeneutics (rules for explanation) which guide us to explain and apply Scripture according to Scriptural norms. Otherwise we are inclined to follow our hearts too subjectively. To follow Christ is not the same as to follow our heart.

While studying your deputies' reports and previous General Synod's decisions we found what we believe are subjective inclinations in some of the reports and decisions. We will raise these issues here in order to alert you and ourselves to the inclination to be led too much by our subjective feelings.

1. Regarding the "willful desertion" as possible ground for divorce deputies *Marriage and Divorce* state in their final report to General Synod Amersfoort that Paul indicated in a new situation, arisen in Corinth, how to deal with marriage and divorce. "From that, we may infer that we, as congregation of Christ in a new situation (that is one which is unforeseen in the Bible, or at least not mentioned), may need to determine our position in regard to divorce. There are, therefore, situations in which the church may acquiesce in or approve of a divorce. It happens that you may be placed before a similar choice as is mentioned here: you must choose between one evil and another. In our view, there is no Biblical argument to suggest that such a choice between two evils can only occur in case of adultery or desertion." (p 16)

We find that deputies leave too much room for a subjective approach by which we do not *apply* what is revealed in the Bible (by Jesus and Paul) but *add* permissible reasons to divorce to the Bible.

2. Regarding the foundations of their argument the same deputies *Marriage and Divorce* state that, under the guidance of God's Spirit, the church has come to realize that the day of rest ought no longer to be the seventh day, but the *first* day of the week. There is no such command of God to be found in the Bible. We can say that the church made this decision, in which the honour of God (Christ, who rose from the dead) came first. In a new situation, it sometimes becomes necessary to further specify an existing rule." (p 18)

Again, we find this too subjective an explanation. We believe that the Sunday rest and worship is not a further specification of an existing rule, but the inevitable application of the whole of Scripture. The question of Lord's Day 38 is not "How did the church further specify the fourth commandment?", but "What does God require in the fourth commandment?"

3. Regarding the proposal of Committee Fryslân that a hymn should be in harmony with Scripture and confession (see GS Zuidhorn, art 83) General Synod stated that "the pronouncement that a hymn should not be in conflict with Scripture and the confessions is an invitation to submit

objections. Echo Scripture frankly and you are not in conflict with the confession.”

We find it hard to understand this because we use our confessions precisely to avoid subjectivism. If the confessions are the virus scan on our computer of hymns, then deletion of it will only be to our hurt. We agree that the confessions do not add to Scripture, but as an alarm bell, they alert us when the Bible is being broken into. Scripture is important. Therefore we are thankful for the confessions, even as we are happy with the alarm in our car. To remove that alarm, reasoning that our car is sufficiently safe, doesn't make sense. Therefore we asked deputies to bring forward our conviction that a good hymn ought not to be in conflict with Scripture and the confessions.

4. Regarding the new 121 hymns from The Liedboek GS Zuidhorn made 117 available for use in worship services. After thorough study Synod decided to reject the objections to these hymns (GS Zuidhorn, art 86).

We ask you to consider the effects of singing incomprehensible language. The more obscure the language, the more subjective reading takes place. Which adolescent in the year 2005 understands “Mijn Verlosser hangt aan't kruis, hangt ten spot van snode smaders, hangt er mijnentwegen”? (Hymn 189). First of all my Redeemer doesn't hang on the cross but rules the whole kingdom from heaven. We don't re-live subjectively Christ crucifixion, do we? Further “snode smaders” and “mijnentwegen” are as obscure as “deel ons zelf de voorsmaak mee van der zaalgen sabbatsvree” (Hymn 221).

And please stick to Zuidhorn's decision not to release the proposed Ordinarium for publication. It doesn't apply the historical line of salvation in understanding Scripture, but instead often chooses to re-enact the redemptive historical facts, explaining it in an exemplaric, subjective, sometimes mystical manner (think of Cyril of Jerusalem).

Further realise that the translators of the original hymns often have changed the contents. According to translator WJ van der Molen is “de hel teniet gedaan nu onze Heer is opgestaan” (Hymn 200). This suits better our subjective feelings, but the poet Nikolaus Herman (1500-1561) wrote different: Jesus Christ has “überwunden” (defeated) the hell, not nullified it. Hell still exists.

We ask you, in line with Calvin, to put to rhyme Bible texts and passages. It is better to spend time and energy in composing hymns directly derived from Scriptures than in dealing with appeal upon appeal to unbiblical, subjective, thoughts and feelings that have crept in into the hymns. We know that some

Liedboek hymns can be sung if the congregations, by singing, every time translate the ambiguous sentences in a Reformed way, but always those hymns shall be found inferior to the faithful Cantica which are directly derived from God's own reliable Word.

5. Regarding the second worship service deputies came with a proposed order of worship for the "leerdienst" to the GS Zuidhorn (art 74).

In this proposal we do not find the four main elements (*objective* criteria) around which all the other liturgical elements should be grouped. Based on Scripture (e.g. Acts 2:40-47) and confessions (e.g. Lord's Day 38) the four main elements are:

- ☐ God's Word: reading and preaching
- ☐ two sacraments: baptism and Lord's Supper
- ☐ calling upon the LORD: praise and prayer
- ☐ charity: offertory.

6. Regarding Lord's Supper in crisis and war areas GS Zuidhorn decided to allow military chaplains to conduct the celebration of the Lord's Supper in exceptional circumstances under certain conditions (GS Zuidhorn, art 101).

We are afraid that this decision is prompted more by subjective feelings rather than by earlier made decisions like: "only those who have professed the Reformed faith and are godly in conduct are invited to the Lord's table". Along the same subjective reasoning we can ask why military personnel would have such a need of the sacrament of Lord's Supper, while the chronically ill or imprisoned do not have such opportunity.

7. Regarding the new Form for Marriage we appreciate the Scriptural teaching about marriage.

But we are afraid that the subjectively uncomfortable feeling with the word "submission" or even the feelings of risk for brute dominion and slavish submission have caused this word to disappear in the Form. We are of the opinion that the new Form could have used the biblical word "submission" with the biblical explanation.

8. Regarding the report on the "HEERlijke dag" we would like to express our appreciation for the good biblical survey of the subject of Sabbath/Sunday.

But we ask you to guard more adequately against the opinion that the Lord's Day is only a gift for which we should express our feelings of thankfulness. We urge you to copy the following words of the deputies' report into the main paragraph 1.1:

- “Lasting *and* new in relation to the fourth commandment is () to *rest* from own work and performance by enjoying God's gifts of grace in His creation and care of His world, as well in redemption and sanctification of His people. It is Christ Who is the way to the rest (Mat 11:28).” (par 11.6, p 54)
- “Out of the question is the “vrijblijvendheid” in relation to spending the Sunday. The two pillars of Sunday celebration remain standing: the assemblies and the rest in order to rejoice in God's great deeds.” (par 18.6, p 90)

These sentences easily fit in par 1.1, third section on Rest and Celebration, after the second sentence “That is how the fourth commandment has been applied within the Reformed tradition.” Then we get:

De Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) in Nederland hebben de vrije zondag, zoals die onder Gods voorzienigheid in Europa tot ons is gekomen, steeds met dank aan God aanvaard. Zo is het vierde gebod in de gereformeerde traditie toegepast. Blijvend en nieuw in relatie tot het vierde gebod is het rusten van eigen werk en prestatie door te genieten van Gods genadegaven zowel in schepping en verzorging van zijn wereld, als in verlossing en heiligmaking van zijn volk. Christus is het die de weg naar de rust is (Mat. 11:28). Er is geen sprake van vrijblijvendheid met betrekking tot de besteding van de zondag. De twee pijlers van de zondagsviering blijven recht overeind: de samenkomsten en de rust om je te verheugen in Gods grote daden.

Nu op zondag door de wetgever meer ruimte wordt geboden om te werken en die dag daardoor als dag van de Heer minder beschermd wordt, willen wij publiek en eensgezind, met woord en daad, getuigen:

(the new part is underlined)

Finally, if we may, we fully support the proposal of the *Particuliere Synode* of Gelderland that General Synod Amersfoort declares the following (see *De Reformatie*, Jan 29, p 300):

In obedience to Scripture, in a faithful response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in communion with the instruction of the church concerning the meaning of the Sabbath according to the fourth commandment as expressed in Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Reformed churches ascribe the special value of a day of rest to the Sunday.

Esteemed brothers,

Again, we raise these matters from the heart in order to support you in your church work in God's kingdom, and to challenge you to make decisions which are fully based on Scripture and confessions. We hope that this modest contribution of ours may convince you that we too are eager to follow Christ in trust and obedience. And this we pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the *diapheronta*, the things that really matter (Phil 1:9), and that you may apply them in a life of thankfulness. May the God of peace be with you all (Phil 4:8,9).

With Christian greetings,
on behalf of the FRCA Deputies for Sister Churches

W Huizinga, Convener
AMC Bruning, Secretary

Text of the Appeal of the General Synod of De Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt) in Nederland

Held At Amersfoort, 2005, To The “Newly Liberated” As Recorded In The Acts, Article 01.03.02

Official Translation

To:

The general synod of the churches who will assemble around October 15 in Marienberg,

Clerk of the Reformed Church Marienberg
G. H. Plaggenmars
Hesselinkkamp 11
7692 AS Marienberg

Esteemed sirs and brothers,

We, as General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – Amersfoort-Centrum 2005, kindly request your attention.

Our Synod was the first after the division of ecclesiastical ways between you and us in 2003 and the following years. You will understand that from the very beginning of our meeting, this break in our fellowship has been in view. During the time we met it has been directly discussed more than once.

For years we have broken bread together and drunk from one cup, the cup of the new covenant in Christ's blood. Together we have been heartily encouraged by the gospel and by God's covenant. We stood shoulder to shoulder in all activities in God's kingdom. Together we have shared the joy of

return to God's Word and have wanted to build God's spiritual house together. Together we have recognised heresy and sin and fought against it. The LORD had given us to each other. That was how it was and that was how we experienced it. One in kneeling before God's Word and in commitment to the confession; one in looking forward to the Marriage feast of the Lamb. For this reason it feels even worse than an amputation that we are no longer united around pulpit, baptism font and at the Lord's table. It is a disunity which grieves the LORD and which damages our witness to the world. This motivates us as synod to address you.

In recent times, reactions to your withdrawal have taken place in many ways and on many levels. Frequently it became obvious how difficult it is to express feelings adequately and to keep demonstrating the mind of Christ. This was not always done successfully. In this, our appeal as synod, we seek your hearts. But we realise that it will not be easy to reach each other. On both sides interference and resistance can disturb the exercise of contact. And yet we write you this letter. For our heart goes out to you and we are grieved about our damaged family relationships and personal friendships. Above all we see a calling from God to restore brotherly unity. We are writing our letter in dependence on and in trust in the Lord as the only One who is able to conquer our powerlessness and to restore unity between you and us.

Attacked and vulnerable

We are of the opinion that there is much within the Reformed Churches for which the apostles taught us to thank the Lord (see e.g. 1 Cor. 1:4-9). We think of what Christ and His Spirit are bringing about in the churches in terms of faith and obedience, in love for the Lord and dedication to his kingdom, in willingness to make sacrifices and to show hospitality to our neighbours.

This in no way allows us to think we 'have arrived'. We realise all too well who we are in ourselves. And then we are not looking at a few people or at tendencies in our midst. We then refer to all of us together and each one personally. Humiliation does not suit us merely because of certain sins but because of our sinful nature. We see how Satan aims arrows at the heart of us all and at that of our children. We confess that none of us are immune to sin and heresy. We are all, more than we would wish, children of our age and have to fight against the urge for autonomy which nestles deep within us. We discover in ourselves our Western desires for rest and ease and enjoyment, desires which undermine our readiness to offer and to serve. Insights confront us and rise up within us which we find difficult to assess in the light of Scripture. In a society with so much secularisation, emptiness, and lust for pleasure, we see ourselves facing challenges, questions and dangers, which we as mere human beings are not strong enough to withstand. There is absolutely no reason to be self assured. We are nothing without the blood of Christ and the power of his Spirit.

Catholic Reformed

In the last years, besides you, others have also left us, be it individually, because we were 'too reformed' and we have allegedly 'regulated too much'. In your case, in the joint and public 'Act of Liberation or Return', expressed as a complaint in our direction, we talk about a quite different of grievance.

In your judgment we have become a pluralistic church, and reformed doctrine is no longer safe in our midst. Your 'Act of Liberation or Return' is a call for us to repent and return. In answer to this we feel the need to make clear what we stand for.

1. We confess the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. For this reason it affects us deeply when in your 'Act of Liberation or Return' you speak about synodical decisions made by our churches which are 'directly contrary to the Word of our God'. In the requests for revision which we were given to deal with, we have not been able to find evidence of inconsistency with God's Word or with the confessions of the church in any synod-decision. Nor have we as Reformed Churches declared that we no longer want to submit ourselves to the Holy Scriptures nor want to be bound to the reformed confession any more. On the contrary, God's Word and the confessions of the church are continually confessed as norm and maintained as our concrete standard in all our decisions.
2. We want to discover what God's will is in all sorts of circumstances. We are out to do maximum justice to God's Word. However, we do not want to clothe all our conclusions about various issues with divine authority or with the authority of Scripture. In the way in which we humans work out and make concrete what the whole of Scripture offers us, we cannot deny cultural limitations and factors. Hence, reformation is for us not always 'proceeding further' in absolutising certain conclusions, which drawn from God's Word, conclusions which are always limited, but rather it means 'turning back' to God's Word in all its breadth. The treasure and the strength of the church does not lie in drawing more and more conclusions and applications which we attribute to God's Word (which conclusions and applications can be merely human and one-sided), but in the Word of God itself.
3. We are churches of the Reformation. Typical of the Reformation was that it bound itself only to the Word of God (arts. 7 and 32, Belgic Confession). Alongside the Word of God – and the confession which echoes and summarises this Word – we have all sorts of agreements, regulations and church pronouncements. Just as you, we see the importance of these. They serve to help build up and govern the church. God is after all not a God of disorder. He calls for peace by means of justice and by clarity and by faithfulness. But no matter how important these specific statements and agreements may be, they are not of the same order as God's Word and the confessions of the church. They are

not indispensable assurances upon which our salvation depends. This salvation is fixed in Christ and in His Spirit.

4. Commitment to the reformed confessions is, according to our conviction, fully a catholic issue. We want to measure our church life against this standard. We therefore take it seriously that in our commitment to the reformed doctrine, we have to do with our 'common, undoubted Christian faith', the faith of the church of all places and all ages. But in no way do we want to make our boundaries of our foundations narrower than this catholic, reformed commitment (cf. the title of the brochure which our deputies for sister relations wrote: *Not beyond what is written*, referring to 1 Cor. 4:6, an important text in the days of the Liberation). In this way we hold on to what belongs to the breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ.
5. Throughout the centuries God's people have always been an attacked and sinful people. This has never been a justification for the servants of God to leave the flock of the LORD. On the contrary, someone like Elijah was sent back to fulfil his task in the Israel of Ahab. Especially in the struggle against sin and heresy, do we in the church prove that we are each other's shepherds. Life in the church does not only take in days of sunshine when there is no danger or struggle. The Lord Jesus did not write off the people amongst whom He did His work, but went to battle with the devil for 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. He who is the Good Shepherd, came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance. Only when we should be cast out or forced to sin, is there a limit: obey God more than man.
6. In the struggle for reformation and church recovery, we as reformed people, under the claim of the Word of God, have always emphasised the need to exercise patience. Reformed people have always pointed to God's patience with the 'bruised reed' and the 'smoking flax' (Is. 42:3), and have always placed their trust in the living Christ and the work of his gospel. Not in order to justify sin but in order to conquer it in the power and way of the Spirit (cf. the fourth in the row of decisions from our synod following the recommendations of the deputies for 'marriage and divorce'). This gave us mercy, decisiveness and trust despite all weakness of faith and all the evil desires of the flesh which are left in us.
7. Our ideal has never been in the peace of the 'conventicle' (the small group of true believers in the church) nor in a corps d'élite of like-minded people. The church of Christ exists thanks to God's grace to sinners, recognises a variety of gifts, is characterised by love and care for all called by Christ, and commits itself to reformation and restoration of the church where necessary. That is how we want to be church. We refuse to change into a mere group or conventicle.

Appeal

We hope in this way to have indicated how we want to be and to remain catholic and reformed. We appeal to you to accept us in these reformed intentions and to be prepared to speak with us openly from heart to heart. Out of love for the catholic character of the faith of the church. Out of love for the Lord of the church, our good Shepherd who is a Redeemer of sinners and Protector of a people who in and of themselves are vulnerable, sinful and unwilling.

What a gift it would be if we could meet each other again in the unity of true faith. We believe that words of Scripture such as 1 Corinthians 3 (about the temple of God), 1 Corinthians 12 (about the body of Christ), and Ephesians 4 (about the unity and mutual building of the church) obligate us to this.

In the world

We do not appeal to you on the basis of the conviction that everything in our church is good, and that there is 'peace without danger'. For that is not so. We do not want to appear better than we are. In ourselves we are vulnerable. Many submissions and deputies' reports tabled at synod witnessed to the spiritual struggle against more than flesh and blood. We received requests for clear statements on the subject of marriage and divorce, of pastoral dealings with brothers and sisters who are sexually attracted to the same sex, and of observance of the Sunday. The report from the deputies for marriage and divorce, against the current way of living to which we also are exposed, wrote emphasising the need for a style of living which is characterised across the whole breadth by maximal dedication to God, on the basis of the rich mercy in Christ, and by readiness to carry a cross and to serve from the perspective of the coming kingdom of God. It was pointed out how the spirit of individualism and relativism, of materialism and desire for pleasure also has its influence amongst us. In discussions and reports about issues surrounding church polity and church order, it became clear how careful we have to be of the dangers, on the one side, of anxiously desiring to regulate things, and on the other hand, of the danger of indifference to ecclesiastical agreements.

Via the deputies for 'mission, ecumenical help and training' we received a document (*The Candlestand Statement*) containing 'reformed considerations over the charismatic movement', which, according to the writers, also has direct relevance for current discussions in The Netherlands. In our letter to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* churches we wrote: 'we know, above all, if we talk of the developments in our churches, that you and other reformed churches are anxiously watching to see how we, as churches, approach and deal with the issues which face us in these days, on the basis of the Word of God. We see it as important not to walk away from these issues, but we do realise that we find ourselves in a process which knows countless risks and dangers, and that, despite robust words sometimes, we have little strength. We understand in this situation that we cannot always ask you and others for a blank cheque expressing your support'.

But in all this we also know our Saviour. He prayed that his Father would not take us out of the world but, in the midst of that world, would keep us in his holy name (John 17). We know that we are compelled by Him to be reformed in the midst of the world which is His, and in a time which is not removed from his authority and care. We do not call 2005 and years that may yet come ‘annus Domini’ for nothing. We cannot withdraw ourselves from the challenges, questions and dangers which confront us today, nor do we want to. We want to confront ourselves with these things honestly and openly. Our discussions about the so called missionary deputyships, about the relationship with our government and about the room we want to give to the work of spiritual care in the armed services, penitentiary institutions and institutes for care, made us deeply aware of our place in society and of the public nature of our confession. Not only in our worship services, but throughout our entire lives, we want to serve the Lord and follow our Redeemer.

We believe that you cannot avoid the questions of our time either. You too, want to be reformed in a world which is de-christianised, and in many ways empty. What a gift it would be if we could support each other in this - you with your gifts and we with ours. The Word of God has, after all, not only reached you or us and will not stop with you or us. It is the Word that is also intended for the 21st century, for the people of today, for the people who sit in your and our church pews.

Appendices

Examining our agenda, we found various items which touched on and referred back to the issues which, according to your ‘Act of Liberation or Return’ and according to the brochure *Let us repent*, were the reasons for you to break church fellowship with us.

We are sending you the decisions which we took about issues which you mention or are referred to in your ‘Act of Liberation or Return’: those concerning the fourth and seventh commandments and about church unity.

We also are adding the decision about the administration of sacraments in the armed services, mentioned on pages 84f. of the brochure *Let us repent*. We have to say that we do not recognise ourselves in the image you painted of us in the press concerning how our decision was taken. We hope that it will be clear from our decisions that we wanted to make them on the basis of Scripture.

In your ‘Act of Liberation or Return’ and on page 84 of the brochure *Let us repent*, various liturgical decisions are also mentioned. Of these we are sending you the decisions pertaining to the ‘ordinarium’ church service. As far as receiving the blessing from the ruling elder who leads a church service is concerned, we note that since the Synod of Heemse 1984-85 it has been assumed that there is no evidence to support the idea that the giving of the blessing must be reserved for the minister of the Word (*Acta*, art. 70, decision 2, ground a).

The Synod of Zuidhorn 2002-2003 indicated that liturgical decisions in particular have been the reason for much concern. We realise this and we are sad about this too. But no matter how important it is, we do not see it as reason to justify church division. In this too we ask you to do us justice. There are differences of opinion about new hymns and about concrete liturgical considerations amongst us, but we are convinced that the procedure as such to make a new selection of hymns cannot be called careless or contrary to God's Word. The authority of God's Word is explicitly expressed in the criteria for church hymns. From the standpoint of carefulness, hymns have to have a qualified majority support in order to be released for use after the first reading. The possibility of 'appeal' in line with the 'unless' of Church Order article 31 has not been diminished in any way.

Also, with regard to the other points of liturgy, the teaching of Scripture is sought and a way is sought that the church of today can use the heritage of the church of all ages. The various synod decisions and deputy reports witness, in our judgment, to this intention.

As appendices we also send:

- a. the brochure *Not beyond what is written. Do the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands not hold to Scripture and Confession?*; our deputies for sister relations reported to us that the churches abroad with whom we have relations have been informed of the church developments via this brochure. By means of this letter, we want to avoid that our deputies in overseas relations speak about you, without we ourselves addressing you.
- b. the appeal to you from our sister churches in Sumba (de Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia di Nusa Tenggara Timur).

Request

We ask of you and your ecclesiastical assemblies to consider this appeal before the face of God. We are prepared to explain our appeal to your synod at any time. We have given authority to our deputies for church unity (assisted by the moderamen of the General Synod of Amersfoort Centre) to do this.

We would be grateful if you would be prepared to talk with us. To do this, you can make contact with our deputies for church unity (address: Mr. K. Mulder, De Meesterproef 22, 3813 GL Amersfoort). They have been authorised to speak with you by means of an agenda which, of course, would be drawn up mutually, in order to make recommendations to our next synod. If necessary, they can request the assembling of an extraordinary synod.

In all sincerity, we express the hope that our separation shall not turn out to be permanent, but that we will search for and find each other as Christians and as churches.

We sincerely pray for God's blessing over you and the wisdom of His Spirit in your considerations and decisions.

With sincere brotherly greetings,

On behalf of the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Amersfoort Centre 2005,

P. Niemeijer, chairman; H. Pathuis, 2nd clerk.

P.S. This appeal is being sent by us to all brothers and sisters who have left us. We do so via their consistories. Also, we send it to the upcoming general synod that will assemble on October 15.

1.6 *Deputies Report on Dutch decisions regarding Fourth Commandment and Sunday to Synod West Kelmscott 2006 DV*

1.6.1 Mandate

Synod Rockingham 2003 Article 41 made the following decision regarding our sister Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in relation to the fourth commandment:

Decision:

To instruct deputies to:

1. Stay informed about the developments and decisions in the RCN with respect to the 4th commandment re the Sunday.
2. To interact with the Dutch deputies on the matter.

Grounds:

1. Our correspondence and discussions with the RCN on this matter have resulted in some progress. Thus the discussions, according to the rules, should be continued, especially with a view to the Dutch deputyship studying this matter.

1.6.2 Short history

On June 2 1996 Rev. D. Ophoff of Nieuwegein (Utrecht) preached on the fourth commandment (LD 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism). A church member expressed concern about certain elements in the sermon. The church council, however, did not share these concerns. The member then appealed to Classis Utrecht. Classis Utrecht turned down the appeal. The matter was then appealed to Particular Synod Utrecht and it upheld the appeal. The matter was then appealed by the church of Nieuwegein to General Synod Leusden which upheld the decisions of the church council of Nieuwegein and Classis Utrecht and rejected the decision of PS Utrecht.

Synod Leusden 1999 stated in its decisions, amongst others, that:

- in the sermon of Rev. Ophoff on LD 38 the importance of the worship services and the space which should be kept for these clearly came to the fore;
- that, however, in the sermon it is insufficiently clear that LD 38 speaks of a command, namely especially on the day of rest to diligently attend the worship services;
- that the view of Rev. Ophoff (that the Sunday as day of rest is not founded on a Divine command) is not condemnable.

In Ground 4 Leusden regrets that Rev. Ophoff's sermon has led to the understanding that the Sunday is merely a human institution. Leusden states:

- "The sermon-passage referred to can, however, also be understood in the sense that the Christian church in her believing answer to the guidance of God's Spirit has given the Sunday the special value of day of rest, following the example of the Israelite Sabbath. There always has been room for this approach (namely that the Sunday as day of rest is founded upon a responsible choice of the Christian Church) in the Reformed tradition (cf J Douma, *The Ten Commandments*, 1996 (1992), esp p 145)."

General Synod Zuidhorn 2002 decided not to revise Leusden's decision 'that it is not condemnable to say that the Sunday as day of rest is not founded upon a (direct) Divine commandment'. Synod emphasized (in Ground 4 of its decision):

- "the express command to devote the day to worship in such a way 'that on it men rest from all servile labour (except those required by charity and present necessities), and likewise from all such recreations as to prevent the worship of God'."

Therefore Synod Zuidhorn also decided to establish a deputy-ship 'Fourth Commandment and Lord's Day' (Acts art. 13) and to instruct deputies:

- to serve the churches with a study in which a positive point of view is offered in regards to ethical behaviour as believers and churches in the 21st century in regards to celebrating the Sunday as Day of the Lord in the light of the 4th commandment.

In the grounds for this decision Synod states:

- The Christian church learned, under God's providence, already centuries ago to value and to celebrate the Lord's Day as a complete day of rest. The recognition of the value of this precious gift is diminishing, now that government and society in the Netherlands have lost the Christian label they carried for many centuries. As a consequence the general acceptance of the

Sunday as a day of rest has suffered. The erosion of the Sunday-rest is also among Christians increasingly apparent, leading to a decline in the heartfelt motivation and room for the worship service. Renewing and developing the churches' conviction on this point is therefore of utmost importance, so that the churches, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of God's Word can address these developments, now and in the future, and can so assist and guide the believers.

- It became apparent that certain centuries-old differences of opinion about the doctrine re the 4th commandment and the Lord's Day could not be resolved yet. It is good that the churches do not just draw that conclusion and leave it at that. Overcoming these unresolved dilemmas will improve the reflection on and the power of the Christian life in the churches. To that end the churches must cooperate in the development, formulation and promotion of a positive Scriptural viewpoint regarding the Sunday-rest in the 21st century in the light of the 4th commandment.

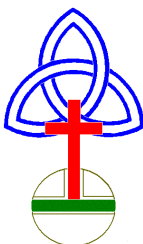
It is clear that Synod Zuidhorn did not allow the opinion that the Lord's Day is no longer a day of rest. It may be so that there are those who wished that Synod Zuidhorn had decided to choose for one approach to the 4th commandment (Sunday as day of rest is based on a direct Divine command), rejecting the other approach (Sunday as day of rest is founded upon the responsible choice of Christ's church based on the Scriptures). At this stage Synod decided not to do this, but to install a deputy-ship to study and discuss these matters in order to serve the churches with advice based on Scripture and Confessions.

1.6.3 Dutch deputies Fourth Commandment and the Sunday

In October 2004 the Dutch deputies Fourth Commandment and the Sunday came with a substantial Report: Zondag, HEERlijke dag. Chapter 1 contains an Instructional section (1.1) and practically ethical guidelines (1.3). Chapters 2-10 give a Biblical-theological explanation, chapters 11-13 is an ethical section and chapters 14-18 a historical section.

1.6.4 Australian Response to the Dutch Report

The FRCA deputies for Relations with Sister Churches submitted the following Response to the Report Zondag, HEERlijke dag.



**Deputies of the
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
for Relations with Sister Churches**

17 February 2005

Response to the Report of the Dutch deputies Fourth Commandment and the Sunday, titled “Zondag, HEERlijke dag”

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

We fully agree with what you have written on page 89 and 90: “The conclusion is univocal: in the Reformed Churches the Sunday applies as day of rest.” And: “No matter how you approach Sunday rest, both lines take their starting point in a *commandment* to rest on Sundays.” We like to express our appreciation for the good biblical survey of the subject of Sabbath/Sunday. The biblical-theological description compels admiration because of its good explanation of Scripture and the fourth commandment. Please receive our constructive criticism within the context of this recognition.

Response to chapter 1

The Instruction section (1.1) of the deputies’ report should guard more adequately against the opinion that the Lord’s Day is only a gift (not a requirement) to be thankfully accepted, and also counteract the opinion that it is merely a choice of Christ’s church. The Lord’s Day as day of rest is founded upon God’s teaching in His Word which the NT church understood when it set apart the first day of the week. The rest on Sunday is based on the Christological application of the 4th commandment. Lord’s Day 38 asks “What does God *require* in the 4th commandment?” To celebrate the Feast-day as God’s gift is required. The deputies’ report even refers to this as a commandment of God (for example, in sections 1.3.2-1.3.4 and 1.3.9). The church, comparing Scripture with Scripture, understood that what Leviticus 23:3 says about the solemn rest and holy convocation today applies to the Sunday in a Christological way (Acts 20:7ff; 1 Cor 16:2). We ask deputies to stress this more explicitly in the Instruction section (1.1) and the Practical Help section (1.3) of their report.

The Christian church in its believing answer to the guidance of the Holy Spirit has given the Sunday the special value of a complete day of rest following the example of the Israelite Sabbath. Deputies write in par 18.4 that “Leusden explained that there was always room in the church for brothers and sisters who defended the generally acknowledged and defended Sunday rest c.q. prohibition of labour on *slightly different grounds* than directly from the 4th

commandment.” There are two lines: 1) Sunday as day of rest is based on a direct Divine command; 2) Sunday as day of rest is founded upon the responsible choice of Christ’s church based on the Scriptures. Deputies write in par 18.5 and 18.6: “No matter how you approach Sunday rest, both lines take their starting point in a *commandment* to rest on Sundays. () The two pillars of Sunday celebration remain standing: the assemblies and the rest in order to rejoice in God’s great deeds”. In paragraph 3 of our next section we will quote from sections in your deputies’ report which more adequately stress this element of commandment. We suggest to deputies to use these quotations in their paragraphs 1.1 and 1.3.

Recognising the deterioration of the Sabbath day in today’s world (see, for example what is mentioned in 1.2.3.3 of the deputies’ report) deputies would do well to emphasise more “the express command to devote the day to worship in such a way that on it men rest from all servile labour (except those required by charity and present necessities), and likewise from all such recreations as to prevent the worship of God” (GS Zuidhorn’s decision, art 52, ground 4).

The following statements leave room for more Sunday work:

- “Hence we urge each other to keep this day as free as possible from labour and other activities which will prevent us from worshipping the Lord and assembling as congregation.” (1.1)
 - *What is meant with “as free as possible”? The impression should be avoided that Sunday rest functions as the means to create room for the worship service (see GS Zuidhorn, art 52, ground 4).*
- “When due to economic and societal pressure Sunday-labour increases, it is good that the congregation supports those who, on account of their labour, must work.” (1.3.10)
 - *We miss further explanation of “economic and societal pressure” and we find “on account of their labour” unnecessarily vague.*
- “Our homes need the support of household rules to find rest and peace on the day of the Lord. () Household rules are agreements which are taught to children as a way of personally giving form to the Sunday-rest. Thus the younger generation can learn how to give shape to Sunday-rest in a responsible way.
 - *We miss the link between household rules as agreements and the express command to devote the day to worship in such a way that we rest.*

We ask deputies to stress more explicitly what we read in Matthew 12:1-4 regarding works permitted on the Day of rest and worship, i.e. works of necessity, of worship and of mercy. Works of *necessity*: David, the anointed king of the LORD, ate the showbread in time of emergency when Saul tried to

kill him (verse 3ff). Works of *worship*: the priests couldn't keep the Sabbath rest (verse 5ff) because of temple service duties (cf Numbers 28:9), but they were blameless. Works of *mercy*: healing (verse 9ff), because it's always lawful to do well on the Sabbath.

Response to chapter 2-13

We like to express our appreciation for the good biblical survey of the subject of Sabbath/Sunday. The biblical-theological description is admirable because it gives a good explanation of the strong biblical line from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day. Please receive our criticism within the context of this recognition.

1. We find that not enough attention is paid to the whole sabbatical system. Obviously, the weekly Sabbath would receive central attention, but it needs to be understood in the context of the whole system of Sabbaths. This system really characterised the economic and social fabric of Israel. When Jesus came He called attention to this sabbatical system, crowned by the Year of Jubilee or *the acceptable year of the Lord* (Luke 4:16-21). This is what Jesus proclaimed to the people. The Scriptures, e.g. Isaiah 61:1,2, become fulfilled in their hearing. Jesus brings the fulfilment. Jesus brought the setting free, the healings, and the release from the effects of sin and Satan. So this system of Sabbaths, all based on the number 7, was a system which proclaimed and produced freedom (see also James 1:25 – the perfect law of *liberty*): freedom from debts; freedom from slavery; freedom for the land; freedom for the original owners of land.

By following this line in its biblical explanation the report would also add in its ethical section significant contributions about Sunday being a celebration of our freedom in Christ (12.2 for example). With this the report would follow what itself says in section 3.1 about the word *Sabbath*. JP Lettinga (1999), in line with JL Koole (1983), explained that the word which we translate with *Sabbath* derives from the Akkadian word *šabpattu* which indicated the 15th day, that is the day of full moon. The celebration of this 15th day, which was the day of the exodus from Egypt was the celebration of the liberation of the house of bondage. Your report rightly parallels "Pascha – sabbat" with "Pasen – zondag". The Sabbath refers to the day of the exodus ("Pascha"); the Sunday refers to the day of Christ's resurrection ("Pasen"). Sabbath was the celebration of God's deliverance from the slavery of Egypt; Sunday is the celebration of God's deliverance from the slavery of sin.

2. There is a refrain that we do not like so much. It is this refrain: the NT does not state that assemblies on the first day of the week are connected to the fourth commandment (8.0, 8.5, 10.5, 14.4); and the NT does not mention the fourth commandment directly (8.0, 10.2-10.4, 10.6). We could also say that the NT does not say explicitly that the animal sacrifices are to be stopped. Hebrews makes it clear that the sacrifice of Jesus has fulfilled these OT sacrifices. Well, in the same way

does the work of Jesus not fulfil the rest and freedom God gave in the OT? Do we need a chapter and verse for that? Does Paul not adequately teach it in his letter to the Galatians, for instance?

We think that the above-mentioned refrain sets the scene in which the conclusion can be reached that the church and not the Lord chose the first day of the week as the day for assembling in worship. This is said explicitly at the bottom of p 59 in section 13.1 (The congregation chooses the Sunday). We believe that the church saw the fulfilment of Scripture (as Jesus taught them to see such fulfilment of Scripture after he rose from the dead for instance – Luke 24). It was not the choice of the church, since we never read that. No proof is offered. Instead, we would claim God's fulfilling in Jesus Christ of the rest men need, and long for, determined this transition. Even as the believers had to learn gradually that the gospel would go to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, so also the transition from Sabbath to Sunday was gradual since the church had to learn to see how God gives us rest in Christ crucified but risen. The report does acknowledge that this was gradual, as a result of Christ's resurrection and under the leading of the Holy Spirit, but in the end it is the church that decides. We find this is not a correct characterisation. God sends his Son, not to destroy the law, the fourth word, but to fulfil it. As a result the day of worship changes. This should be attributed to God and his fulfilling work, rather than to the choice of the church. Of course the church must respond in faith to what Jesus and his inspired apostles taught, and learn to adjust from Sabbath to Sunday. But please do not attribute the change to people. Of course, this refrain will justify Leusden's conclusion that there has always been room in the reformed tradition for the idea that the Sunday as a rest-day is founded on a responsible choice of the Christian Church. Yet it is founded on statements without proof, and it bypasses the obvious point of how the church learned to accept that we enjoy on Sunday, the LORDly day, the fulfilled rest we have in Christ.

3. We ask deputies to integrate essential parts of the following quotations of their report, cp 2-13, in its foundational part, sections 1.1 and 1.3. We stress that we agree with the following statements and we are of the opinion that the foundational part will be more balanced if it contains these crucial elements.
 - “Jesus reminds his listeners of the creation of man, and calls Himself the Son of Man. This encompasses a reference to Adam. The Sabbath is for the benefit of man. When Jesus compares Himself with Adam, and moreover calls Himself Lord of the Sabbath, then it cannot be so that the Day of Rest as such would disappear.” (8.2.c; p 35)

- “When Jesus calls Himself Lord also over the Sabbath, then it is not expected that the day of the LORD and the day of rest – the purpose of the 4th commandment – will disappear.” (8.5.2; p 38)
- “The shadow of the Old Testament has been replaced by the reality of Christ. Paul’s instruction corresponds with the Gospel in which Christ manifested Himself to be the heart of the Sabbath.” (9.2.3; p 41)
- “The commandment to love God, in which also the 4th is summarised, will continue to exist. The new covenant cannot be poorer than the old. Resting from daily labour and doing Christ’s work should receive room, also in the new covenant.” (10.4.4; p 46)
- “What remains in the 4th commandment of Sinai is the portrayal of God’s rest which we may enter through faith in Christ and the expectation of His kingdom, and which we may celebrate in the assembly of the congregation.” (10.4.5; p 46)
- “Lasting *and* new in relation to the 4th commandment is () to rest from own work and performance by enjoying God’s gifts of grace in His creation and care of His world, as well in redemption and sanctification of His people. It is Christ Who is the way to the rest (Mat 11:28).” (11.6; p 54)
- “For only the miracle of Easter, the resurrection of Christ, Who broke the ban of our sin and the doom of death, can explain why not the seventh day, but the first day of the week became so important for the following of Christ.” (11.6; p 53)
- “No matter how you approach Sunday rest, both lines take their starting point in a *commandment* to rest on Sundays.” (18.5; p 90)
- “Out of the question is the “vrijblijvendheid” in relation to how we spend the Sunday. The two pillars of Sunday celebration remain standing: the assemblies and the rest in order to rejoice in God’s great deeds.” (18.6; p 90)

We suggest that you copy the following quotations in the main paragraph 1.1:

- ☐ “Lasting *and* new in relation to the fourth commandment is () to *rest* from own work and performance by enjoying God’s gifts of grace in His creation and care of His world, as well in redemption and sanctification of His people. It is Christ Who is the way to the rest (Mat 11:28).” (par 11.6, p 54)
- ☐ “Out of the question is the “vrijblijvendheid” in relation to spending the Sunday. The two pillars of Sunday celebration

remain standing: the assemblies and the rest in order to rejoice in God's great deeds." (par 18.6, p 90)

These sentences easily fit in par 1.1, third section on *Rest and Celebration*, after the second sentence "That is how the fourth commandment has been applied within the Reformed tradition." Then we get:

De Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) in Nederland hebben de vrije zondag, zoals die onder Gods voorzienigheid in Europa tot ons is gekomen, steeds met dank aan God aanvaard. Zo is het vierde gebod in de gereformeerde traditie toegepast. Blijvend èn nieuw in relatie tot het vierde gebod is het rusten van eigen werk en prestatie door te genieten van Gods genadegaven zowel in schepping en verzorging van zijn wereld, als in verlossing en heiligmaking van zijn volk. Christus is het die de weg naar de rust is (Mat. 11:28). Er is geen sprake van vrijblijvendheid met betrekking tot de besteding van de zondag. De twee pijlers van de zondagsviering blijven recht overeind: de samenkomsten en de rust om je te verheugen in Gods grote daden.

Nu op zondag door de wetgever meer ruimte wordt geboden om te werken en die dag daardoor als dag van de Heer minder beschermd wordt, willen wij publiek en eensgezind, met woord en daad, getuigen:

(the new part is underlined)

Esteemed brothers,

Receive our comments in the knowledge that we want to maintain sister relations on the same basis of God's Word and our Reformed confessions. We wish you all God's indispensable blessing to fulfill your task in His kingdom. Let the LORD work in you through His Holy Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath. May every Sunday be a *HEERlijke dag* of God's deliverance in Jesus Christ!

With brotherly greetings,

On behalf of the deputies of the FRCA,
Rev W Huizinga, Convener,
AMC Bruning, Secretary

1.6.2 General Synod Amersfoort 2005 about the Fourth Commandment and Sunday

GS Amersfoort decided:

1. To disallow the objections against GS Zuidhorn which disallowed the objections against a phrase in a sermon, because no new arguments were brought forward.

Having said that, Synod pronounced to move on in order to come with positive statements about the Lord's Day and decided:

2. To commend the statement of pastoral guidance "Sunday, LORDly Day" (attached below), to the attention of the churches with the aim:
 - a. to give it a place in their instruction within the congregation, and in their witness to the neighbour and to society;
 - b. to endeavour, while looking upward in prayer to God, to come to renewed conviction regarding the celebration of the Sunday and its place within a Christian style of life as a whole.

Grounds:

1. Synod Zuidhorn explicitly instructed the Deputies to serve the churches with pastoral guidance in which a positive statement of position is offered regarding ethical action as believers and churches in the 21st century, especially in relation to the celebration of the Sunday as the Lord's Day, in the light of the fourth commandment.
2. This statement of pastoral guidance does not have the ecclesiastical authority of a confession, but it aims to offer a testimony as to how the observance of the fourth commandment may be put into effect in our present time.
3. This statement relates to a *specific moment*, i.e. a time in which the churches have finished dealing with this matter at the General Synods of Leusden and Zuidhorn, including appeals and requests for review, and in which deputies were appointed because the dissatisfaction and confusion which arose through this matter had not been taken away. Once this appeals process had been formally concluded, the way was clear for a positive study, without the church-procedural complications of an earlier consideration. Now that the Deputies have presented their work to the churches, convened at the Synod, the time is ripe to offer the instruction of Scripture, in the form of a statement of pastoral guidance, to the churches.
4. This statement relates to *one special, clearly defined theme*, that is the interpretation of the fourth commandment in the light of the New Testament, in Christ Jesus, and the celebration of the Sunday by the church of the new covenant within the concrete circumstances of the Netherlands in the 21st century.
5. This statement relates to *extraordinary circumstances*, specifically: a. the elimination of references to the commands of

God in civil legislation; b. The complexity of present-day society, with its multiplicity of roles and occupations; c. An increasing superficiality in Christian living, including the way in which the Sunday is observed, d. The pressures of work and forced expectations of achievement under which young people and adults are burdened, or in which they participate.

6. The form of a short text is suitable to summarize and render accessible the broad range of material relating to the fourth commandment, the Sabbath and the Sunday. The text of this statement is useful for the churches, and may be incorporated in the preaching, in instruction and in public witness.
7. In the decision to appoint the Deputies the statement is made that "...it is high time and of great importance that the churches renew and develop their conviction on this point, so that they may, in the light of God's Word, and searching for the purpose of God's Spirit, respond to present and future circumstances, and support believers in this." (Acts, Synod of Zuidhorn, art 13, decision 1, ground 2.)

Below you can see how the Deputies 4th Commandment took on board all of our comments:

1. Emphasise more that the Lord's Day as day of rest is not only a gift, but that it is also based on God's commandments. Which they did as you can see in **ARIAL font italicised**.
2. Be more explicit about what you mean with "to keep the Lord's Day 'as free as possible'". Which they did as you can see in **COURIER NEW font italicised**.
3. Integrate essential parts of the report in the Instruction, such as statements about what's lasting and new in relation to the 4th commandment. Which they did as you can see in **ARIAL font underlined**.
4. Be more clear about the economic and social pressure of society and what it means for work on Sunday, and integrate the message of Jesus' instruction in Matt 12:1-9. Which they did as you can see in **COURIER NEW font underlined**.

SUNDAY, LORDLY DAY. A PASTORAL GUIDELINE.

Translator's Note: In the original, this document is called "een Handreiking". I have not been able to find an adequate English equivalent. The original conveys a document that is given as a helping hand, a guide or support, and in this context the word has a particularly pastoral connotation. The expression "pastoral guideline" doesn't really

do justice to that, but it's the least unsatisfactory term I could come up with. A Plug

The Reason for this Document

This pastoral guideline has been put together for two reasons. The first is that, as has happened so often since the time of the Reformation, a dispute has arisen within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands concerning the relationship between the fourth commandment and the Sunday, and the consequences that this has for the hallowing of the Sunday.

The second reason is the actual background which gave rise to this dispute, namely the changing spiritual climate in our country, leading to a secularised and multi-religious society. Economic and societal developments (internationalisation, globalisation and technology) exert great influence on our national culture. This pastoral guideline aims to help the churches in renewing our Christian conviction in relation to rest on and celebration of the Sunday in the Netherlands in the 21st century.

Introduction

As Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, we acknowledge that we *stand under the authority of the fourth commandment, within the whole of the Ten Commandments and the instruction of Scripture. It is partly because of this commandment that we celebrate the Sunday as the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is our desire to grow in our understanding of how the Sunday has been given to us in Him, to the redemption and sanctification of all the days of our lives.

1. Instruction from Scripture

1 From Sabbath to Sunday

Just as Israel, through the centuries, celebrated the Sabbath, so the Christian church has received the Sunday as the Lord's Day. Jesus Christ called Himself "Lord, also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). He has completed all righteousness before God, and the sacrifice for our sins. On the first day of the week, He rose from the dead. The great deeds of God, in the completion of creation and in the liberation of His people from slavery were the motives for the celebration of the Sabbath. In Christ, God has brought the history of His salvation decisively further. The additional motive for the celebration of the Sunday is now God's great work in the resurrection of His Son from the dead.

In the New Testament, the first day of the week is seen in the light of Christ's appearances to His disciples. (John 20:19,26). The first Christian congregation gathered every day in the temple and in their homes (Acts 2:46). The first day of the week is received its accent in their assembling to hear the instruction of

the apostles and to break bread (Acts 20:7), and in the setting aside of gifts (I Cor 16:2). Later, this day is called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10), and this is the day which the Christian church subsequently gave to the Sunday. That is also why we call the Sunday the LORDly day.

2 *The day and the days of the Lord.*

In the New Testament, the celebration of the Sunday is not explicitly connected to the fourth commandment of the law of God. Every day and all of life is hallowed in Christ. Whoever celebrates one day as special, does so to the Lord (Rom 14:6). At first, in the New Testament world, the Sunday was a normal working day. This day quickly received its special colour in the gatherings of Christ’s congregation in the morning and towards evening.

Christ is the fulfilment of the whole law (Matt5:17), and He incorporates God’s commandments into His instruction concerning the Kingdom. The great commandment of love and perfection give strength to a life of following the Master. The Gospel recounts how He observed the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment, and participated in the assemblies in the synagogue. In the progress of the Gospel, you will not expect that the celebration of the seventh day would change, until Jesus dies, and His body rests, on the Sabbath, in the grave.

Just as all the other commandments, the fourth commandment comes to us in Christ. In His person, and in the unity of the Scriptures, the church wants to understand what it means to remember, hallow and rest on the Lord’s Day. In the freedom of the Spirit, we want to do justice to what is temporary, what is continuing and what is new in the will of God concerning the fourth commandment.

3 *The temporary, the continuing, and the new*

God wants to bring his creatures rest, and give them opportunity to catch their breath (Ex 23:12). He wants to set them free from the rigour of labouring under the curse. The creation motif (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:11) is reinforced with the motif of liberation (Deut 5:15). Man, animal and land may share in the rest which God gives them to enjoy.

3.1 That which is **temporary** in the fourth commandment we see in the seventh day, in the opportunities afforded in the Promised Land, in the claim of the law of God on Israelite society, and in the regulations which God laid upon His people with regard to the Sabbath. In this too, the law led Israel to the Redeemer. Scripture calls the Sabbath a

shadow of the things that were to come, while the reality is found in Christ (Col 2:17). The one promised land gave a temporary expression to that rest. Now, the Christian church is as stranger in the world. Christians are not always and everywhere in the position to be able to have the day of rest coincide with the Sunday.

- 3.2 *There are also **continuing** aspects to the fourth commandment. We see this first in the alternation of work and rest. Then also in the gathering before the Lord on the day of rest and on feast days. And in this way learning to take a distance from reliance on one's own efforts, and living from the generous hand of God. Already at the completion of the world, we hear how God rested from His work of creation in six days (Gen 2:2-3: Ex. 20:11). The Lord Jesus add to this that the Sabbath is made for man (Mark 2:27). He makes this clear Himself in His proclamation of the Gospel. He also demonstrates it in the way He heals children of Israel, and sets them free, also on the Sabbath. It is especially those things that belong to the rest that is to be found in Him, and to which He invites the people of God (Matt 11:28-12:21).*
- 3.3 The **new** in Christ's resurrection means that henceforth not the seventh, but the first day of the week is highlighted. The real rest is to be found in Him (Matt 11:28-30). He is our Sabbath. He sets free all the days of sinners' lives from the burden of sin and guilt. Light now shines over all the days of the week, and over all the peoples of the world. The coming of His Kingdom will bring us the eternal Sabbath peace (Heb 4:9). That is why we pray: Come, Lord Jesus (Rev 22:20).

4 Sunday, day for the Church.

From that which is new in Christ, that which is continuing in the fourth commandment also is also given form. The command to rest from our own labour and effort requires a concrete response. It is especially on the Sunday that learn to find rest in the completed work of our Creator, and in the completed suffering of our Redeemer. Proceeding from the resurrection of our Saviour, the first day of the week is accented in Scripture. On that day, the living Lord assembles His congregation around Himself. From that day, He sends His people into the life of everyday, to let His light shine.

The assembly of the congregation follows in the line of the "sacred assemblies" of the Old Testament. We are exhorted "not to give up meeting together", all the more as we see the coming

judgement of the Day of the Lord approaching (Heb 10:25). The “today” of god’s voice, which calls us to repentance, counts for every day that the Word is heard (Heb 4:1-13). In a special way, His voice is heard as often as the Holy Scriptures are read and proclaimed in the assemblies. Christ is the Lord of the church, and He gathers it in one body.

We wish to do justice to the actuality of rest and to the **remembrance** of God’s works. We do this when we celebrate the Sunday and if it devote ourselves to the assembly of the congregation. As Christian church, we know ourselves *bound to receive this gift thankfully, and to use it, as optimally as we can, to the honour of God. If this freedom should be taken away from us, then the Sunday would remain as a token of our longing to serve our Lord in full freedom.*

We exhort one another to keep this day, as much as possible, from occupational labour, and from any activities *which would keep us from* worship of the Lord, from meeting with His congregation, *and from the rest which typifies this day.* Justice is done to the fourth commandment when God’s people rejoice in the Lord’s day by taking a step back from our usual everyday busyness (Isaiah 58:13).

5 *The congregation as body of Christ*

The twofold command of love is the summary of the law and the golden thread that runs through all commandments (Matt 22:27-40 and Rom 13:8-10). Our love for God as the first and greatest commandment is expressed in the gathering of the congregation with its Lord. In the assemblies, the congregation presents itself before Him, who is its Head.

Love towards the neighbour is expressed in the desire to gather as congregation which is called the body of Christ. This commandment exhort us not to give up meeting together, but to encourage one another (Heb 10:25). In the whole of the body, no member can be missed (I Cor 12:12-31). The celebration of the Sunday binds the members together as one body, in which we have been baptised by one Spirit (I Cor 12:12-13).

6 *Sunday and society*

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have always received, with thankfulness to God, the free Sunday as it has come to us in Europe by His providence. The Dutch people, however, have in great numbers left the way of faith in God, and now value the Sunday primarily as a day off.

Now that the governing authorities have given more room to work on that day, and thus this day, as day of the Lord, receives less protection, we wish to testify, publicly and of one mind, in word and deed, of the Gospel of Christ. This includes:

- Pointing to the Creator of all that lives, who has given the rhythm of working and resting to man, created in His image;
- Witnessing of the Deliverer, who redeems lost people from the power of sin, and who call us together in His congregation
- Praising the Spirit, who wants do renew damaged people after the image of Christ, and lead us to the renewal of heaven and earth.

We wish to uphold the Sunday to the honour of the living Lord, and as the day of the Christian congregation. We also wish to stand for the upholding of the Sunday as a day of communal rest. From the beginning, God included the servant, the stranger and the livestock in the day of rest (Ex 20:10, Deut 5:14). We too desire to give such a form to the celebration of the Sunday that it gives an attractive representation of the rest that God gives, and our joint communion. Our prayer is that this example and witness will also draw our neighbour to Christ.

In our daily work, in our leisure time and on the Sunday, we want to witness of Christ, by finding rest in Him ourselves. *In this way, united upon the confession of Lord's Day 38 of the Catechism, and in our time and circumstances, we wish to do justice to God's purpose in regard to the fourth commandment and the Sunday.*

2. Practical-Ethical Assistance

1. In a society with mobile phones, laptops, documents, television, email and internet, many people are constantly on the run. Work and leisure times overlap, in spite of a shorter working week. It's high time to go back and learn from the Creator, who made both **time of work and time of rest**. Christ is Lord of redeemed slaves, and of the day of rest.
2. Life and work are still subject to the curse of the fall into sin (Gen 3:15-19). For many, work is toil (Eccl 1:3), also in a highly developed economy and society. Education and training put great pressure on younger and older workers. That's why it's so beneficial that the Creator has placed a **day of rest** in the rhythm of the week (Gen 2:2,3; Ex 20:8-11; 23:12). Following God's example and command, we may find rest, and learn to look back on and enjoy the work that was done. In this way, God is

honoured as the One who completes all our work. Everything depends, not on our achievement, but on His blessing.

3. **The rest** (the laying down of work) **comes first**, then the celebration. God finished His work of creation, and so laid the foundation for the Sabbath. He creates time to find rest in His presence. His commandments, also to rest, are not burdensome (I John 5:3; Matt 11:30). In this way we learn to long for the perfect rest (Heb 4).
4. The Lord commanded rest on His day so that people, animals and the land would share in His rest. This rest has meaning for the Dutch people, its society and its economy. Recreation serves re-creation. In word and deed, the church will witness of the rest which is found with the Creator, Deliverer and Renewer of all that lives.
5. By resting, we show that we realize we have been set free from slavery, also the slavery to our own sins, our achievements and economic laws. By celebrating the Sunday, we give expression to our acknowledgement of **Christ as Lord**, also of the day of rest (Mark 2:28). When He says: “Do not worry about tomorrow” (Matt 6:34), that is all the more true for the Sunday. On the Sunday, we learn to enjoy His care, just as Israel learned it in the gift of the manna.
6. While there are few direct prescriptions for the Old Testament form of worship, **celebration** is highlighted. For instance, in the presence of the “tent of meeting”, in the sacrifices, in the “solemn assemblies” of the people, and later in the synagogue. As was his custom, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). In the New Testament, Christ appears after His resurrection to His disciples and the women. They assemble on the first day of the week (John 20; Acts 20), the day which the congregation calls “the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10).
7. Christ calls us to His **congregation**, which is His body. This congregation does not consist of individuals, but is the body of Christ, comprised by the power of the Spirit of many members (parts of the body). When our Saviour calls us to His congregation, there is no more room for individualism.
8. In its assembly, the congregation presents itself as the body that places itself in the service of Christ. In the worship service, the congregation places itself before God as His people, making every effort to enter His rest (Hebrews 4). Following the example of the early Christian church, we need the second worship service as well, in order to enjoy the Sunday in its entirety and as a congregation. Where attendance of the afternoon or evening

services should decline, the congregation will need to be instructed and motivated to take part.

9. In all forms of **education** within the church, it is necessary to learn how the following hold together:
- God's command and a willing observance of it;
 - The congregation that assembles and one's own living membership of it;
 - Choice of career and personal responsibility

We need the proclamation of the Word and the exercise of the communion of saints to develop a Christian style of living.

10. When, as a result of economic and societal pressures, work on Sundays increases, it is necessary to remind each other of the need to rest from one's own labours, and of our total dependence on the blessing of God. Work in the service of the Gospel (Matt 12:4-5) and works of mercy (Matt 12:6-7) may be necessary. This kind of work will, in itself, create opportunities to give expression to our following of Christ. The circumstances under which occupational labour is necessary must be determined in Christian freedom. Such a determination should include listening to the Word of God, prayer for wisdom, and the asking of advice. Isaiah 58:13 may give practical direction and support.
11. The danger of regular work on Sunday is that you fall out of the rhythm of Sunday rest, that you lose the energy to attend at least one worship service, and that you become isolated from the congregation. Then, a life of prayer is even more necessary, so that you will be given the right devotion to the Lord of life and His congregation. It will also be good if the congregation surrounds its members who have to work on Sundays with its support. This can be done through prayer and personal attention for each other. In determining times of worship, wherever possible their needs should be kept in mind.
12. Work on Sundays which is undertaken **for financial gain** is to be rejected, as is all love of money (1 Tim 6:9). "No-one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and Mammon", says Jesus, our Lord (Matt 6:24).
13. The law of the Lord is the rule of **thankfulness** for our redemption in Christ. The fourth commandment helps us – in our work as in our rest – to receive the sanctification of the whole of our lives. The Holy Spirit fills the congregation as a temple.

There, sinners receive the power to live to the honour of God all the days of their lives.

14. Christ liberated the Sabbath from human regulations that laid a burden on the day of rest. The development of a pattern of hallowing the Sunday requires **creativity**: to discover the good, pleasing and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). It requires **love**, to be a hand and a foot to one another.
15. In judging and speaking about one another, it is good to use a “**patient and compassionate style of living**”. Not the external expressions of Sunday work are determinative. What counts is the evaluation of the motives by which working on Sundays are weighed. Within this framework, the words of the Lord Jesus are salutary: “If you had known what these words mean: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice’, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” (Matt 12:7,8)
16. In the nurturing of faith the development of a personal and communal style of living is important. **House rules** can be helpful to find rest and peace on the Lord's day. House rules are agreements between adults, which afford clarity about lifestyle choices concerning attendance of worship, the use of media (computer, internet, TV, music), the kind of travel on Sunday, etc. *The room which the Holy Spirit wishes to make in our hearts may not be restricted by our busyness. At the same time, God gives a day of rest to enjoy free time, relaxation and recreation.* House rules are agreements which are taught to the children to give personal shaping to their Sunday rest. In this way, the younger generation can be taught to take responsibility themselves for the way they shape their rest.
17. One aspect of the Sunday celebration is to lay aside all reliance upon ourselves or our own efforts. Christ alone has the power to set us free from slavery to the curse and the power of sin. **Repentance** from dead works is a return to the living God.
18. An ineffectual and joyless observance of the Sunday goes together with a smallness of faith that does not find its strength in Christ as Lord. Over against that, a living faith in Christ leads to an inspired and joyful **celebration** of the day of His resurrection.
19. 2.19 A focus on the finished work of Christ and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit means for the day of rest: to whatever serves a festive celebration of the Lord's day, and to **abstain from** whatever might hinder this.
20. The society in which we live is estranged from the Sunday as a day of rest. The Sunday, as the day of worship is largely

confined to the congregation and the homes. The congregation of Jesus Christ will look for ways to **make contact** with their neighbours, and to invite them to share in a taste of the true rest. *To those who come to faith in Christ, we want to explain why we value this day so highly, and show how we celebrate it with joy (see 2.15, above).*

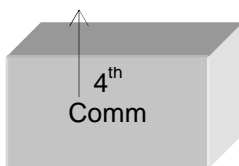
Translated by Aart Plug

1.6.2 Conclusion

Leusden and Zuidhorn have upheld that in the course of history there has always been difference of opinion in the Dutch Reformed Churches regarding the question whether Scripture compellingly states that there is for the New Testament church a direct command from God to keep the Sunday as the day of rest. Both Synods stated that within their churches there always has been room for difference of opinion about the Scriptural foundation of the Sunday as day of rest.

Sunday:

NT Sabbath



Scriptural foundation 1

Sunday:

responsible *Spiritual* choice of the church based on Scripture



Scriptural foundation 2

Synods Leusden 1999 and Zuidhorn 2002 didn't condemn the opinion that the Sunday as day of rest is not based on a Divine Commandment, because such a decision could easily upset the balance of Dort:

- ceremonial was the rest of the seventh day; moral is a specific day meant for religion with the necessary rest
- on Sunday one should rest from all servile labour.

But Synod Zuidhorn didn't condemn the opinion that the Sunday as day of rest is based on a Divine Commandment either, because such a decision would also restrict the room for difference in opinion (see Zuidhorn, art 60).

Further, Leusden already explained that during the course of justice the passage from Rev D Ophoff's sermon has been coloured by the expression that the Sunday is a good human institution (although not used in his sermon) and has created undue misunderstanding as if the Sunday is merely a human institution. "The passage referred to from the sermon can, however, also be understood in the sense that the

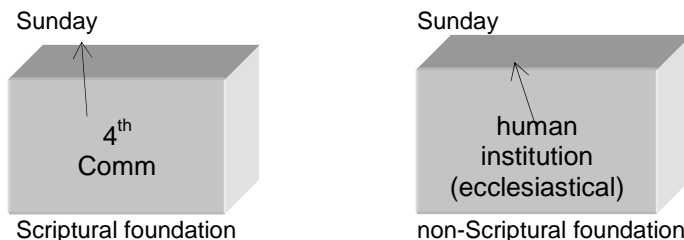
Christian church in her believing answer to the guidance of God's Spirit has given the Sunday the special value of day of rest, following the example of the Israelite Sabbath." (Leusden art 25). That means that the Christian church on the basis of Scripture and guided by the Spirit started to celebrate the day of rest and worship on the Sunday. As Calvin puts it:

"It being expedient to overthrow superstition, the Jewish holy day was abolished; and as a thing necessary to retain decency, orders and peace, in the Church, another day was appointed for that purpose.

It was not, however, without a reason that the early Christians substituted what we call the Lord's Day for the Sabbath. The resurrection of our Lord being the end and accomplishment of that true rest which the ancient Sabbath typified, this day, by which types were abolished serves to warn Christians against adhering to a shadowy ceremony."

(Institutes, book II, ch 8, sections 33,34)

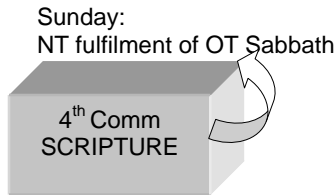
Because of the misunderstanding as if the Sunday is merely a human institution instead of a responsible Spiritual choice of the church based on Scripture Leusden's ground that there has always been room to think differently about the Scriptural foundation sometimes has been explained as: there is a Scriptural foundation and a non-Scriptural foundation. Like this:



Synod Amersfoort 2005 decided:

- As Reformed Churches in the Netherlands we know ourselves to stand under the authority of the fourth Commandment in the whole of the Ten Commandments and of the instruction of Holy Scripture. It's also by virtue of this Commandment [*het is mede krachtens dit gebod*] that we celebrate the Sunday as the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Decisions re fourth comm.: *Introduction [I]*)
- Just like the other Commandments the fourth Commandment comes to us in Christ. In His Person and in the unity of the

Scriptures the church wants to understand what the celebration, observance and rest on the Lord's Day means. (1,2)
That means that Amersfoort bridged the different Scriptural foundations and drew a depth contour instead of a linear line, like this:



1.6.3 Recommendations

1. To acknowledge with thanks that the mandates to stay informed about developments and decisions in the GKV about the Sabbath/Sunday issue and to continue the discussions with the GKV on this matter have been amply fulfilled.
2. To acknowledge with thanks the progress made in our Dutch sister churches on this pressing issue, and to accept this definitive decision as a satisfactory answer to our concerns.
3. To make the English translation of the report of the Dutch deputies along with the synodical decision available for our churches on our church website.

Grounds:

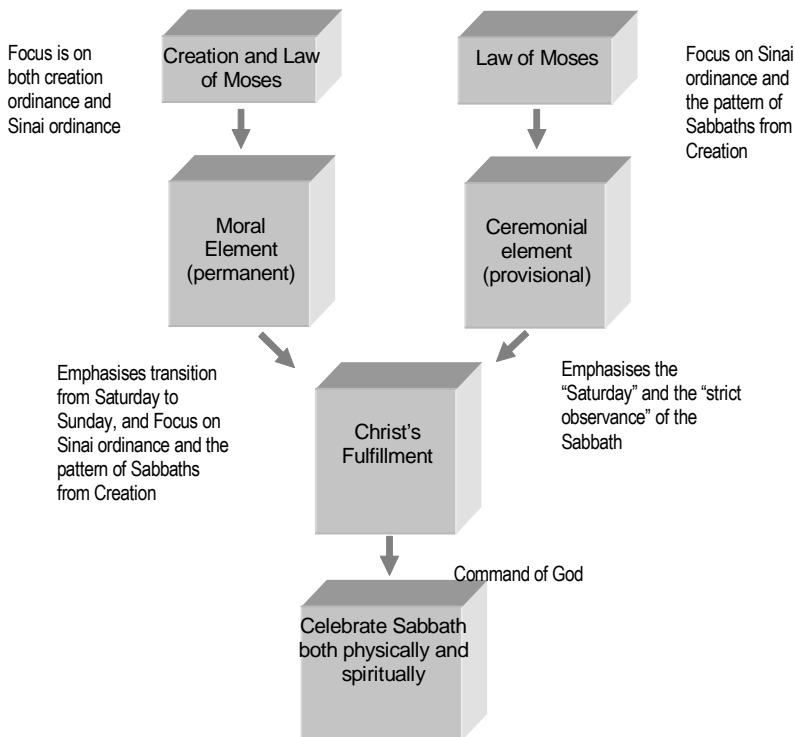
- a. The deputies have had to study long reports from the Dutch deputies and interacted with intensive discussions, both by letters and by personal meetings, with our Dutch sister churches on this issue.
- b. The decision adheres to the Scripture and our reformed confessions, especially LD 38, H. C.
- c. This decision brings together the various views by stressing the authority of Scripture, by following our reformed confessions, by applying the hermeneutic of following the line of fulfilment in the history of redemption, and by applying the doctrine in a practical way for our time so that Sunday can indeed be a glorious day of rest and worship.
- d. Our churches can benefit from such a comprehensive study of this important matter. It seems prudent to use our FRCA/deputies website for this.

After ample discussion two deputies still couldn't accept these recommendations and asked that their alternate analysis and recommendations be passed on to

synod as a minority proposal. The meeting approved the request to send the alternate set, which now follows.

The Sabbath: Two views or one?

The debate about “two views” on the Sabbath is centered on whether or not it is a creation ordinance, or a Mosaic law, and hence whether or not the Sabbath rest is a moral element that abides permanently in the New Testament church, or a ceremonial element that was provisional until Christ’s (first) coming. The question then is what implications this has for why we the Sabbath and how we keep it. The Synod of Dordt brought together these views and clearly indicated, via its “Six Rules” that the Sabbath rest is a command of God and must be kept by the church of God, albeit on a Sunday. Figure 1 depicts this debate.



No matter which line of thought was taken regarding the historicity of the Sabbath command, the practical outcome was essentially the same, as evidenced by the decision of the Synod of Dordrecht 1618/1619.

Figure 1: The one practical application of the two historical views of the Sabbath

Jesus resisted the pharisaical perversion of the Sabbath, but He did not turn against the fourth commandment. He came to fulfill the law, and not to destroy it (Matt 5:17). The Ten Commandments remain for us today, including the 4th commandment, and will remain until the return of Christ and the final fulfilment of the eternal Sabbath (Heb 4).

Calvin emphasised the spiritual character of the eternal Sabbath rest. He focussed on the rest from “evil” and lamented the fact that not every day was a Sabbath. But, according to Calvin, anyone who claims that the Sabbath has passed away, does not have a full grasp of the matter.

Ursinus in his commentary on Lord’s Day 38 indicates the practical application of the Sabbath rest. Concerning Christ’s teachings about the Sabbath, Ursinus says that *“these declarations teach, that such works as do not hinder or interfere with the proper use of the Sabbath, but which, on the other hand, rather carry out it’s true intention and so establish it, as all those works do which so pertain to the worship of God or religious ceremonies, or to the duty of love towards the neighbour, or to the saving of our own, or the life of another, as that necessity will not allow them to be deferred to another time, do not violate the Sabbath, but are especially required in order that we may properly observe it.”* (p. 559).

The Synod of Dordrecht brought together the two historical views of the origins of the Sabbath into one practical application of the Sabbath for today (quoted from Acts of GS Leusden):

“The National Synod of Dordrecht of 1618/19 made a statement with six rules about the question of sabbath and Sunday. These rules enjoy moral authority among us. They are as follows:

1. In the fourth commandment there is a ceremonial and a moral element.
2. The rest on the seventh day after the Creation, and the strict observance of this day assigned to the Jewish nation in particular were ceremonial.
3. That a definite and appointed day is set aside for worship, and along with it as much rest as is necessary for worship and for holy meditation, belongs to the moral element.
4. Now that the Sabbath of the Jews is set aside, Christians are duty bound to hallow the day of Sunday solemnly.
5. This day has always been kept since the time of the apostles in the early church.
6. This day must be so consecrated to worship that on it men rest from all servile labor (except those required by charity and present necessities), and likewise from all such recreations as prevent the worship of God.”

Note from these six rules that:

- a. The rest of today is grounded in the fourth commandment. "...as much rest as is necessary...belongs to the moral element" (ie. permanent).
- b. The "as much rest as is necessary for worship and for holy meditation" refers to the Westminster Larger Catechism which says "and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship..." In other words, the "rest" must not just take place for part of the day when you "worship" and "meditate", but for the whole day which is to be taken up by the "public and private exercises of God's worship".
- c. Strong language, eg. "duty bound" and "consecrated...that on it men rest" shows that this is not just a decision of the church, but a command of God.
- d. The exceptions to resting from work on the Sunday are very explicit and related to those of "charity and present necessities". No servile labour and recreations.

In his book *The Ten Commandments: Manual for Christian Life*, Prof. Douma indicates that "...ecclesiastical divisions were avoided, in large part because the various viewpoints approached one another more closely than would appear from the discussion, especially when it came to the *practice* of Sunday observance." (Douma, p. 144). "That the fourth commandment has retained its validity is the correct confessional starting point." (Douma, p. 146).

Given that there was one line put forward in the history of the reformed churches regarding the practical application of the Sunday rest, why has this issue resurfaced in the churches in The Netherlands? Here we need to consider the context of the church in today's world.

The Context

The Context today in which this "Sabbath" issue arises is one of an attack on the Sunday as a rest day. This is very evident in the world in which we live today, and was also acknowledged by the synods in Holland.

Synod Zuidhorn recognises that the keeping of the Sabbath is deteriorating, not just in the world, but also in the church.

"The Christian church learned, under God's providence, already centuries ago to value and to celebrate the Lord's Day as a complete day of rest. The recognition of the value of this precious gift is diminishing, now that government and society in the Netherlands have lost the Christian label they carried for many centuries. As a consequence the general acceptance of the Sunday as a day of rest has suffered. The erosion of the Sunday-rest is also among Christians increasingly apparent, leading to a decline in the heartfelt motivation and

room for the worship service. Renewing and developing the churches' conviction on this point is therefore of utmost importance, so that the churches, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of God's Word can address these developments, now and in the future, and can so assist and guide the believers." (Synod Zuidhorn, Acts Art 13)

The statement produced by Synod Amersfoort shows how strong the pressure is in today's climate to work on Sundays.

"This statement relates to *extraordinary circumstances*, specifically: a. the elimination of references to the commands of God in civil legislation; b. The complexity of present-day society, with its multiplicity of roles and occupations; c. An increasing superficiality in Christian living, including the way in which the Sunday is observed, d. The pressures of work and forced expectations of achievement under which young people and adults are burdened, or in which they participate." (Synod Amersfoort, Decision 2, Grounds 5)

Given the strong attack of the world on the Sunday rest, and its infiltration into the church, what should we expect from synods? Should we not expect a stronger focus AWAY from man and TOWARDS God who gave the commandment and the eternal Sabbath in the first place? Should we not expect an emphasis on God's commands and how we must stand up AGAINST these worldly attacks, and say NO to them, on the basis of the Old and New Testaments? If we understand well the attacks of our threefold enemy (LD 51) and acknowledge man's depravity, then we will do well to recognise that, not man (not even the church), but God decides what the Sabbath and Sunday rest means for us. He has already done that in His Word, through the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

The Direction of Synods

So what did the synods Leusden, Zuidhorn and Amersfoort really decide? What directions are they going in and what is the practical effect on the churches and church life?

The synods have emphasised that there are two historical views, and have, in essence, extended them beyond the the Six Rules of Dordt. In fact, the practical application, as evidenced by the decisions and grounds in all three synods, is to open the way for more "necessary" work to take place on Sunday, leave it in the "Christian freedom" of man, and minimise the fact that it is a COMMAND of God. At the same time, those who see it as a "command of God" (a divine command) may continue to do so.

Hence, these synods have extended the two views to, not just refer to the historical basis of the Sabbath, but also to include the practical application of the Sabbath rest in today's modern world. So, in essence, there are now also *two views of the practical application* of the Sunday rest. Figure 2 depicts this.

Synods have said that two historical views have always been allowed. So why broaden these two views to give two practical applications as well, rather than simply stick to the one practical application of the six rules of Dordt? The pressure on the church in today's world is towards more work on the Sunday. It is true that synods do not explicitly state that professional/occupational work can be performed on Sundays. However, they also do not explicitly state that no such work may be performed on Sunday (other than works of necessity and charity), which the Synod of Dordt did do. Rather, synods have kept open the possibility of regular daily work on Sunday by using language such as keeping the day free from work "as much as possible", and to "distance" oneself from ordinary everyday work on the Sunday.

For example, Synod Amersfoort in Section 4 of its report *Sunday: a Lordly Glorious Day*, says that we must "encourage each other to keep this day free from professional labour as much as possible and from any other activity which keep us from the worship service for the Lord, from the meeting as a congregation and from the rest which characterizes this day. The fourth commandment is done justice when God's people enjoy this day of the Lord by distancing themselves from the ordinary activities (Isa. 58:13)".

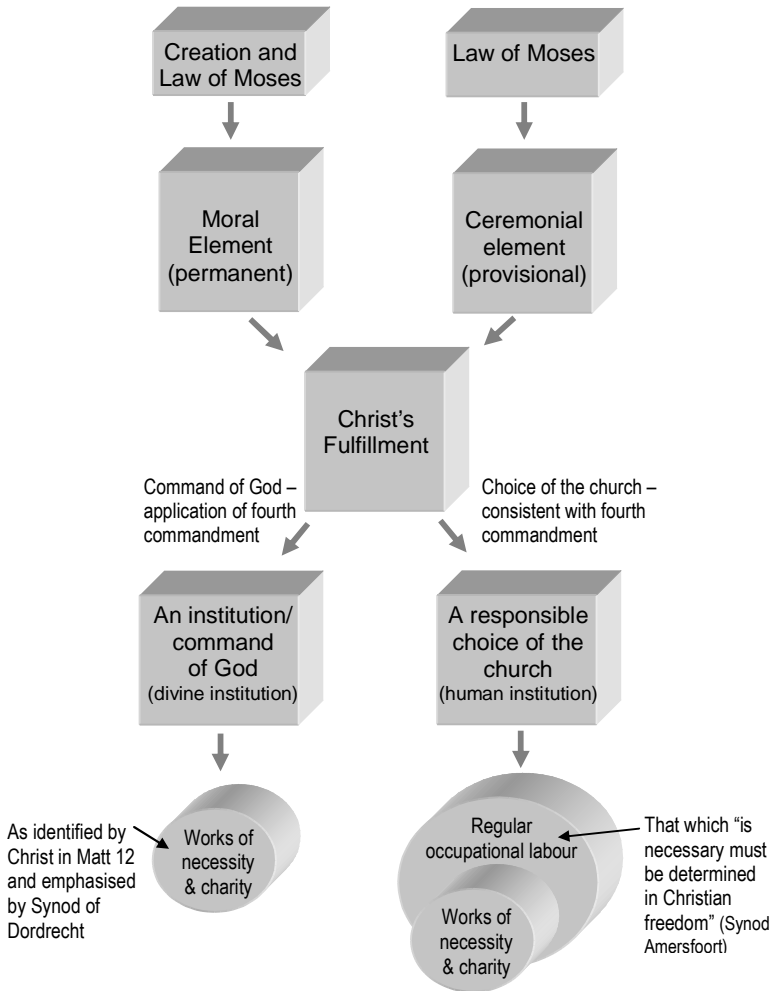


Figure 2: The one practical application of the two historical views of the Sabbath

Further examples from *Section 2 Practical-ethical section* of this report of Synod Amersfoort include:

- "...Under what circumstances (professional-)labour is necessary shall be determined in Christian liberty" (Section 2.10)
- "The danger of regular Sunday-labour is that one is no longer used to the rhythm of Sunday-rest, that one does not have the energy to attend

even one worship service... It is also good that the congregation supports those who, on account of their labour, have to work...In determining the moment of worship, times when they are able to attend are taken as much as possible into account" (Section 2.11)

- "Sunday-labour which is accepted for increased returns, is to be rejected, as is all love for money" (Section 2.12)
- "...Not the outer marks of Sunday-labour are determinative. One must judge the motives, on account of which one decides with respect to Sunday-labour." (Section 2.15)

Such statements certainly are not the strong and clear language of the Synod of Dordrecht, but rather, a softening of it and opening the door to more work and less rest. In fact, according to Synod Amersfoort, what is "rest" and what is "necessary work" is determined by man's "Christian freedom", rather than by what God commands and requires of us. This then becomes very dangerous for depraved and sinful man in a fallen world that puts the pressure on for increasing Sunday work.

Synod Amersfoort has taken heed to some of our requests and suggestions. This is reason for thankfulness. For example, Synod has strengthened the link of Sabbath rest to the fourth commandment by saying "It is in part because of this commandment that we celebrate the Sunday as the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Introduction to *Sunday: a Lordly Glorious Day*, Synod Amersfoort) and "From the new aspect which came in Christ, the lasting aspects of the fourth commandment can take shape. The command to rest from one's own work and exertion requires being made concrete. Especially on Sunday we learn to find rest" (Section 4 of *Sunday: a Lordly Glorious Day*, Synod Amersfoort).

However, in heeding our suggestions, they have only addressed them in a limited technical way and not in a wholesome substantial manner. Synod appears to be very reluctant to say that our keeping the Sunday rest is a command of God based on the fourth commandment and on Christ's fulfilment through His resurrection (Christ's first coming) and through the eternal sabbath, the promise of eternal rest (Christ's second coming). Synod does not take the clear and direct line of Synod of Dordt in Rule 6, "This day must be so consecrated to worship that on it men rest from all servile labor (except those required by charity and present necessities), and likewise from all such recreations as prevent the worship of God". In fact, Synod is obscure and does not explicitly state the fact that God forbids normal daily work on the rest day, with only the exception of works of necessity and charity.

Given the pressures on the Church in today's world and given the sinfulness of man, the practical result of these synod decisions is the danger of more and more daily work infiltrating the Sunday rest day.

Alternate set of recommendations (of two brothers)

Deputies recommend that Synod decides:

1. To thank the GKV for the contact that we could have with them at both the deputies and synodical levels, in expressing our concerns regarding the fourth commandment and Sunday rest.
2. To thankfully acknowledge that Synod Amersfoort has taken on board some of the suggestions put forward by our deputies.
3. To express our concern to the GKV that they are reluctant to express that the Sunday rest is indeed a command of God to rest from all our work (with the exception of works of necessity and charity) according to Scripture and the confessions.
4. To express our concern to the GKV that they do not close the door to professional/occupational work on the Sunday that goes beyond works of necessity and charity.

Grounds:

1. Our deputies have been able to openly discuss issues and concerns regarding the 4th commandment with Dutch deputies, and to have them tabled and expressed at synod.
2. Synod Amersfoort has incorporated some of our suggestions, such as strengthening the connection between the Sunday rest and the fourth commandment, into their report.
3. No matter which historical view of the foundation of the Sabbath is taken, the practical effect is that the Sunday rest is a command of God, as recognised by the Synod of Dordt. Synod needs to give strong Scriptural guidance on this.
4. The decision of Synod Amersfoort in its report *Sunday: A Lordly Glorious Day* leaves room for the possibility that professional/occupational labour (other than works of necessity and charity) can be performed on the Sunday. This is against Scripture and the Confessions (Lev 23:25, Ex 34:21, Matt 12, Luke 13:15, 14:5, Lord's Day 38) and is not in line with the Six Rules of the Synod of Dordt.

1.7 Deputies Report on Dutch decisions regarding Marriage and Divorce to Synod West Kelmscott 2006 DV

1.7.1 Mandate

Synod Rockingham 2003 Article 41 made the following decision regarding our sister Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland:

Decision:

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations
2. According to the rules, discuss and to continue to discuss with the RCN Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the RCN, and as outlined and recommended in the report of deputies.

In the past your deputies have reported on the subject of the new Marriage Form, which our Dutch sisters have adopted. That matter was amply dealt with. This other issue about marriage and divorce continued to be on the agenda of their general synods. Though the 2003 Synod gave no specific mandate concerning this issue about marriage and divorce, the general mandate for deputies was according to the rules, to discuss and to continue to discuss with the GKV deputies the concerns as to the developments with the GKV. Since this was a major issue which was coming to a definitive phase, your deputies studied it thoroughly and also discussed it with our Dutch counterparts in an intensive manner, both by letters and in our personal visits with them, as well as in our participation in the discussion on this on the floor of the GS Amersfoort of 2005.

1.7.2 Short history

Since the General Synod of Ommen (1993) several sets of Deputies have been busy with questions in relation to marriage and divorce. A new study Report was presented to the General Synod of Zuidhorn (2002). In this Report, attention was asked for a broad approach to this matter, proceeding from the totality of the Biblical message about life in the Kingdom of Christ.

At the Synod of Zuidhorn this Report was intensively discussed. As well as agreement, questions were also expressed about the approach of the Deputies and the way they worked this out. A decision was made not to limit the discussion concerning marriage and divorce to the Synod table, but to stimulate it further within the churches as a whole. The Deputies were given the role of kick-starting this process of reflection. They were asked to support the churches by providing them with an abridged version of their report, and by giving further information.

In their report Divorce and remarriage? (January 2004) Deputies gave an account of this process of reflection within the churches, and of their activities. The point of departure for this period of activity was the decisions made by Synod Zuidhorn. They were given the following mandate:

- a) To begin and stimulate a broad reflection regarding marriage, divorce, the single state, preparation for marriage, and the

solemnization of marriage, in part by publishing an abridged and popularly accessible version of the Report, which incorporates the discussion at Synod (Decision 1).

- b) To call the churches to common humility in this matter, and in connection with this, to draft a letter to the churches (Decision 2a and 2b)
- c) To set up an Advisory Council to serve the churches in matters relating to marriage and divorce (Decision 3a and 3b).
- d) To examine, together with the Deputies for Church Order and Church Polity, whether additional forms of admonition and discipline are possible and desirable (Decision 4b).
- e) To give attention to questions relating to the solemnization of a second marriage after divorce, and in connection with this to review the meaning and status of marriage solemnization (Decision 5).
- f) In addition, the churches were already given the freedom to publicly express judgement in the midst of the congregation, about situations which may occur.

1.7.3 Australian Response to the Dutch Report

On 30th March 2004 the Australian deputies sister churches responded to the Dutch deputies' Report *Divorce and remarriage*?

Response from the Australian deputies sister-churches to the Dutch Report Divorce and remarriage?

30th March 2004

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. We express our appreciation for your report's impulse towards an approach which will drive back the problems regarding divorce and remarriage, and which will stimulate a life in the style of the kingdom in which our yes is yes. Therefore we agree with your report's statement on page 15 that an allowable divorce is not choosing for what is good (because it is justified), but for the 'lesser evil'.
2. We further welcome your fight against divorce by emphasising that divorce does not fit in the style of the kingdom, and that the voice of the whole of Scripture should be heard in considering how to follow Christ by a Christian lifestyle (p 2). As J van Bruggen already said in his *Het huwelijk gewogen*: Not marriage but our calling for God's kingdom weighs most heavily (p 5-7). Jesus highlighted, in e.g. Matthew 19, the new perspective of His kingdom, the new dimension God gives to those who seek first

His kingdom. Instead of stating, “divorce is allowed if....” followed by one or more concessions, your report correctly reasons along another line of thinking. It states that divorce is not an option for those who follow Christ. And if there are situations in which divorce, instead of separation, is the only way (out), then, according to your report, remarriage in the church is not allowed. We agree that this can be a signal that the church does not find the ending of marriage and the remarriage normal, even if such a position is contrary to the current trends in society (cf. p 21)

3. However, we have problems with the report’s conclusion k on page 30: “The churches must, as a general rule, consider that a second marriage after divorce cannot be solemnised in the church.”

We recommend the following:

- If a divorce is against God’s commandment, then the church must discipline in order to protect itself against the evil of divorce, to save the sinner, and to honour God’s name.
- The church cannot approve remarriage after a divorce which was against God’s commandment. It therefore cannot give room for its solemnisation in the church. Instead, the sinful act of remarriage should be publicly admonished, i.e. the consistory should inform the congregation publicly. If there is hardening of heart, then the consistory continues with church discipline.
- However, if we cannot say that the divorce was against God’s commandment, and the church therefore accepts the marriage in a civil ceremony, then it does not make sense to bar the way to the kneeling-bench in the church to ask God’s blessing over it. If, as the report states, the believing partner, who is left by the unbelieving one, is not bound (cf. 1 Cor. 7:15), namely “not a slave to the rule that divorce is not allowed” (p 7), then it does not make sense to start a remarriage in the Lord outside the church. A marriage in the Lord starts in the house of the Lord.

Your report does not prove from Scripture that, after a permissible divorce, the decision not to remarry is more fitting in the style of the kingdom than the decision to remarry in the Lord, and that bypassing the church in case of a remarriage after a lawful divorce is better evidence of a Christian lifestyle than kneeling before God in His church.

4. We have also problems with section 5 of the report.

a. Re 5.1:

This section would be strengthened if references could be made to the Old Testament also. It is a distinct lack that not a single Old Testament text is mentioned in 5.1.1 – 5.1.4. Old Testament children of God as Joseph and David lived (with much brokenness!) in “the style of the kingdom”, and were driven by more than ‘cold’ commands but by love for God and the neighbour (cf Ps 35). Cf Lev 19:17f. Our point is: Jesus’ instruction is not really something new, but draws out the heart of the Old Testament instruction and builds on the renewing work of the Holy Spirit as exemplified already in the Old Testament.

b. Re 5.2.3:

- We have problems with the proposed “new analogy”. Under the heading “Analogous to 1 Corinthians 7” your report states in section a on page 15: “We perceive what Paul said, not as an inbuilt exception, but as an *incidental* exemption from adherence to the rule” (‘ontslag van de binding aan de regel’). We believe that what Paul said is not an *exemption* (ontslag) from Jesus’ rule, but a, by the Holy Spirit inspired, *implementation* of His rule in a specific situation. Therefore we do not agree with your statement: “The analogy then is that, just like Paul, we ought not (to) apply the rule which emerges from the Lord’s teaching.” We are bound to both Jesus’ words and Paul’s specific implementation, and we do not agree with the suggestion that Paul releases us from Christ’s rule about the indissolubility of marriage and that we by analogy can do the same in situations which in Jesus’ time were unforeseeable.
- Your report addresses the evil of infidelity in marriage. Adultery is so great an evil, that it is the main allowable reason for divorce. Infidelity breaks wedlock and both husband and wife should realise this very well. We think that you do not address the evil of unfaithfulness adequately by speaking about “commit adultery once” (p 14). The word once and also the phrase that a marriage must be continued “in any way possible, even after adultery” (p 14), underestimates the evil of adultery.

5. We do not agree with the second measure mentioned in par 9.3 (p 27). For, if the divorce is against God's commandment, then it is the consistory's responsibility to do more than to announce disapproval and to leave the sinners to their own responsibility. The first measure in par 9.3 is better, because in doing so the consistory takes the aim of church discipline seriously (see also our point 3).

Esteemed brothers, we hope you will receive our sincere appreciation and constructive criticism in the knowledge that we are of the same opinion and in the same mood to resist the evil of divorce and to promote a Christian lifestyle in which we follow Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit. We wish you the indispensable blessings of our God and Father in this task.

1.7.4 Final Dutch Report Marriage and Divorce

In October 2004 the Dutch deputies came with the final Report *Marriage and Divorce* in which they integrated the comments of more than 60 churches and persons, including the FRCA. To this final Report two Australian deputies sister churches (Rev W Huizinga and AC Breen) responded in Amersfoort during their stay in May 2005. In the next paragraph you find their Report on the meetings in the Netherlands.

1.7.5 Report on meetings re Marriage and Divorce

We were able to have meetings and speak about the Report on Marriage and Divorce.

1. A meeting was held with the Dutch deputies (BBK) on Wednesday, 25 May.
2. On the next day (May 26) a meeting was held with the deputies appointed for this subject of Marriage and Divorce. Among others we met with Drs A.L.Th. de Bruijne, Rev H.J. Siegers, and Rev H.J. Smit.
3. On Friday evening (7-9:30 p.m.) the report was discussed on the floor of synod. This was arranged specifically for the benefit of the overseas delegates. We were the ones who instigated this request. It was a pity that we were the only delegates from a sister church who as advisory members of synod took the opportunity to speak that evening to offer advice.

At the meeting with the BBK deputies (sections 1+3) it had been arranged that the churches who correspond with section 3 (Canada and other English speaking sister churches) would also be present. They had not made extensive studies on this matter but were interested. It seemed most economical in terms of time and talents. Rev P Niemeijer, the chairman of the synod, attended. The deputies for this subject were not in attendance. We read the letter of the moderamen of synod in

which they agreed to have meetings with the respective deputies and deputies BBK on this and other subjects on the days before synod met in full sessions. Apparently through misunderstanding this was not arranged (each thought the other would arrange it!). Thus we made new arrangements and the chairman said he would try his best to have the matter of Marriage and Divorce discussed on Friday evening, if time allowed. This item had been placed on the agenda for the week already (it was on our agenda as given by BBK), and seeing the situation, the chairman would do his best to ensure it was done.

Only the FRCA deputies had finished studying the reports (the first version and the later version) and had submitted letters about them. We were thus given the floor outlined the main concern we had with the report. We advised that p 16 be rewritten because it is not guarded enough and these lines bypass the norms given by the Lord in Mat 19:9 and 1 Cor 7:10-15.

It concerns the following sentences:

There are thus situations in which the church approvesⁱ divorce and acquiescesⁱⁱ in it. It happens that you come face to face with the same sort of choice as is mentioned here (1 Cor 7:10-15).

ⁱ The English verb approve is the translation of the Dutch verb *billijken* = *je stemt er mee in*; *je kunt het voor rechtmatig houden*; *het is acceptabel* (“betaalbaar”, denk aan “billich”: ik kan de prijs betalen); *het is redelijk* (denk aan “billijke” prijs).

ⁱⁱ The English verb acquiesce is the translation of the Dutch verb *berusten* = *zich schikken met behoud van gevoelens*; *je stemt er eigenlijk niet mee in*, maar je maakt er verder geen werk van.

This means that a divorce may be approved in other cases than those mentioned in Mt 19 or 1 Cor 7. To defend this approach the report on p19 uses an example of a psychopath who terrorises the life of his wife. According to the report, in such a situation, you should use the whole Scripture (not just a part of it). One relevant part of Scripture in this case is that one needs to come to the defence and salvation of one's neighbour. If there is no other way out, then you may say as Paul did, you are not bound in order to save and to defend the life of your neighbour (the wife and her family).

Our advice in such a case was to apply 1 Cor 7:10-11 to the example of the psychopath who terrorised his wife. She may separate from him (from table and bed as they say in Dutch) for security reasons, but she may not divorce, since it does not include sexual immorality or deliberate desertion by an unbelieving partner. She should continue to pray and seek ways of reconciliation.

In the last version of their report, “Marriage and Divorce (Oct/2004)”, the deputies do not speak any more of grounds for divorce and they describe each divorce as an evil. The church may approve divorces in certain situations, e.g. adultery and deliberate desertion by an unbeliever and other situations which are not mentioned in the Bible.

Both in our response on Friday, 27 May, during the mealtime with the deputies for Marriage and Divorce, as well as in our advice given on the floor of synod on Friday evening (7-9:30 p.m.) we stressed that divorce may be approved on the basis of Scripture only in two situations: sexual immorality (Mt 19) and deliberate desertion by an unbelieving partner (see 1 Cor 7). In other cases a separation of table and bed may be acquiesced in for a time during emergencies, but no official divorce can be allowed. We stressed the application of these norms of Scripture, of course in connection with the whole Bible, especially with other relevant directives of Scripture.

Further, we found the examples which the report gave (namely, Mt 5, 12, 18 and the Fourth Commandment) to legitimise the third category (unforeseen situations) not at all clear and convincing. The examples are not exceptions to and departures from the Biblical rule, but they make clear how the Biblical rules are applied.

From the reactions (14 in total!; ranging from total agreement to total disagreement) of the members of synod (on Friday evening) and the replies given by Drs AL Th de Bruijne it became clear to us that the discussions at synod will focus on:

- to approve or not approve divorce ‘in situation which the Bible has not foreseen’;
- to confirm a marriage in the church or not, after a divorce has been approved;
- whether or not the marriage oath/vow remains valid even after one or both of the partners has broken their oath and a divorce takes place because of it.

We were very thankful for all these meetings and discussions, even on the floor of synod! It allowed us to interact. We told our BBK counterparts that reports of this kind often serve our larger Dutch sister first. Then it finds its way across the oceans and may end up in our common Book of Praise. Thus we preferred to act pro-actively rather than reactively. We thanked them heartily for the opportunities given and for all the arrangements made to accommodate our requests. The synod asked Rev W Huizinga to close the evening with a meditation and prayer. Thus we were included as much as possible.

Rev W Huizinga / AC Breen

1.7.6 General Synod Amersfoort 2005 about Marriage and Divorce

GS Amersfoort decided (summary):

1. to deal with the objections against the Report of the previous deputies *Divorce* to GS Zuidhorn 2002/3 [de bezwaren als inhoudelijke bijdrage mee te nemen] when Synod discusses the Report of their deputies Marriage and Divorce;

Ground 2: GS Zuidhorn in its decisions did not adopt the Report of deputies *Divorce*.

2. to endorse the main lines [in te stemmen met de hoofdlijn] of the deputies' approach regarding marriage and divorce that focuses on [waarin wordt ingezet op] maximal devotion to God and His will, on following Christ and on a lifestyle which does justice to the coming kingdom.

Ground 1: This endorsement doesn't mean that Synod agrees with all the insights of the Report. With appreciation synod took note of the broad lines of the study of the deputies [heeft in grote lijnen met waardering kennis genomen van de studie], but left responsibility for their Report to themselves [laat hun rapportage voor hun eigen rekening].

3. to pronounce that, as a rule, new marriages won't be solemnized in the Reformed churches after a divorce.

Ground 1: A promise once made continues [blijft gelden] and still resounds also after a divorce.

Ground 4: Consistories keep their own responsibility regarding the question whether a second marriage after a divorce is acceptable and can be solemnized in the church.

4. to pronounce that it is advisable that every consistory structurally introduces premarital counseling, and strongly encourages those who prepare themselves for a marriage to attend it.

Ground 1: Divorce is a grave evil that should be prevented as much as possible.

5. to replace the principles and guidelines as adopted by GS Leusden 1999 with the following principles and guidelines:

principles:

- i. Marriage has been instituted by the Lord. This close bond between husband and wife should not be dissolved by men (Gen 2:24; Mal 2:14-16; Matt 19:3-9; 1 Cor 7:10-11).

Divorce is a grave evil that should be prevented and combated as much as possible. To live according to the style of the kingdom of Christ means that in every marriage problem we concentrate all energies on [inzetten op] reconciliation and on the restoration of the relation.

- ii. If a marriage has been harmed [aangetast] because of sin or the effects of the fall, then restoration of the bond of marriage should be pursued and/or that bond should be kept as much as possible in the way of self-denial, following Christ by means of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.
- iii. In case of the actual break of the bond of marriage it fits the style of Christ's kingdom the best to maintain the marriage formally and to chose for a solution by which both partners enter into mutual agreements which they (let) record, or for the solution of separation from bed and table.
- iv. Also in the above-mentioned situations the marriage vows once have been given remain valid as long as both partners are alive. Therefore remarriage after a divorce doesn't fit in principle the style of the kingdom of Christ.
- v. Solemnisation of a next marriage is not possible as a rule if the previous marriage has been dissolved by a divorce.

1.7.7 In a summary

The Dutch deputies *Marriage and Divorce* took on board many comments of many churches and persons, including the FRCA. The two Australian deputies sent to the Netherlands explained at the General Synod Amersfoort why they did not agree with what the Dutch Report said about the approval (*het billijken*) of divorce in other situations than those mentioned in Matt 19 and 1 Cor 7. Further they explained why they could not agree with the examples of Matt 5, 12 and 18 which were used in the Dutch Report to approve (*billijken*) divorce in unforeseen situations. The two FRCA deputies explained that those examples are not exceptions to the Biblical rule, but applications of the Biblical rule.

General Synod Amersfoort 2005 did not fall in the pit of Anabaptist perfectionism which strives for the controllability of watertight rules and exceptions, but endorsed the main lines of the deputies' Report focusing on maximal devotion to God and His will, on following Christ and on a lifestyle which does justice to the coming kingdom in fullness. One of the grounds for their decisions is: "Divorce is a grave evil that should be prevented as much as possible."

General Synod Amersfoort 2005 did not endorse the Report itself, because there are still thoughts in the Report which should be further discussed and crystallized, for instance, how to apply the message of the Bible regarding divorce in situations which are not described in the Bible. We would have liked synod to give more explicit direction in this, rather than leaving it open to the churches as to how to apply it. This then would have been in line with the strong Scriptural stance taken by the synod regarding the evil of divorce and subsequent remarriage.

1.7.8 Recommendations

1. To express thankfulness that our Dutch sister churches could take a strong Scriptural stance regarding God's teachings against divorce and remarriage.
2. To express regret that, while the issue regarding the approval of divorces for reasons beyond the Scriptural reasons of adultery and willful desertion was not endorsed by synod and thus implicitly excluded, synod did not explicitly state this.

Grounds

- a. Synod Amersfoort in the "Principles and Guidelines" that it approved, gives strong Scriptural guidance showing how divorce and subsequent remarriage are a serious evil and must be so dealt with by consistories.
- b. Synod Amersfoort gave no explicit guidance regarding the danger of moving in a direction that allows divorce for reasons beyond adultery and willful desertion (Matt 19 and 1 Cor 7).

1.8. Report on Liturgy

1.8.1 Mandate

Synod Rockingham 2003 decided regarding Liturgy in general and Hymns in particular:

1. To keep monitoring these decisions in accordance with our Rule b (to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in ... liturgy) and to become more acquainted, in a selective manner, with the hymns that are approved and are being approved.
2. To investigate the principles and criteria for selecting and approving these new hymns.
3. Meanwhile in general to continue to express our concern toward the GKV about the proliferation of new hymns.

Grounds:

- a. It is unrealistic to ask the deputies to study all these newly approved hymns. Yet in order to mutually care for the GKV with conclusions about these hymns we would need to do exactly that, i.e., study all the new hymns, even as the GKV has done. Thus to monitor them in a selective manner would be the best way.
- b. The need to be specific in our selective monitoring is born out by the decision of our Canadian sisters. They have decided (art.97, Acts of the 2001 GS of Neerlandia) to receive submissions and proposals for additional hymns from the churches with the reasons for their suitability. One consideration (4.1) was that though this synod was cautious with respect to the additional 120 hymns in the GKV, their own Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) did not give evidence to show that the changes taking place in the GKN(v) are wrong (Art 80, Cons. 4.7). In the same consideration it added, while there are concerns about adding a large number of hymns, it cannot be said without further investigation that the increase of hymns in the GKN comes at the expense of singing Psalms.
- c. In this process it is important to study the principles and criteria used to select and to approve new hymns. This will also be helpful for us in time to come.
- d. At the same time the great multiplication of these new hymns, just by their great numbers as well as other factors mentioned in the deputies' letters to the RCN, continues to concern us.

The FRCA deputies for sister-relations in three letters sent to the Dutch deputies their responses to Zuidhorn's decisions regarding Liturgy, including new Hymns.

Responses dd 10th July and 9th August 2004

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

As deputies sister churches we examined the decisions of the 2002 General Synod Zuidhorn, regarding *Liturgy*. We were able to assemble some comments and would like to pass these on to you as deputies, to assist you in your work. In section A below please find our summary in English of the most important articles. In section B we explain which criteria we use in order to evaluate the synod's decision. Our response to the decisions is written in section C.

A. Zuidhorn's decisions

1. Article 73: *Ordinarium* liturgy, decision 3:
to instruct deputies to collect responses to and experiences with the *ordinarium* from the churches, and, if possible, to propose a new order of worship to the next synod.
2. Article 74: *The second worship service*
 - a. decision 1:
for the time being not to release for publication the order for the instructional worship service (*leerdienst*) as presented by deputies.

Ground:
in their report deputies themselves have already indicated that there are several non-liturgical problems and possible objections attached to the proposed order on which people differ in opinion or which are not discussed sufficiently within the churches.
 - b. decision 2:
to call the churches to examine chapter 10 of the deputies' report and to send their responses to the deputies *worship service*, who will report to the next synod.

Ground:
the responses may show how the churches want to act in the future regarding the afternoon service.
3. Article 77: *Form for public profession of faith*, decision 2:
to instruct deputies to present the proposed Form for public profession of faith to the churches and to incorporate the responses in a final version.
4. Article 79: *Form for marriage*, decision:
to reject the objections raised against the marriage form, adopted by General Synod Leusden 1999.

Grounds:
 1. The objection against the disappearance of the term 'confirmation of marriage' will be dealt with at the first synod, when deputies Marriage and

Divorce and deputies Church Polity and Church Order have in co-operation brought out advice on the meaning and status of an ecclesiastical marriage-confirmation and whether art. 70 CO should be changed.

2. The phrase ‘until Christ returns or death separates you’ does not imply that it is impossible for marriage to have continued value for eternity. On this point the church has not made a confessional statement. The two parts of this phrase point to the same matter in line with Rom 7:2-3, namely that the promise of marital faithfulness only ends when this earthly life ends. With Christian frankness one may reference, also for husband and wife, the joyous expectation of Christ’s return, which will remove sin and death, as indication of death; [tr.: the Dutch for the last sentence reads: De blijde verwachting van Christus wederkomst, ook voor man en vrouw, die ook zonde en dood zal wegnemen, mag in christelijke vrijmoedigheid voor het benoemen van de dood gesteld worden.]
3. The fact that a *marital* form speaks of *marital* love need not be explicitly stated.
4. It is good to indicate that those who are married should *above all* live in communion with Christ and not, in the first place, in communion with each other, so too that they live *above all* in love to the Lord and not to each other.
5. It has not been proven that in the whole of Scripture the diversity between husband and wife takes precedence over their unity.
6. The form sufficiently makes clear that the husband is the head of the wife. In addition it is to be noted that the form should be judged on its own merits, and not in comparison with its forerunner.
7. It is no less wrong for the bridal couple to kneel during a worship service as it is for anyone to kneel.
8. It is not contradictory to Scripture to state that husband and wife are to be a help to each other.
9. From the context it is clear that God does not want husband and wife to desert each other.

10. When a bridal couple promise fidelity to each other, this takes place before the LORD in the midst of His congregation. Reference to such an act as a personal matter [tr.: in Dutch 'onderonsje'] is irrelevant.
11. The term 'relation' need not have a modern and unbiblical connotation but is used in the Dutch language in a neutral way to indicate the relationship between people in all manner of contexts. The form first of all states that in the sealing of a marriage "the bond between both becomes legal before God and man". Then it is said "If they desire to be one, they are obliged to this covenant by God and each other." Only then and in the light of these statements is the term 'relation' used, and thus sufficiently qualified.
12. The mandate to form a family is sufficiently and clearly articulated in the form.
13. The reference "LORD" for our God is not wrong, confer the NBV* and various stanzas in our Psalms and Hymns.
14. The tone of the form is such that it avoids superficiality.
15. The liturg has every freedom to bless the couple. There is no reason as to why this should only be possible after the prayer.

This decision was taken with 33 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

* tr.: the NBV is a new Dutch translation in the making. During the course of 2001 an interchurch debate raged on how translators should translate the Hebrew YHWH. This debate is more complex in Dutch than in English since it not only concerns a choice between writing out the Name or substituting 'LORD' in all capitals, it also concerns the spelling of the Dutch word for 'LORD': does one use modern or old Dutch (HEER or HERE respectively) and if the latter does one use 20th century or earlier spelling (HERE or HEERE). The NBV translators have for the moment chosen for the translation 'HEER'.

5. Article 83: *Criteria for selecting new hymns*, decision 1:
 - a. to agree that a hymn may not be in conflict with the Reformed confessions;

- b. to pronounce that the criteria of the General Synod Leusden 1999 doesn't require alteration on that point, because in it was stated that a hymn should be in harmony with Scripture.

Note

Leusden's criteria:

- i. a good hymn should be appropriate to serve in a liturgical context in which God's words and deeds stand in the centre;
- ii. a good hymn should be in harmony with Scripture concerning its contents;
- iii. a good hymn is characterised by style and quality regarding linguistic and musical form; it gives proof of a good word-tone-relation; it is usable and accessible to present-day people.

B. Preceding our response

Our word liturgy comes from the Greek word *leitourgia* which is used in the NT of "sacred (priestly) ministrations". Jesus Christ has obtained a more excellent *leitourgia* (Hebrew 8:6), putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Greek word *leitourgia* is akin to *leitourgos* denoting "a public servant, minister" (see Vine's Dictionary 1996). Jesus Christ at the right hand of the throne is a *Leitourgos* of the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrew 8:2), protecting His people as Priest-King. In the OT the LORD met His people via mediators, where He met His people today through the Mediator of the new covenant. As a Christian royal priesthood which belongs to the Priest-King Christ we may proclaim the praises of Him who obtained mercy for us (1 Peter 2:9,10). In Him we have entrance to God's throne. The word *liturgy* became in the NT church an indication of the meeting between God and His people through Jesus Christ Who gathers, protects and defends His church. The reformer Valerandus Pollanus (Poullain), minister of the French refugee congregation in Strasbourg from 1544, used the word *liturgy* to indicate the order of worship, and today we use the word in that way (see further G van Rongen, *Met al de heiligen – Liturgie in hemel en op aarde*. Barneveld 1990).

We confess in Lord's Day 38 of the HC that especially on the Feast day we diligently attend the church of God to hear God's Word, to use the sacraments, to call publicly upon the LORD, and to give Christian offerings for the poor (from original German and Latin editions). With this a basic pattern of liturgy has been

given for our church services, namely, preaching (including teaching or instruction), sacraments, prayer, and charity. This is based on e.g. Acts 2:40-47 where we read that in the first Christian church those who gladly received the apostles' word were baptised, and that the church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers, having all things in common so that no one was in need, praising God and having favour with all the people. The same pattern of doctrine (*didache*), fellowship of faith (*koinoonia*), sacraments, prayer and charity. In our church liturgy these four elements are easily recognised.

The centrality of God's Word in our church services can also be learned from Romans 10:14-17:

How then shall they call on Him (the LORD) in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!* But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, *LORD, who has believed our report?* So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

In our liturgical consideration we should maintain the four main elements which are based on Scripture and the reformed confessions. All other liturgical elements should be grouped around these four main ones. Therefore we do not neglect the liturgical tradition which is based on, e.g., Acts 2 and Lords Day 38. But we do not canonise the liturgical tradition either as if all the other elements should be maintained in the same way or same order as the church has proposed in the past. "Let our liturgy not become a dead service. ... "No liturgical forms, just because of tradition." And also: "The Word of life demands living words" (K.Schilder, *Tolle Lege I*, p 76). "Dead forms can lead to the situation in which a congregation is preached to death or, at least, gets tired. But the LORD wants to have a living congregation, living people of His covenant, which is taught by the living proclamation of His Word!" (K Deddens, *Fulfill your ministry*, 1990, chapter IV, p 70,71).

Conclusion

We will evaluate Zuidhorn's liturgical decisions in the light of the following criteria:

1. the liturgical renewals and refreshments, including the order of worship, the worship itself, the liturgical Forms,

and the new hymns, should not be in conflict with Scripture and the reformed confessions;

2. the liturgical elements should be grouped around the four main elements which are based on Scripture and the reformed confessions, namely:

- ☐ God's Word: reading and preaching
- ☐ Two sacraments: baptism and Lord's Supper
- ☐ Calling upon the LORD: praise and prayer
- ☐ Charity: offertory.

C. Our response

Re 1: Ordinarium

The proposed order of worship contains elements of the *Ordinarium* of the early church, including the Kyrie, Gloria, Nicene Creed, Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei. We will follow the proposed order as we can read this in the deputies' report, chapter 7.8 and 7.9., while we make comments on it.

7.8.1: Votum and Salutation

We find the "casting" artificial. The words of Psalm 124:8 are a unity, and the word Amen here doesn't mean an acceptance by the congregation, but is a confirmation. We suggest:

Congregation: Votum + Amen

Pastor: Salutation + Amen

7.8.2: Kyrie and Gloria

The text of Willem Barnard is obscure. Which advent does he mean? The rhyme is ragged and the language is not accessible, especially for the youth. We suggest deleting this text.

7.8.3: Prayer for the Spirit's illumination

We suggest that this prayer is only an example, and that the pastor may use his own words.

7.8.9: Lord's Supper

a. invitation

According to 1 Corinthians 11 the self-examination is an indispensable element of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor 11:26: "you *proclaim* the Lord's death": know what you confess. 11:28: "let a man *examine* himself": know what *you* confess. 11:29: judgement by

“not *discerning* the Lord's body”: know *what* you confess.
We find a Form without a self-examination unthinkable.

b. prayer

We find it hard to take the first part seriously:

v (minister): De Heer zij met u (The LORD be with you)

g (congregation: Ook met u zij de Heer (The LORD be with you too)

This dialogue is not functional in the liturgy for the Lord's Supper celebration. We like the quotation from Philippians 2. We have difficulties with the last hymn of the Benedictus. We do not eat and drink life, and the breaking of the bread is not a symbol of the scattering of the believers over the earth. We suggest deleting this song.

7.9.1: Christmas Proprium prayers

7.9.1.3: prayer for illumination

Speaking about Jesus Christ as “uw geliefde Zoon als mens tussen hemel en aarde” (Your beloved Son as man between heaven and earth) is at least obscure. We also find the indication of Jesus as “kribbe-kind” (manger-child) inadequate. We suggest speaking about Jesus Who “via de kribbe en het kruis de weg heeft geopend naar het Vaderhuis.”

7.9.1.9: celebration of the Lord's Supper

See what we said under 7.8.9. Further, we reject the mystical archaisms in the following words:

“Wij *aanschouwen uw welbehagen* om vrede eer aan te doen;

Wij volgen uw lichtende ster in een *duistere wereldnacht*:

Christus die mensen licht en richting geeft,

Ondoorgrondelijk wonderbaar zijn uw heilgeheimen o God”

And also:

“Hem roemen wij, Jezus van Nazaret,

die het levenslicht zag om de *doodsnacht* in te gaan.”

Also the following words are, although poetical, obscure for young people:

U die “Hem geboren deed worden uit een vrouw:

De Zoon des mensen, arm en naakt;

Uw Heil, *gebakerd in een voederbak*.”

We cannot say that Christ’s resurrection was a birth or rebirth as in :

“opnieuw geboren uit de schoot der aarde”

Beautiful are the words:

“Wiens komst wij viere en verwachten”,

but we do not speak about our life on earth as a “tussen-tijd” (interim). This is an underestimation of our life on earth as God’s image: His child and steward.

7.9.2: Pentecost Proprium prayers

7.9.2.3: prayer for illumination

It is unclear what is meant with “Jeruzalem” in this prayer.

7.9.2.9: celebration of the Lord’s Supper

The following metaphors are obscure:

“Uw gemeente, als levende Pinksterbruid,
die zich voegt bij het gezang van alles wat ademt
en bezielt (sic) uw grote Naam wil loven en danken.”
U wilt dat uw kinderen
“herschappen worden tot een levend dankoffer.”

We don’t think that people understand the meaning of the presbyters and the living creatures from Revelation 4 and 5 in the following words:

“wij loven U om Hem – uw Geest – die...
oudsten en dieren een lofzang op de lippen legt.”

Further, it is too poetical to call the Holy Spirit “de Schepper van den beginne, toen engelen juichten”. The triune God is the Creator, and there were no angels when God started his creation work. Finally, speaking about Jesus Christ who “*nu* eeuwig leeft” gives rise to misunderstanding, because He is God the Son *from* eternity. Strictly speaking it is not correct to say: “Uw dood waarin

ons leven ligt”. Our life lies in the death *and resurrection* of Jesus our Lord.

Conclusion

We noticed the influence of the early church of the 4th century and following which was prone not to apply a redemptive and historical line in understanding Scripture, but instead often chose to re-enact it, explaining it in an exemplaric manner and often in a manner not free from mysticism (think of Cyril of Jerusalem), spiritualising or allegory. We agree with Zuidhorn’s decision not to release the proposed *Ordinarium* for publication, because there are too many shortcomings attached to it. We hope that our comments will serve you to revise the proposed *Ordinarium* drastically. We urge you to study further on the re-enactment influence on the *Ordinarium*, especially on the *Propriums*.

Re 2: The second worship service

The General Synod Berkel en Rodenrijs 1996 instructed deputies “to investigate the possible specific character of the second Sunday service and the consequences of it for the organisation of this service.” Concerning the first aspect, the specific character, the 1999 General Synod of Leusden concluded that, on the basis of information from Scripture and church history,

- the Sunday afternoon / evening service may indeed have a specific (*eigen*) character according to Bible and history;
- the teaching of the church may be emphasised, and this is why one may call this service an “instructional service” (*leerdienst*).

Concerning the second part, the consequences for the organisation, synod Leusden asked the deputies to serve the churches with a proposal for the organisation of the second church service.

In chapter 10 of their report to 2002 General Synod of Zuidhorn deputies came with the following proposed order of worship for the second service:

- Opening singing
- Salutation (e.g. 2 Tes 1:2 or 1 Tim 1:2 or Titus 1:4), answered with “Amen” by the congregation
- Prayer for God’s blessing over the service
- Possibly: administering of baptism
- Short introduction to the theme

- Reading(s) from Scripture, followed by readings from the Catechism or other confessions
- Instruction in the doctrine
- Hymn and/or contributions in relation to the theme from the congregation, or discussion (in groups), with a concluding word
- Prayer or thanksgiving
- Encouragement, closed with the blessing (e.g. Fil 4:7)
- Closing Song

If we evaluate this proposed order for the doctrinal service in the light of the criteria mentioned above in section B, then we do not find all the four main elements around which the other liturgical elements are grouped. We do read about “instruction in the doctrine” and “concluding word”, which is quite different from the preaching of the Word. Preaching includes teaching, but this instruction should also be preaching! There is a possibility for baptism, but not for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper. And we miss the offertory.

As deputies we like to serve you with the following alterations in which the four main elements are restored:

- Votum, salutation, singing
- Prayer for God’s blessing over the service
- Sacraments
- Introduction to the theme
- Readings: Scripture and confessions
- Singing
- Preaching, with emphasis on teaching, part 1
- Response
- Preaching, with emphasis on teaching, part 2
- Singing
- Prayer of thanksgiving
- Offertory, singing

- Encouragement
- Benediction

Finally, we'd like to say that not every worship service is a *leerdienst*, but that every *leerdienst* is a worship service.

Re 3: Form for Public Profession of Faith

The 1999 General Synod of Leusden instructed deputies to continue revising the form taking into account that the connection between baptism, profession of faith and the Lord's Supper should be clear. Our response to the new form is that the connection is not clear enough. We suggest making this more obvious with help of the first four letters of the alphabet. That means in Dutch:

Doop: God zegt ja tegen jou: de verbondsgemeenschap gaat van God uit

Catechisatie: leren geloven in die verbondsgemeenschap

Belijdenis: jij zegt ja tegen God: je wilt niet onder die verbondsgemeenschap uit

Avondmaal: vieren van die verbondsgemeenschap

Finally, we suggest to put some words of Paul's letter to the Philippians in before or instead of the concluding words of 1 Peter 5:10,11. We think of:

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, and the God of peace will be with you!" (1:9-11; 2:15b; 4:9c)

Re 4: Form for Marriage

One of the main objections against the new marriage Form was the omission of the words *obey and submit*. GS Zuidhorn rejected this objection stating that "the form sufficiently makes clear that the husband is the head of the wife." We read in the new Form:

- (in the section on Relationships) "In following Christ the husband shall be the head of his wife in love and self denial. As the one with first responsibility he shall lead her

in their life with the Lord (*moet hij haar voorgaan in het leven met de Here*)."

- (in the section on Relationships) "As the church entrusts itself to Christ and lets itself be guided by Him (*zich aan Christus toevertrouwt en zich door Hem laat leiden*), so the wife shall entrust herself to her husband and follow him in serving the Lord (*zich toevertrouwen aan haar man en hem volgen in het dienen van de Here*)."
- (section on Mutual commitments) To the bridegroom: "Lead her in a life with the Lord. Care for her and give her a sense of security (*geborgenheid*). Accept her loving support as help which Christ gives you."
- (section on Mutual commitments) To the bride: "Help him by seeking his good in everything. Accept him as head and receive his loving care as the security (*geborgenheid*) that Christ gives to you."
- (section on Vows) To the bridegroom: "Do you promise to lead her in all things which are according to God's will?"
- (section on Vows) To the bride: "Do you promise to help him and to follow him in all things which are according to God's will?"

If we compare the quoted passages with a proposed previous version of the Form for Marriage, on which we responded dd 25th March 1999, then we are thankful for the changes which have been made in the sections "Mutual commitments" and "Marriage vows". Key concepts in the new form are: the husband as head should lead his wife in their life with the Lord, and the wife as supporter should follow her husband in their life with the Lord. He should give evidence of responsible leadership, and she should entrust herself to his responsible leadership and accept him as head. Although the verb *submit* is not used, the meaning of the word is everywhere present. It is there just like the *unity* in marriage is present everywhere in the apostolic statement, *neither man without woman, nor woman without man, in the Lord; for as the woman of the man, so also the man through the woman* (literal translation of 1 Cor 11:11,12).

That the verb *obey* is not used has to do with the fact that Ephesians 5 and 6 do not characterise the relation between wife and husband with that verb. The verb, which is used in Eph 5:22, Col 3:18, Titus 2:5, 1 Peter 3:1,5 to indicate this relation between wife and husband, is *hupotasso*, which means to *submit*. The explanation of this verb can be found in the new form where it

instructs the bride to entrust herself to his responsible leadership. The verb *hupakouo* (to obey) is used to indicate the relation between children and parents in Eph 6:1 and Col 3:21,22. From 1 Peter 3:1 we learn that the norm is that wives are submissive to their own husbands. In former times (verse 5ff) Sarah used to respect (*hupekouse*: aorist of *hupakouoo*, indicating that it is a reference to one event, otherwise we may have expected the imperfect tense) Abraham's position as head of the household, speaking about him as *my lord*. Note that this is a quotation of Genesis 18:12. This is an indirect reference, not a direct address, to Abraham as the master of the household. At this point Sarah laughed at the promise of a son. Abraham too had laughed in unbelief (cf 17:17-22). Obviously the two of them afterwards spoke together. Abraham helped Sarah. Abraham himself, *contrary to hope, in hope believed...being fully convinced that what God had promised He was also able to perform* (Rom 4:17-22). He helped Sarah believe the same. Sarah became a mother of many nations and kings came forth from her (Gen 17:16). Thus they were a godly team. Both had important positions. Sarah respected Abraham's position and learned from him. Yet at the same time Sarah received authority to bring Hagar into line to respect the position of Sarah. This may not have pleased Abraham, but note that he complies (Gen 16:6). Their relationship was a healthy yoke or team. Sarah did not have to bow and scrape before him, calling him master. Abraham respected her position too. This expression of respect with which Sarah spoke of Abraham is an example of submission. Following Sarah (being her daughters), is, according to verse 6, doing good and not being afraid. That means in the context of verse 1+2 being submissive and not being afraid in dealing with unbelieving husbands. That was often a daunting task in that time.

Our conclusion is that the new Form could have used the biblical word *submission* with a biblical explanation. We refer to dr Floor's *Commentary on Ephesians*. Husband and wife are co-heirs of the grace of life. It means they must serve each other in love, as Christ did. This two-sided love and service (Eph 5:21) take place within a marriage where the husband is given responsibility for his wife and where the wife submits to her husband. This structure can be degraded to brute dominion or slavish submission, but Christ's ministry must shine through so that submission and mutual care reflect what Christ did for his people (Floor 1995, p 188ff).

We agree with the following consideration (4.5) of the 2004 General Synod of Chatham of our Canadian sister churches:

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

Re 5: Criteria for selecting new hymns

1. Second criterion Kampen 1975

GS Leusden 1999 has cancelled the second criterion of GS Kampen 1975: “the hymn should be a valuable addition to the Psalms and should not lead to undervaluation of the Psalms.” GS Zuidhorn 2002 pronounced that Leusden did this correctly.

Grounds:

- it is unclear if this criterion concerned the contents of the separate hymns which are to be selected, or also the number of hymns which the church adopts beside the psalms;
- concerning this criterion it is still unclear in what way a hymn could lead to undervaluation of the psalms.

So, the second criterion of Kampen says something about *the number* of new hymns, but cannot function as a criterion to test *the contents* of separate new hymns. Zuidhorn stated: “Therefore GS Leusden cancelled this criterion while not making a statement about the place of the Psalms in the worship service.”

In art 89, decision 11 Zuidhorn decided:

“The synod will underline that in art 67 of the Church Order the psalms take precedence. The

psalms in the rhymed versions always have had a place of honour in the reformed liturgical tradition as hymns which the LORD has given to His people in His Word. Also hymns which are based on and drew on other parts of the Old and New Testament belong in principle to the reformational liturgical tradition, although the collection has been small. Now that the churches are busy to add new hymns to it, it is good to pronounce that it is not our intention that the hymns supersede the psalms in the worship services and in the hearts of the believers.”

We agree with the decision of Leusden 1999 and Zuidhorn 2002 concerning this second criterion of Kampen 1975.

2. Scripture and confession

Zuidhorn decided that a hymn may not be in conflict with the Reformed confession. But why didn't the synod pronounce this in its second criterion: “a good hymn should be in harmony with Scripture concerning its contents?” Synod said the following:

“Should a hymn be in harmony with Scripture and the confessions as committee Fryslan wants to add to the criteria of Leusden, or is it sufficient to state that a hymn should be in harmony with Scripture? A discussion began. Of course a hymn ought not to be in conflict with the confession. But it does not need to contain everything what can be confessed about a certain topic. We are thankful with the confession which, among other things, functions as a virus scan against errors. But the pronouncement that a hymn should not be in conflict with Scripture and the confessions is an invitation to submit objections. Echo Scripture frankly and you are not in conflict with the confession.”

If the criterion “a hymn should be in harmony with the confessions” means “it should contain everything what can be confessed about a certain topic” then we understand that it is almost impractical to test new hymns by this criterion. But if you explain “in harmony with the confession” as “not in conflict with the confession,” then you can state frankly that a new hymn should not be in conflict with Scripture and the confessions. We do not understand that this is an invitation to submit objections. If the confessions are the virus scan on our computer of

hymns, then deletion of it will only be to our hurt. We agree that the confessions do not add to Scripture, but as an alarm bell, they alert us when the Bible is being broken into. Scripture is important. Therefore we are thankful for the confessions, even as we are happy with the alarm in our car. To remove that alarm, reasoning that our car is sufficient safe, doesn't make sense.

We ask the Dutch sister churches to change Leusden's second criterion as follows:

"a good hymn should not be in conflict with Scripture and our adopted confessions."

3. New hymns

3.1 Number

As said in Re 5 point 1 (see our Response dd July 10, 2004), we agree with the decision of Leusden 1999 and Zuidhorn 2002 concerning the second criterion of Kampen 1975. Indeed, one cannot use the *number* criterion to evaluate the *contents* of hymns. But having said that, we want to emphasise Zuidhorn's words in art 89, decision 11, that it is not their intention that the hymns supersede the Psalms in the worship services and in the hearts of the believers. We welcome that statement, but one of the first things you can do to live up to that intention is to prevent the Psalms from being exceeded by hymns in number. If there are more hymns than Psalms and, as you said, hymns shouldn't supersede the Psalms, then the congregations don't have time to learn the hymns and absorb their tune, rhyming and contents.

We ask the Dutch sister churches to prevent the Psalms from being exceeded by hymns in number.

3.2 Language

In considering the 117 new hymns from *The Liedboek* which has been published by 'De Interkerkelijke Stichting voor het Kerklied' one is somewhat surprised. The reason for this surprise is that the new Psalm book which was accepted by synod Heemse in 1985 was modernised due to the 'archaic' wording of the psalms. The youth had to know what they were singing. And rightly so. That is also the reason why we have accepted a new

Bible translation and in Holland an interdenominational committee is also working on a new one. But now synods seem to accept hymns from all sort of sources, and many of which are 300 to 400 years old (Hymn 7, 9 etc.). We are sure that there are many children that would have no idea what they are singing when these hymns appear on the psalm board in church service. They simply don't understand: "*Mijn Verlosser hangt aan 't kruis* (not true, He is the risen King!), *hangt ten spot van snode smaders, hangt er mijnentwegen*" (189). They haven't a clue what it means: "*deel ons zelf de voorsmaak mee van der zaalgen sabbatsvree*" (221). Or: *Leer ons daaglijks, leer ons duizendwerven in uw kruisdood meegekruisigd sterven*" (221). There are many more we would have trouble understanding and we cannot understand that so many of them have been accepted when every effort is made in Holland to accommodate the youth and to stop them from leaving the church.

We ask the Dutch sister churches to re-evaluate the hymns especially regarding incomprehensible language.

3.3 Contents

Which hymns are in accordance with God's revealed Word and which are not? At synod Zuidhorn there were many objections from churches and church members. Some of the criticism leveled against the 121 hymns was based on the claim that a lot of hymns breathe the teaching of reconciliation for everyone (Karl Barth) and the Remonstrant thinking that salvation partly depends on our faith. There was also criticism against the hymns which would let us re-experience the facts of salvation which happened in the past.

We note that your synod went through all the hymns consciously. Though, there are a few outstanding things we want to address. We ask the Dutch sister churches to re-evaluate the hymns especially regarding the following two aspects:

- Remonstrant offer of salvation theory

- Barthian salvation universalism (incl Israelism)

Regarding these aspects we have problems with hymns 20, 41, 87, 90, 106, 114, 200.

Examples:

Hymn 20

Text:

“Moet iemand onrecht lijden,/ de Heer staat aan zijn kant./ Hij doet te allen tijde aan elk zijn woord gestand.”

Comment:

The line of demarcation is not between all those who suffer injustice and those who don't, but between those who listen to God's Word and those who don't. To those God keeps His word.

Text:

“Maar omdat Gij mijn leven/ duldt voor uw aangezicht...”

Comment:

In Jesus Christ Whom we embrace we are close to Father's heart. Those who belong with body and soul to Jesus Christ are not *endured* but fully *redeemed* (niet verdragen, maar gedragen).

Hymn 41

Text:

“... Israel, Israel,/ eens zal u de wereld aanvaarden/ ... Eens zullen de volken u eren.”

Comment:

The message of Zech 8:20-23 is that Pentecost will cause people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9) to seek the LORD and to pray before Him. Then His people will honour God because of Jesus Christ. And only if Israel does not continue in unbelief it will be grafted in into the tree of God's covenant (Rom 11:23).

Hymn 87

Text:

“... want wij zijn voor de zonde dood/ ... De mensheid der verloren tijden deed Christus sterven aan zijn kruis.”

Comment:

How different is our confessional speaking: CD, V,1: “Those whom God according to His purpose calls into the fellowship of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ (*hoezo de mensheid stierf met Christus?*) and regenerates by His Holy Spirit, He certainly sets free from the dominion and slavery of sin (Rom 6:17), but not entirely in this life from the flesh and the body of sin (Rom 7:21-24).” (*hoezo dood voor de zonde?*)

Hymn 90

Text:

“ik heb voor heel mijn leven/ in God mijn bondgenoot./ ... dat Hij mijn Vader is, mijn vriend,”

Comment:

God our ally and friend. What a poor language comparing with our Reformed Forms: “When we are baptised into the Name of the Father, God the Father testifies and seals to us that *He establishes* an eternal covenant of grace with us. He *adopts* us...” (Form for baptism). “For if *while we were enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.” (Form for Lord’s Supper).

Hymn 106

Text:

“liefde dekt alle ongerechtigheden.”

Comment:

1 Peter 4:8 reads that love will cover a multitude of sins. Peter didn’t say that love covers all iniquities. Love keeps no record of wrongs but forgives if God also can forgive them.

Hymn 114

Text:

“Een stem roept in het rond: nu gaat beginnen/ de koninklijke tijd,”/ ... De Koning die zijn troon heeft in den hoge, houdt bij de mensen hof/”

Comment:

We cannot find, in Rev 21:1-4, the words of the voice calling around. Of course not, because Jesus Christ already is King. There will be no royal time (of 1000 years) *after* His (first) coming. Jesus Christ resides (houdt hof) over His world *already today*, and once, through Jesus Christ (already) Emmanuel, God Himself will be the Tabernacle with us eternally. Then there will be that eternal Feast of Tabernacles (cf Rev 7).

Hymn 200

Text:

“De nacht, de zonde en de dood,/ de hel, het leed, de angst, de nood,/ dit alles is teniet gedaan,/ nu onze Heer is opgestaan./ ... Heel d’aarde, al het schepsel zal opstaan in 't zonlicht overal”

Comment:

Christ's resurrection doesn't mean that sin, death and hell have been annulled for all creatures. There is salvation and eternal life for all who are Christ's, but eternal punishment for those who belong to Satan (Mat 25:46). And the last enemy death isn't yet destroyed (1Cor 15:26). Further, that we are freed from the tyranny of the devil doesn't mean that sin has been nullified. The original text by Nikolaus Herman (1500-1561) is different. There we read: “Die alte Schlange, Sünd und Tod,/ die Höll, all Jammer, Angst und Not/ hat überwunden Jesus Christ” (the serpent of old, sin and death, hell and all sorrow have been defeated by Jesus Christ). VanderMolen's translation doesn't mention the serpent of old and incorrectly changes *defeated* in *nullified*. And concerning the *resurrection* of all creatures, this is what N Herman wrote: “Die Son, die Erd, all Kreatur,/ alles was betrübet war zuvor,/ dat freut sich heut an diesem

Tag” (the sun, the earth, all creatures, all that was sad before *are pleased* today).

3.4 Psalms

Rhyming and tunes

Brothers, in our letter about the new hymns, dd November 16, 2001, a letter we wrote to you before the General Synod of Zuidhorn we suggested:

Moreover, we want to encourage you to consider paying more attention to the retention of the psalms. If it is true that the desire for more hymns arises out of some dissatisfaction with the psalms with their Genevan tunes, then it is time to consider this. The Genevan tunes are not sacrosanct nor inspired. However, their biblical content as well as the weight and majesty of the tunes, though hard to get used to by outsiders, mean that one never tires of them. The same cannot be said of many modern hymns! However, the Psalms in the *Book of Praise* are rhymings and not the literal text of the psalms themselves. There have been other rhymings and new ones are possible as well. Also, other tunes are possible and this might be something to work on (especially for mission fields and for other cultures where the Genevan tunes do not suit). We are not suggesting the elimination and replacement of the present Psalms with their Genevan tunes, but the possible *addition* of alternate rhymings and tunes. You would do the reformed faith a great service if this problem was addressed so that the psalms could remain the focal point of our singing in the worship services.

This suggestion was not followed up. That is a pity. Allow us to expand on this. We here in Australia do not have the expertise, the manpower and the time at the moment to develop this project. Yet we see much benefit in it for all the Reformed churches in this world. We love the psalms and wish to see them remain central and important in our church services. You in The Netherlands have manpower and expertise for such a project.

Thus we again earnestly encourage you to explore this suggestion of new, modern tunes for the psalms, tunes which display dignity, and which help bring out the meaning of the psalms. At the same time, we suggest that new rhymings be made of the psalms, rhymings that show the work and person of our Lord Jesus Christ in a greater fashion. We state this because the present rhymings already do this to an extent.

Of course, we in the English speaking world would still need to translate this into our own language. It would still entail much work. Yet the ground-breaking work of having a basic text to work from, and of having appropriate tunes to bring out its meaning, would already be done. That is why we turn to you.

Christological

At the same time we raise a related matter. Often psalms are not sung in their entirety. A minister chooses only one or two stanzas of a psalm. This makes it difficult for a church member to follow that psalm as they sing. Moreover, we also want to respect what Christ taught us (Luke 24:27,44-45), namely, to see the things concerning Himself in the Writings/the Psalms (the third section of the Jewish Bible). Much work is presently being done on seeing the Christ in the Psalms. A Christological psalter, with rhymings that show how the Psalms also speak of the Messiah and his wonderful ministry, would tremendously help our churches understand, appreciate and heartily sing the psalms. This Christological approach to the psalms should not be forced, of course. It should be natural, as our Lord explained. Christ's congregation in the NT will be able much more to identify with such a psalter.

Biblical Psalter

We know that Calvin was not against hymns as long as they were clearly *Songs from Scripture* based on Bible texts and passages. He therefore included in his Reformed Psalm book also Hymns (Cantica) such as the Songs of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon, the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed. It was Calvin's wish that many

other parts of Scripture would be put to rhyme for the congregation to sing in the worship service (see further Dr T Brienens, *De liturgie bij Johannes Calvin*. Kampen 1987, p 198ff).

We ask the Dutch sister churches, in line with Calvin, to put to rhyme Bible texts and passages. It is better to spend time and energy in composing hymns directly derived from Scriptures than in dealing with appeal upon appeal to unbiblical thoughts that have crept in into the hymns. And probably those hymns can be sung if the congregations, by singing, every time translate the ambiguous sentences in a Reformed way, but always those hymns shall be found inferior to the faithful Cantica which are based on God's own reliable Word.

Response dd 19th August 2004

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

As deputies sister churches we examined the decisions of the 2002 General Synod Zuidhorn regarding Liturgy. We have sent you responses to Zuidhorn's decisions on the Ordinarium liturgy, the second worship service, the Form for Public Profession of Faith, the Form for Marriage and to the criteria for selecting new hymns. A month later, 9th August 2004, we sent you our response to the new hymns. And within a few weeks you will receive our response to Zuidhorn's decisions regarding the blessing in church service and the celebration of the Lord's Supper by military chaplain.

While we went through your General Synod's Acts we sensed that there is a common thread, and that is the unanswered matters relating office and liturgy. Liturgy is related to the bibliological, ecclesiastical, dogmatological, ethical and diaconiological aspects of theology. We think there are unsolved issues on the interface between liturgy and, so to speak, some studies on the offices (see diagram on the next page).

We suggest that you report this to your churches and the next synod, and in whatever proper way it can be tabled, that as soon as your churches ask for deputies *Office and Liturgy*, you will support that. There are many questions regarding the relation between:

- Liturgy and the office of all believers (common office)
- Liturgy and the office of minister, elder, deacon (special office)
- The common office and the special offices.

In the past, general synods discussed issues related to Liturgy and Bible Studies, and Liturgy and Church Studies. We think the churches would benefit from a thorough study on all the liturgical issues with are related to the offices. Or, in other words, an overall study on the relation between the special office and the office of all believers in relation to the church service and all its elements.

Think of questions like:

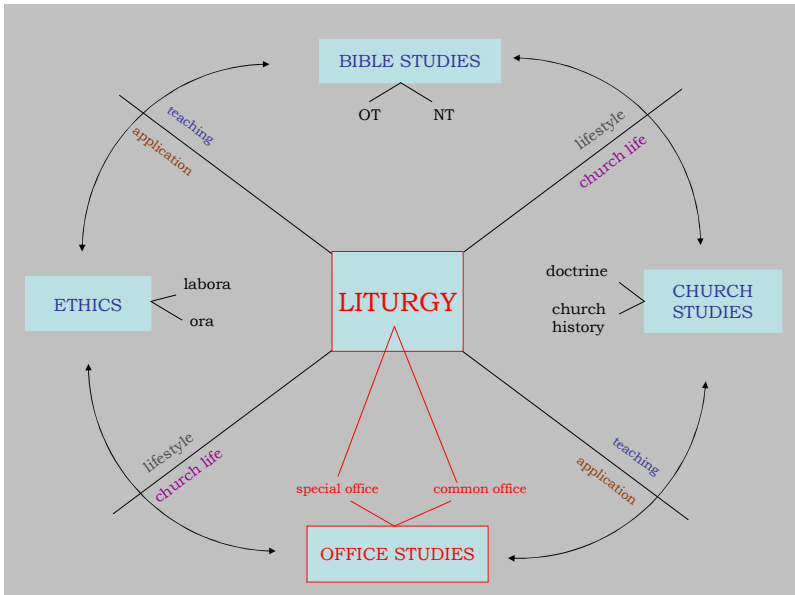
- What is the task of the special office bearers in the church service? For example, should only those called to office as representatives of God pronounce the blessing in the church services, or can this be done by the office of all believers?
- What is the meaning of the office of all believers, that is of all men and women, in the church service?
- How do we express the meaning of the office of all believers in the church service?
- Which liturgical elements are required in every church service, and what is their relation with the offices?
- What is the task of the special office bearer in war zones in relation to a local church?
- What is the relation between the special office and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper?

The discussion on "Woman and Office" can be integrated in the study on *Office and Liturgy*.

Esteemed brothers,

We hope you will receive our comments as a challenge to study further these important issues regarding the church service, and the common and special offices in Christ's church.

With brotherly greetings,
On behalf of the deputies of the FRCA,
Rev W Huizinga, Convener
AMC Bruning, Secretary



Decisions General Synod Amersfoort 2005

A. *In relation to Liturgy in general*

1. not to develop a separate order of worship on the basis of the *Ordinarium* texts (11-06; decision 2)
2. not to release for use in the churches the order of worship for the "leerdienst" as presented by the deputies (16-09; decision 1)
3. to approve and release for use in the churches the proposed Form for the public profession of faith hereby replacing the present Form

new in the Form:

- ☐ "Since you have now come here before God and His holy congregation to say yes to your baptism, to profess your faith and hereby to receive admission to the supper of our Lord Jesus Christ,"
- ☐ "Do you promise to commit yourself to the edification of the congregation, to use Word and sacrament faithfully, and....."

B. In relation to New Hymns

1. not to revise Leusden's criterium that the contents of the hymns should be in harmony with Scripture

Ground: GS Zuidhorn has added to it that a hymn should not be in conflict with the Reformed Confessions

2. to charge deputies "Kerkmuziek" to make an inventory of the opinion and vision of churches and church members in relation to the released hymns in order to find out which hymns should be in the final Hymn Book

- Note: at the moment there are 117 (Leusden and Zuidhorn) plus 55 (Amersfoort) new hymns from the "Liedboek voor de kerken" plus 49 new hymns from other sources plus the "90 Hymns" (Zuidhorn), besides the 41 already in the *Gereformeerd Kerkboek*.

3. to charge deputies "Kerkmuziek" to finish their selection between 2005 and 2008 with another 120 hymns
4. to determine that General Synod 2008 should decide which hymns, selected before 2005, and which hymns, proposed at GS 2008, can be released for use in the churches
5. to determine that General Synod 2011 decides which hymns should be in the Hymn Book
6. not to comply with the request from Rijnsburg still to delete 14 hymns from the list, but to answer Rijnsburg, and also Hardenberg-Centrum, Vroomshoop and Kornhorn in a letter in which would be explained why GS Amersfoort didn't comply with the request.

- Note: in the letter the conclusion is reached more than once that we can explain the hymn in a Scriptural way, or that we can sing it in a Scriptural way if we give a good explanation

Recommendations

1. to express appreciation for not developing a separate order of worship on the basis of the *Ordinarium* texts;
2. to express appreciation for not releasing for use in the churches the order of worship for the "leerdienst" (teaching-service) as presented by the deputies;
3. to express concerns about the continuing proliferation and the contents of the hymns from the "liedboek voor de kerken;" and to

continue to suggest more time be spent on the Psalms and on songs based directly on Scripture.

4. to keep monitoring GKV's decisions in accordance with our Rule b (to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in ... liturgy) and to become more acquainted, in a selective manner, with the hymns that are approved and are being approved.

Grounds for our concerns

1. Although GS Amersfoort stated that GS Zuidhorn has added to GS Leusden that a hymn shouldn't be in conflict with the Reformed Confession, GS Zuidhorn decided not to change Leusden's criterium into "a good hymn should not be in conflict with Scripture and Confession".
2. The contents of hymns should be unambiguously biblical and reformed. There are too many hymns in "Liedboek voor de kerken" which are not unambiguously biblical and reformed.
3. We have asked that the Psalms, the Book of Praise in the Bible, receive more attention. Without replacing the present rhymings and tunes of the Psalms, to work on new rhymings which are more Christ-centered and on tunes other than Genevan ones. Thus more attention can be given to the Psalms.
4. More than once we have asked the GKV, in line with John Calvin, to put to rhyme Bible texts and passages. It is better to spend time and energy in composing hymns directly derived from Scriptures than in dealing with appeal upon appeal to unbiblical thoughts that have crept into the hymns. And probably those hymns can be sung if the congregations, by singing, every time translate the ambiguous sentences in a reformed way, but always those hymns shall be found inferior to the faithful Cantica which are based on God's own reliable Word.

1.9 Deputies Report to Synod West Kelmscott 2006 Sacraments and Military Chaplains

1.9.1 Mandate

Synod Rockingham 2003 Article 41 made the following decision regarding the issue of military chaplains in our sister churches in The Netherlands:

V. Military Chaplains and the Lord's Supper

Decision:

1. Deputies should further examine the decision of GS Zuidhorn to ascertain whether or not our concerns were alleviated and relay their findings to the Dutch Deputies.

Grounds:

1. Further study is required of the GS Zuidhorn decision to determine if it is in accordance with Scripture and the Confessions.
2. Because our concerns were relayed to the Dutch Deputies, they deserve a response.

1.9.2 Activities

Deputies examined the decision of GS Zuidhorn. This synod decision is provided in Appendix A and included the previous letter of our deputies that was sent to them prior to GS Zuidhorn as material for this decision. The decision can be summarised as:

1. The appeals to the previous decision by GS Leusden were rejected on the basis that they did not contradict Scripture, the confession or the Church Order.
2. Scripture, confession and Church Order speak about the Lord's Supper in reference to a "normal situation", but this decision is about an "extraordinary" situation.
3. The conditions for such a celebration of the Lord's Supper as specified by GS Leusden were changed to highlight the fact that in the gathering, the character of the Christian congregation is honoured; the military chaplain may only invite those are communicant members who agree with the 'foundational matters' of the Christian religion and are blameless in their walk of life; and that mutual supervision and discipline is required by participants of the Lord's Supper.

Our continuing concerns were explained in a letter to Deputies of our sister churches in The Netherlands. This letter is attached as Appendix B and highlights three concerns which are summarised as:

1. Synod should not be making rules for "exceptions" in "exceptional circumstances". The decision of GS Zuidhorn relates only to military situations where military chaplains may conduct the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Exceptions need to take into account individual circumstances for which "rules" cannot be made.

2. The Synod decision sets aside a Church Orderly rule in a military situation and is in danger of going in the direction of interdenominational celebrations of the Lord's Supper. GS Zuidhorn indicates that this situation is an "exception" from the norm.
3. The decision appears to elevate the sacrament of Holy Supper to the extent that military personnel cannot do without it over an extended period of time, whereas there are other situations, such as for chronically ill persons, where church members do go without.

Dutch deputies responded to our concerns by continuing to defend their position. They argue that since military personnel are deployed for periods of six months to war zones, they miss the comfort and strengthening of the celebration of the Holy Supper, and therefore it is good to have the military chaplain administer Holy Supper with "sincere Christian service personnel". They raise an additional point, which is of potential concern to us, that the celebration of Holy Supper already occurs in hospitals, but no detailed information was provided. As regards the relationship between the sacraments and the Church Order, they indicate that there is a difference of view between our and their deputies. Their correspondence to us is attached as Appendix C.

GS Amersfoort rejected all the appeals, including the submission of our deputies, and amended the decision of GS Zuidhorn to allow military chaplains to administer also Holy Baptism in addition to Lord's Supper. In addition to the previously decided conditions for administering and celebrating Holy Supper, Synod expanded on these by specifying that the celebration takes place using the relevant forms adopted by the churches. The decision of GS Amersfoort is provided in Appendix D. Synod stipulated that this decision applies only to military chaplains and that it is undesirable that this decision begins to function as a point of departure for the administration of the sacraments in other situations. Other situations require decisions to suit the circumstances.

In addition to the concerns we already identified, this decision highlights additional concerns as follows:

1. The same concerns that apply to the administration of Holy Supper in military situations now also applies to the administration of Holy Baptism.
2. The following anomaly arises. A non-baptised military serviceman who professes the reformed faith can be baptised and then become a member of the GKV (together with his children who at the same time will be baptised). But children of believing servicemen, who have been admitted to the Holy Supper in the Christian congregation to which they belong, can

be baptised and then will enter in the register of the (possibly non-GKV) congregation to which the servicemen belong. Here we miss the appeal of Art 28 of Belgic Confession that it is everyone's duty to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church.

3. The terms "war zones" and "areas of crisis" that were previously used to define "exceptional circumstances" have now been retracted since they "do not cover all situations to which military personnel are sent out". This opens the doors for celebrating the Lord's Supper in almost all military environments where members are away from church for extended periods. This leads to the danger that these situations are not "exceptional" anymore but become commonplace.

1.9.3 Recommendations

Deputies recommend the following to synod:

Recommendations:

1. To express our concerns to the Dutch sister churches that GS Amersfoort's decision regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel goes beyond the common consent of the Church Order and leads to the danger of interdenominational (against Art 28, B.C.) administration of sacraments.

Grounds:

1. GS Amersfoort has not alleviated our concerns that were sent to deputies. We are still not convinced that there is no danger in making exceptions to the commonly agreed regulations of the Church Order and then apply them in exceptional circumstances within the military environment.
2. GS Amersfoort should have referred to Belgic Confession, Art 28, where we confess that it is everyone's duty to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church.
3. The possibility of administering the Lord's Supper, under certain conditions, to those who are not members of the GKV (or sister churches) has been expanded to the sacrament of baptism (again under certain conditions). Baptising children of believing servicemen who are not members of the GKV (or sister churches) is now also possible.
4. The exceptional situations, which previously referred to "war zones" and "areas of crisis" have now been broadened to include all military zones where the GKV servicemen are isolated for lengthy periods of time.

Appendix 6a: Decision of General Synod Zuidhorn 2002

Requests to revise the decision concerning administration of the Lord's Supper by Military Chaplains

Material: objections from various churches and members of the GKN(v), as well as a letter from the FRCA.

Decision 1: to declare that the decision of GS Leusden 1999, Acts art. 70 decision 3, does not contradict Scripture, the confession or the Church Order

Ground

Objectors have made various noteworthy remarks on the basis of Scripture, confession and Church Order with reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in a normal situation, namely the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the congregation of the Lord which assembles under the leadership and supervision of the church council. This does not prove that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is impossible in the most extraordinary situation to which the decision refers, namely, in a situation of war or crisis where there is an assembly of believers not under the leadership and supervision of a church council but where a responsible preacher is present.

Decision 2: to declare that the afore-mentioned decision is not a concession to the Senior Military Chaplain and thus is not the result of an enforced prescription of the authorities, nor that this does violence to the separation between church and state.

Ground

The agreement to administer the Lord's Supper in a situation of war or crisis is not a mandate from the Senior Military Chaplain but the result of agreements made within the CIO-M by Protestant Churches.

Decision 3: to declare that the regulation for such an extremely extraordinary situation gives no ground for thought that within our church federation one may speak of or there might be an open Lord's Supper Table.

Ground:

The decision has clearly been taken for situations of war or crisis within which members of the armed forces assemble as extraordinary community to hear God's Word and use the sacraments. The regulation for this exception thus does not create a new rule for those situations in which one cannot speak of war or crisis. It wants to translate the basic criteria for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in general as well as is possible to this extraordinary situation.

Decision 4: to declare that the afore-mentioned decision does not contradict decisions of previous general synods as referred to by objectors.

Grounds:

1. GS Leeuwarden 1920 (art. 170), GS Utrecht 1923 (art. 163), and GS Kampen 1951 (art. 141) all refer to the Lord's Supper celebrated under normal circumstances and have been maintained with the decision of GS Leusden 1999, which only refers to the extraordinary circumstance of a situation of war or crisis
2. GS Groningen 1946 (art. 224B) indeed states that it does not advocate the institution of 'emergency' or 'field' congregations, but when it comes to the incidental celebration of the Lord's Supper in a situation of war or crisis no institution of a 'field' or 'emergency' congregation as referred to by GS Groningen 1946 is in view.

Decision 5: to change the decision of GS Leusden 1999, Acts art. 70 decision 3 as follows: "to mandate deputies to guide and advise a serving military chaplain with respect to exceptional situations of crisis and war so that he, as the person bearing final responsibility in this matter, is able to celebrate and administer the Lord's Supper when this is desired and the opportunity arises, as long as:

1. in the gathering the character of the christian congregation is honoured, namely, that it is a communion on the basis of God's Word which gives form to mutual supervision and discipline;
2. he only invites those of whom he is convinced
 - that they are admitted to the Lord's Supper in the Christian congregation to which they belong
 - that they agree with us in the 'foundational matters' of the Christian religion;
 - that they are blameless in their walk of life;
 - that they with a view to participation in the Lord's Supper are prepared to submit themselves to each other's supervision and discipline."

Grounds:

1. Christ has commanded that the Lord's Supper be celebrated when He said: "Do this in remembrance of Me."
2. It should be taken into account that in the extreme circumstances of war or crisis there would be a special need for the powerful sealing of God's grace.
3. Participation in the institute of military chaplains implies that a military chaplain of the GKV also has a calling with respect to those who are not member of a GKV.

4. The aforementioned decision wrongly limited the decision with respect to the administration of the Lord's Supper to an army chaplain while a military chaplain was intended.
5. It was a mistake to introduce into the discussion at GS Leusden the concept emergency congregation and subsequently name the concept 'emergency congregation' in ground 2, Acts art. 70 decision 3, a concept that was not further defined and that gives rise to confusion in view of the decision of GS Groningen 1946, Acts art. 224b on this matter.
6. It was in error that ground 3 of the afore-mentioned decision lacked the element of mutual supervision and discipline.
7. In a striking way this situation is comparable to that of Christians for whom GS Leeuwarden 1920, Acts art. 170, drew up its stipulations, namely that "there is for them no opportunity to use the Lord's Supper in the church of which they are member." Hence that stipulation, suited to this concrete situation, is also applicable here.
8. Placing the matter of mutual supervision and discipline in the whole of the community that celebrates the Lord's Supper prevents the administration of the Lord's Supper from being only the responsibility of the preacher or dependent on how well the preacher knows his men. With respect to the celebration of the Lord's Supper and admission thereto the preacher does have the last word.
9. In this way the holiness of the Lord's Table is sufficiently guarded.

Decision 6: To declare that

- the procedure, as described in GS Leusden 1999, Acts art. 70 decision 4, for this situation does not injure the holiness of the celebration of the Lord's Supper;
- based on the now revised decision it is not necessary for deputies to draw up a further instruction.

Ground:

This revised decision creates a sufficiently clear framework for military chaplains, under the guidance and advice of deputies, to act as they see fit and afterwards give account to deputies in view of the fact that he is accountable to them.

Adopted with 28 votes in favour, 2 against and 4 abstentions.

Appendix 6b: Letter to Deputies of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

c/ AMC Bruning, Corresponding Clerk
20 Wallangara Drive
Bedfordale, WA 6112

To the Deputies of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands
Secretariaat BBK
Postbus 499
8000 AL Zwolle
bbk@gbouw.nl

14 September 2004

Esteemed Brothers Deputies,

General Synod Leusden 1999 decided to allow military chaplains to conduct the celebration of the Lord's Supper in exceptional circumstances such as in crisis and war areas and under certain conditions.

We, as deputies for sister churches, indicated in a letter to you, the Dutch deputies, our concerns with this decision. Since then, Synod Zuidhorn 2002 has revised the Leusden decision somewhat. Our abiding concerns can be listed in three points:

First of all, we continue to be mystified as to the need of this exceptional ruling. Why make '*exceptions*' to the commonly agreed regulations of our Church Order, and apply them in '*exceptional circumstances*' within the military environment? Could you please explain the need for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated in these 'crises' and 'war zones'? Could you give some details of when and where this is actually taking place? Can such soldiers not wait till they return home or return on furlough to celebrate the Lord's Supper? It could be that their home congregations could arrange such celebrations to coincide with such dates. Why the need for such special celebrations away from the congregation? In prisons and in hospitals, where persons could be detained for extensive periods of time, it has been customary to preach the gospel, but not to celebrate the Lord's Supper. As people profess the reformed faith, arrangements are made, if at all practical, for them to use the sacraments as administered in a church service according to our agreed Church Order. Even on the mission field a missionary accents the preaching. If people profess the reformed faith and are godly, then a celebration of the Lord's Supper is arranged with them, but with them only. Even then, in situations where there is (yet) no missionary, there could be quite some time between celebrations, depending on the availability of a minister. In the early days of our churches here in Australia, we also at times experienced a long delay between celebrations when there was no minister available. In fact, we also did make an exceptional circumstance, but we did not make "rulings" to do so. So could we

ask and challenge you to give information about the special need for this ruling?

In the second place, the churches have made agreements in Articles 60 and 61 of your Church Order (Arts 51/56/57 of ours) regarding administration, frequency and admission to Lord's Supper. This regulation serves the churches at home and also serves as a norm on the mission field (where only an ordained missionary is present to supervise the table) as well. Only those who have professed the reformed faith and are godly in conduct are invited to the Lord's table. To set such a rule aside in one situation makes this rule of relative value. If the revealed word of God (as 'caught' in Art 60) can be placed aside in one circumstance (military), it can also be placed aside in other circumstances (eg. prison, hospital or even a congregation member in crisis of depression, etc). As it is, we believe that the rule in Art 60 upholds the sacred deposit, the pattern of sound teachings (2 Tim.1:13) as entrusted to us in Scripture and faithfully confessed over the centuries by the church of Jesus Christ. If we make exceptions we are in danger of going in the direction of interdenominational celebrations of the Lord's Supper.

Thirdly, it is true that the Lord wants His people at His table (see Lord's Day 28). But let us not elevate the sacraments as if they are so necessary that they must be imported to the barracks. Let us keep things in proportion. The primary means of grace is the preaching of the gospel (Rom 10:14ff; Lord's Day 25) and not the sacraments. We do not understand why military personnel would have such need of the sacrament of Lord's Supper, while the chronically ill or imprisoned do not have such need (and therefore opportunity).

Putting it all together, we conclude that perhaps you should have declined participation with the CIO-M as long as the CIO-M required of your chaplains to administer the sacrament contrary to what you have agreed with common consent in the Church Order.

We pray that this contribution of ours may help you as deputies, together with your bond of churches, to see the danger of the direction that you are going.

With Christian greetings,

On behalf of the FRCA Deputies for Sister Churches

Rev W Huizinga, Convener
AMC Bruning, Secretary

Appendix 6c: Response from Deputies of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
Deputies for Spiritual Care of Military Personnel
c/- Rev GF de Kimpe,
Gramsbergerweg 63,
7772CV Hardenberg, the Netherlands

Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
for Relations with Sister Churches
c/- AMC Bruning, Corresponding Clerk
20 Wallangarra Drive
Bedfordale WA 6112, Australia

Re: Your letter of 14 September 2004

Amersfoort, 12 November 2004

Esteemed brothers, Deputies.

As Deputies for the Spiritual Care of Military Personnel (*Geestelijke Verzorging Militairen – GVM*), we have taken note of your letter, in which you express your concern about the decision of General Synod Zuidhorn in relation to the celebration of the Holy Supper by military personnel in war or crisis zones.

You ask a number of questions around the theme: is it necessary for our military chaplains (Dutch: *legerpredikanten – tr*) to celebrate the Holy Supper? Most pressing is the question: is it good to take decisions in this matter that conflict with the Church Order as it is currently in force?

As Deputies, we appear to note a difference of view between yourselves and us in relation to the sacraments and the Church Order. Only, we do not consider ourselves, as Deputies GVM, to be called upon to exchange thoughts with you about that. We see this more as the task of our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad.

To begin with, a short reaction to what you wrote:

“Why make ‘exceptions’ to the commonly agreed regulations of our Church Order, and apply them in ‘exceptional circumstances’ within the military environment? Could you please explain the need for the Lord’s Supper to be celebrated in these ‘crises’ and ‘war zones’? Could you give some details of when and where this is actually taking place? Can such soldiers not wait till they return home or return on furlough to celebrate the Lord’s Supper? It could be that their home congregations could arrange such celebrations to coincide with such dates. Why the need for such special celebrations away from the congregation? In prisons and in hospitals, where persons could be detained for

extensive periods of time, it has been customary to preach the gospel, but not to celebrate the Lord's Supper."

Regularly, our military personnel are deployed for periods of six months to war zones like Iraq. "A quick trip home" to join in there with the celebration of the Holy Supper is clearly not possible. In such places they are completely separated from normal church life. In addition, there is the constant threat of death: military personnel are often killed; and for Dutch servicemen also, there is no assurance that they will return home safely. In such situations, the military chaplain attempts to support them; he will encourage Christian servicemen especially with the Word. In such circumstances, believing service personnel often strongly miss the comfort and strengthening that the celebration of the Holy Supper can give: especially there, where your own death can be so close, it is good to seek comfort in the death of your Saviour for the salvation of His own. That is how sincere Christian servicemen experience that, also within our own Deputyship. Within the Reformed Churches we have searched for ways to give this spiritual support to our brothers – and possibly also sisters – who serve in the military forces. In doing so, we have taken especial care to ensure that only sincere Christian service personnel take part in the celebrations.

As regards the examples of prisons and hospitals, it should be known that the Reformed Churches actually have created possibilities to celebrate the Holy Supper in hospitals: not separately from the local congregations, but still separately from its normal worship services. There is a parallel here, because the military chaplain is not separate, but has been sent into the military *for and on behalf of the churches*. He represents more than just himself.

We would also like to respond to another part of your letter:

You conclude that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) perhaps should have declined to participate in the CIO-M, as long as the CIO-M requires military chaplains to administer the sacraments, in conflict with the agreed rules of the Church Order.

In reply to this, we ask your attention for the following:

- A. The General Synod of Berkel en Rodenrijs (1996) decided to request membership of the CIO-M, within the framework of their mandate to the Deputies:
 - a. To monitor as closely as possible the development of spiritual care within the military forces, to evaluate this, and where possible to respond to it.
 - b. To maintain contact with the Chief Military Chaplain, in order to exert a positive influence, wherever possible.

As ground for this was given:

- 3. Participation in the CIO renders membership of the CIO-M desirable.

In the period that the Reformed Churches were members of the CIO-M, the churches have collaborated positively for the improvement of the quality of Protestant Spiritual Care within the armed forces. Part of this decision was that the churches would appoint as military chaplains only such ministers as were fully available (Dutch: volledig inzetbaar – tr).

- B. “Fully available” means, that in relevant situations these ministers may also administer the sacraments. In the first place, this is intended for Christian service personnel who for extended periods are unable to take part in church life within their home congregation. Long-term deployments abroad, or participation in peace-keeping missions.
- C. At that time, the Reformed churches recognized that this could only be implemented for our ministers, if a special decision was taken to that effect. It had to be recognized that the current Church Order did not provide for such a special situation.
- D. The conclusion must be, then, that the Reformed churches have not set aside or weakened the current church-orderly stipulations, but have made a specific decision to deal with a specific situation.

We hope that with this answer we have been able to take away some of your concerns. Please be assured that we, in our considerations and proposals to Synod, comprehensively confront ourselves with the Word of God, the Confessions which are based on it, and the agreements which we as churches have laid down in the Church Order. Our expectation is that the Lord God will bless the decisions that have been taken, so that His children who serve in the armed forces may receive support and strengthening of their faith.

With Christian greetings,
For the Deputies,
GF de Kimpe, chairman.

Appendix 6d: Decision of GS Amersfoort

Revisieverzoeken avondmaalsviering door militairen in oorlogs- of crisisgebied.

Voorstel : commissie Overijssel

Materiaal :

1. Acta GS Zuidhorn, art 101, besluiten 1 - 5, inzake avondmaalsbediening door de krijgsmachtpredikant;
2. brief van br. C. Boekholt en anderen te Hoogeveen d.d. 10 februari 2005, waarin verzocht wordt de besluiten 1, 3, 4, 5, genoemd in Materiaal 1, weg te nemen uit het midden van de kerken. In de brief worden vragen gesteld bij de besluiten, wordt gesteld dat deze besluiten een eerste stap zijn op weg naar een open avondmaalstafel en wordt

aangegeven dat het avondmaal alleen onder kerkelijk toezicht in een wettige gemeente gevierd kan worden (art. 60 en 61 KO);

3. rapport van de Free Reformed Churches of Australia aan de synode van Amersfoort 2005 m.b.t de Nederlandse deputatenrapporten en de synodebeslissingen d.d. 17 februari 2005. In dit rapport wordt gesteld dat het besluit genoemd in materiaal 1 meer is ingegeven door subjectieve gevoelens dan door wat staat in art. 60 KO. Gevraagd wordt waarom militair personeel behoefte heeft aan dit sacrament en chronisch zieken of gevangenen van de viering worden uitgesloten;
4. brief van ds. E. Heres te Dalfsen dd. 17 februari 2005, waarin hij verzoekt de besluiten, genoemd in Materiaal 1, uit het midden van de kerken weg te nemen. Zijn bezwaren zijn:
 - a. de groep militairen die samenkomt, is niet de christelijke gemeente;
 - b. de voorwaarde dat genodigden in de eigen kerk tot het avondmaal zijn toegelaten heeft maar geringe betekenis, omdat in veel kerken de tucht niet meer in ere is;
 - c. gevraagd wordt wat de grondstukken van de christelijke leer zijn, zoals genoemd in besluit 5, punt 2, en hoe in een oorlogs- of crisissituatie uitgemaakt kan worden wie overeenstemt in deze grondstukken;
 - d. het is een niet waar te maken opdracht voor de krijgsmachtpredikant om vast te stellen dat de genodigde militairen onberispelijk van levenswandel zijn;
 - e. gevraagd wordt wat concreet verwacht mag worden van de bereidheid zich te onderwerpen aan elkaars opzicht en tucht als het gaat om mensen van verschillende kerkgenootschappen;
 - f. bij de adviseurs van de synode van Leeuwarden¹⁹²⁰ leefde kennelijk de leer van de pluriformiteit van de kerk, dit is een opvatting die niet overeenkomt met art. 29 NGB;
 - g. het besluit van de synode van Leeuwarden¹⁹²⁰ kan het besluit, genoemd in Materiaal 1, niet legitimeren en de regeling die deze synode trof kan niet van toepassing zijn voor de situatie waarvoor onze krijgsmachtpredikanten kunnen worden geplaatst.

Besluit:

aan de verzoeken om de besluiten uit het midden van de kerken weg te nemen niet te voldoen.

Gronden:

- 1.a. in de revisieverzoeken worden veelal dezelfde argumenten aangevoerd die de Generale Synode van Zuidhorn al gewogen heeft bij de verzoeken om revisie van het besluit van de Generale Synode van Leusden, Acta art. 70 besluit 3 m.b.t de avondmaalsviering in crisis- en oorlogsgebieden. De Generale Synode van Zuidhorn sprak uit dat genoemd besluit van de Generale Synode van Leusden niet in strijd is met de Schrift, de belijdenis en de kerkorde (Acta art 101 besluit 1);
- 1.b. in de brieven worden wel allerlei vragen gesteld bij de besluiten en de regeling, maar het stellen van vragen is niet het aantonen dat de besluiten ten onrechte genomen zijn;
2. de Generale Synode van Berkel en Rodenrijs 1996 besloot aan het verzoek om revisie van het besluit van de Generale Synode van Leeuwarden 1920, Acta art. 25, niet te voldoen. Als argument voor dit verzoek werd o.a. aangevoerd dat dit besluit gebaseerd zou zijn op de pluriformiteitsgedachte. De synode van Berkel en Rodenrijs wees het verzoek af met onder andere als grond: het besluit van de Generale Synode van Leeuwarden 1920 is wel tot stand gekomen onder invloed van een advies van een commissie onder leiding van dr. H.H. Kuyper, maar dit betekent nog niet dat de pluriformiteitsgedachte in het besluit is terug te vinden (Generale Synode Berkel en Rodenrijs, Acta art. 41 besluit 1 grond 1);
3. de Generale Synode van Zuidhorn legitimeerde haar besluit niet alleen met de uitspraak van de Generale Synode van Leeuwarden 1920, en sprak niet uit dat de regeling van deze synode van toepassing is voor de situatie waarin de krijgsmachtspredikant kan worden geplaatst, maar zij sprak uit dat op een markant punt deze situatie overeenkomt met die van de christenen voor wie deze synode haar bepalingen opstelde namelijk, dat “er voor hen geen gelegenheid bestaat om in de kerk, waarvan ze zelf lid zijn, het avondmaal te gebruiken”, en dat daarom de regeling van Leeuwarden, aangepast aan deze concrete situatie, van toepassing kan zijn (Acta art. 101 besluit 5 grond 7).

Decision regarding the administration of the Sacraments for military personnel in remote areas.

Decision 3-A:

To amend the decision of synod Zuidhorn 2002-2003 (Acts, art. 101, decision 5) and to declare that ministers of the armed forces are authorized to administer the sacraments

- In worship services, in exceptional circumstances where military personnel are isolated for lengthy periods from regular church life
- When the desire is there, and opportunity exists

- Under the oversight and guidance of the *Deputies for the Spiritual Care of Military Personnel*
- And where the final responsibility rests with the relevant minister.

The following conditions must be satisfied:

1. They may administer and celebrate the Holy Supper, provided:
 - a. That in the worship service the special character of the Christian congregation is honoured, i.e. that this communion is based on the Word of God and that it upholds a form of mutual oversight and discipline.
 - b. That he only invites those to participate of whom he is satisfied that:
 - i. they have been admitted to the Holy Supper in the Christian congregation to which they belong
 - ii. they agree with us on the basic doctrines (Dutch: *grondstukken*) of the Christian faith
 - iii. they are blameless in a Christian walk of life.
 - iv. they are willing, in view of their participation in the Holy Supper, to subject themselves to mutual oversight and discipline.
 - c. The celebration of the Holy Supper takes place using the relevant forms adopted for this purpose by the Gereformeerde Kerken
2. They may administer Holy Baptism to military personnel, provided:
 - a. they allow themselves to be instructed in the Christian faith, as summarized in the Apostles' Creed
 - b. they profess the Reformed faith, including its doctrine concerning baptism
 - c. the administration of Holy Baptism takes place using the relevant forms adopted for this purpose by the Gereformeerde Kerken
 - d. the *Deputies for the Spiritual Care of Military Personnel* have given concurring advice
 - e. the military serviceman so baptized is registered as a member of one of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, or one of their sister churches.
3. They may administer Holy Baptism to children born within families of believing military personnel, provided:

- a. The parents requesting Holy Baptism allow themselves to be instructed in the doctrine of Baptism, as set out in the relevant forms adopted by the Gereformeerde Kerken.
 - b. The administration of Holy Baptism takes place using the Form for the Baptism of Infants
 - c. The parents have been admitted to the Holy Supper in the Christian congregation to which they belong
 - d. The child so baptized is entered in the register of that congregation
4. Holy Baptism and Holy Supper may also be administered to civilians who are part of the Dutch military forces, and who live in the same isolated circumstances as the military personnel referred to above, provided they satisfy the conditions outlined in Points 1, 2 and 3, above.

Grounds:

1. The Deputies have demonstrated that the terms “war zones” and “areas of crisis” in the decisions of the General Synod of Zuidhorn do not cover all situations to which military personnel are sent out.
2. The General Synod of Zuidhorn judged that the situation of military personnel in war zones and areas of crisis is in significant respects similar to that of Christians for which the Synod of Leeuwarden 1920 (Acts, art. 25) made stipulations, i.e. *“There is no opportunity for them to celebrate the Lord’s Supper in the congregation to which they belong.”* This also applies to military personnel who find themselves in an ecclesiastically isolated position. Accordingly, the stipulations of the Synod Leeuwarden may also be applicable to the situations of military personnel.
3. For military personnel, a lengthy period of service outside the Netherlands, and contact with a minister of the armed forces may lead to a desire to be baptized.
4. It is evidence of proper procedural care that the advice of Deputies is obtained before someone is ingrafted into the Christian church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism
5. The Synod of Zuidhorn judged that the right to participate in the Holy Supper is concurrent with the right to the use of the other sacrament, Holy Baptism. (See Art 50 and 60 of the Church Order, and Acts of Zuidhorn, Art 36, decision 1, ground 3)

Decision 3-B:

To declare that the provisions outlined above – decision 3-A – apply exclusively to ministers of the armed forces, and to the military and civilian personnel entrusted to their spiritual care.

Ground:

It is undesirable that Decision 3-A begins to function as a point of departure for the administration of the sacraments in other situations than those of military personnel and those who give them spiritual care. In other situations, a line of argument must be found which suits their specific circumstances.

At the conclusion of the discussion of the report of the Deputies for the Spiritual Care of Military Personnel, the president of the Synod addresses the meeting as follows:

We have just made a decision regarding the administration of sacraments by our ministers in the armed forces in exceptional situations, in which military personnel are isolated for lengthy periods from regular church life. When you take into account the correspondence received, you don't have to be an arch-pessimist to presume that not everyone in the churches will applaud this decision.

Because the decision of Synod Zuidhorn concerning this matter has evoked criticism from our sister churches abroad, and because it became one of the reasons why brothers and sisters have left our churches in recent years, I would like, as president, to say something at this point. It is not my intention to defend the decision. The decision will speak for itself, and the churches will have to judge it on its merits.

There is one important matter at stake here: the administration and celebration of the sacraments. Then, the greatest of care is required. But we are dealing with – and I have the need to point this out – exceptional circumstances. We have not made a new rule. We have not tried to hollow out the existing rule; rather, we wish to confirm it in an exceptional circumstance.

In exceptional circumstances, different factors must be weighed. These factors should not cause us to panic, as long as in the original rule is confirmed in the exception in question. In his advice, Prof Dr B Kamphuis has pointed out how, in his view, confessional points of departure can be recognized in this decision. I am happy to agree with that. In order to demonstrate that it was not the intention of Synod to create room for an open or unecclesiastical celebration of the Holy Supper, but to give the greatest possible effect to our existing rule.

1. It is of first importance that our Synod takes **the forms for Baptism and Holy Supper**, as adopted in our churches, as points of departure. In these forms, the force of Scripture itself is applied to explain what Baptism and Holy Supper are really about. In these forms, it is clearly expressed how Christ Himself has instituted the sacraments, how they speak of Him and His benefits, and how they seal His promises. These

forms also express, with the greatest seriousness, what is meant with the holiness of the sacraments, and the responsibility everyone has in honouring them. A heavier judgement is proclaimed to everyone who uses the Holy Supper without faith.

2. According to the doctrine of Scripture, the sacrament is a sign and seal of the promise of the Gospel. This **connection between Word and Sacrament** is reinforced in this decision, in that the sacrament is to be administered in a proper worship service, which, within the existing situation, honours to the greatest possible extent the character of the Christian congregation, i.e that it is a community based on the Word of God. The prescribed forms, also, clearly express that the sacraments are signs and seals of the Gospel. Baptism and Holy Supper belong with the Gospel! In this way, the unity of Word and sacrament is safeguarded.
3. In this decision, care is taken for **the holiness of the sacrament** by means of criteria relating to doctrine (agreement with the chief points of the Christian faith, as summarized in the Apostles' Creed) and life (a blameless walk of life), which apply to the adult to be baptized, the parents requesting baptism for their child, and the participant in the Holy Supper. Responsibility for a holy use of the Lord's Supper rests with the participants, but not only with them! Also with the minister, and with other participants. In this way, and within the limitations of the situation, justice is done to the exercise of self-discipline, mutual discipline, and ecclesiastical discipline. In the event of baptism, in addition to the judgement of the minister, the concurring advice of the Deputies and/or the decision of the home congregation to register the baptism act as further safeguards.
4. The **confessional character** of the administration of the sacraments is evident in that the requirements in force since 1920 are maintained: communicant membership in a Christian congregation, and agreement with the basic doctrines of the Christian church, as summarized in the Apostles' Creed. The forms to be used themselves explicitly point to a confession of Christ. This confession may not be hindered by an unchristian walk of life: hence the requirement of a blameless life, and the exercise of mutual discipline.
5. The **ecclesiastical character** of the sacraments is also honoured, to the extent that this is possible in the given situations. This is necessary, for Christ gave His sacraments to His **church**. Justice to this principle is done by ensuring that the sacraments are administered, not by a minister appointed by the military forces, but by a minister appointed by the churches. In the exercise of his task, he is supported and overseen by the churches, and his consistory supervises his doctrine and life. In this respect, his situation is similar to that of a missionary, and he has a similar mandate to preach the Word and administer the sacraments.

In such situations, regular church life does not exist. And still, in those situations the administration of the sacraments is explicitly connected, not to an informal gathering, but to a formally constituted worship service, in which, within the existing limitations of the situation, the special character of the Christian congregation is honoured, i.e. that it is a communion based on the Word of God, which exercises mutual oversight and discipline.

The ecclesiastical character of this communion at the Lord's table is further reinforced by the criterion that the membership status of the participants in their own home congregation must be observed.

6. The element of **shared communion** at the Lord's table finds expression in the willingness of participants to submit to mutual oversight and discipline.

Even those who are unable to agree with the decision taken, who would have given different weight in their consideration, would do well to realize that Synod, in this exceptional case, has striven to do justice to confessional points of departure concerning the sacraments, in line with synodical stipulations that have already been in force for 85 years (Synod Leeuwarden, 1920).

Those who do not agree with this decision, might ask themselves what other ways there would be for military personnel to observe Christ's command to proclaim His death, or what kind of celebration of Baptism and Holy Supper might even be possible, in extreme situations and during lengthy periods of isolation.

Or is it so that the administration of the sacraments is completely bound up with the normal conditions of our ordered church life, and that as a serviceman you are by definition withheld from the sacraments if you are isolated for a long time from normal church life? For us here in the Netherlands this might be a theoretical question; but for military personnel in situations of deadly danger or lengthy isolation, this is a matter of direct spiritual importance. May no-one ever take **us** to task that we did not have sufficient eye or empathy for the significance of Christ's own institution of signs and seals of the Gospel, for brothers and sisters in such situations.

2.1 NGK and CGK

Report Contact GKV with the CGK

Synod Rockingham 2003 decided:

1. To encourage our sister-churches in their pursuit of unity with the CGK on the proven basis of God's Word as confessed in the

Three Forms of Unity and as practiced by the Church Order of Dort.

2. To monitor developments and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. These churches have the same basis. The Union of 1892 should have seen both within one federation. Though this did not occur then, the mandate of our Lord and His prayer to be one obliges us to seek this unity.
2. Since these developments are ongoing, it is good to keep the churches posted.

General Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 decided (in summary):

1. to follow the road of church union in thankfulness for the growing closeness to the CGK
2. to agree with the evaluation of deputies that there are no differences with regard to content between the texts of the confessions as used in the CGK and in the GKV
3. not to comply with the requests in relation to dr B Loonstra because the CGK have showed to subscribe fully to the confession regarding the Holy Scriptures (BC, art 2-7) in officially dealing with his publication, which resulted in a further explanation (in which he publicly distanced himself from controversial passages, ND, 22/08/2005) in relation to the clarity of Scripture, and the historicity of the Lord's Ascension and Pentecost

(Note: In the meantime dr Loonstra has written a book about homosexuality from which he - after different church appeals - has publicly distanced himself ordering the printer to stop distribution. Further he has withdrawn himself as curator of the Theological University of Apeldoorn, see RD, 21/10/2005)

Report Contact GKV with the NGK

Synod Rockingham 2003 decided:

1. To encourage the GKV in their contacts with the NGK and to encourage the GKV to continue to insist on the need within the NGK for binding to God's Word as confessed in The Three Forms of Unity, and also to insist on the proper place of the Church order to counteract independentism.
2. To encourage the GKV to assess carefully the events of the split in the 1960s.

3. To keep in close contact with the Dutch Deputies and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. The binding to the Scriptures and confessions as well as the proper place of the Church Order for the bond of churches are the crucial points of division. We should encourage our Sister Churches in these matters.
2. The subject of the split will be investigated. It should be done carefully.

General Synod Zuidhorn 2002/3 decided, in summary (24/01/2003; art 129):

1. not to comply with the request of the Provincial Synod Holland-North 2002 to appoint deputies to advise the next General Synod whether and how the decisions of General Synod Amersfoort-West 1967 and Hoogeveen 1969/70 should be reconsidered. This is in connection with br HG van der Weijden's request, suggesting that the decision not to welcome Rev BJF Schoep as member of the synod was insufficiently grounded because of its misinterpretation of "The Open Brief"

Ground:

The request has not given evidence of compelling reasons to reconsider the decisions of the above-mentioned synods.

2. to forward Decision 1 to the NGK Committee for Contact, and informing them that the moderamen of Synod is very willing to explain this decision

Ground:

The existence of the NGK is closely connected to the condemnation of "The Open Brief" by Amersfoort-West 1967. Because of the relation with the NGK it's important to explain the decision directly to them.

This is what the FRCA deputies Sister Church Relations told General Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 in their Address:

"What really matters is our answer ("ans-word") to *the* Word, in particular where the Bible doesn't give the answer directly. What matters is the Scriptural application of Scripture, including what it teaches us about the position and duty of men and women in the church. With their dismaying decision to open the special office of supervision and discipline for women, the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* (NGK) have firmly locked the door of dialogue ("de samensprekingsdeur"). In this situation it really

comes down to an application of what the universally applicable Scriptures teach us about the unique office of women. And that is something else than having women in the special offices. May the stranded NGK-ship convince you all the more of the need today for a Reformed hermeneutics-lighthouse, a lighthouse which also sends out the light of Assen-26!"

General Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 decided (in summary):

1. to note with appreciation that the meeting between deputies of both GKV and NGK has led to a useful discussion, especially about God's election.
2. to note with appreciation the declaration of the National Assembly of the NGK that giving a natural place for reflection and discussion on issues of doctrine and life at ecclesiastical assemblies is desirable, even though it may not yet be clear how effect can be given to doctrinal binding.
3. to note with disappointment the declaration of the National Assembly of the NGK stating that it is Biblically justified to open the special offices of elder and minister to the sisters of the congregation also; this declaration forms a serious barrier for mutual contact
4. to instruct deputies to take the declaration referred to in Point 3 into consideration in its discussion with the NGK about the binding to Scripture and confession

Ground for decision 4:

The questions which successive General Synods of the GKV have sent explicitly via their deputies to the NGK in relation to this binding have not been sufficiently answered till now, and they should play a key role in further discussions before restoration of church unity can be taken place.

Appendix A

General Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 decided on the following Regulations for local contact and cooperation with the CGK (in summary):

1. Starting point is the "federative growth model" which was adopted by GS Zuidhorn 2002/3.
2. This model includes the following aspects:
 - a. in principle, it is open to all local churches to arrange pulpit exchange with the local CGK, and to accept each others' members and discipline

- b. the aim of joint activities is to grow closer to each other on the basis of spiritual unity
3. Where the consistory is of the opinion that the time for pulpit exchange, joint church services or Lord's Supper celebrations is ripe, it should ask for the assent of the congregation and the approval of classis.
4. Where the consistory wishes to extend cooperation beyond the "growth model", it should first request the advice of the General Synod's Deputies for Church Unity, and receive the assent of the congregation and the approval of classis.
5. In all the situations local cooperation will be limited and incomplete, should not lead to forming of one congregation, and will only have local validity.
6. Far-reaching forms of local church cooperation, while national unity is still lacking, should remain an extra stimulus to desire full spiritual national unity of both bonds of churches.

General Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 decided on the following Regulation for local contact and cooperation with bonds of churches other than the CGK, where there is no national agreement (in summary):

1. The consistory sees to it that the contacts and activities take place on the basis of Holy Scripture and bound to the Reformed confessions in order that the truth doesn't suffer in the striving for unity.
2. Where the consistory is of the opinion that church cooperation is possible in the local situation to the point of accepting each others' members at the Lord's Supper, pulpit exchange and joint church services, it should request written advice from the General Synod's Deputies for Church Unity, inform the congregation and the classis of this advice, and ask for the assent of the congregation and the approval of classis.
3. In making a request as outlined in Point 2, the consistory shall declare and show that there is actual unity in the submission to God's Word and the Confessions of the churches, and that the objections to further unity which exist at a national level do not apply in the local situation.
4. see further point 5 and 6 of the Regulations for relations with CGK.

Recommendations:

Re CGK

1. To encourage our sister-churches in their pursuit of unity with the CGK to do so on the proven basis of God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and as practiced by the Church Order of Dort.
2. To monitor further developments and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. These churches have the same basis. The Union of 1892 should have seen both within one federation. Though this did not occur then, the mandate of our Lord and His prayer to be one obliges us to seek this unity.
2. Since these developments are ongoing, it is good to keep the churches posted.

Re NGK

1. To encourage the GKV in their contacts with the NGK to continue to insist on the need within the NGK for binding to God's Word as confessed in The Three Forms of Unity, and also to insist on the proper place of the Church Order to counteract independentism.
2. To express thanks that the GKV carefully assessed the request to reconsider the decisions of GS Amersfoort-West (1967) and Hoogeveen (1969/70)
3. To encourage the GKV to pursue the recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity.
4. To keep in close contact with the Dutch Deputies and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. The binding to the Scriptures and confessions as well as the proper place of the Church Order for the bond of churches are the crucial points of division. We should encourage our Sister Churches in these matters.
2. The subject of the split in the 1960s has been carefully investigated. It was decided that it's not necessary to change the decisions of previous General Synods.
3. The declaration of the NGK to justify women in the offices of minister and elder indeed sets a barrier to unity. Our sisters need to address this with the NGK.

2.2 The Newly Liberated Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKVc)

During the course of the inter-synodical term we received official correspondence from the continuing Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (GKVc). This correspondence included the following documents:

1. An official letter requesting to continue sister relations.
2. Call to Reformation

3. Deed of Liberation or Return

4. Let Us Repent.

All these documents have been uploaded on to the FRCA website/deputies. The last three documents were already available and tabled at our last Synod of 2003. Thus they are not new. The official letter is new and it is attached. It states that they in 2003 have officially separated from the GKV, our sister churches, since they cannot recognise them any longer as true churches. Several charges are pressed to confirm that conclusion. At the end of the letter they state that since they claim to be the continuing GKV (GKVc), they view us as sister churches and request to continue sister relations with us.

It is clear that we as deputies can not make a decision on this official request. It in actual fact involved condemning our sister churches as no longer true and faithful churches, approving their conclusions about the general synods of the GKV, and approving their claim to be the continuing GKV, as well as entering sister relations with the GKVc. These decisions should be made by our synod, not by deputies.

Yet we as deputies have a mandate to continue to discuss the developments within the GKV. Thus we saw our responsibility to help the upcoming synod in its work.

Since we had planned to visit the 2005 GS Amersfoort, your deputies requested the two delegates to arrange a meeting with delegates from the GKVc during the same visit. This was done.

At the same time we informed our sister churches about this correspondence, so that they would be officially informed. They thanked us for this and also sent their booklet in which they respond to the GKVc.

Upon return home the two delegates prepared a report on their visit with the GKVc. Since they followed the seven points of the official letter, it seemed best to draft a response at the same time, a response which our 2006 Synod could use in their discussions and deliberations about this request.

Below is the report of the meeting with the GKVc ⁷. After that a more comprehensive report, including questions and answers, and analyses of the latter are given. At the end an overall conclusion is offered, along with recommendations.

⁷ A set of minutes of the meeting was received much later on from the deputies of the GKVc as well. These minutes are not translated, have not passed our meeting, and have not been checked for accuracy. Two of our deputies wanted them included in this report and thus we also append them to this report just after the summary of concerns of the GKVc.

It might be worth mentioning that the GS Amersfoort, after its decision re the fourth commandment, decided to forward this decision to the GKVc along with a covering letter. In that letter they invite and urge the GKVc to hold discussions together. Since this matter of the fourth commandment was probably the main issue that caused the separation, GS Amersfoort decided to use the decision on this matter to be the catalyst for common discussions. The GKVc were to hold its synod in Nov/05, D.V. Thus at this time of writing our report we are not able as yet to relay their response.

Much discussion took place among your deputies on this matter. We did not all agree on all things. As a result there was some amalgamation of views, especially in the recommendations and grounds. We tried to use the route of consensus. Even after that was done, two deputies still could not accept the analyses of the delegates as well as the second recommendation⁸. We did not want to send two reports to you. We have tried to avoid majority and minority reports as much as possible, since that route did not serve synods well in the past. Instead, we choose for this one report where consensus was achieved as much as possible.

⁸ We footnote the Alternate Recommendation 2 which the two deputies favoured:

2. To maintain official contact with the GKVc and request deputies to investigate whether or not the decision to “liberate” was lawful.

Grounds:

- a. Although we understand that the GKVc have concerns with decisions and directions of the GKV, the information provided to us by the GKVc does not adequately explain why the liberation had to occur at this time (ie. 2003) and in the manner that it did.
- b. Even though the liberation took place in 2003, subsequent events including that of Synod Amersfoort 2005 need to be discussed with the GKVc to ascertain whether or not their liberation is lawful.
- c. It is a serious matter to allow deformation to go unchallenged, but it is also a serious matter to separate when it is not warranted. The injunctions to remain one in the Lord (e.g.s. John 17 and Eph 4) sometimes even when serious problems arose, as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible (cf Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The letters of Paul and the other apostles constantly remind us of this.
- d. There is also the need for diligence in our sister relations with the GKV. Deputies in their submissions to the GS of Zuidhorn and Amersfoort have specified their concerns as they related to the reports about the fourth commandment, reports about marriage and divorce, the decision re the blessing as given by a non-elder, the liturgical changes and proposals about the same, including the proliferation of new hymns, as well as the decisions re the chaplaincy and celebration of the Lord’s Supper in war zones. We thus have registered our concerns as well. Such diligence will need to continue, in accordance with the rules for sister relations.
- e. Deputies have shown that diligence in discussing developments and trends in the GKV churches has led to some good results. This should be continued. For there continue to be some trends within our Dutch sister churches that do cause concern.

MEETING WITH DEPUTIES OF THE NEWLY LIBERATED CHURCHES (GKVC)

On Wednesday evening, 1 June, 2005, at the home of br H Bos in Ede, your delegates met with four deputies of the newly liberated churches (GKVC). They were br HC de Marie, br J (Hans) VanderJagt, br H Bos, and br H Griffioen

Br de Marie opened by reading 1 Tim 6:3-22 after which we sang together Ps 66:3. He welcomed your delegates and expressed the hope that we could have a fruitful evening together.

Br AC Breen explained how we had received their correspondence, their request to continue sister relations with them, and how we had informed our Dutch sister churches (GKV) of this. He also said we have only had one preliminary meeting as deputies about their letter. It means we do not come with judgments of deputies or finalised evaluations. Instead, our deputies asked us to meet with the newly liberated churches. This will be one step in our process of evaluating their official request.

For this evening we took their official letter which came via our deputies to our churches, the letter in which they officially make their request for sister relations on the basis of their statements in the letter. We compared their claim to being the continuation of the true church, along with their serious charges against our Dutch sisters (GKV) in this letter, with the Acts of synods and with the response from our Dutch sister churches. From all this we formulated questions so that we could understand them clearly and also evaluate 1) their claims to continue the GKV, 2) their claim that our sister church is no longer a true church, and 3) their request for sister relations.

We also passed on the letter of the GGRI (our sister in Sumba) addressed to the GKVC ^(letter found at the end of this appendix). The GGRI had hoped delegates from the GKVC would be at the GS Amersfoort and that they could address them there, but this did not eventuate. We were asked to deliver the section of their letter personally. This we did.

At the end of the evening br H Griffioen closed in prayer.

SUMMARY OF THE LETTER OF THE GKVC

So that we do full justice to the brothers of the GKVC we offer below a summary of their letter.

1. The GKVC acknowledge that they too share in the *“guilt in relation to the deformation and desertion of the covenant within the GKV”*.⁹

⁹ DepGKVC (2005) Letter from Deputies of GKV-continuing, 4 February 2005, p. 2.

2. The GKVc state that the desire to come to *“renewed unity with the GKV...seems to be a receding possibility. Nonetheless we as churches and church members ought to continually pray for a return within the GKV”*.¹⁰
3. Regarding the Fourth Commandment, the GKVc believe that the fundamental difference is *“Either the Sunday as a day of rest is **based on the fourth commandment from the Lord** or it is a **good human institution**.”* [emphasis is theirs]¹¹
4. The GKVc contend that *“both synods [Leusden and Zuidhorn] have...allowed for a different explanation of the doctrine of LD 38...have invalidated the fourth commandment...have **allowed** for the fourth commandment to be explained in a different way...decided not to listen to the manifold arguments from Scripture and create room for two contradicting points of view.”*¹²
5. The GKVc concludes *“that the GKV made definite unscriptural decisions as to the issue of Sabbath and the fourth commandments while rejecting the many requests for revision. Their deviations regard the following:*
 - *Scripture: neglecting the unity of Scripture and persistent validity of the Ten Commandments, thereby altering the exegesis of certain texts,*
 - *Confession: altering the explanation of LD 38,*
 - *Church History: altering historical facts and making them a basis for their decision.”*¹³
6. Regarding ecclesiastical unity with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) and the Nederlands Gerformeerde Kerken (NGK), the GKVc contend that the GKV, by expressing thankfulness *“for the growth in mutual approach”* towards the CGK and *“progress made in respect to mutual understanding”* towards the NGK, have *“made serious and unacceptable compromises. This makes them (co-)accountable for the deviation from Scripture and the Confessions within these churches.”*¹⁴
7. The GKVc points to the fact that the GKV and their deputies have not rejected the Emmaus-course and the teachings of drs. A. L. Th. De Bruijne of the Theological University in Kampen regarding

¹⁰ DepGKVc, p. 2.

¹¹ DepGKVc, p. 2.

¹² DepGKVc, p. 4.

¹³ DepGKVc, p. 6.

¹⁴ DepGKVc, p. 8.

the historicity of the days of Creation, understanding Scripture in the context of the time of their origin, altering the function of the commandments of the Lord into guidelines and examples rather than regarding them as literal norms, etc.

8. The GKVc indicate that the GKV synods are proposing songs from the “Liedboek” that are *“unscriptural, and therefore unacceptable as songs that should be pure and pleasant before the face of our holy God”*.¹⁵
9. The GKVc indicate that Deputies’ report regarding the seventh commandment veers away from Scripture and Synod Zuidhorn should have rejected this report.
10. The GKVc contend that the new Marriage Form of the GKV weakens the biblical teaching of marriage.
11. The GKVc state that the GKV, by *“Establishing a sister relation with th PCEA, brings the GKV in conflict with the three marks of the true church, outlined in article 29 of the Belgic Confession.”*¹⁶
12. Regarding the decision of the GKV synods to allow military chaplains to *“administer the Lord’s Supper in exceptional circumstances in areas of war...fits to the idea for a more open Lord’s Supper celebration”* and *“that the Synods decisions are contrary to Scripture (eg. 1 Cor 11:23-29)”*.¹⁷
13. Regarding the decision of Synod Leusden to allow a non-elder to speak the blessing using the words of Scripture along with the raising of hands, the GKVc say the this “decision makes GKV deviate from Scriptures, as preaching ois of unique importance, being the ‘service of reconciliation’ (2 Cor 5:18-20)...It makes Churches also move away from the Confession (BC Art. 30)”.¹⁸
14. The GKVc conclude that they see their *“act of Liberation and repentance as an act of obedience to the Word of God. As this Word forbids us to have communion with sins and heresies and tells us not to follow a crowd to do evil (Ex 23:2, Eph 5:6,7, 2 John 10, Art 7 B.C.).”*¹⁹
15. The GKVc contend that *“The present reality is that the foregoing issues have now been finalised by two successive Synods [Leusden and Zuidhorn]. Further appeal in the church-orderly way is no longer possible...To our great sorrow, this call to*

¹⁵ DepGKVc, p. 12.

¹⁶ DepGKVc, p. 15.

¹⁷ DepGKVc, p. 16.

¹⁸ DepGKVc, p. 17.

¹⁹ Dep GKVc, p. 18.

reformation has suffered a large-scale outright rejection by the [GKv] churches and in the church press...the Gereformeerde Kerken are no longer pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15)...And to our great sorrow we have to draw the conclusion that the Gereformeerde Kerken can no longer be seen to be true church...".²⁰

16. The GKvC declares *"that it is no longer justified for us to continue our membership of a community which, in spite of repeated calls to reformation and repentance, has confirmed its acceptance of deviation from Scripture and the Confessions...as long as you are unwilling to turn back from your way of deformation, we are unable for the LORD's sake, to assemble with you under your pastoral supervision and to accept your discipline as being exercised in the name of the LORD. We reject, in accordance with Article 31 of the Church Order, the unscriptural Synod decisions and liberate ourselves from this corruption of the doctrine. Furthermore, we liberate ourselves from the unscriptural curtailment of the preaching in respect of the divinely commanded Sunday rest, as well as from the adoption of songs that oppose God's covenant Word. This act of liberation and repentance is one of obedience to the Word of God, which commands us not to share in sins and doctrinal errors, and not to follow the majority to do evil: the truth being above all."*²¹
17. The GKvC does indicate that *"we are heartily willing to pursue ecclesiastical unity with all who are willing to live on the basis of Scripture, the Confessions, and the Church Order of Dordrecht."*²²

Appendix - Record of the Meeting of Delegates with the GKvC

Verslag van de vergadering van de Deputaten voor Betrekkingen met Buitenlandse zusterkerken van de Gereformeerde Kerken met de afgevaardigden van de Deputaten van de Free Reformed Church of Australia, gehouden op 01-06-2005 te Ede.

Aanwezig namens de Australische kerken ds. W. Huizinga en br. A. Breen; namens de Gereformeerde kerken: br. H. Bos, br. H. Griffioen, br. Joh. W. van der Jagt en dr. S. de Marie (voorzitter). Br. W.J. Boot was met kennisgeving afwezig.

Na het lezen van Tim. 6: 2b – 21 gaat br. de Marie voor in gebed, we zingen Psalm 66: 3. De Australische afgevaardigden worden welkom geheten. Br. De

²⁰ Deed of Liberation or Return.

²¹ Deed of Liberation or Return.

²² Deed of Liberation or Return.

Marie geeft hen de gelegenheid om vragen te stellen m.b.t. de brief verzonden op 4 Februari j.l., gericht aan de Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Br. Breen neemt het woord. Hij zal fungeren als 'hoofd'-woordvoerder i.v.m. het feit dat hij de Nederlandse taal beter beheerst dan ds. Huizinga. Ds. Huizinga neemt het gesprek digitaal op via een microfoon verbonden aan zijn laptop. Br. Van der Jagt vraagt of dit op een CD-rom gebrand kan worden en of hij een exemplaar kan krijgen.

Br Breen geeft aan dat hij vragen zal stellen m.b.t. de 7 punten die in de brief dd. 4-2-05 genoemd worden op p. 2. Hij zal deze stellen in de informatieve sfeer zodat zij, als deputaten een rapport kunnen schrijven voor hun Synode. De vragen zullen vergelijkenderwijs gesteld worden. Zij zijn, volgens br. Breen, niet blanco naar de vergadering gekomen, ze hebben zelf veel gelezen van beide kanten. De GKV enerzijds en de GK anderzijds. 'Wij hebben alles bestudeerd en zorgpunten geformuleerd'.

Br. Breen begint met een vraag over het 4e gebod. Wat opviel volgens br. Breen is de tegenstelling die tweemaal vet gedrukt is weergegeven in de brief. Namelijk dat: "Either the Sunday as a day of rest is based on the fourth commandment from the Lord or it is a good human institution". In verband hier mee stelt br. Breen de vraag hoe wij staan tegen over de 6 punten van de Synode van Dordrecht 1618/1619 en of wij die accepteren.

Br. De Marie antwoord hierop dat het in de 6 punten van Dordt gaat over het vierde gebod. In regel 2 wordt met het ceremoniële bedoeld op het rusten op de **zevende** dag (de nadruk valt op zevende) in het OT, in het NT is dat verschoven naar de eerste dag. De andere regels geven heel duidelijk aan dat werken op de rustdag NIET toegestaan is ²³. Ds. Huizinga wijst in verband hiermee op het verschil tussen Voetsius en Gomarus in dezen.

Br. Breen leest een pagina voor uit het boek van G.P. van IJtteren (1929) over Gomarus. Hieruit blijkt hoe Gomarus over het vierde gebod dacht. Hij zag de sabbat als instelling vanaf Mozes en niet vanaf de schepping; volgens hem was het vooral een gewoonte van de kerk om op de zondag samen te komen. Br. Breen vraagt hoe wij dit citaat zien in verhouding tot de 6 regels van Dordrecht (die met name samengesteld zijn vanwege een meningsverschil tussen Gomarus en afgevaardigden uit Zeeland en Engeland).

Br. Van der Jagt merkt op dat hij het betreurt dat Gomarus bij de zondagsrust niet uit gaat van het vierde gebod en dat hij via een andere weg komt tot het rusten op de zondag. Het is teleurstellend dat hij de nieuw testamentische bijbelteksten die de verandering van de zaterdag naar de zondag aangeven niet voldoende acht. Br. De Marie merkt op dat belangrijk is wat de belijdenis

²³ Regel 6 zegt bijvoorbeeld: 'Deselve dach moet alsoo den goodtsdienst toegeeuygent worden, datmen op den selven moet rusten van alle slaeffwerken (uytgesondert diegenen, die de lyeffde (liefde), ende de teghenwoordige noodsaeckelickheden vereyschen), mitsgaders van alle sodanighe recreation (ontspanning) die den Goodtsdienst verhinderen.

zegt over de wekelijkse rustdag, de zondag; daar staat duidelijk dat de dag van samenkomst de sabbat (de rustdag) op basis van het 4e gebod is.

Ds. Huizinga verwijst naar het besluit van de Synode in 1905. Toen werd eenzogenaaemde pacificatie formule vastgesteld.

Ter sprake komt zondag 38 van de Heidelbergse catechismus. Hierin wordt het rusten op de zondag gebaseerd het vierde gebod. Ds. Huizinga beaamt dit: ja, daar wordt gevraagd: wat **gebiedt** God in het vierde gebod. Het gaat om gebieden.

Br. Bos. Legt uit dat men dit in de GKV anders uitlegt. Er staat namelijk. 'dat ik op de sabbat, dat is de rustdag ...' In de originele Duitse tekst staat er voor het woord 'rustdag' het woord 'feiertag', en de GKV zegt dat dit woord in onze Catechismus eigenlijk niet goed vertaald is met 'rustdag'. Feiertag zou veel meer 'feestdag' betekenen en niet 'rustdag'. Een blik in het "dikke" Van Dale woordenboek leert echter dat Feiertag gewoon 'vrije dag, rustdag' betekent.

Br. Breen vraagt of het voor ons -de deputaten van de Gereformeerde Kerken - noodzakelijk is dat het rusten op de zondag gekoppeld is aan het 4e gebod.

Br. de Marie benadrukt dat het niet slechts om één passage in één preek gaat. Ds. J. Ophoff te Nieuwegein vertolkt in zijn preek de mening van vele anderen. Volgens hen is het rusten op de zondag niet persé gebaseerd op een goddelijk gebod. Wij willen echter graag de geboden van de Heere in vreugde onderhouden.

Br. Bos wijst er op dat het niet 'slechts' om een theoretisch verschil gaat. Het gaat er ook om dat dit leidt tothet ontheiligen van de zondag, doordat mensen op die dag niet noodzakelijk werk doen. Hij wijst hier op de zaak die in Berkel gespeeld heeft. Waar een bakker om economische / financiële redenen zijn bedrijf openstelt en anderen voor zich laat werken. Dat hij zich zo niet houdt aan wat de Heere in het 4e gebod vraagt namelijk om te rusten en je dienstknechten etc. niet te laten werken op die dag. Dit alles wordt nog eens duidelijker wanneer je in acht neemt dat de betreffende directeur van het bakkersconcern in het ND stelt dat "hij er geen moment over heeft gepiekerd om zijn bedrijf op zondag niet open te stellen". Br. de Marie wijst de Australische deputaten erop dat de classis Rotterdam in deze zaak mocht stellen dat de tekst van het 4e gebod slechts geldig was voor het Oude Testament; niet meer voor vandaag. De synode heeft bezwaren hiertegen afgevoerd, en deze classisuitspraak dus niet afgekeurd.

Br. Griffioen haalt Genesis 2: 2 en 3 aan: "Toen God op de zevende dag het werk voltooid had, dat hij gemaakt had, rustte Hij op de zevende dag van al het werk, dat Hij gemaakt had. En God zegende de zevende dag en heiligde die, omdat hij daarop gerust heeft van al het werk, dat God scheppende tot stand had gebracht". Die heiliging van de rustdag gebeurde niet pas bij de Sinaï maar vond al bij de schepping plaats. Genesis 2: 2 en 3 overstijgt zo het Oude en het Nieuwe Testament. Het vierde gebod grijpt ook rechtstreeks op die scheppingsorde terug.

Br. Breen gaat voort: ik hoop niet dat u het erg vindt als we nu standpunten in nemen? Ziet u de zondag als Nieuw Testamentische Sabbat of als de heilshistorische voortzetting van de Sabbat. Kun je, volgens u ook zeggen: de zondag is niet gebaseerd op het 4e gebod maar op de vervulling van het 4e gebod.

Br. De Marie wijst op Hebrreeën 4 waar het daar gaat over het meerdere van de zondag. Zo is er wel voortgang te zien in de Heilshistorie.

Br. van der Jagt zegt dat wij nu vanuit de rust mogen leven, we starten met een rustdag, dit in tegenstelling tot het Oude Testament, waar men de week beëindigde met een rustdag. Wij mogen nu, vanwege het offer van Christus vanuit de rust leven.

Br. Breen vraagt: is het ook mogelijk dat de zondagsrust niet gebaseerd wordt op het 4e gebod?

Ds. Huizinga gaat terug naar de Dordtse kwestie. Volgens hem geeft het commentaar van Ursinus op de HC een andere uitleg evenals Calvijn. Daarnaast stond Datheen, die ideeën uit Engeland (de puriteinen) overbracht naar zondag. Deze twee lijnen kwamen samen op Dordt.

Br. Griffioen merkt op dat het zo frappant is dat als je Schilder leest dat hij de volwaardigheid van de Sabbat zo naar voren brengt.

Ds. Huizinga merkt op dat er altijd al twee lijnen geweest zijn.

Br. Breen haalt uit artikel 52, het materiaal bij het revisie verzoek aan. Er zijn verschillende manieren om die zin te lezen. Als jullie dat lezen waar leggen jullie dan de nadruk op?

Br. De Marie merkt op dat je de uitspraken van de Synode toetst, en niet zozeer het materiaal hoewel je dat ook meeneemt.

In reactie op de opmerking van de Australische deputaten dat er toch altijd ruimte geweest is voor de twee lijnen binnen de kerken, merkt br. De Marie op dat er geen sprake is geweest van ruimte binnen de kerken maar dat er juist altijd strijd geweest is rond dit punt. Dat is wat anders dan ruimte.

Er wordt gesproken over de Synode van Hoogeveen 1969 over Visee dat hij het gebod ziet als iets van de Sinaï en dat het niet rechtstreeks op de Schepping terug gaat. Br. Griffioen merkt op dat wij juist vanuit de Schrift zien, dat het vierde gebod terug gaat tot de scheppingsorde.

Br. Breen zegt: Stel je nu eens voor dat de GKV uitspreekt dat de Here nog beveelt om te rusten op de zondag; hoe staan jullie daar dan tegenover? Zou dat voor jullie reden zijn om weer samen te spreken met de GKV.

Br. De Marie spreekt uit dat het er van afhangt hoe daartoe besloten wordt. Als het een diplomatieke wijze is om de mensen vast te houden, is het heel wat anders dan wanneer het een hartelijk gehoorzamen naar de Schriften is. Br. Van der Jagt merkt op dat hij er weinig hoop op heeft dat dit werkelijk zal

gebeuren omdat de vele schriftuurlijke bezwaren die ingediend zijn om aan te tonen dat het rusten op de zondag wel degelijk alleen gekoppeld is aan het 4e gebod van de Here, al deze bezwaren zijn tot nu toe zonder er op in te gaan van de tafel geveegd. Hierin heeft men niet naar de Schrift willen luisteren. Daarnaast zou een zodanig besluit ook consequenties moeten hebben: de oude besluiten die in strijd zijn met de Schrift, moeten dan herroepen worden.

De Australische deputaten merken op dat er toch juist een studiedeputaatschap is ingesteld om deze zaken te onderzoeken?

Br. De Marie antwoordt dat door dit deputaatschap, geen onderzoek meer zal gedaan worden naar de grond voor de zondagsrust, maar zal uitgaan van beide meningen. Het principe zelf stond niet meer ter discussie. Br. Van der Jagt verhaalt dat hij het betreurt dat het voorstel van ds. P.L. Voorberg indertijd is afgewezen. Hij stelde voor om een studiedeputaatschap in te stellen die de fundering van de zondag nader zou bestuderen. Dit voorstel is nu juist afgewezen. Men heeft al besloten dat er twee meningen over de zondag naast elkaar kunnen bestaan in de kerken. Op deze basis – met overkoepeling van beide meningen - heeft men een deputaatschap ingesteld die moet komen met een praktische handreiking aangaande de zondag voor deze tijd.

Br. Breen stelt een vraag m.b.t. de drie punten die onderaan op pagina 6 van onze brief staan. Kunnen jullie daar bewijzen van geven?

Br. Van der Jagt antwoordt dat de GKV de historische feiten verdraait en zegt dat er altijd ruimte geweest is binnen de kerken voor twee meningen. Dit is echter niet waar.

Vande belijdenis verandert men de uitleg van zondag 38 HC door te zeggen, dat daar niet gesproken wordt over de zondag als rustdag.

Van de Schrift verandert men de teksten die wijzen op het gebod van de Here om te rusten op de zondag, men negeert de doorgaande lijn in de Schriften.

Vervolgens komt het tweede punt uit de brief aan de orde nl. De kerkelijke eenheid met de Christelijk Gereformeerden en schriftkritiek.

Br. Breen vraagt: maakt u de volgende (simplistische)gevolg trekking: De CGK pakt Loonstra niet aan à de GKV werkt naar eenheid met de CGK dus... de GKV is ook schuldig aan schriftkritiek?

Br. de Marie antwoordt: Loonstra heeft inderdaad wat bijgesteld, maar daarbij de essentie van zijn Schriftkritische leer niet weggenomen. Hoe kan men nu stellen dat er in de CGK geen schriftkritiek te vinden is?

Br. Breen vraagt: De CGK zegt Loonstra te hebben aangepakt. Zij doen dat misschien op een andere manier als wij gewend zijn. Maar is het samengaan met de CGK ook persé een aannemen van Loonstra? Br. Breen noemt hier grond 1 van besluit 131.

Br. Van der Jagt merkt op: ik vindt het heel vreemd dat men dat nu kan zeggen. De essentie van Loonstra's dwaalleer is niet weggenomen. We hebben ook de uitspraak van Arnhem 1981 die de CGK opriep om de Schriftkritiek te verwerpen.

Br. De Marie voegt hier aan toe: Het betreft niet alleen Loonstra het gaat ook om andere christelijk gereformeerde voorgangers zoals dr. S. Paas, en prof. dr. Oosterhof. Bovendien, en dat maakt de zaak nog ernstiger, heeft de GKV in samenwerking met de CGK de evangelisatiecursus "Emmaüs"bewerkt en uitgegeven. Deze interkerkelijke Emmaüscursus wordt inmiddels ook binnen de GKV gebruikt. Hierin wordt keihard beweerd dat Genesis 1-11 oergeschiedenis is en géén historische betrouwbare geschiedenis. Wij moeten dit alles in een breder verband zien, waarbij ook het boek uit Kampen dat onder redactie van prof. Trimp is uitgekomen 'Woord op Schrift' moet worden betrokken. Hierin komt ook Schriftkritiek naar buiten. Met name in de hoofdstukken van drs. De Bruine.

Br. Bos noemt in dit verband ook de praktische consequenties van deze Schriftkritiek. Hij wijst op de werkgroep Contrario binnen de GKV. Waar homoseksuelen elkaar ontmoeten. (www.contrario.nl/docs/navolgingvanchristus.doc) Homoseksueel samenleven wordt niet langer veroordeeld, zo blijkt uit deze site.

Br. Breen zegt dat hij en ds. Huizinga de uitgebreide discussies erg goed gevolgd hebben m.b.t. de stukken van De Bruine (zoals o.a. in het blad Ministerio gepubliceerd). De Bruine vindt dat hij veelal verkeerd begrepen is en dat hij niet bewust Schriftkritisch bezig is geweest. Br. Breen stelt daarom de vraag: vindt u niet dat hij dingen heeft terug genomen?

Br. De Marie vertelt dat hij met drs. De Bruine om tafel gezeten heeft om de zaken door te spreken. In dat gesprek is wel het een en ander duidelijker geworden, maar er werd niet teruggenomen van de verkeerde ideeën.. Deze betreffen m.n. de Inspiratie van de Heilige Schrift. In zijn geschriften gebruikt hij veel van prof. Hays, een mennonitisch gevormd theoloog, die de Christus van de Schriften niet kent. Hoe kan De Bruine de ethiek van zo iemand overnemen?

Ds. Huizinga merkt op dat bij zijn eerste lezing van "Woord op schrift" hij ook zijn wenkbrauwen gefronst heeft. Maar dat bij tweede lezing de dingen toch niet zo erg waren als ze misschien wel leken. De Bruine probeert bijvoorbeeld niet de geboden opzij te zetten, maar hij wil het breder zien: je kunt voor de praktijk ook veel halen uit en leren van de verhalen van de bijbel.

Br. de Marie merkt op dat zo het gevaar bestaat dat het verhaal het gebod fundeert. En dat De Bruine de historische context teveel bepalend laat zijn bij de uitleg van de Schrift.

Br. Breen zegt: Er is meer in de Bijbel als verbod en gebod, in de lijn van Douma zie ik het als volgt: In het verhaal komt naar je toe wat de Heere van jou in je leven wil. De context hoeft niet rigide te zijn.

Br. De Marie zegt: Het gevaar bestaat dat je dan overgaat tot het metaforisch lezen van de geboden. De Australische deputaten vragen of wij ook bewijs kunnen leveren voor het gedeelte op pagina 9 van de brief waar wij zeggen dat de Bruine ‘alters de function of the commandments of the Lord into guidelines and example rather than regarding them as litteral norms.’ Br. De Marie pakt het boek er bij en gaat op zoek naar voorbeelden. Vanwege het doorgaande gesprek kan hij die voorbeelden niet zo even opzoeken, maar is bereid daar later op terug te komen.*)

Ds. Huizinga geeft aan dat hij ook moeite heeft met Genesis 6. Hij zegt: ‘Genesis 6 you hid your head on’.

Vervolgens wordt gesproken over de Liedboekliederen.

Br. Breen vraagt: Hebben jullie je wel gerealiseerd dat K. Deddens bij zijn kritiek op het Liedboek ervan uitging dat het niet mogelijk was om een selectie over te nemen maar dat het liedboek als geheel moest worden genomen?

Br. De Marie geeft aan dat de volgorde in de huidige beoordeling van deze liederen anders is geweest. Eerst hebben we de liederen getoetst. Omdat ze al direct vrijgegeven waren moest dit veelal door “leken” gebeuren. Dit bracht ook vervelende praktische consequenties. Ineens werd je geconfronteerd tijdens een kerkdienst met liederen die je moest zingen maar die je niet kon zingen vanwege de inhoud, met als gevolg: de één zong wel de ander niet. Daar komt bij dat de samenstelling en inhoud van het Liedboek is afgestemd op 7 verschillende kerkgenootschappen. Dit is duidelijk te zien in de inhoud van de liederen. Vanuit de GKV werd wel gezegd dat je ze toch wel op een gereformeerde manier kon zingen. Maar veel liederen geven een goed gevoel, maar laten Gods eis en oordeel eruit weg. De Lieder en zijn onder andere beïnvloed door de leer van Karl Barth, het pacifisme en de bevrijdingstheologie. Het is het resultaat van Hervormde, Lutherse en andere vrijzinnige dichters.

Br. Breen vraagt: Als het alleen om het Liedboek zou zijn geweest, zou u zich dan hebben Vrijgemaakt?

Br. De Marie antwoordt: U moet het zien in het verband met de geest die er heerst binnen de GKV. Br. Breen merkt op dat dat inderdaad moeilijk te pijken is voor hun als “buitenstaanders”. Br. De Marie vindt dat de geest die er binnen de GKV heerst, toch ook op te merken moet zijn door buitenstaanders. Hij noemt enkele voorbeelden: het verdwijnen of openstellen van G-organisaties en scholen, het veranderen van het ND van een gereformeerde naar Algemeen Christelijke krant, de eenheid die gezocht wordt met andere kerkverbanden, waaronder ook de NGK: In alles zie je een lijn terug. Het is allemaal aan elkaar verbonden.

We gaan over op het onderwerp huwelijk en echtscheiding.

Br. Breen merkt op: Het rapport over huwelijk en echtscheiding is toch niet ongewijzigd geaccepteerd door de Synode? Ook de Australische bezwaren wil men meenemen.

Br. De Marie antwoordt: Toch is de populaire versie de gemeenten ingegaan en heeft daar zijn uitwerking. Men heeft dit nooit terug getrokken, maar juist aanbevolen, het is niet herroepen.

Men heeft het over de 'stijl van het Koninkrijk', dat is een diffuus geheel. Men heeft het over de gebrokenheid van de wereld, in plaats van in zo'n situatie vergeving en steun bij de Here te zoeken.

We gaan over op het onderwerp Huwelijks formulier. Br Breen vraagt hoe het zit dat met de vertaling van 'Je vrouw voorgaan en haar leiden'. Volgens de Nederlandse deputaten zit er wel verschil tussen je vrouw leiden en haar voorgaan. Br. Van der Jagt die deze termen heeft vertaald in 'preceeding and leading' geeft toe dat hij het moeilijk vond om dit ook zo in de engelse taal over te brengen. Toch is het wel jammer dat het afgezwakt is uit de bestaande tekst. Br. Breen geeft aan dat het Griekse woord als het gaat om de vrouw gebruikt in Efeziërs niet is 'gehoorzamen'.

Ds. Huizinga zegt dat hij zich niet kan vinden in wat in de brief staat m.b.t. de ruimte voor 'secular view about having children'. Het formulier verwijst hier juist naar 1 Tim. 2: 15. Wij stemmen graag toe dat vanuit dit Schriftgedeelte gelezen hert genoemde bezwaar weggenomen wordt. Toch zou een explicietere omschrijving beter geweest zijn met het oog op de praktijk van veel 'secular view's' m.b.t. het krijgen van kinderen. Br. Breen kan zich dat goed voorstellen.

Het onderwerp PCEA.

Br Breen vraagt en citeert uit de Acta van de Australische kerken: dat de FRCA "to re-engage With the PCEA". Hoe kan het dan dat er in de brief gesteld wordt: "that this brings the GKV in conflict with the three marks of the true church, outlined in article 29 of the Belgic confession"?

Br. van der Jagt merkt op dat als de GKV de PCEA erkennen dat zij daarmee aangeven dat zij geen moeite hebben met een open avondmaalstafel en een open kansel. In de GKV is een open avondmaalstafel overigens ook al praktijk in bijvoorbeeld de GKV te Franeker en in de avondmaalsbediening in crisisgebieden.

Br. Breen vraagt: wat verstaat u dan onder een open avondmaalstafel;?

Br de Marie antwoordt: Het aangaan zonder opzicht en tucht van een kerkenraad of van een zusterkerk, door personen die geen lid van deze kerk of zusterkerk zijn.

Ds. Huizinga stelt dat het in crisisgebied toch niet anders is dan op het zendingsveld waar er ook geen kerkenraad toeziet? Br. Van der Jagt merkt op dat dit wezenlijk anders is omdat op het zendingsveld gaat om leden van één kerk – het avondmaal is toch van de Here en Zijn gemeente?!- en dat er in oorlogsgebied mensen aangaan uit verschillende kerken.

Br. Breen haalt aan wat er gezegd wordt in de 6 punten die de synode van de GKV heeft opgesteld om de zuiverheid van het avondmaal in oorlogsgebieden te waarborgen. Br. van der Jagt merkt op dat deze punten geen duidelijke waarborg geven dat alleen leden aangaan die daartoe gerechtigd zijn. Het gevaar is dat er mensen aankunnen gaan als ze Jezus maar lief hebben. Ook is er het gevaar dat men het avondmaal in crisisgebied gebruikt als een magische kracht, waar je niet zonder kunt.

We gaan over tot het laatste punt: de zegen door een niet-ouderlingr.

Br Breen vraagt hoe wij het verband zien tussen de Prediking en de zegen.

Br. De Marie legt uit dat de zegen gekoppeld is aan de bediening van de verzoening.

Br. Breen wil nog twee algemene vragen stellen.

Br. Breen vraagt over de boodschap van Genesis 3: 15: Ziet u het niet meer spreken over de antithese als de alles samenvattende oorzaak voor het verval binnen de GKV?

Br. Griffioen antwoordt dat het verval vooral ontstaan is doordat het kerkbegrip is verdwenen.. Br. De Marie vult aan dat het ook te maken heeft met het verzwijgen van het verbond. En dat alles hangt daarom ook weer samen met de antithese.

Br. Breen vraagt: Stel dat de Australische kerken het model van de GKV mbt de Schotse kerken hanteert tav de GKV en de GK, waarbij voorlopig beide kerken als zusterkerk worden erkend. Hoe kijken jullie daar tegenaan.

Br. De Marie zegt dat de Schotse kerken beide hebben uitgesproken dat zij spoedig weer één hopen te worden.

Br. Van der Jagt merkt op dat hij zich kan voorstellen dat de Australische kerken voor dit model als een tijdelijke oplossing zouden kiezen, terwijl zij de zaken nog aan het bestuderen zijn. Dan zou hij daar geen moeite mee hebben.

Br. De Marie voegt daar aan toe dat dit kan als de Australische kerken tegelijkertijd de GKV ernstig waarschuwen – ze hebben toch een bepaalde verantwoordelijkheid tegenover hen.

Br. Breen spreekt de bede uit dat de broeders er alles aan zullen doen om elkaar weer te vinden op de basis van de waarheid.

Ds. Huizinga heeft nog een laatste vraag: Voor hem is het vier [OF DRIE??]voudigsoer uit Prediker 4: 12 erg belangrijk. Hoe kijken jullie aan tegen de verhouding: kerk gezin en school?

Br. Bos geeft aan dat er initiatieven worden ondernomen om tot eigen Gereformeerd onderwijs te komen.

Br. Griffioen gaat voor in gebed, waarna de voorzitter de vergadering sluit.

*) Nadere toelichting: Het betreft hier een samenvattend oordeel van de inhoud van deze bladzijden.

Questions for the GKVC (Continuing) Churches in the Netherlands and Analysis

We have used four columns with an analysis at the end of each section. Each section is numbered for easy reference.

The quotes in the first column are from the official letter of the GKVC which is the document we had to go by. Their other documents may elaborate on this letter, but the letter itself is the official document we had to go by. The quotes in the second column are from the Acts of the general synods of our Dutch sisters or from the response of the BBK of our Dutch sisters, NOT BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN – (NB). The third column records the questions we prepared for the meeting. Not all could be asked (it was very late when we left). In the fourth column the answers to our questions are recorded. At the end of each section an analysis is offered. A final conclusion is offered at the end of all sections.

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
1	This brings us to the core of the matter, the fundamental difference: Either the Sunday as a day of rest is based on the fourth commandment from the Lord or it is a good human institution . The Synod of Leusden 1999 decided the following: “the opinion of Rev. Ophoff (being: that the Sunday as a day of rest isn’t based	Decision 4 (of art 25) of GS Leusden: To judge that: 1. In the sermon ...about LD 38, HC, the importance of the worship services and the time made available for them clearly came to the fore; 2. In spite of this, in this sermon it is not	Do you accept the six rules of Dort (1618/19) on this matter of the fourth commandment? ²⁴ How do you understand those 6 rules of Dort? To see how the reformed churches over the centuries have dealt with the fourth word of the	See last page re 6 statements of Dort. The GKVc accepts them but accent that the ceremonial part was the <u>seventh</u> day, and not the <u>rest</u> on that day. <i>De Marie answered, I am disappointed in Gomarus. Gomarus must have provoked the decision and it must be directed against</i>

²⁴ The National Synod of Dordrecht of 1618/19 made a statement with six rules about the question of sabbath and Sunday. These rules enjoy moral authority among us. They are as follows:

1. In the fourth commandment there is a ceremonial and a moral element.
2. The rest on the seventh day after the Creation, and the strict observance of this day assigned to the Jewish nation in particular were ceremonial.
3. That a definite and appointed day is set aside for worship, and along with it as much rest as is necessary for worship and for holy meditation, belongs to the moral element.
4. Now that the Sabbath of the Jews is set aside, Christians are duty bound to hallow the day of Sunday solemnly.
5. This day has always been kept since the time of the apostles in the early church.
6. This day must be so consecrated to worship that on it men rest from all servile labor (except those required by charity and present necessities), and likewise from all such recreations as prevent the worship of God.

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
	on a divine commandment.) cannot be condemned.” And	sufficiently stressed that LD 38 speaks of a command, namely, on	covenant, it might be useful to go back into history, back to the time of	<i>him!</i> We corrected this wrong

²⁵ Is the seventh day instituted already from the creation of the world as a day of rest for people and for the worship of God? And, must, according to the Fourth Commandment, a day which is repeated periodically be appointed for the service of God? With most of the fathers Gomarus answers the first question in the negative. He does not consider it in agreement with Scripture that the seventh day found its origin at the creation of the world (*Opera*, III, p 327, no.2). As evidence he refers to Gen 2:2,3 (*Opera*, III, p.327/8, no.4-10); to the time of the patriarchs when there is no mention of a sabbath (*Opera*, III p 328, no 11,12); to Gen 8:10,12 (*Opera*, III pag 328, no 13); Ex 16:23 and 25 (*Opera*, III page 328, no 16), where he considers that the maintaining of the sabbath was not necessary in order to keep the distinction of time in weeks (*Opera*, III pag 329, no 20), and that the heathens, if they celebrated the seventh day, did not do so on the strength of a creational command (*Opera*, III pag 331, no 44), and Gomarus points to the fact that God punished the Jews for violation of the sabbath but never the gentiles (*Opera*, III pag 331, no 53).

All these considerations lead Gomarus to the conclusion that the sabbath is an institution from the time of Moses (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 57). Men as Calvin, Hieronymus Zanchius, Josiah Simler and Cornelius Bertram (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 58-61) posited the opposite view (the sabbath as a creational institution) but never viewed this as an absolutely definite truth but always presented it as a probable proposition (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 57). The testimony of other writers is given as evidence of his stance (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 62).

Gomarus also answers in the negative the question whether a certain day is set aside for the the worship of the LORD. The arguments in favour of this view never convinced him (*Opera*, III pag 334, no 1). Many theologians distinguish between the ceremonial and the temporal from the moral and abiding in their explanation of the Fourth Commandment. They draw a line between the outward aspect and the moral aspect of the seventh day (*Opera*, III pag 335, no 9). Gomarus considers that proof for the view that the apostles appointed the Lord's Day in the place of the sabbath is not delivered by referring to Acts 20:7 (*Opera*, III pag 335, no 2), 1 Cor 16:1,2 (*Opera*, III pag 337, no 22) and Rev 1:10 (*Opera*, III pag 338, no 32).

One may speak of the custom of the church of the apostles, but not of their command (*Opera*, III pag 339, no 40). This is made clear by quotations from Bullinger, Ursinus, Aretius, Zanchius, Simler, Paraeus, Joh Cuchlinus and Thomas Aquinas (*Opera*, III pag 339, no 40-48). After considering all these things Gomarus deems that it clear that it is not certain the Lord's Day or the first day of the week was instituted by the apostles for the worship of the God. Nevertheless he must defend the public worship of the Lord, in agreement with the general sense of the Fourth Commandment and this cannot be violated without shortchanging or injuring the public worship. God has so directed things that we all should celebrate the spiritual sabbath and the keep the public day of worship holy, without injury to it or without superstition (*Opera*, III pag 340, no 49). [G.P. van Iltterzon, Franciscus Gomarus. 's-Gravenhage 1929 (diss)]

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	<p>under point 4 of the same decision: that “there is no reason to assume that Rev. Ophoff ... departs from the doctrine of the church with regard to the fourth commandment of the law of the Lord.” These decisions are substantiated by different grounds. One of them is: “Within the Reformed churches in the Netherlands there has always been room to think differently about the Scriptural foundation regarding the Sunday as a day of rest.”</p>	<p>the day of rest diligently to attend the church services;</p> <p>3. The view, that the Sunday as day of rest is not based on a divine command, is not to be condemned;</p> <p>GS Zuidhorn decided:</p> <p>3. to call upon the churches in general and the appellants in particular to preserve the peace and unity which has always existed in the churches between the different adherents of differing views on the significance of the fourth commandment.</p> <p><i>Grounds:</i></p> <p>1. It serves the peace and unity of the churches when in a situation of differing</p>	<p>the synod of Dort. How do you respond to Gomarus' views? [We read a piece out of the dissertation of GP van IJterzon about Gomarus ('s-Gravenhage 1929, p 307/8). ²⁵</p> <p>Where has GS Zuidhorn stated that the Sunday rest is based solely on a human institution?</p> <p>Do you believe that the Sunday is the NT Sabbath? Or do you believe that the Sunday is the redemptive historical fulfilment of the OT Sabbath?</p>	<p>explanation (for the views of Gomarus were the same as those of Calvin and Ursinus who co-wrote the HC), but then he made reference to LD 38 and “op Zondag, <u>de Sabbat</u>...(on Sunday, the Sabbath...)”</p> <p>The GKVc starts with the premise that the Lord instituted the sabbath at creation. Calvin had also said this in his commentary on Genesis.</p> <p>What Rev Ophoff said represented many ministers' view about this. If the GKV concludes that resting on Sunday is a church rule based on their understanding of Scripture, then we are very close to each other.</p> <p>The GKVc does not wish</p>

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		<p>opinions we do not bind each other beyond binding each other to the adopted doctrine, also with respect to the fourth commandment;</p> <p>2. though there are varying opinions there is agreement on the significance of the Sunday as a gift from the Lord, as a day on which the congregation of Christ should assemble to celebrate the great deeds of God in creation and redemption.</p> <p>The synod saw no reason to condemn this opinion. In support of this it was stated, among other things, that in the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, there</p>		<p>iron clad rules but wants to keep the commands out of thanks.</p> <p>Must we rest on Sunday or not? This is a practical and serious matter for many church members.</p> <p>The GKVc sees the line of the Bible, the line of the fulfilment indeed.</p> <p>In their view it would be very odd if one could say we rest on Sunday, on the basis of the whole Scripture but not directly on the 4th commandment.</p> <p>They deny there ever was room for founding the rest on Sunday on various Scriptural understandings (either direct or via fulfilment). In history the reformed churches could have only one view.</p>

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		has always been difference of opinion on this point. From this it can be deduced that this statement in no way censures those who do want to speak of Sunday rest as a command of God (NB).		
<p>1. Analysis.</p> <p>There was very little discernment and understanding of the background of LD 38, namely, that it represented the views of Calvin as in his <u>Institutes</u> where the Ten Commandments are dealt with at length, and as Ursinus commented on them in his <u>Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism</u>. Gomarus had the same views as Calvin and Ursinus. Dort did not oppose him. Hardly! At the great, international Synod of Dort Gomarus was the leading Dutch theologian to oppose the views of the Remonstrants. His views were respected and certainly followed. Gomarus repeats the views of Calvin and Ursinus. The synod of Dort tried to bring peace when the new view, come from the British isles, found strong entrance in the reformed churches in The Netherlands. So Dort actually brought peace between the two views. That decision has guided and united the reformed churches right up to today.</p> <p>This means that they (GKVC) failed to realise that it is true that two views have been tolerated in the churches from the time of Dort and before. One should not try to condemn Calvin and Ursinus (one of the main writers of our Heidelberg Catechism!) or Gomarus, the leading defender of the faith at Dort. The GS of Leusden and Zuidhorn did nothing more or less than accept what has always been accepted in the churches. They thus did not introduce a new doctrinal statement when handling the appeal about the sermon on LD 38.</p> <p>Though they subscribe to the view that one needs to follow the redemptive historical line in explaining the Scriptures, for them this only means that the seventh day has changed to the first day. That Jesus fulfilled the whole content of the Fourth Commandment, as elaborated on in the sabbatical system of seventh year and seven times seventh year, did not seem</p>				

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	<p>the important issue. That the Fourth Commandment is still valid today, and still calls for physical Sunday rest is the important topic. They see a <u>direct</u> command to rest, though the Fourth Commandment says, <i>the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall do no work...</i> The term <i>Sabbath</i> refers both to <i>rest</i> and <i>seventh</i> and is thus strongly related to rest on the seventh day (seventh year and seven times seventh year). Both these ideas are ceremonial, pointing ahead to the reality in Christ (cf Col 2:16-17). Thus it is almost impossible to see a direct command, for one has to do violence to Scripture to arrive at the conclusion from the Fourth Commandment to rest on the first day of the week. Yet the concept of following the line of fulfilment in Christ, and thereby coming to the conclusion that still today the Lord asks us to rest on one specific day, that is, the Lord's Day, seems foreign and not understandable to the newly liberated brothers. They say that the Fourth Commandment still stands today and this means we too must rest from all work on the Sunday. How one comes to that conclusion is rather simple for them – directly from the Fourth Commandment! That others follow the line of redemptive history, the line of fulfilment in Christ, to the same conclusion seems strange to them.</p> <p>One applauds their strong stance of keeping the Lord's Day as the day for the Lord and not for man. One also respects their simple view that the Lord commands rest on the first day of the week. Yet some discernment and thorough study of Scripture would stop them from making charges against the GKV that cannot be substantiated.</p> <p>The conclusion must be that they have either not understood or not appreciated the redemptive historical explanation of the fourth commandment. In the process they have not done justice to the GKV and its decisions on this matter. Rather they have wrongly accused the GKV of deviating from Scripture, and so wrongly defamed the reputation of the GKV.</p>			
2	Both Synods decided not to listen to the manifold arguments from Scripture and created room for two contradicting points of view. On the one side the Sunday as a day of rest is based on the fourth commandment from the	<p>GS Zuidhorn decided:</p> <p>1. To declare inadmissible the letters received and listed in (2).</p> <p>Ground: the letters do not raise new issues or do not address the contents of the issue.</p>	Is it necessary to connect the Sunday <u>directly</u> to the fourth commandment, and otherwise you cannot say, "thus says the LORD?"	See above. If you can base it on Scripture, not directly on the Fourth Commandment, they would find that a bit of theological acrobatics, but they are happy with the end conclusion.

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	Lord , on the other side the Sunday as a good human institution . The fundamental difference should not be down played. In the first place a minister of the Word can in His sermon no longer address the congregation of the Lord and say 'Thus says the Lord'.	2. Not to accede to the requests contained in the letters received and listed in (3) and (4). Synod acknowledges that criticism of some of the grounds is in place and will send the committee report to the appellants.	If the GS of Amersfoort decides that the LORD still commands us to rest on the Sunday, would that give an opening and calling for you to have talks with the GKV (for reunion)?	Yes, then the GKVc would be happy. At the same they quickly add that then the GKV would have to retract their earlier decision re the sermon of Rev Ophoff.
<p>2. Analysis.</p> <p>See above. Also, it is to be hoped that the GS Amersfoort will make a clear statement that even today the Lord commands his people to rest on the Lord's Day. This should cause the newly Liberated people to open up contacts with the GKV and to seek a way back together.</p> <p>At the same time they fail to realise that the appeal about a sermon was handled on the basis of what the reformed churches in the past have decided (i.e. the decision of Dort). One does not need to retract that decision of Dort, nor decisions on appeals based on it.</p>				
3	Instead of making the above-mentioned decisions the GKV should have studied the matters of Leusden concerning the fourth commandment on the basis of Scripture and	GS Zuidhorn decided: To appoint a deputyship (Fourth Command and Sunday) and to give deputies a mandate to serve the churches with guidelines in which a	Does the big report (a 100 pages) of the Deputies for the Fourth Commandment (which has a large portion devoted to the biblical explanation of the matter) not show that the whole	They (GKVc) see the new deputyship as an attempt to legitimise the two views, also for ethical direction for Sunday observance, <u>without defeating either view</u> . Both views are sacrosanct, non-

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
	<p>confession. Yet, Synod was not willing to study further the matter whether the Sunday as a day of rest is a divine command or not.</p>	<p>positive stand and direction are given concerning the ethics of believers and churches in the 21st Century with respect to the celebration of the Sunday as the Day of the LORD in the light of the fourth commandment.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Synod itself was not completely satisfied by this result: two not completely harmonious outlooks, while, above all, the legitimacy of one of both was contested in the churches. Therefore, she agreed to set up a committee which should serve the churches with a document “in which a positive position with regard to the celebration of Sunday as the day of the Lord in the light of the fourth commandment</p>	<p>matter could still be discussed and settled?</p>	<p>negotiable, and the report must justify both positions and sanction their right in the churches. They do not consider that the mandate of this deputyship includes an attempt to bridge the two views.</p>

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		would be offered” to help believers and churches in the 21st century act in an ethically sound way (NB).		
<p>3. Analysis.</p> <p>Their contention that this matter of the Fourth Commandment was a finished item which could not be discussed further is incorrect. Also, their contention that the GS only wants to justify the two views in the new deputyship has not proved to be correct, since the report of deputies clearly wants to bridge the two views and overcome the impasse that existed for some centuries. This means that they did not need to separate and liberate for this reason.</p>				
4	In all this the GKV won't take a stand on whether the Sunday as a day of rest is based on the fourth commandment or whether the rest is based on a good human or ecclesiastical institution.		<p>Has there not been room since the great Synod of Dort for both ideas?</p> <p>Does the lesson of 1905 and 1942 not teach us that elevating one view as law and condemning the other breaks the unity in the churches?</p>	<p>There has always been strife about this point, but not room for two views. This common statement was said more than once during the evening meeting.</p> <p>The GKVC could not understand our reference to 1905 and 1942, where 1905 brought peace. 1942 saw the elevation of one view as binding, and the condemnation of the other view brought the strife.</p>

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<p>4. Analysis</p> <p>Again, the options offered – either a direct command or a human institution – are a caricature. The report that serves GS Amersfoort at the moment uses the redemptive-historical method and explains Scripture in a Christological manner. This means the church concluded, on the basis of the fulfilment of Scripture, that still today God commands the church to rest physically, especially on the Lord's Day so that the church can worship the LORD, and also to rest spiritually from our evil works all the days of our life. Thus Sunday rest is not a human or ecclesiastical institution but grounded on Scripture. If GS Amersfoort adopts this conclusion, it will help to show that this charge against the GKV is wrong, and that this reason for the new liberation was unnecessary.</p> <p>Also, the lesson from church history is decisive. Dort made a type of pacifying decision re the Sunday and it brought peace. 1905 saw a Pacification Formula (non-binding) about varying views, and it brought peace. In 1942 this peace was broken and strife broke out when GS elevated one view as binding in the churches and condemned the other view. Thus one cannot blame the GS Leusden and Zuidhorn for allowing what was always allowed in the churches. Peace is destroyed and strife introduced when one party wants one view elevated as the binding rule in the churches to the exclusion and condemnation of the other view.</p>				
5	Preaching: disallowing ministers (or anyone for that matter) to bind and administer the keys of the Kingdom of heaven on this issue.	The GS of Zuidhorn, in agreement with the Regional Synod of Holland-South, corrected a decision of the classis of Rotterdam. This classis had rejected the opinion that for the New Testament church a command not to work on Sunday, could directly be derived from the text of	Did GS Zuidhorn not give you room to say, <i>Thus says the LORD</i> , with art 60?	<p>Yes, but the GKVc finds that the next minister can say the opposite.</p> <p>Also, they refer to local examples of consistories allowing people to work on Sunday or to open shops on Sunday. One example from their letter was repeated (about the bakery business).</p>

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		the fourth commandment. "This opinion has never been rejected in the Reformed Churches and the classis with her rejection has unjustly limited the existing room, regarding the case in question' (Acta GS Zuidhorn, 2002, art. 60).		
<p>5. Analysis</p> <p>It is clear that the GS of Leusden/Zuidhorn never removed the right and privilege of any minister or consistory to see a direct command from the LORD to rest on the Sunday, and it did not impede any consistory in supervising and exercising discipline on the basis of this belief. In fact the decision quoted (art.60) shows that the GS upheld this right! Thus this charge is unsubstantiated.</p>				
6	The GKV states that there 'has always been room to think differently about the Scriptural foundation regarding the Sunday as a day of rest' and 'to keep the peace that has always existed, within the churches'. We have to defeat these statements as history teaches us that		<p>Why do you want to defeat the statement that <i>there has always been room to think differently about the Scriptural foundation</i>, since there has always been room?</p> <p>Can we compare this with 1905 where two points of</p>	<p>See above. Allowing the two views in the church has not been allowed, and making room for two views only brings grief and not peace.</p> <p>See above in #5.</p>

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	there has been no space or peace in the churches regarding this subject.		view were allowed, and so keeping the peace; and with 1942 where one point of view was exalted and the other condemned, so destroying the peace in the churches? (Think of what Prof Gomarus and B. Holwerda said.)	
<p>6. Analysis</p> <p>The contention that the reformed churches (see the 6 statements of the international Synod of Dort where the English delegates, who were dismayed at the lack of church attendance in some places in The Netherlands also took part) never allowed two views, is incorrect. See above.</p> <p>That the ‘pacification formula’ of Dort only brought grief is historically incorrect. It has kept peace in the churches over the many decades and centuries. Very little discussion has taken place about it since then. See analysis in #5.</p> <p>Historically, their contention is incorrect and their insistence on only the one view breaks the peace and unity in the churches. It would have been wiser to await the outcome of what GS Amersfoort would say and work towards one view as is presently being attempted at GS Amersfoort. The complaints that allowing two views on this subject only leads to a pluriform church, where both truth and the lie may live together, only aggravates the situation. There is a history to consult, and important issues to decide before these views can be bridged.</p>				
7	We must therefore sadly conclude, that the GKV made definite unscriptural decisions as to the issue		Can you tell us where the explanations of certain texts and of LD 38 were	The only reference is to the Lord’s Day, the Sabbath. (Yet these were not altered)

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	<p>of Sabbath and the fourth commandment while rejecting the many requests for revision. Their deviations regard the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scripture: neglecting the unity of Scripture and persistent validity of the Ten Commandments, thereby altering the exegesis of certain texts, -Confession: altering the explanation of LD 38, - Church History: altering historical facts and making them a basis for their decision. 		<p>altered?</p> <p>How were historical facts altered?</p>	<p>No other texts were quoted.</p> <p>The GKVc were very fuzzy about the historical facts of the Synod of Dort and the origin of LD 38.</p>
<p>7. Analysis</p> <p>GS Leusden + Zuidhorn had to deal with appeals. They had to decide about these appeals on the basis of what the reformed churches had taught up to that point. This they did, without condemning either view. But they certainly did not alter the Scriptures or the confessions.</p>				

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	<p>As shown above, the two GS did not deny in any way the validity of all ten commandments. The new deputyship (serving GS Amersfoort) interprets the Fourth Commandment specifically, as all ten, in a Christological way and following the redemptive-historical method.</p> <p>As shown above, these GS did not alter the text of LD 38, but kept to it and probably did so even more closely than those who recently liberated themselves.</p> <p>Also, these GS did not alter historical facts. The people of the new Liberation need to study church history more closely on this matter.</p> <p>As a result, the GKVc has again wrongly accused the GKV.</p> <p>In conclusion, these are not grounds for demanding repentance and separation from the GKV. Instead, the GKVc needs to study this complex, ethical issue more closely and with more discernment. This would also temper the accusations they aim at the GKV.</p>			
8	<p>Ecclesiastical Unity - CGK</p> <p>Although the CGK discussed this matter with Loonstra resulting in a toned-down version of some of his earlier statements, yet his Bible-critical conviction in his original writings remained unchanged. We must, therefore, judge that the CGK persist in their unscriptural tolerance.</p>	<p>About the CGK the GKV has said that they stand with them on the basis of God's Word and the reformed confessions; that there is no evidence of Scripture-criticism in the CGK, and about the procedures for ecclesiastical supervision of publications which concern the authority of Scripture, the deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity shall</p>	<p>Do you accept the difference between how the CGK + GKV deal with supervision of the publications of ministers in their midst?</p>	<p>Loonstra now says the ascension is factual. But in other things there is no retraction. Then how can we accept that?</p> <p>They (GKVc) say the CGK accepts Scripture criticism but do not acknowledge it.</p> <p>E.g. in Zwolle in a CGK two practising homos are allowed to attend the Lord's Supper. Classis, with the advice of Loonstra,</p>

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	<p>However, the Synod of Leusden, 1999 (GKV), decided to continue on the way of ecclesiastical unity with the CGK.</p> <p>(This is) evidence of tolerance towards heresies.</p> <p>The CGK have not changed, (and thus) sadly the GKV made serious and unacceptable compromises. This makes them (co-)accountable for the deviation from Scripture and the Confessions within these churches.</p>	<p>discuss these with the deputies of the CGK, in agreement with the instructions given by this synod (grounds, Art 131 GS Zuidhorn).</p>		<p>endorsed this.</p> <p>This is also allowed in the GKV (p.15, note 52 of their letter).</p>
<p>8. Analysis</p> <p>It is true that the CGK deals with the supervision of the publications of ministers/professors differently than the GKV. Yet they have dealt with Loonstra.</p> <p>The local examples cited do indeed disturb us, but what can one do with such local examples? They in the end are really not persuasive and convincing. If these matters were followed up in the ecclesiastical manner, namely, by taking them to classis/regional synod/ and general synod, with the whole bond of churches taking a stand on the issue, then one could</p>				

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<p>use this to make the charge against the bond of CGK (and thus the GKV by implication) stick. However, this has not been done. Other information received (your delegates inquired from deputies and ministers who subscribed to the <i>Manifest</i>) suggests that consistories and classes have corrected this local acceptance of homos. In a bond of churches some disturbing things do happen, but one then needs to see what is done about them. For example, Paul found seriously disturbing practices and beliefs in Corinth, but he worked to correct them. At the same time he did not hesitate to address them <i>to the church of God...to those who are sanctified...called to be saints...</i>(1 Cor.1:2).</p> <p>If the brothers were as concerned as this letters says, then one would expect a follow up. This has not happened to our knowledge.</p> <p>Thus the charge against the CGK, and the GKV by implication, cannot be substantiated.</p>				
9	<p>Supervision of Doctrine - GKV</p> <p>(Re Drs AL Th de Bruijne)</p> <p>A consequence of this approach is that whatever the historical writers wrote in Scripture has in reality not always happened. In this view also God's commandments will lose their literal meaning. Drs. De Bruijne alters the function of the commandments of the Lord into guidelines and examples rather than</p>		<p>Can you give proof from his writings that he alters the commandments into guidelines and examples rather than literal norms?</p>	<p>De Marie spoke with him for a whole evening. He did not note a step backwards, as being too unguarded, e.g. about inspiration of the Bible.</p> <p>De Bruijne takes over the ethics of Hays.</p> <p>Again, the example of justifying homos (in Heemse), is presented as being due to the ideas of Drs AL Th de Bruijne.</p> <p>De Marie kept flipping through the book but did not come up with any examples.</p>

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	<p>regarding them as literal norms.</p> <p>In conclusion, all these developments testify of the destructing consequences of accepting a Bible-critical view and tampering with the unconditional authority of the Word of God.</p>			
<p>9. Analysis</p> <p>Though proof was asked from the writings of Drs AL Th de Bruijne, none was forthcoming (though time was given to De Marie to search through the book, which he did).</p> <p>Drs AL Th de Bruijne writes in <u>Woord op Schrift</u> that in certain ethical situations one does not need to feel forlorn if there are no direct commands of the Lord about it – <i>and where in the Bible we find no command to show us the way, Christian ethics does not stand with empty hands. Because there too it remains necessary for our lives to learn to see and to learn to think and to make decisions in the light of the story of God's historical acts</i> (pp. 216-217; cf pp.213-217). For also the narrative sections of the Bible and the poetic sections give us much encouragement, instruction and direction. We can draw lessons from them, even though they do not contain direct commands. Drs AL Th de Bruijne does not substitute the commands of God with guidelines or examples, but rather <u>supplements</u> the commands with the lessons of Scripture in the narrative and poetic sections. Having studied his writings in <u>Woord op Schrift</u>, deputies see this allegation as a misreading and misunderstanding of Drs AL Th de Bruijne. In defence of Drs AL Th de Bruijne, it must be said that it is especially (and only) Drs AL Th de Bruijne who has given the ideas of Dr B Loonstra a very critical review (in the same book). He thus takes the authority of Scripture seriously, and defends it. Thus this charge is incorrect and cannot serve as motivation for a new reformation and a separation.</p>				

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Again, the reference to local situations were disturbing, if true and if not corrected, but they were not convincing. For no follow-up was made by following the ecclesiastical route. Thus the comments in #8 above apply here as well.				
10	<p>Liedboek songs – Worship</p> <p>The churches were asked by Synod Leusden to try out the 121 songs. The final decision would then be taken by the next Synod. One congregation in the Netherlands, the sister churches in Australia and two brothers and sisters reminded Synod that at the time the “Liedboek” was first published dr. K. Deddens had warned in a number of articles in the church magazine “Reformatie” that the “Liedboek” songs could not be accepted for use in worship services (he called them ecumenical love songs). Most of the songs taken</p>	<p>GS Leusden’s criteria (for new hymns):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a good hymn should be appropriate to serve in a liturgical context in which God’s words and deeds stand in the centre; a good hymn should be in harmony with the Scripture concerning its contents; a good hymn is characterised by style and quality regarding linguistic and musical form; it gives proof of a good word and tone relation; it is usable and accessible to present-day people. <p>GS Zuidhorn (Article 83)decided:</p>	<p>Do you realise that K Deddens could not recommend the Liedbook (Song-Book or Hymnal) songs as a whole, because at that time it was not allowed to make a selection?</p> <p>If all other arguments for liberating yourself from the GKV would fall away, is this reason still sufficient on its own to break with the GKV?</p>	<p>This reference was added later on, and it may need correction.</p> <p>The testing of the new hymns has been done by lay people.</p> <p>The Liedboek or Songbook had to serve 7 bonds of churches. The composers had a variety of backgrounds.</p> <p>Yet the GS said one could sing them.</p> <p>(Thus the GKVc brothers did not answer the question).</p> <p>If the spirit in the church was good, and we could address each other on the Word, then this would not have been allowed to be reason for liberation (De Marie’s</p>

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
	<p>from the “Liedboek” are unscriptural, and therefore unacceptable as songs that should be pure and pleasant before the face of our holy God.</p> <p>Synod decided to make a further 90 songs available to the churches. It must be stated that these 90 songs, which presently are being tried out in worship services, are by no means songs which should be used as such. Most of them were made to be used in primary schools. They are thus ‘childish’ songs. At the coming Synod 2005 these songs will be discussed and perhaps added to those already permanently in use.</p> <p>The proposed additional songs, mainly meant for children, are unacceptable</p>	<p><i>Criteria for selecting new hymn,:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to agree that a hymn may not be in conflict with the Reformed confessions; ii. to pronounce that the criteria of the General Synod Leusden 1999 doesn’t require alteration on that point, because in it was stated that a hymn should be in harmony with Scripture. 	<p>If ‘childish’ songs are Scriptural, do you still refuse to sing them?</p>	<p>own view).</p> <p>However, there is a line in the church life of the GKV, in its reformed organisations, which tells us that such a spirit on the basis of the reformed confessions is not possible.</p> <p>No time to discuss this.</p>

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
	to be used in worship services.			
<p>10. Analysis</p> <p>Your deputies share the concerns about the Liedboek (Songbook). Our submission to the GS Amersfoort about liturgy and worship, as well as our address to GS Amersfoort stated this point very clearly. Specifically, we voiced concern about the introduction of <u>so many</u> new hymns, about the unsuitability of some hymns in the Songbook (we only tested a selection), concerns about the Ordinarium, concerns about some new forms, and we proposed that they work on new rhymings and tunes for the psalms. Thus we share some of these concerns.</p> <p>Liturgy and worship concern church members each Sunday, and thus it receives much attention, and deserves it. However, it should be made clear that originally the Songbook could only be adopted if it was adopted as a whole. Adopting individual selections from the Songbook was not allowed. That made its endorsement (by K Deddens whose name is used in the letter to substantiate this charge) impossible. That has now changed and individual selections are possible.</p> <p>In order to put all these concerns into perspective we asked the second question (for this section). The answer from the brothers of the new Liberation indicates that they see this (important) matter of new hymns, in itself, as insufficient reason to separate and form new churches.</p>				
11	<p>7th Commandment</p> <p>The report of these Deputies begins with pleading for radical obedience to the Word of God regarding the seventh commandment, and the once spoken “I</p>	<p>GS Zuidhorn did not adopt the report but gave deputies the following mandate:</p> <p>a) To begin and stimulate a broad reflection regarding marriage, divorce, the single</p>	<p>Can you give proof that the synod decided to allow members to be released from the 7th commandment on the basis of certain situations?</p>	<p>No answer.</p> <p>The synod did send it to the churches without trying to stop or correct it. In the churches the reports are used to justify divorce on grounds not found in the 7th word or in Jesus’ teachings.</p>

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
	<p>do". In the same report, however, there is also a veering off from this Scriptural direction by:</p> <p>a) Situational ethics (proportionalism): human circumstances such as 'the hardness of heart' and the 'spiritual ability to bear' are permitted to determine whether one can be released from the seventh commandment. In this way, however, God's command is rendered powerless.</p> <p>Synod Zuidhorn-2002 should have, wholeheartedly, rejected this report that deviates from the obedience to all the commandments of the Lord (Art. 7, BC). Instead, Synod continued with the report.</p>	<p>state, preparation for marriage, and the solemnization of marriage, in part by publishing an abridged and popularly accessible version of the report, which incorporates the discussion at Synod (Decision 1).</p> <p>b) To call the churches to common humility in this matter, and in connection with this, to draft a letter to the churches (Decision 2a and 2b)</p> <p>c) To set up an Advisory Council to serve the churches in matters relating to marriage and divorce (Decision 3a and 3b).</p> <p>d) To examine, together with the Deputies for</p>	<p>Can you explain why you say that the synod continued with the report, since the synod did not accept it? (We have been at synod and taken part in a discussion about this very matter. No decision has been accepted).</p>	<p>We updated them on the progress of this matter at GS Amersfoort. But they still did not accept that this matter has not been decided, and that it is still at this time open for discussion and for decision at synod.</p>

No .	Letter of GKV(continuing)	Acts, Response of BBK of GKV	Questions	Answers
		<p>Church Order and Church Polity, whether additional forms of admonition and discipline are possible and desirable (Decision 4b).</p> <p>e) To give attention to questions relating to the solemnization of a second marriage after divorce, and in connection with this to review the meaning and status of marriage solemnization (Decision 5).</p> <p>f) In addition, the churches were already given the freedom publicly to express judgment in the midst of the congregation, about situations which may occur.</p>		

11. Analysis

It is clear that they are incorrect. No GS has made a decision as yet.

In fact it needs to be said that the present report before GS Amersfoort protects marriage even more, discourages the use of a checklist mentality to see if divorce is allowable, strives to prevent divorce, and uses the style of the kingdom to engender a Christian spirit which seeks to reconcile instead of to divorce. One should applaud such efforts to unite the bond of churches to fight against divorce in the very secularised world of The Netherlands.

Again, this cannot be a ground for separation.

12	<p>Marriage Form</p> <p>The new marriage form pays insufficient attention to what the Bible says about the relationships within marriage. The Bible clearly states <i>‘wives submit to your husbands’</i> (Ef 5: 24, Col. 3: 18, 1 Pet. 3: 1, 5). The new form weakens this biblical teaching by not speaking of <i>‘obey and submit’</i>, as in the old marriage form, but, rather, replaces it by: <i>‘accept as head... and follow’</i>. Also the role of the husband is viewed in a different way as the new</p>	<p>(New Marriage Form)</p> <p>Bridegroom, love your wife, as Christ loves the Church (Eph 5:25-33)</p> <p>Fear the Lord! Live sensibly with your wife and show her respect, for together you share in God’s grace, both in this life and in the life to come. Then you will be able to pray to God without hindrance and receive what you have requested. (1 Pet 3:7) Lead her in a life with the Lord. Care for her and give her security. Accept her loving support as the help which Christ is</p>	<p>Why do you translate ‘voorgaan’ with ‘precede’ since ‘voorgaan’ means guiding and leading?</p> <p>Does ‘accept him as head’ not include the concept of authority and leadership as in the Greek word, <i>kephale</i>?</p> <p>Does Paul in Ephesians in 5-6 not use different terms for the relations between parents and children (obey, honor and submit), workers and bosses (obey, honor and submit),</p>	<p>Yes, it is a matter of translation. Hans VanderJagt accepts responsibility.</p> <p>Yes, but we find the authority of the man needs more attention.</p> <p>They (GKVC) accept our view that their arguments are not strong.</p>
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	<p>form speaks of 'preceding' instead of 'leading'.</p> <p>The old form stated that by their marriage they have to co-operate to extend the human race; in the new form this is weakened where it states 'when the Lord provides the possibility thereto'.</p> <p>This can be interpreted in a way to please people who have secular views about 'having' children.</p>	<p>giving you.</p> <p>Bride, love your husband and assist him by seeking his welfare in everything. (1 Tim 2:8-15) Accept him as head and receive his loving care as the security which Christ is giving you. (Eph. 5:22-24,33). Fear the Lord! Do not be focused upon outward appearance but let your good works adorn you (1 Peter 3:1-5) within the family and beyond it.</p> <p>Purpose</p> <p>God's Word also teaches us about the purpose of marriage. Man and wife may belong to each other in love and enjoy that which God gives them therein. The love between man and woman is exuberantly celebrated in the Song of Solomon. Love is more sparkling than wine and sweeter than honey (SoS. 5:1).</p>	<p>than for the relation between the husband and the wife where she is to love and submit?</p> <p>Could the old form not be abused by those who did not want children on their terms?</p> <p>Does the new form not call and command couples to be fruitful (become parents)?</p> <p>Does the new form not stress that the Lord has to open the possibility to have children; instead of giving couples the possibility to have secular views?</p>	<p>Yes, indeed, one could read the new form in that way.</p> <p>Yes, it could be read in that way.</p>
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		<p>Many waters cannot quench the vehement fire of love (SoS. 8:6,7). Because love is not self seeking, (1Cor. 13:5) those in love will seek the interests of the other. In this way, the lives of both can blossom. Above all together they are to dedicate their lives to God (Josh 24.:15b), and assist each other on the way to eternal life.</p> <p>In addition, it is the will of the Lord to build future generation through marriage with a view to the coming of His kingdom. (Gen 17:7). In Paradise He said to the man and woman : <i>be fruitful and multiply: fill the earth</i> (Gen.1:28).</p> <p>Also today, spouses are called to become parents (1 Tim 2:15), when the Lord provides the</p>		
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		possibility for it (<i>Ook nu worden echtgenoten geroepen tot het ouderschap wanneer de Here de mogelijkheden daarvoor geeft</i>). When they are given children by God, they receive a priceless gift indeed (Ps 127 :3; Prov. 1:7-9). As father and mother they are to portray the image of God in the care and love for their children.		
<p>12. Analysis</p> <p>The questions and answers show that they have not read the new Marriage Form very charitably.</p> <p>The deputies have studied the whole new marriage form and have concluded with the Canadian sister churches that though one may wish that the term 'submit' was maintained, with a Scriptural explanation, the new form does maintain the ideas of the loving headship of the husband and that the wife willingly entrusts herself to his leadership and protection. Indeed, the new form often expresses these biblical concepts in new and fresh ways.</p> <p>'Voorgaan' is leadership and not 'preceding' as though the husband walks ten steps ahead of his wife!</p> <p>Any form can be misused. The old form could be misused as well. That does not make it wrong. The new form calls couples to become parents, i.e. to have children. In a secularised world in which man wants to play God, the new form accents <i>when the LORD opens the possibility to have children</i>. This in no way allows people to adopt secular views and try to take God's role in having or preventing children. That is not only an uncharitable misreading of the text, but simply wrong. The quotation of 1 Tim 2:15 is very telling. Other texts, which come readily to mind (Gen 1:28 and 9:1), are used elsewhere, but here this text focuses on and stresses a woman's role as child-bearer. It is not the most favourite text among those advocating birth-control!</p>				

Again, this accusation does not substantiate but undermines their conclusion that separation was necessary.				
13	Sister churches - PCEA Establishing a sister relation with the PCEA brings the GKV in conflict with the three marks of the true church outlined in article 29 of the Belgic Confession.	On the basis of the assurance that we only engage in discussion regarding church unity with churches that we believe to be true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make a sincere effort to re-engage the PCEA in effective discussions (Art 81 of 2003 Synod of Rockingham)	Since the GKV has its own responsibility, since it decided on the basis of art 29, BC to recognize the PCEA, and since the FRCA views the PCEA as true churches, why do you make this conclusion?	They (GKVC) agree the FRCA has stated this and the GKV has its own responsibility. However, they maintain their contention. Hans VanderJagt says there were more issues. E.g. that the PCEA has an open Lord's table shows this matter is confessional and thus no decision should have been made.
<p>13. Analysis</p> <p>We would have liked the GKV to wait till we decided on the PCEA. However, we must concede that we have been very slow in this and also been internally divided on it. The GKV could not wait any longer. That is unfortunate.</p> <p>One wonders why this criticism is said only of the PCEA and not of other Presbyterian churches.</p> <p>The GKV made its decision on the basis of the reformed confessions, including art 29, B.C. They have stated that in the exercise of sister relations they wish to discuss any leftover areas of concern. Our other sister churches do the same thing.</p> <p>Thus we cannot accept this charge.</p>				
14	Lord's Supper and the army Finally we conclude that the Synods' (Zuidhorn) decisions:	(The GS Zuidhorn decided re chaplains) 1. in the meetings to honor the character of the Christian	Please explain why the decision about military chaplains is contrary to Scripture?	This leads to an un reformed practice of interdenominational communion, in their view. They repeat their comments

<p>1. Most of them in relation to articles 60 and 61 of the Church Order, mentioning that in areas of crisis and war, there is no consistory to exercise oversight over its members, as it is the task of the elders to guard the holiness of the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>2. Another objection was mentioned; soldiers in danger may use this holy sacrament as a magical aid serving for extra protection and safety or as an easy means to eternal salvation.</p> <p>3. Finally, we are of the opinion that this decision fits to the idea for a more open Lord's Supper celebration, as this is already started to be practiced within the Reformed Church (Liberated) GKV of Franeker.</p> <p>are contrary to Scripture</p>	<p>congregation, i.e. that it is a fellowship on the basis of God's Word which expresses mutual supervision and discipline.</p> <p>2. that the chaplain invites only those of whom he is convinced</p> <p>a. that in their local churches they are admitted to the LS;</p> <p>b. they agree with us about the doctrinal 'fundamentals' of the Christian religion;</p> <p>c. they are blameless in conduct; and</p> <p>d. with a view to taking part in the LS they are ready to submit to each other's supervision and discipline.</p>	<p>That there is no consistory on site to supervise does not mean it is wrong, does it? On the mission field only the missionary is there to supervise, and we approve it.</p> <p>Please give proof that such celebrations of the LS are used in magical and unscriptural ways?</p>	<p>in the letter and again refer to Franeker, a local example.</p> <p>Br H Griffioen, who worked out on the mission field, corroborated this and said only the missionary (with approval of the home consistory) supervised. They had to agree.</p> <p>It is a proposition or a supposition that it could be used for magical purposes, etc. So they only presupposed it. It is not based on fact.</p>
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	(eg. I Corinthians 11: 23-29) and are therefore unacceptable.			
<p>14. Analysis</p> <p>We share some of the concerns about chaplaincy and the celebration of the Lord's Supper in areas of crisis and war. However, we have not said that it is impossible, in a mission-type situation, to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a war zone. Our focal point was more that our church order (art 57) requires that all those who attend must have professed the reformed faith and be godly in their walk of life.</p> <p>Citing the possible objection that the sacrament could be used in a magical manner to gain protection in a war (even as Israel did with the ark, for example), is really grasping at straws. The same objection could be made of any proper Lord's Supper celebration.</p> <p>GS Zuidhorn was at pains to state that this decision was not an introduction of an open Lord's table. Yet they contradict this statement of synod and cite a local example to substantiate their objection. One must repeat what is said in #8+9. It does become a very subjective charge.</p> <p>This incorrect charge (#1) and the supposition(#2), as well as the unproven charge (#3) cannot lead to the necessity to separate and liberate.</p>				
15	<p>Blessing by a non-elder</p> <p>The General Synod of Leusden-1999 again determined that the blessing, the salutation and the benediction, can be spoken and applied in an unaltered manner, along with raising of hands, even by a non-elder, (an ordinary</p>	<p>GS Leusden (art 48) decided:</p> <p>In place of the previous decisions about this to declare that each brother appointed by the consistory to lead a worship service is entitled thereby to pronounce unaltered the blessing, also with the raising of</p>	<p>Both preaching and blessing belong to the ministry of reconciliation. We agree that only those in office should fill these functions.</p> <p>But if a non-elder gives the blessing, does this mean that preaching is at risk too? Is there evidence</p>	<p>No, they (GKVC) do not think that preaching will be given to non office bearers.</p>

	<p>congregation member). The Synod of Zuidhorn-2002 decided not to alter this decision, though many churches objected. At present, as new Reformed Churches, we feel that the changes to theory and practices are the result from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devaluation of the character of the preaching. 2. Not seeing the connection between the blessing and the preaching. 3. Devaluation of the doctrine of the three-offices. <p>This Synod's decision makes GKV deviate from Scriptures, as preaching is of unique importance, being the "service of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5: 18-20), performed by the office bearers. Between</p>	<p>hands. Grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To pronounce the blessed greetings and the blessing in God's name no specific requirements apply to this aspect of the worship service that do not apply to his ability to conduct the other aspects, such as the reading of the law, the declaration of grace or leading in prayer. 2. When the consistory appoints someone to lead a service, it pays attention to the conditions for this, namely, his capacity to do this work and his reception in the congregation. 	<p>that preaching too is done by someone not a minister, or not in office?</p> <p>How does this decision devalue the character of the preaching? Do you have evidence that preaching is no longer seen as the ministry of reconciliation?</p> <p>Is this subject that serious that it should, on its own, lead to separation and liberation?</p>	<p>No.</p>
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	the preaching and the blessing, there is a direct link.			
<p>15. Analysis</p> <p>Your deputies share the concern about the blessing being laid on the congregation by a non-elder. We have conveyed that to GS Zuidhorn. One needs to respect the office which the Lord bestows on ordained men in the congregation. We wrote to GS Amersfoort that we have left this matter lie, and gone on to more important issues.</p> <p>However, to say as the GKVc does, that hereby the office of preaching is undervalued goes too far. Though it is a matter of concern, this matter should, on its own, not lead to separation and liberation.</p>				
16			<p>General questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are you reaching out to the GKV churches and bond in an effort to “seek unity in Christ”? 2. How are you responding to those in the GKV churches, who sympathise with your concerns but do not consider that withdrawing is an option for them (or at this time)? 3. Do you think that one reason for the separation has to do 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If one sees that none of the appeals was upheld, then one needs to realise that they are not eager to seek contact at this point. 2. These members need to call their consistory to repentance; if no reformation occurs, they should follow and join the GKVc 3-6. Kerkbegrip disappears in GKV. There in GKV the church is present all over, it is claimed. The church is an open

			<p>with the growing disregard of the antithesis?</p> <p>4. Do you think there is a correlation between synod's decisions and increasing secular trends in the church (ie. Sunday work, divorce, etc.)?</p> <p>5. Do you think the message of the enmity in Gen 3:15 in this time and age has a relation to your decision to break with the GKV?</p> <p>6. Can you prove that the GKV is a pluralistic church in which the truth and the lie both have a lawful place?</p>	<p>market place instead of a building with walls.</p> <p>Watchers on the wall need to be active, and this is lacking in the GKV, in their view.</p> <p>The idea that in the GKV that we need to be more outgoing means the need for defence of the truth, for godliness, etc take a backward seat.</p> <p>The use of discipline (all levels) is not strong in the GKV.</p> <p>Evangelisation is not the task of the church, br J (Hans) vdJ says. But others correct him and say it is not the first task of the church, in their view.</p> <p>They (GKV-c) do not stand on the same foundation as the GKV and thus they cannot come together at this point.</p>
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			<p>7. Do you accept that the FRCA in 2006 would decide to have sister relations both with the GKV and with yourselves? We think in this respect to the decision of the GKV to have sister relations with both the FCS and the FCS continuing.</p>	<p>7. They give us time to admonish the GKV, and to find out how things are. Thus they would not be surprised if we accept both.</p> <p>They would go back together, if they could stand on one basis.</p>
<p>16. Analysis</p> <p>The separation is still very fresh and painful, on both sides. Movement toward each other seems very difficult at this point in time. Your delegates queried these brothers and the answer shows that they are not inclined to seek contact and reconciliation, at this time.</p> <p>From ministers (of the GKV), whom we interviewed, the response came that the contact is impossible because the members of the new Liberation do not make themselves available. Attempts to talk have been frustrated. Attempts to send articles and letters to <i>Reformanda</i> have been blockaded repeatedly. No discussion seems possible. They have tried but hit a brick wall.</p> <p>It seems too early to start pressing the need for reconciliation. The newly Liberated want to see some tangible changes; the other side would like contact and find that walls have gone up high to thwart it. May the LORD use the GS Amersfoort and other means to show to the newly Liberated that (some of their) charges are unsubstantiated and that the GKV wishes to remain fully reformed!</p> <p>Official contact should be maintained at the very least with the newly Liberated so that we can continue to speak with them and to urge them to seek the path of reconciliation, on the basis of Christ's prayer for unity.</p>				

17	Reformed instruction.		What are you doing with respect to reformed instruction. (an added question by WH)	<p>To start up reformed schools again. Meanwhile compromises must be made due to small nos.</p> <p>An e.g. is given of sending their children to the Hervormde school instead of the GKV school.</p>
<p>17. Analysis</p> <p>It is to be deplored that the newly liberated parents withdraw their children from the reformed schools across the land. At the GSR in Rotterdam we were informed that next year no children from the newly Liberated churches would attend any more. They would go to other Christian schools from other denominations (Gereformeerde Gemeenten and the NHK) or to the public schools instead. This is done in spite of the fact that they are welcomed at the reformed schools and are not blocked at all from attending.</p> <p>In the reformed schools teachers must be either from the GKV or the CGK. Teachers who withdraw from the GKV are thus prevented from teaching in the reformed schools. Parents who are not from the GKV or CGK may have their children attend (an interview is held and a board decides on each individual application) but the parents are not members of the school association.</p> <p>One wonders how parents can justify withdrawing their children from reformed schools and sending their children to schools of the Gereformeerde Gemeenten which they have branded as unscriptural and as advocating Scripture-criticism, or to the NHK with all its unreformed teachings.</p> <p>To start up new reformed schools seems such a waste of manpower and resources. Also, it indicates that instead of attempting reconciliation, the gap between the GKV + GKVC is widening. That is a real pity.</p> <p>This is an important aspect of church life and your deputies thus asked for information.</p>				

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The GKVc asks us to accept their charges of Scriptural deviation against the GKV. After testing their arguments, we find them wanting.

The letter from the GKVc has not substantiated their claim that the GKV has no right any more to the title of true church. Though we in the past too have concerns about trends in the GKV, our synods did not decide to stop sister relations or to put them under strain. And though we sent letters with our concerns (as well as appreciation) to deputies and the GS Amersfoort, we are heartened by the strong decisions of GS Amersfoort. We cannot come to the same conclusion to separate. Some of the objections are incorrect, some are uncharitable, and not one leads to the necessity of separation and liberation.

Since the GKVc asks us to accept their claim to be the true, continuing GKV, we must answer that this is impossible. Instead we must urge them to re-consider their argumentation and their accusations. This should lead them to seek reconciliation with the GKV, and so restore the unity for which Christ earnestly prayed just before his unique, atoning sacrifice unto death on the cross. The apostles consistently urged the churches to remain united (see the strong argument in Paul's letter to the Ephesians).

Having stated this, it would be unjust to enter into a sister relation with the GKVc.

Yet we hear in the voice of these brothers a strong desire to remain reformed. One cannot but appreciate this. Thus we need to continue to have contacts with them so that we can speak to them and continue to urge them, as well as our Dutch sister church, to work for reconciliation on the basis of truth and love.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To express grief that some members separated from the GKV and formed the GKVc.

Grounds:

- a. Such a separation always causes much grief as it divides believers who used to sit around the same Lord's table. It especially grieves our Lord who prayed fervently that the apostolic witness would build one, apostolic church.
- b. It also means that brothers who all want to keep the church on a strongly reformed basis now stand divided.

Some are in the GKVc and some in the GKV. This is both a pity and a grievous hurt.

2. Not to accept the accusations against our sister churches, the GKV, but to defend the honor and reputation of our Dutch sisters. At the same time to remain diligent in monitoring the trends in our Dutch sister churches (GKV).

Grounds:

- a. The letter from the GKVc has not substantiated their charges against the GKV.
- b. Though we share some of the concerns (e.g.s. about the number of new hymns and some aspects of liturgical changes), we cannot come to the same strong conclusions. Some of the objections are incorrect or unsubstantiated. This is seen in their charges re the fourth and seventh commandments, and those re toleration of false doctrine by theological colleges. Some are uncharitable, as in the cases of their charges re the new marriage form, and some of their charges re the celebration of the Lord's Supper in a military zone, as well as in some charges re the PCEA.
- c. The members of the GKVc had not exhausted the avenues of appeal before they separated and formed the GKVc. Matters such as those relating to the fourth and seventh commandments had not been finished when the GKVc was formed. The matters re new hymns remain unfinished.
- d. Though we too have concerns about trends in the GKV, we cannot come to the same conclusion, namely, that they warranted separation.
- e. It is a serious matter to allow deformation to go unchallenged, but it is also a serious matter to separate when it is not warranted. The injunctions to remain one in the Lord (e.g.s. John 17 and Eph 4), sometimes even when serious problems arose as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible (cf Paul's letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians). The letters of Paul and the other apostles constantly remind us of this. Unwarranted separation then becomes schism.
- f. The command to *defend and promote the honour and reputation* of our (unbelieving) neighbours (LD 43) applies not only to us as individuals but also to our sister relations.
- g. Yet there is the need for diligence in our sister relations with the GKV. Deputies in their submissions to the GS of Zuidhorn and Amersfoort have specified their concerns as they related to the reports about the fourth commandment, reports about marriage and divorce, the decision re the blessing as given by a non-elder, the liturgical changes and proposals about the same, including the proliferation of new hymns, as well as the

decisions re the chaplaincy and celebration of the Lord's Supper in war zones. We thus have registered our concerns as well. Such diligence will need to continue, in accordance with the rules for sister relations.

- h. On the other hand, deputies have shown that diligence in discussing developments and trends in our Dutch sister churches has led to good results. This should be continued. For there continue to be some trends within our Dutch sister churches that do cause concern.

- 3. We cannot at this time positively respond to the request of the GKVc to acknowledge them as "the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands."

Grounds:

- a. As decided at Synod Rockingham 2003, we as FRCA acknowledge the GKV as giving "*evidence of continuing faithfulness.*" At the same time the FRCA want to "*discuss and to continue to discuss with the GKV deputies the concerns as to the development within the GKV and as outlined and recommended in the report of deputies*".²⁶
- b. From the information received we conclude that their charges lacked substance, or were not convincing enough to warrant separation. Thus it is impossible to accept their claim to be the continuing GKV.

- 4. Not to accede to the request to enter sister relations with the GKVc.

Ground: Not being able to recognise them as the continuing GKV means that we cannot enter sister relations with them.

- 5. To maintain official contact with the GKVc so that we can work for reconciliation between them and the GKV, on the basis of truth and love.

Grounds:

- a. We hear in the voice of the brothers of the GKVc a strong desire to remain reformed. One cannot but appreciate this desire to remain reformed. Thus we need to continue to have contacts with them so that we can speak to them and continue to urge them, as well as our Dutch sister church, to work for reconciliation on the basis of truth and love.

²⁶ Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003, Article 41.

- b. Indeed, unwarranted separation is against Christ's prayer for unity, and we need to address this in these contacts.
 - c. Visits can be made to the GKVc at the same time as those to the general synods of our sister churches.
 - d. There are those in the GKV who share similar concerns and have openly and publicly indicated their concerns.
 - e. The GKVc seceded in 2003. Much has occurred since then. There is a need for up-to-date contacts, especially after the GS of Amersfoort and its decisions, including its attempts to re-open official contacts. Also, we must take into consideration the synod which the GKVc will hold (as yet) in 2005, D.V.
6. To have synod respond to the letter of the GKVc.
- Ground:* After a decision is made by synod, only then can an official response be sent. Synod should send such an official answer to the GKVc in accordance with this decision.

¹ Their address reads:

Bring the warm and genuine greetings from the GGRI-NTT to our brothers and sisters who at this moment have separated themselves from the GKV. The prayer, expectation, the call and the desire from us, as your fellow-believers is: turn back to the fellowship of the GKV, do not separate, dear brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus. We do not in the least wish to mingle in the problems. What we want to pass on to you are only words to stimulate you. Your attitude of criticism and dissatisfaction with the decisions of the GS Zuidhorn may not be reason to separate yourself from the ecclesiastical fellowship. Travel the ecclesiastical route. Discuss further the decisions taken. Put in your official proposal or your appeal for reconsideration of the decisions which you consider non-Scriptural. Is your right not guaranteed in Art 31, C.O.? Thus you have opportunity to consider together and to listen to each other, and to talk about all the problem which exist, in a spirit of brotherly love and unity. You are undoubtedly of the same mind as us that our Lord Jesus Christ does not want his church to be racked with divisions. To separate (to withdraw from the fellowship: to walk out) is not the only way which remains for solving the problems, as long as the best way is still open. Give the Holy Spirit the room to work. The Lord Jesus Christ is sad when He sees the GKV experience a schism. Think of the prayer of our Lord: I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me (John 17:20-21). Consider, brothers and sisters, that the Lord Jesus as our only Mediator and Intercessor still pleads for us with this prayer. The GGRI-NTT, as part of the history of the GKV, are really saddened to hear of this serious struggle taking place in the fellowship of the GKV, and which already has as consequence that brothers and sisters have separated themselves. While we examine ourselves, we, your fellow-believers, yet ask you: will we continue to give expression to the practise of "separate yourself" in our church life and church history? Let's learn to become more mature and more wise in our resolution of problems and differences. May the LORD help you all! Amen.

¹ The National Synod of Dordrecht of 1618/19 made a statement with six rules about the question of sabbath and Sunday. These rules enjoy moral authority among us. They are as follows:

1. In the fourth commandment there is a ceremonial and a moral element.
2. The rest on the seventh day after the Creation, and the strict observance of this day assigned to the Jewish nation in particular were ceremonial.
3. That a definite and appointed day is set aside for worship, and along with it as much rest as is necessary for worship and for holy meditation, belongs to the moral element.
4. Now that the Sabbath of the Jews is set aside, Christians are duty bound to hallow the day of Sunday solemnly.
5. This day has always been kept since the time of the apostles in the early church.
6. This day must be so consecrated to worship that on it men rest from all servile labor (except those required by charity and present necessities), and likewise from all such recreations as prevent the worship of God.

¹ Is the seventh day instituted already from the creation of the world as a day of rest for people and for the worship of God? And, must, according to the Fourth Commandment, a day which is repeated periodically be appointed for the service of God?

With most of the fathers Gomarus answers the first question in the negative. He does not consider it in agreement with Scripture that the seventh day found its origin at the creation of the world (*Opera*, III, p 327, no.2). As evidence he refers to Gen 2:2,3 (*Opera*, III, p.327/8, no.4-10); to the time of the patriarchs when there is no mention of a sabbath (*Opera*, III p 328, no 11,12); to Gen 8:10,12 (*Opera*, III pag 328, no 13); Ex 16:23 and 25 (*Opera*, III page 328, no 16), where he considers that the maintaining of the sabbath was not necessary in order to keep the distinction of time in weeks (*Opera*, III pag 329, no 20), and that the heathens, if they celebrated the seventh day, did not do so on the strength of a creational command (*Opera*, III pag 331, no 44), and Gomarus points to the fact that God punished the Jews for violation of the sabbath but never the gentiles (*Opera*, III pag 331, no 53).

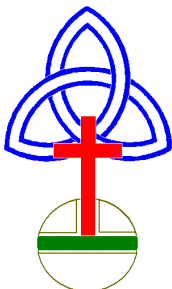
All these considerations lead Gomarus to the conclusion that the sabbath is an institution from the time of Moses (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 57). Men as Calvin, Hieronymus Zanchius, Josiah Simler and Cornelius Bertram (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 58-61) posited the opposite view (the sabbath as a creational institution) but never viewed this as an absolutely definite truth but always presented it as a probable proposition (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 57). The testimony of other writers is given as evidence of his stance (*Opera*, III pag 332, no 62).

Gomarus also answers in the negative the question whether a certain day is set aside for the worship of the LORD. The arguments in favour of this view never convinced him (*Opera*, III pag 334, no 1). Many theologians distinguish between the ceremonial and the temporal from the moral and abiding in their explanation of the Fourth Commandment. They draw a line between the outward aspect and the moral aspect of the seventh day (*Opera*, III pag 335, no 9). Gomarus considers that proof for the view that the apostles appointed the Lord's Day in the place of the sabbath is not delivered by referring to Acts 20:7 (*Opera*, III pag 335, no 2), 1 Cor 16:1,2 (*Opera*, III pag 337, no 22) and Rev 1:10 (*Opera*, III pag 338, no 32).

One may speak of the custom of the church of the apostles, but not of their command (*Opera*, III pag 339, no 40). This is made clear by quotations from Bullinger, Ursinus, Aretius, Zanchius, Simler, Paraeus, Joh Cuchlinus and Thomas Aquinas (*Opera*, III pag 339, no 40-48). After considering all these things Gomarus deems that it clear that it is not certain the Lord's Day or the first day of the week was instituted by the apostles for the worship of the God. Nevertheless he must defend the public worship of the Lord, in agreement with the general

sense of the Fourth Commandment and this cannot be violated without shortchanging or injuring the public worship. God has so directed things that we all should celebrate the spiritual sabbath and the keep the public day of worship holy, without injury to it or without superstition (*Opera*, III pag 340, no 49). [G.P. van Itterzon, Franciscus Gomarus. 's-Gravenhage 1929 (diss)]

Appendix 7: Supplementary Reports Deputies Relations with Sister Churches



Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia Maintaining Relations with Sister Churches

Thursday, May 18, 2006

c/ AMC Bruning, Corresponding Clerk
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Website: <http://frca.org.au/sischurches.cgi>

To the Deputies of the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (lib)
Postbus/ P.O. Box/ B.P. 499
8000 AL Zwolle
The Netherlands
bbk@gbouw.nl

Dear brothers/sisters in the Lord,

Last year we enjoyed a visit from one of your deputies, Rev J Plug. We discussed with him some difficulties we had encountered re the reports about the decision of the GKSA (Dopperkerken) to ordain female deacons.

During your 2005 GS of Amersfoort we read and heard the report from your deputies that a tripartite meeting had occurred in South Africa among you, the GKSA and our sister churches, the VGKSA. Apparently, at that meeting the delegates of the GKSA stated and confirmed that such female deacons have no standing in the consistory, i.e. have no ruling authority in the churches. On that basis you felt free to offer sister relations to the GKSA.

However, our delegate to the 2005 Synod of the VGKSA heard the delegates of the GKSA explain to that synod that such female deacons held a normal position in the consistory! It was stated clearly and publicly.

Later on we also heard that delegates from the GKSA who attended the 2005 Synod of the RCNZ also confirmed that such female deacons held a normal position in the consistory and would thus be involved in some ruling functions within the churches. This causes quite some problems for the RCNZ, who have strongly opposed such female deacons in the consistory. In their sister relations with the CRCAustralia, who have female deacons, they have taken a strong stance against this.

Thus we received conflicting reports, and we relayed that to Rev J Plug.

To become clearer on the matter we asked advice from Rev Eugene Viljoen, one of the delegates of the VGKSA, to the tripartite meeting. He sent a copy of the minutes of that meeting (which we had translated). We quote some relevant parts of those minutes.

The manner in which the 2003 Synod worked with the Scripture about the opening of the deacon's office shows that the Synod submits itself to the Scripture and does not let itself be influenced by Scripture-criticism. The whole meeting supports this.

Delegates of the GKN(V) note that they work with the decisions of the GKSA as documented in the Acta and not with what they expect might happen. It is clear to the whole meeting that the GKSA synod 2003 did not make decisions with the intent of paving the way for the acceptance of women into the office of minister and elder.

It is clear to the delegates of the GKN(V) that the decision of the GKSA regarding women in the office of deacon is not based on principles critical of Scripture (skrifkritiese). The delegation of the GKN(V) is of the opinion that the inclusion of women in deaconal service does not hinder church unity, but they ask time to consider how the decision regarding the office of deacon will influence the teaching about the offices ("ampseleer") in terms of confession and church order.

Two of the delegates from our sister churches in South Africa also gave information indicating how in various GKSA congregations they have ordained female deacons who hold normal positions within the consistory. Indeed this has caused several of their members to leave and to join our sister churches, the VGKSA.

At our meetings we agreed that we should report this anomaly to you.

We read with thankfulness on the GKSA website that their last general synod has withdrawn this decision about female deacons (on procedural grounds). Yet it may not take long before another proposal to do the same lands on their synod's table. Thus we want to keep you alerted.

Yet we wish to make clear that we accept you acted in good faith, on the basis of reports and letters (also from the VGKSA).

We hope we can help each other in this matter.

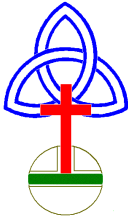
Appendix 7: Supplementary Reports Deputies Relations with Sister Churches

We send our heartfelt greetings to you and look forward to receiving your delegates to our upcoming synod in July/2006, D.V.

With brotherly greetings,

Rev W Huizinga, chairman

Br AMC Bruning, corresponding clerk



**Deputies of the
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Relations with Sister Churches
FRCA 2003 - 2006**

13 June, 2006

c/o AMC Bruning, Corresponding Clerk
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Website: <http://frca.org.au/sischurches.cgi>

To the Secretary
Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (restored).

Dear Rev S.de Marie,

The Lord willing, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia will hold it's 23rd Synod in July 2006.

On behalf of the F.R.C.A we as Deputies for Sister Church Relations of the Free Reformed Church in Australia, having been in discussion with you therefore invite you to send delegates as observers to the FRCA Synod, which will be in session from 10th July 2006, for approximately two weeks.

The Synod of the FRCA, will be convened by the Church of West Kelmscott, and will hold an opening convocation in the Armadale Church building, at 7:30pm.

Visiting delegates will be greeted at the Perth International Airport, and the Church of West Kelmscott will arrange all accommodation, meals and transport.

Our synods have made rules for delegates from other churches. We have four categories (delegates from sister churches, delegates from church with whom we have temporary ecclesiastical contact; delegates from churches with whom the FRCA has entered official contact and those with whom we have come into contact). It will be up to synod to decide which category you belong to. But we would anticipate that synod would give you the opportunity to address Synod as well as other normal privileges of meals and accommodation. It is anticipated that the best time would be in the first week of Synod.

Appendix 7: Supplementary Reports Deputies Relations with Sister Churches

We as deputies for Sister Church Relations would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you as delegates and would suggest this is done during the days that Synod is in session.

Should you not be able to attend in person, than we would give opportunity for your letter of greetings to be submitted for reading during Synod Session.

Please respond to us as Deputies as soon as possible, to advise your intentions, so the necessary arrangements and planning can be made. Further detail will then be provided to you in future communications.

With Christian Greetings
On behalf of Deputies

Rev. W. Huizinga
Convenor

Br. AMC. Bruning
Corresponding Clerk

Appendix 8: Supplementary Items to Deputies Reports for Sister Church Relations

1. GKV

Following discussions and decisions at the GKV Synod Amersfoort, and with BBK representatives, and further discussions and observations at the Synod of the FRCSA attended by FRCA deputies, we discussed what seemed to be an anomaly in the decisions and grounds relating to the recognition of the GKSA by the GKV. See attached letter and minutes for details.

2. Publication of Synod Acts and Deputies Reports Reports

Deputies make a suggestion to Synod for the publication/printing of the Synod Acts and Deputies reports.

Deputies inform Synod that the current Deputies Reports has been formatted in A5 booklet size and in the format of Synod acts.

We propose that as the Deputies reports are already printed and published and also posted on the Web site, that they are not again prepared to be included in the Acts of Synod booklet, thereby;

1. keeping the costs of preparation and printing down
2. keeping the synod Acts to a reasonable size
3. printing out only a limited number of the Deputies reports for issuing to Churches and Sister churches for their "file" copy only.

Ontmoeting van deputate van die VGKSA, GKN(V) en die GKSA op 9 en 10 September 2004 te Potchefstroom

Opening:

Dr. Neels Smit: Lees uit Galasiërs 1 en doen 'n gebed.

Presensie en verwelkoming:

Henk ten Brinke (GKN(v)), Erik de Boer (GKN(v)), Rob Visser (VGKSA), Pieter Nel (VGKSA), Eugene Viljoen (VGKSA), Callie Coetzee (GKSA), Dries du Plooy (GKSA), Neels Smit (GKSA), Douw Breed (GKSA). Verskoning vanweë siekte: Ds. Ben Fourie (GKSA).

Notulering

Besluit: Dat daar net genotuleer word wat ooreengekom is as korrek.

Bedanking:

Ds. Ten Brinke spreek 'n woord van dank teenoor die GKSA vir die hartlike ontvangs in Potchefstroom.

Verwagtings van afgevaardigdes

Besprekinge word kortliks gevoer oor die verwagtinge van die vergadering.

- a. Meer duidelikheid oor hoe ons die pad vorentoe saam as kerke sal loop.
- b. Duidelikheid oor wat die besluit van die GKN(V) se sinode aangaande die GKSA is.
- c. Advies vanaf die GKN(V).
- d. Gesprek oor die brief van die VGKSA van 23 Januarie en die sake wat daarin gemeld is. Kennis word geneem dat die broeders van die VGKSA die voorgenoemde brief onttrek.
- e. Beklemtoning van die erns van die VGKSA met eenheid met die GKSA.
- f. Dat dit nodig is dat afgevaardigdes oop en eerlik sal wees en sal sê waar ons mekaar nodig het.

Terugblik op Zuidhorn

Die besluit van die GKSA sinode 2003 (Vgl GKSA 2003:201) word voorgehou en gesprek word gevoer. Broers van die GKSA en van die GKN(V) stel hoe hulle die besluit by Zuidhorn verstaan.

Afgevaardigdes van die GKSA stel dat daar volgens hulle kerkregtelik onordelik op die sinode te Zuidhorn opgetree is deur getuienis vanaf die VGKSA toe te laat wat nie getoets is nie. Die broeders van GKN(V) gee egter die versekering dat die besluit van Zuidhorn nie beteken dat die aanbod van ekumeniese eenheid afgekeur is nie, maar dat die staking van stemme met die besluit bloot inhou dat die aanbod van die GKSA om ekumeniese eenheid met die GKN(V) nog afgehandel moet word. Die afvaardiging van die GKN(V) gee ook die versekering dat hulle steeds streef na susterkerkrelasie met die GKSA soos die sinode te Zuidhorn besluit het. Die besluit oor ekumeniese eenheid (susterkerkrelasie) is dus hangende. Die afvaardiging van die GKSA aanvaar die versekering van die GKN(V) dat die aanbod nie van die hand gewys is nie.

Besluite van die GKSA Sinode 2003 t.a.v die VGKSA

Die besluit van die GKSA Sinode 2003 (Acta:209) word voorgehou. Kennis word geneem van die redes waarom die deputate van die VGKSA nie geantwoord het op die brief van die GKSA se deputate in reaksie op hulle brief van 23 Januarie nie. Die broeders van die VGKSA beklemtoon dat ekumeniese eenheid met die GKSA hulle erns is en dat eenheid vir hulle ook strukturele eenheid beteken.

Ten op sigte van Zuidhorn: Die broeders van die VGKSA sê dit was vir hulle ook 'n ongelukkige gebeurtenis. Hulle verwys na vorige samesprekings met die GKSA en stel dat hulle nie die GKSA as Skrifkritiese kerk gesien het nie, maar wel beklemtoon het dat hulle bekommernis het oor sekere sake in die GKSA. Die broeders erken dat hulle te kort geskiet het deur nie te antwoord op die briewe wat die GKSA aan hulle geskryf het nie.

Daar word besluit dat inhoudelike sake wat tussen die VGKSA en die GKSA nog hangende is (waaronder die toespraak van ds. Nel by die sinode in Zuidhorn) in die res van die vergadering ingewerk sal word vir sover dit pas in die aangenome agenda. Sake wat nog oorbly, sal in gesprekke tussen die GKSA en die VGKSA behandel word. Daar word verder besluit dat die GKSA en die VGKSA ooreenkom om minstens twee keer per jaar bymekaar te kom vir samesprekings.

Ontwikkelinge binne die GKN(V)

Ds. De Boer meld van twee spesifieke verwickelinge ná die Sinode in Zuidhorn, te wete mense wat nie tevrede is nie met die sinode se besluite oor die "Sondagviering" en met die behandeling van die deputaterapport "Egskeiding".

Ontwikkelinge binne die VGKSA

Afgevaardigdes van die VGKSA meld dat daar mooi verwickelinge is. As voorbeeld word gestel dat die eerste blanke student van eie opleiding beroepbaar gestel is. Hy het intussen 'n beroep ontvang. Twee swart studente is ook ge-eksamineer en beroepbaar gestel. Twee klassies is ingestel. Twee swart kerke is deel van een van die klassies. Een swart gemeente het 'n "sendende" kerk geword wat sending doen.

In een van die VGKSA se gemeentes is daar 'n aantal lidmate wat die gedagte van die Teonomie aanhang.

Ontwikkelinge binne die GKSA

Afgevaardigdes meld:

- Dat daar na Sinode 2003 redelik roeringe was oor die vrou in die diakenamp en ook oor die nuwe Psalmomdigting wat deur die sinode vir gebruik beskikbaar gestel is.
- Dat verhouding met Vendas van Soutpansberg steeds gespanne is. Goeie vordering word egter tans gemaak in verhouding met swart kerke.
- Dat die GKSA se teologiese skool sodanig selfstandig is dat indien Noordwes Universiteit in 'n rigting sou beweeg wat sou bots met die oortuiging en beginsels van die GKSA dit nie die teologiese skool direk negatief sou raak nie.
- Dat, hoewel gesprek oor korrespondensie met die CRCNA voortgesit word, daar ondersoek ingestel sal word na vermeende afwykings van die gereformeerde hermeneutiek en die gereformeerde kerklike praktyk

(liturgië ens.) en dat daar by die volgende sinode oor die saak gerapporteer sal word.

Besluite van die GKSA Sinode 2003.

Broeders van die GKSA spreek waardering uit vir die skriftelike kommentaar van die GKN(V) oor die GKSA se besluit oor toelating van die vrou tot die amp van diaken.

Brothers of the GKSA express their appreciation for the written commentary of the GKN(V) concerning the decision of the GKSA regarding the admittance of women to the office of deacon.

Die konklusie van die kommentaar is: The conclusion of the commentary is:

“De manier waarop de sinode 2003 is omgegaan met de Schrift inzake de vraag naar de openstelling van de diakenambt geeft er blijkt van dat de Sinode zich onderwerpt aan de Schrift, en zich niet laten beïnvloeden door Schriftkritische noties”. Die hele vergadering ondersteun dit.

The manner in which the 2003 Synod worked with the Scripture about the opening of the deacon's office shows that the Synod submits itself to the Scripture and does not let itself be influenced by Scripture-criticism. The whole meeting supports this.

Die res van die kommentaar word indringend bespreek.

The rest of the commentary is discussed in detail.

Na aanleiding van 'n verwysing in die kommentaar van die GKN(V) beklemtoon die afgevaardigdes van die GKSA dat die studie wat Prof Fika van Rensburg en ander wetenskaplikes voor die sinode van 2003 oor die plek van die vrou gedoen het, nie 'n studie is wat deur die GKSA onderneem is nie, maar deur die universiteit. Die resultate van die studie was nie op die agenda van die sinode nie.

In relation to a reference in the commentary of the GKN (V), the delegates of the GKSA emphasise that the study of Prof Fika van Rensburg and other theological experts which was made before the synod of 2003 regarding the place of women in office, was not a study undertaken by the GKSA, but by the university. The results of this study was not on the agenda of the synod.

Bespreking word gevoer oor die GKSA se besluit om vroue tot die amp van die diaken toe te laat. Afgevaardigdes van die GKSA beklemtoon dat dit onbillik sou wees om te aanvaar dat indien 'n kerk vroue tot die amp van diaken toelaat, dié kerk daarom Skrifkrities sou wees. Die GKSA afgevaardigdes beklemtoon die feit dat die GKSA in die besluitneming oor die vrou in die amp voortdurend gepoog het om dit volgens die duidelik geformuleerde hermeneutiese beginsels te doen. Ander afgevaardigdes word gevra om te waak dat die GKSA se besluite nie beoordeel word in die lig van wat vermoed hoe dinge verder sal verwickel nie, maar op wat werklik gebeur.

A discussion follows regarding the decision of the GKSA to allow women into the office of deacon. Delegates of the GKSA emphasise that it would be unjust to accept that a church that allows women into the office of deacon, would therefore be guilty of Scripture-criticism ("Skrikrities"). The delegates of the GKSA emphasise the fact that the GKSA continuously attempted to make decisions regarding women in the office of deacon according to clearly defined hermeneutic principles. Other delegates are asked to be careful not to judge the GKSA decisions in the light of how they presume things will develop, but according to what really happens.

Afgevaardigdes van die GKN(V) wys daarop dat hulle werk met die besluite van die GKSA soos opgeteken in die Acta en nie in wat hulle verwag gaan gebeur nie. Vir die hele vergadering is dit duidelik dat die GKSA Sinode 2003 nie in sy besluitnemings voorbereidings gedoen het dat vroue tot die amp van predikant en ouderling toegelaat word nie.

Delegates of the GKN(V) note that they work with the decisions of the GKSA as documented in the Acta and not with what they expect might happen. It is clear to the whole meeting that the GKSA synod 2003 did not make decisions with the intent of paving the way for the acceptance of women into the office of minister and elder.

Vrae oor "Hermeneutiese uitgangspunte".

Questions regarding "Hermeneutic principles"

Na aanleiding van die geskrewe dokumente van die GKN(V) en die standpunte van die deputate van die GKN(V) en die VGKSA dat die voorbeelde aangaande Van Rensburg en Vergeer wel buite die gestelde uitgangspunte val, antwoord die deputate van die GKSA soos volg:

Die uitgangspunte soos aanvaar deur die GKSA Sinode van 1988 word steeds deur die GKSA gehandhaaf. Die versekering word gegee dat wanneer iemand buite die ondertekeningsformulier en hierdie uitgangspunte tree, daar in terme van die relevante kerkordelike bepalings opgetree word – soos inderdaad reeds gebeur het.

In relation to the written documents of the GKN(V) and the points of view of the deputies of the GKN(V) and VGKSA that the examples concerning Van Rensburg and Vergeer fall outside the given principles, the deputies of the GKSA answered as follows:

The principles as accepted by the GKSA synod of 1988 is still maintained by the GKSA. The assurance is given that if somebody acts outside the "Ondertekeningsformulier" and these principles, action is taken in terms of the relevant church order regulations- as has indeed already happened.

Relasie tussen die besluit “vrou in die diakenamp” en kerklike eenheid.

The relation between the decision “women in office of deacon” and church unity.

Daar word ooreengekom dat eenheid tussen kerke op eenheid in belydenis berus. Afgevaardigdes van die GKSA stel dat na hulle oortuiging die besluit oor toelating van vroue tot die diakenamp nie die eenheid tussen die GKSA en die GKN(V) en die VGKSA raak nie.

It is agreed that unity among churches is based on unity in confession. Delegates of the GKSA state that they are convinced that the decision to allow women into the office of deacon, will not influence the unity between the GKSA, GKN(V) and VGKSA.

Die afgevaardigdes van die VGKSA stem saam dat die besluit van die GKSA oor die toelating van vroue tot die diakenamp nie op 'n skrifkritiese benadering berus nie. Hulle stel dat dit egter nog nie vir hulle duidelik is hoe - as die besluit saam gelees word met ander sake, byvoorbeeld sake wat in die toespraak van die VGKSA in Zuidhorn gemeld is - die besluit oor vroue in die amp van diaken die verhouding tussen die GKSA en die VGKSA raak nie. Die sake sal daarom by die eersvolgende vergadering tussen die twee kerke opgeneem word.

The delegates of the VGKSA agree that the decision of the GKSA to allow women into the office of deacon is not based on a “skrifkritiese” approach. They state that it is not clear to them, if the decision is considered with other issues, for example, the issues mentioned in the speech of the VGKSA in (2002 GS of) Zuidhorn (of the GKN(V)), how the decision regarding women into the office of deacon will influence the relationship between the GKSA and VGKSA.

Dit is vir die afgevaardigdes van die GKN(V) duidelik dat die besluit van die GKSA aangaande vroue in die diakenamp nie op Skrifkritiese gronde berus nie. Die afgevaardigdes van die GKN(V) is van oordeel dat die inskakeling van die vrou in die diakonale diens nie die kerklike eenheid verhinder nie, maar hulle vra tyd om te besin oor hoe die besluit oor die diakenamp die ampsleer raak in terme van die belydenis en die KO.

It is clear to the delegates of the GKN(V) that the decision of the GKSA regarding women in the office of deacon is not based on “skrifkritiese” principles. The delegates of the GKN(V) is of the opinion that the inclusion of women in deaconal service does not hinder church unity, but they ask time to consider how the decision regarding the office of deacon will influence the teaching about the offices (“ampsleer”) in terms of confession and church order.

Hoe verhoudinge tussen die GKSA en ander kerke die verhouding tussen die GKSA en die VGKSA en die GKN(V) raak.

Die afgevaardigdes van die GKSA verduidelik dat daar nie 'n kerklike eenheid tussen die GKSA en die NGK of die NHK is nie. Sedert 1958 is daar gesprekke met die twee kerke omdat hulle dieselfde belydenis het as die GKSA. Die strewe is dat die drie kerke moet kom tot kerklike eenheid, maar dan natuurlik

net op grond van eenheid in belydenis. Dit kon vanweë baie verskille wat uitdruklik geformuleer is, nog nie realiseer nie. Tans word op 'n kritiese opbouende vlak oor belydenis sake gesprek gevoer soos in die verlede. Daar word ook op verskillende raakvlakke byvoorbeeld oor onderwys saam gewerk.

Al drie kerke (GKSA, NHK en NGK) stem saam dat daar tans nie enigsins sprake kan wees van kerklike eenheid van die drie kerke nie.

Die broeders van die GKSA stel hulle ongelukkigheid met die feit dat daar in die toespraak by Zuidhorn deur die VGKSA die indruk geskep is dat die GKSA geen kritiese houding het teenoor dit wat fout is in die ander twee Afrikaanse kerke nie.

Die afvaardiging van die VGKSA en die GKN(V) vra 'n aantal vrae oor die verhouding van die GKSA met die NGK. Die vrae word in diepte bespreek en daar word ooreengekom dat daar in bilaterale gesprekke verder aan die saak aandag gegee sal word.

Verhouding met Soutpansberg

Afgevaardigdes stel dat daar na vorige gesprekke met die VGKSA en die GKN(V) geen verdere verwikkelinge was nie.

Ondersteuning vir aansoek met ICRC (IKRK)

GKSA sal GKN(V) nader vir ondersteuning vir aansoek van GKSA by die ICRC.

Praktiese invulling van sustersrelasie

Dit is duidelik dat bande met mekaar nie eerstens 'n praktiese saak is nie maar 'n "gehoorsaamheidsaak". Tog is dit ook nodig dat die eenheid tussen die kerke tot praktiese uitlewing moet kom.

Evaluering van gesprek

Eerlikheid: Baie positief

Openheid: Baie positief

Moeite en koste met die gesprek in Potchefstroom: Dankbaarheid uitgespreek.

Volgende samesprekings: Dit is belangrik vir almal teenwoordig.

Bilaterale gesprek tussen VGKSA en GKSA: Vir almal duidelik dat dit moet plaasvind.

Bereidheid om weer voor volgende sinodes gesprek te voer: Almal beskou dit as nodig.

Gesindheid oor optrede in verlede: Dat ons mekaar verseker dat daar nie kwaadwilligheid by enige optrede van die verlede was nie en dat almal dit so aanvaar.

Vertroue: Dat vertroue by almal na vandag se gesprek gegroei het.

Ekumeniese relasies: Groei het plaasgevind

Hermeneutiese sake: Ietwat teleurstellend ervaar deur GKN(V).

Datum van volgende gesprekke: Dat dit kan plaasvind maar die datum sal later vasgestel word.

Korrekheid van die notule

Die notule word deur middel van 'n dataprojektor op die skerm vertoon en deur die volle vergadering goedgekeur.

Afsluiting: Henk ten Brinke sluit met gebed af.

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Appendix 9: Deputies Relations with Other Churches – Indonesia and the Philippines

Introduction

Appointed by Synod Rockingham 2003, deputies met 11 times. Rev PKA DeBoer was appointed by Synod 2003 as convener. Br John Bosveld continued as treasurer; Rev. W. VanderJagt continued as clerk. As members participating in our deputyship were Br B. Bosveld, Br. W. Geurts and Br R. Huizinga.

According to the mandate our report contains three parts. The first part deals with the Churches in Indonesia. The second section deals with the Churches of the Philippines. The last segment will give insight into the use of the 'Guidelines for deputies' and the financial aspect of our work.

1. Churches in Indonesia

Appendix 9a: Gereja Gereja di Indonesia

Deputies received the following mandate regarding the GGRI:

1. To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To continue to visit the conference/synods of the GGRI ... subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available.
4. To financially support br Pila Njuka (along with his family) to complete his studies at Hamilton, monitor his progress, and prepare for his return to Indonesia. To invite him to Australia on his way back to Indonesia. To ask the Indonesian churches how he could best be utilised in their midst, and to support him in the mean time. Where necessary to support his reintegration into Indonesia and among the churches.
5. To monitor and determine the best possibilities to train Indonesian theological students - by either supporting and helping in setting up a college for theological training (for eg. In Kupang) or sending another student overseas to study.
6. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise.

7. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.
8. To financially support ... Rev Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study English for three months in Australia ... subject to an expected request from the GGRI deputies and ... subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to the availability of funding from the churches.

With gratitude we can report that our contacts with the GGRI have been very good. The GGRI continues to show faithfulness to the Lord as He teaches in His Word and as explained by the Reformed Confessions. Deputies got an invitation to attend the synod in Karipi, [East Sumba] in 2003 [see attachment 1]. Br. John Bosveld visited this synod as our delegate. Two delegates [Br. J. Bosveld and Rev. W. van der Jagt; Br B. Bosveld came along as an observer] could visit the Conference of the Indonesian churches in Kupang 2004 [the report got lost due to computer problems]. Br John Bosveld and Brian Bosveld visited the Indonesian churches in 2004 [this was a personal visit, but upon the request of deputies the brothers visited the churches as well – see attachment 2], while Rev. PKA DeBoer and Br Brian Bosveld visited the first session of their synod in Kalu [Sumba] [see attachment 3], December 2005. Upon invitation of the Indonesian deputies Rev. W. VanderJagt visited the second session of Synod Kalu in January 2006 [see attachment 4]. At times deputies traveled to Indonesia for holidays or for other reasons. When this happened and there was opportunity to visit the churches credentials and a mandate were given. The most important issue at their synods and conference was the future theological training. During the Conference and Synod it was also possible to have good contact with the delegates of our Dutch sister churches so that we have a better understanding of each other's involvement in the support for the Indonesian Churches. During the Conference in Kupang the Indonesian Churches, the Dutch sister churches and the Australian churches could make a tripartite agreement regarding the theological seminary to be established. Initially the Indonesian churches were of the opinion that the theological seminary had to be located in Kupang [West Timor] but synod Kalu decided that the place for theological training would be in the vicinity of Waingapu [Sumba]. The appointed deputies for the theological training work hard to open the theological seminary as soon as possible. Initially the empty buildings of the previous theological school in Waimarangu will be used. The theological training and seminary will need ongoing attention and support overseas sister churches.

We could continue the support for Rev. Pila Njuka during his study as well as his time of re-integration in Indonesia. Since Synod Rockingham Rev. Pila Njuka successfully graduated from the Theological College in Hamilton. On his way back from Canada to Indonesia deputies invited

him and his family to visit Australia. Deputies organized four evenings in our churches [Metro, Albany, Bunbury and Tasmania] during which he presented some of his study results and expressed his gratitude for the support received during his studies in Canada. After the Conference in Kupang the delegates visited the consistory of Kataka [Sumba] to discuss the re-integration of Rev. Pila Njuka. As a result the consistory of Kataka – with financial support from the FRCA – extended a call to Rev. Pila Njuka in anticipation of the new theological seminary. Synod Kalu has appointed him as full time lecturer. However his actual work cannot begin until the college comes off the ground. In the meantime he has been busy among the churches to assist in preaching and has been working on preparing a curriculum for the planned theological college. Seeing that no college budget or finances is in place ongoing financial support of the church at Kataka to maintain Rev. Pila Njuka and his family remains necessary. As soon as the theological seminary has been established this support will be reconsidered.

At the moment there are no further developments showing movement toward closer unity between the GGRI and the GGRC. It is the impression of deputies that the two bonds of churches are drifting apart. It has not been possible to organize combined seminars for the evangelists/elders/deacons in the GGRI/GGRC. Although there were initial plans for a combined theological training centre, the GGRC is not involved in the present plans. Synod Kalu of the GGRI offered the GGRC mediation for their internal problems and appointed deputies to be involved if required.

Due to several practical reasons it was not possible yet to get Rev. Yan Pariamalnya to Australia to familiarize himself with Reformed church life and to improve his English. At the moment we are waiting for the result of his visa application.

Deputies agree with a further request of the Indonesian deputies to support evangelist Benyamin Rohi to be invited to Australia to study English and to familiarize himself with the Australian churches for three months. Deputies are willing to contact the deputies of our sister churches in the Netherlands to make financial arrangements similar to that of the arrangements of Rev. Pariamalnya Yan [and Rev Yawan Bundi of the GGRC].

Limited financial support has been given so that it was possible to keep contact with the deputies of the Indonesian churches. There was also some limited support for the publication of the church bulletin. This bulletin is meant to be a tool for the communication within the GGRI and GGRC. Although it has been an important means to strengthen the reformed character of the churches, publication has not continued. The main reason appears to be the rift between the GGRI and the GGRC. Upon request from the Indonesian deputies some financial support was

given to the church at Kalu for the completion of their church building with a view to the upcoming synod in Kalu. Deputies have reported this to the churches and received the approval of the churches to spend some extra money for this cause.

Proposal

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance.
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
4. To continue the financial support of the church at Kataka for the support of Rev. Pila Njuka and to reconsider this support after the theological seminary has been established.
5. To support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and to make extra funds available for this cause.
6. To financially support Rev Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study English in Australia and to familiarize himself with reformed church life for three months. This will be done according to the financial agreement with our Dutch sister churches and as per our previous mandate.
7. To financially support evangelist Benyamin Rohi to come to Australia to study English and to familiarize himself with the Australian churches for three months subject to a financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches. This support will be given in a different year than Rev. Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI and Rev. Yawan Bunda of the GGRC.
8. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully practice the unity they already recognise.
9. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 4,5,6,7.

Appendix 9b: Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin

Deputies received the following mandate regarding the GGRC:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC.

2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC ... subject to available finance;
3. To support the ... GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available.
4. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise.
5. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.
6. To financially support Rev. Yawan Bunda of the GGRC in a different year than Rev Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study English for three months in Australia ... subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to the availability of funding from the churches;
7. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 2,3, 5.6.

The deputies Br John Bosveld and Rev. W. VanderJagt visited the synod of the GGRC in 2004 [held at the same time as the Conference of the GGRI]. In our address [see attachment 5] we emphasised the 'dynamic aspect' of Christ's church gathering work in relation to their relationship with the GGRI and we continued with, "We have a full sister church relation with the GGRI and as we pointed out in Ephesians 4 we believe that our Lord Jesus likes to see unity, also among the two federations here in NTT, and again we like to encourage you to take the step of unity. We have reported your desire to become full sister churches at our last synod. It is for this reason that we got as part of our mandate "to monitor and report developments on the unity of the GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity they already recognise. We like to use our presence today to encourage you to go in this direction. At the moment you face many challenges. Last synod you made the decision to register your churches under the name GGRCalvin. You faced some problems in your application for this registration with the government. At the moment the registration has not been finalised yet. If we are right, some of your delegates present at that synod said that if registration would not be possible under your adopted name, they would go in the direction of joining the GGRI. On top of that since your last synod you faced some difficulties in the cooperation with the GGRI for the theological training of the students. At the moment it seems that there is no progress possible regarding the theological training. For all these

reasons, brothers, we plead with you; consider the possibility that Christ's churches entrusted to you join the GGRI. Yes, we realise that this is not the easiest way. It is as if this move is not justified because of the history of your churches. A lot of your leaders have put a lot of effort into the establishing and guidance of a true reformed church. The blessings you have received are many. It is the Lord who has blessed the works of your hands. But it is also the Lord who has given this opportunity to become one with your sister churches of the GGRI. In this way you can really show that you as churches want to follow the mandate of Christ to actively seek the unity with all who believe. We agree, it will not be the easiest way. For we have to deny ourselves. But is this not the way in which we are able to show that we are willing to follow the example of Christ as we read in Philippians 2? This, brothers, is applicable to all of us as individuals. But this is also the guideline we have as churches. Let us set aside every possibility of selfish ambition in maintaining the status quo. But dare to move in faith and follow that example of Christ in self denial. In the end our name, our plans, our schools, our history are not important. We may look for the benefit of the congregations. For the aim is that 'every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that our Lord is our only Master. He may give you the power through His Word and Spirit to follow His directions regarding church unity and the other issues on your agenda. We are really thankful that you have invited us to be present at your meeting so that we may see the great deeds of our exalted Lord and Master Jesus Christ among You. We wish you a blessed meeting that serves the upbuilding of your churches."

During the talks with the deputies and individual ministers/evangelists we have pointed to the same things.

At the moment there is an internal conflict between the GGRC [Rev. Yonson Dethan] and GGRM [Rev. E. Fangidae]. It has everything to do with the official name of the church and the names on the Notari Act of the churches [the 'notari' Act is a requirement of the Indonesian government]. Br. J. Bosveld and Rev. W. VanderJagt spoke with both parties during the Conference in 2004, but to no avail. At the moment the parties involved are waiting for a decision of the supreme court in Jakarta. The GGRI have offered to mediate in these problems. There is also an increasing disunity with the GGRI. Deputies/members of the GGRC are no longer involved in the attempt to establish a theological seminary together. The GGRC did not request any funds from the FRCA to organise seminars for office bearers to strengthen the reformed character of their churches.

The support for Rev. Yawan Bundy to come to Australia to study English and Reformed church life is still pending. Due to the fact that the application of the visa for Rev. Yan Pariamalinya took a long time, it was

not possible to invite Rev. Yawan Bundy yet. The previous synod stipulated that it had to be in a different year than Rev. Yan Pariamalina. Deputies expect that the problems with the visa of Rev. Yan Pariamalina are solved so that we can proceed with an invitation for Rev Yawan Bundi as well.

It has to be noted that there is a good personal contact with the missionary Rev. Edwar Dethan who works in contact with the GGRC. This work is supported by the Canadian sister churches. His mission post/congregation hasn't joined the GGRC. As a result of the difficulties the name GGRC Calvin could not be registered with the government.

Proposal

1. To continue contacts with the GGRC.
2. To continue to visit their synods subject to available finance.
3. To support the GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
4. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRC with the GGRI. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully practice the unity they already recognise.
5. To encourage the GGRC to support the theological training of the GGRI by way of prayer and sending their students to this college when it opens. It would also be beneficial to utilize the study of Rev. Yonson Dethan which he completed at the Theological College in Hamilton.
6. To financially support Rev Yawan Bundi of GGRC to study English in Australia and to familiarize himself with reformed church life for three months, but not in the same year as Rev. Yan Pariamalina of the GGRI [provided that contact between these two bonds of churches is restored]. This will be done according to the financial agreement with our Dutch sister churches and is subject of available funding from the churches.
7. To direct the Deputies Relations Sister Churches, in our relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, that while doing mission work among our sister churches in Indonesia, they direct the result of their work to be joined in the bonds of the GGRI and along with us encourage the GGRC to put to practice the unity they recognise by being joined into one bond (federation) of churches.
8. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 4,5,6,7.

2. Churches in the Philippines

Appendix 9c: The Reformed Free Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines

Deputies received the following mandate regarding the churches in the Philippines:

1. Continue to support these churches in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
2. To visit these churches in an effort to establish better contacts.

In the past period it was impossible to get in contact with these churches. Telephone calls were not answered. Addresses are not available. The people do not respond at all.

Proposal

- a. To terminate the contact with both Reformed churches of the Philippines RFCP.
- b. The deputies remain as an address so that if they are still interested in contact they can contact deputies.

3. 'Guidelines for deputies' and the financial aspect of our work

Support could be given according to the 'guidelines for deputies' as adopted by Synod Rockingham 2003, Acts Article 86.

Deputies have tried to give support in close consultation with all the parties involved. The requests for support came via the respective deputies of the churches. The funds were used for the upbuilding of the reformed character of the congregations. On a regular basis the deputies have informed the churches and every year deputies presented a budget of the coming financial year and came with a financial statement over the past financial year. Reports about the work of our deputyship were published in *Una Sancta*. The books were audited by an external auditor.

According to deputies it is not necessary to change the 'guidelines.

Proposal

Not to change the guidelines.

Appendix 10: Deputies for Relations with Other Churches – Reformed Church in New Zealand

Deputies were able to agree on the text of most of this report. However, at some significant points, including the recommendations, they were unable to come to agreement. Two deputies advocate one approach, and two another. Consequently, it is not possible to speak of “majority” or “minority” reports. At these points, two parallel versions were prepared. These appear side-by-side below, marked as “Version A” and “Version B”.

The Mandate

Synod 2003 gave deputies the following mandate (cf. Acts 2003 Article 72.6)

To appoint deputies with the following mandate:

- a. To convey these decisions to the RCNZ
- b. To assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod
- c. To intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits, if the synodical budget allows
- d. To invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCNZ
- e. To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature and visits.

Regarding a: Your deputies have conveyed to the Inter-Church Committee of the RCNZ the decisions of the Synod Rockingham 2003 by letter, by sending a copy of the Acts of Synod 2003, and by personal visit to the RCNZ Synod.

Regarding b: Please see our assessment which follows.

Regarding c: In May, 2005 two deputies (br. Aart Plug and Rev. Joe Poppe) visited the three main centres in which the Reformed Churches of New Zealand exist. The intent of the visit was two-fold: a) to make the Free Reformed Churches better known to the members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and b) to gather information with which to make a presentation to our own churches in order to acquaint them better about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. To fulfil the first purpose, a video made for this purpose was shown, describing the broader church life in (some of the) the FRCA to members of the RCNZ congregations. In regard to the second purpose, a report of their visit has been published in *Una Sancta*. Other than that the deputies have not had opportunity to make presentations within the churches.

Regarding d: Two delegates (br. Len van Burgel and Rev Arthur van Delden) attended the RCNZ 2005 in Hamilton.

Regarding e: Reports of the two visits to New Zealand were reported in Una Sancta, thereby informing the churches of any developments. These reports are appended to this report for the sake of completeness.

An Assessment of to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations

A. Historical Situation

The deputies appointed by Synod have stated over the years that they recognise the three marks of the true church (cf. Belgic Confession Art 29) in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. This was confirmed when Synod 2000 agreed in principle to see whether the RCNZ would enter into “fraternal relations” with the FRCA. Synod 2003 decided “to confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

At the same time, past synods—(Launceston 1985 Article 75 , Armadale 1990 Article 53, Kelmscott 1996 Article 53, Launceston 1998 Article 89)—have consistently declared that the RCNZ’s relationship with the CRCA, with whom we have principle objections, is an impediment to offering sister church relations to the RCNZ. The rationale behind these decisions is as follows:

It is contrary to the unity of the holy catholic church for Church ‘A’ to have unity with Church ‘B’ and Church ‘C’, but Churches ‘B’ and ‘C’ to have no unity. Likewise, it is contrary to the unity of the holy catholic church for Church ‘C’ to unite with Church ‘A’ as along as Church ‘A’ is united with Church ‘B’ with whom Church ‘C’ can have no unity because of principle differences.

In taking this stand, we were not unique. In a letter to the RCNZ, the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands sent a letter from the hand of Rev J. de Gelder (dd. October 1988) to the RCNZ. In this letter our Dutch sisters passed on the resolution of their synod (Acta Gen. Synod Spakenburg-Noord, Article 124)

Resolution:

1. To continue the contacts with The Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
2. To charge to the deputies to be appointed:
 - a. to pay attention particularly to the relationships between The Reformed Churches of New Zealand and other churches;
 - b. to point out to The Reformed Churches of New Zealand if there should be a sister church relationship with The

Dutch Reformed Churches a similar sister church relationship will exclude the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

- c. To keep up contact with the Australian sister churches on the developments concerning the relationships with The Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Reasons:

1. The discussion on the relationships between The Reformed Churches of New Zealand and other churches has not been finished yet.
2. The Dutch Reformed Churches deviate from the Reformed Confession in Doctrine and in Church government.
3. Although The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands have their own responsibility in entering into and keeping up relationships with other churches there is also a responsibility towards sister churches

In this letter the Dutch deputies explained their reason for this decision:

Now why do our churches place so much emphasis on the relationships that other churches have? The first chapter of that booklet "For the Sake of True Ecumenicity" puts it succinctly. The answer in short is: because we strive after scriptural unity. And deviation from the Word and the Truth of God, which we discern in many another church, disrupts the unity in Christ. We trust that you will understand that it is not our churches' show we are putting up, or a dabbling in our own likes and dislikes. But at stake is the Church's task and calling in this world. And in the framework of ecclesiastical relationships we therefore have to impress upon each other the necessity of speaking what is scripturally normative. Again we trust that you will agree that this is at the very heart of the matter. It therefore affects us deeply having to write to you that a relationship with your churches would bring us into the sphere of a number of churches that we cannot have contacts with any more, but we are convinced that by not writing this we would not be advocating the truly scriptural unity that Christ demands.

The RCNZ's Synodical and Correspondence Committee expressed something similar in their report to Synod 1986 (Mangere): *"Relationships must be true in all dimensions. ...This is being consistent with the principle of a true and faithful church and consequential thinking, as otherwise there would be a triangular problem when A and B establish close relationships while C who already has an intimate relationship with A still has principle objections to B. It will thus be quite obvious that the journey towards this goal for a mutually acceptable close relationship is going to be a long one where much patience and understanding is required."*

At the last Synod, this thinking was challenged. One of the churches proposed *“that Synod accepts that the third party relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA is being dealt with in a faithful manner by the RCNZ and that this relationship no longer forms an impediment to establish a sister church relationship with them.”* Thus it was proposed to recognise the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the LORD Jesus Christ and to offer a sister church relationship to them according to the established rules (Acts of Synod 2003, Art.72). This proposal was not adopted.

Yet Synod 2003 decided *“to confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.”* The ground for this decision was that *“all the reports of the deputies have informed us that the RCNZ has the three marks of the true church and thus the decision in principle should now be confirmed.”* Synod also decided *“to ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and the implications of an offer of sister relations with them, and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy.”* The ground for this decision was that *“the triangular relationship with the CRCA continues to be a point of division among the FRCA, although we note that the RCNZ maintain this relationship in a Scriptural manner. In order to build consensus among ourselves to what extent the triangular relations should be an impediment, it is best to take time before we offer sister relations, so that it can be done with unity and joy. Hopefully the RCNZ can accept that desire.”* (Acts of Synod 2003, Art.72).

B. Principles and Patterns for Establishing Sister Church Relations

According to Article 27 of the Belgic Confession, *“we believe ...one holy catholic or universal church, which is...joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.”* The unity of the church, then, is first of all spiritual in character.

According to Article 28 of the Belgic Confession, *“no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself...but all and everyone are obliged to join and unit with it, maintaining the unity of the church.”* The spiritual unity of the church is to be coupled with physical unity.

This said, Scripture also shows us that the physical unity of the holy catholic church exists in degrees. Believers in one locality join themselves to a local congregation of the one holy catholic church. Believers in another locality join the church there. For example, believers in Jerusalem join the church in the land of Judea, while the believers in Antioch join that church in the land of Syria.

From the Scriptures we learn that these congregations, though separated by distance, did not exist in isolation, but exercised the communion of the saints with each other. They shared their spiritual as well as their material blessings with each other. Consider the following examples from Scripture.

In Acts 15 we read about the spiritual assistance which the churches sought from each other to determine questions about the faith. The church of Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to confer with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning the statement made to them by men of Judea: *“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved”* (Acts 15:1). After conferring together, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem determined that circumcision was no longer required in the new dispensation. They sent a delegation from Jerusalem through the cities to deliver to them the decrees to keep (cf. Acts 16:4) namely, *“that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality”* (Acts 15:29).

We also read in Scripture that the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (cf. Rom. 15:26) and Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3) gave monetary gifts to aid the poor in Jerusalem.

From such texts, we derive the principle that spiritually united should not exist in isolation, but should seek to exercise the communion of saints with other congregations for the sake of mutual edification and assistance. We confess in Lord’s Day 21 (Q&A 55b) *“That everyone is duty bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members.”*

We have applied these scriptural principles in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Twelve independent local churches in Australia together form a federation of churches. This federation exists primarily to facilitate the communion of saints. We make promises to each other, and make demands of each other. We assist each other spiritually as well as monetarily. We seek advice from each other in spiritual matters. We exercise a measure of mutual oversight. We give assistance to churches which are needy. Where necessary, we also cooperate with each other in mission.

By extension, this principle has induced this small bond of churches to establish “sister church” relations with other federations in the world, such as in the Netherlands, Canada, South Africa, Indonesia and Korea. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have received great benefit from these churches, though in different measure at different times. Things could be mentioned such as the calling of ministers, the training for the ministry, the *Book of Praise*, Christian literature, mutual encouragement and admonitions, mission. Also churches in underdeveloped countries receive monetary aid from churches in more developed countries. In this way, even churches which are geographically quite distant from each other are able to engage in the communion of saints.

Conclusion #1 – Churches which are spiritually united by faith ought to exercise the communion of saints with other churches, for mutual edification and assistance, which is an important purpose of establishing sister church relations.

Does this mean, then, that “sister relations” must be formed between all churches which are spiritually united?

The Scripture gives us the pattern of exercising the communion of saints in “concentric circles” of intensity or intimacy. For example, concerning the monetary aid to the needy, Scripture teaches us the following. Caring for the needy is first of the duty of the immediate family. Where this needy cannot be cared for by the immediate family the local congregation is to assume the duty of care (cf. 1 Tim 5:16). But when the local congregation is not able to care for their needy, then other churches are to provide the necessary care (cf. Rom. 15:26 and 1 Cor. 16:3). The concept of concentric circles in giving aid to fellow man also underlies Paul’s instruction in Galatians 6:10, “Let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Our Church Order encourages churches in close proximity to work together most intimately through the formation of classes which meet at least every six months to deal with various matters of church life. When a church is vacant, they naturally seek pulpit supply from churches that are close to them geographically. Thus Classis arranges pulpit supply for vacant congregations. When churches seek advice on spiritual matters, it is logical that they meet with churches that are close by, which occurs at Classis. Article 50 also encourages churches which cooperate with each other in mission work to observe the division of classes, which means that churches that are close geographically work together. This certainly facilitates attendance at mission meetings and allows members of supporting congregations to be directly involved in the mission committee.

This pattern of concentric circles of exercising communion with other churches has also been adopted by the FRCA Synod of 1990 which decided “to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches which are geographically close to us...” (Acts, Article 58). Maintaining close contacts with churches geographically remote from us is both costly and time consuming for us as a small bond of churches. Thus we concentrate more of our time and resources in fostering a relationship with the PCEA than with the Free Church of Scotland, with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand rather than the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

Conclusion #2 – Although Christ’s church gathering work is catholic or universal, churches are not compelled by Scripture to establish “sister-church relations” with all churches over the world. Following the pattern of concentric circles of communion, a church is justified in concentrating its time, energy and resources in promoting intimate communion with churches that are closest to them historically or geographically.

In Article 28 of the Belgic Confession we confess that no believer ought to be content to be by himself, but all believers are obliged to join the church and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church. Believers join the Holy Catholic

Church by joining themselves to the local gathering of this Holy Catholic Church.

This same principle can and should be applied to true churches. No true church should be content to be by itself, but true churches ought to join and unite with each other, maintaining the unity of the Holy Catholic Church. It is contrary to this principle for two or more true churches to exist side by side without joining together and maintaining the unity of the church.

In the history of the Reformed Church, the doctrine concerning the unity of the church has been undermined by the so-called doctrine of “pluriformity” which acknowledges that the one holy catholic (and invisible) church exists in and is dispersed among many (visible) denominations which exist side by side (such as the Lutheran, the Presbyterian/Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, and Uniting Churches), each reflecting to a greater or lesser degree the truth and perfection of the holy catholic (invisible) church. According to the doctrine of pluriformity, the holy catholic church manifests itself in diverse forms among the various denominations.

This doctrine of the pluriformity of the church has long been regarded by our churches as a denial of the fundamental unity expressed by the apostle Paul who said, *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (cf. Eph 4:4-6). The doctrine of pluriformity also undermines the principle concerning the practical expression of the unity of the church. Those who accept the doctrine of pluriformity no longer regard the division of believers into fundamentally different denominations as contrary to the ordinance of God concerning the unity of the church. Nor do they regard the separate existence of different church denominations in close proximity to each other as contrary to the confession concerning the one holy catholic church, but happily accept the different denominations as different forms of the one church.

Conclusion #3 – Two or more true churches who live in close proximity act contrary to the ordinance of God if they refuse to join together and maintain the unity of the church.

In Article 28 of the Belgic Confession, we confess *“It is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church.”* (cf. Num 16:23-26; Isa 52:11,12; Acts 2:40; Rom 16:17; Rev 18:4). This principle can and should also be applied to churches. It is the duty of true churches to separate from those who claim for themselves the name of church, but lack the marks thereof.

In the case of discipline of delinquent members in the church, Scripture outlines a procedure which involves admonitions (cf. Matt 18:15-18).

The goal of Christian discipline is threefold: to save the sinner from condemnation (cf. Eze 33:11; Matt 18:15; 2Pet 3:9); to keep God's name holy (cf. Psa 115:1; Matt 5:16; 1Pet 2:12; 1Pet 3:15-16); and to keep the church pure (cf. 1Cor 5; 2Thes 3:14; Tit 3:10).

This same principle ought to be applied to churches which become unfaithful (cf. Rev 2-3). Other churches with whom they have unity ought to admonish these delinquent churches. If after repeated admonitions these churches do not turn from their errors, fellowship between the faithful and unfaithful churches ought to cease, thereby avoiding a display of false unity.

The doctrine of the pluriformity of the church undermines this call for faithful churches to separate from those which become unfaithful. The belief that all visible churches reflect the holy (invisible) catholic church in differing measures diminishes the distinction of true and false churches, and encourages churches to regard each other as more or less faithful churches of the holy catholic church. This in turn obscures the duty of faithful churches separating themselves from unfaithful churches, and encourages an unholy tolerance of doctrinal or ethical error.

Conclusion #4 – True churches are duty bound to admonish churches with which they have unity, and which become unfaithful, and to separate from those assemblies that claim for themselves the name of church, but lack the marks thereof.

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In Article 28 of the Belgic Confession, we confess <i>"It is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church, and to join this assembly wherever God has established it."</i> From this we learn that there is a proper order regarding separating and joining. A true believer must first separate from the false church, and then join himself to the true church. This is in accordance with the scriptural norm laid down in Numbers 16:23-26; Isaiah 52:11,12; Acts 2:40; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18;	The question now arises: can a church establish "sister-church relations" with a church that has unity with another church that may be becoming (or is) unfaithful? Article 29 of the Belgic Confession teaches us to recognise the true church on the basis of the marks of the church: <i>"It practises the pure preaching of the gospel. It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It exercises church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. In short, it governs itself by the pure Word of God..."</i> Faithful adherence to the Word of God both in doctrine and practice forms the basis for

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<p>Revelation 18:4.</p> <p>We conclude from this that one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia must not receive into the church a true believer who remains a member of a church which we regard as lacking the marks thereof. Rather, according to Article 28 of our Confession, we must point out the duty of this believer to first separate from those who do not belong to the church. Only when this has occurred can he be granted membership in a Free Reformed Church of Australia.</p> <p>This principle also applies to churches. A classis of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia must not receive into the federation a local congregation which has reformed its doctrine, worship and government, but continues to maintain its unity in a bond of churches which we regard as lacking the marks of true churches. Rather, according to Article 28 of our confession, we must point out to that congregation its duty to sever its bond with these unfaithful churches. Only when this is done can they be given a place in the federation of true churches.</p> <p>This principle also applies to federations of churches. We, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, must not enter into sister church relations with a federation of true churches, as long as that federation continues to maintain its unity with a federation of churches which we</p>	<p>establishing unity with another church.</p> <p>Doesn't the continued existence of a relationship with a third party which is (becoming) unfaithful form an impediment to this? Not necessarily. Please consider the situation where a true believer has a brother or sister who is straying (or has strayed) from the ways of the Lord. Do we reject a true believer because he maintains a relationship within which he admonishes his straying brother or sister? Scripture shows that when the gospel was preached in the early Christian church, many were converted from darkness into God's marvellous light (cf. 1Peter 2:9-10). They were not refused membership of the church because they had relationships with family members outside the church. The key fact was not the relationship itself, but how they conducted themselves within such relationships. What Scripture demands is a primary allegiance to Christ and His church rather than to family members or this world (cf. Matthew 10:37; 1 Peter 2:11-12; 1 John 2:15). It is striking that the apostle Paul commands those who are married to unbelievers not to divorce them, but to uphold their marriage vows as much as it depends upon them (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Similarly, Peter commands believing wives to work within their existing marriages to witness to the grace of Christ, with a view to winning their unbelieving husbands to the faith (cf. 1 Peter</p>

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<p>regard as unfaithful. Rather, according to Article 28 of our confession, that federation must first sever its relationship with the federation of churches which lack the marks of true churches. Only when this is done can they be offered sister church relations.</p> <p>Conclusion #5 – The Free Reformed Churches of Australia may not establish sister-relations with churches that maintain unity with another church that we regard as lacking the marks of true churches.</p>	<p>3:1). We need to be careful not to apply these analogies wrongly to inter-church relations. Yet they do make it clear that it is not the <i>existence</i> of a third-party relationship that prohibits unity. Instead, what is important is how that relationship is <i>exercised</i>.</p> <p>To make a third party relationship itself into an impediment as a principle matter goes beyond the teaching of Scripture and confession. That such a relationship needs to be weighed is true. In weighing such a relationship it is important to consider the following. Entering into a sister-church relationship is not the same as being received into one federation of churches. The respective federations are not “joined” to each other in the sense that believers are “joined” to the church, or a congregation is “joined” to the federation. They are voluntary associations between equal partners, and one is not received into another as a member of the other. Each of the partners has their own responsibility towards the Lord of the Church, bound as it is by Scripture and Confession.</p> <p>Each of the partners undertakes obligations in regard to the other (as agreed upon in the Rules for Exercising Sister Relations). And within this context, the relationship each federation of churches has with third parties is primarily the responsibility of <i>that federation</i>.</p> <p>Conclusion #5 – It cannot be said that as a matter of</p>

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	principle, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia may not establish sister-relations with churches that for certain reasons maintain sister-relations with another church that we regard as lacking the marks of the true church.

In the Apostles' Creed we confess *"I believe a holy catholic church."* In the Nicene Creed we confess that *"we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church."* According to Article 27 of the Belgic Confession *"we believe and profess one catholic or universal church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers."* One of the attributes of the church is that it is to be holy.

The fact that the church is holy means that it is set apart, or dedicated to the service of God. The church is sanctified, or made holy, through Christ's blood and Spirit (cf. Eze 36:25-27; Joh 3:5-8; Rom 6:1-14; 1Cor 6:11; 1Pet 1:2; Rev.1:5; 7:14). Because of this the church is also called to live in holiness before God (cf. Lev 19:2; Rom 6:19,22; Rom 13:12-14; Eph 4:24; 1Thes 4:7; 1Pet.2:9; Heb 12:14).

We recognise the holiness of the church by considering whether or not it has the marks of a true church. In Article 29 of the Belgic Confession we confess that *"The true church is to be recognised by the following marks: It practises the pure preaching of the gospel. It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It exercises church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head..."*

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In establishing "sister-church relations" with a church it is necessary to consider the relationships which this potential sister-church maintains with other churches. For the errors of an unfaithful church can easily spread to its sister-churches, and so indirectly enter into our own bond of churches through the back door. To safeguard the	When considering or developing a relationship with another federation, churches that desire to be faithful must consider the third-party relationships that the other federation engages in. However, it is not so much the <i>fact</i> of such relationships as their <i>nature</i> that needs to be taken into account. Factors to consider may include,

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<p>holiness of the church—both the church with whom we are considering entering into a sister-church relations and our own church—it is necessary to consider whether this potential sister-church is faithful in admonishing a sister church that develops unscriptural teachings or practises. Is it willing to break with such a church if it is not willing to heed these admonitions?</p> <p>Conclusion #6 – When offering sister relations to another federation, the manner in which that federation exercises sister relations must be considered because of the impact that sister relations have upon that federation itself and on our own federation.</p>	<p>among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the historical context, • the way in which the third-party relationship is conducted, • the influence (direct or indirect) of the third party on our (prospective) partner, • the influence of our partner on the third party, • the willingness of our partner to break with an unfaithful sister-church if repeated admonition has proved to be unavailing, • the influence the third party may have - by way of our partner - on our own members or church life, • the influence we may have – by way of our partner – on the third party. <p>Each of these factors certainly will be governed and informed by the application of Scriptural principles, but these factors are not principles <i>in and of themselves</i>. They must be counted and weighed, and within the totality of the teaching of Scripture a faithful church may make its own evaluation concerning them, leading to a responsible decision: responsible, first of all towards the Lord of the Church, then also towards the churches and members of its own federation, and finally towards its (prospective) partner. However, in making this evaluation it must always be remembered that the final responsibility for the way in</p>

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	<p>which this third-party relationship is conducted rests with the (prospective) partner.</p> <p>Conclusion #6 – In keeping with the instruction of Scripture, the church must weigh third-party relationships in coming to a responsible decision of its own. Care needs to be taken in establishing sister-church relations with churches that maintain unity with another church that may be becoming (or is) unfaithful.</p>

C. The Application of Scriptural Principles and Patterns

Deputies mandate is: *To assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod.* To do this we want to apply the conclusions reached above to our relationship with the RCNZ, weighing to what extent their relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to us entering into “sister-church relations” with the RCNZ.

Conclusion #1 – Churches which are spiritually united by faith ought to exercise the communion of saints with other churches, for mutual edification and assistance, which is an important purpose of establishing sister church relations.

We have recognised the RCNZ as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such we ought to exercise the communion of saints with them for mutual edification and assistance. There would be definite advantages to establishing sister church relations with the RCNZ.

1. Our close proximity of these two federations would allow members to visit at half the cost of travelling to sister churches in the northern hemisphere. We have over the last few years seen more membership “transferrals” occurring with at least one of our members joining the RCNZ and a number of members of the RCNZ joining the FRCA.
2. The RCNZ have been cosupporters (together with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia) of the Reformed Theological College (RTC) in Geelong, Victoria, Australia. The students from New Zealand studying at the RTC have not had any of the difficulties which some of the FRCA students face when studying in Hamilton Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches (HTC) such as applying for visas,

being restricted from working during the summer vacations, costly airfares preventing regular returns to Australia during the course of studies. Although the RCNZ have adopted an agreement for continued support of the RTC in Geelong, their relationship has been under strain, and alternative theological training has been considered. Establishing a theological college is one area in which the RCNZ and the FRCA could work well together.

3. The calling of ministers between these two federations would not be subject to the tedious and sometimes expensive immigration process.
4. Already the RCNZ have a mission worker in Port Moresby, and the RCNZ are asking our sister churches in Canada to assist them in their work. It would also appear that they will be asking the churches in Australia who engaged in mission work in Lae to support their work.
5. Christian education has been a strength of the FRCA since inception. At the same time, some congregation of the RCNZ are struggling in this matter. We could be of assistance to them in this matter.

Conclusion #2 – Although Christ’s church gathering work is catholic or universal, churches are not compelled by Scripture to establish “sister-church relations” with all churches over the world. Following the pattern of concentric circles of communion, a church is justified in concentrating its time, energy and resources in promoting intimate communion with churches that are closest to them historically or geographically.

The RCNZ is a church that is in close geographical proximity with us. The ease of trade and the lack of barriers to immigration provide good reasons for concentrating our time, energy and resources in promoting intimate communion with these churches.

Conclusion #3 – Two or more true churches who live in close proximity act contrary to the ordinance of God if they refuse to join together and maintain the unity of the church.

It is this principle that has caused some in our churches to push for entering into a sister church relationship with the RCNZ. They feel that not enough consideration has been given to our inherent unity of faith. When weighing this principle against the impediment caused by the RCNZ’s relationship with the CRCA, they consider that this principle should have priority. We believe in *one* holy catholic Church. The reason why they believe this principle should have priority is that as churches we have recognised that the RCNZ exercises their relationship with the CRCA in a faithful manner.

Others in our churches understand the principle that true churches who live in close proximity act contrary to the ordinance of God if they refuse to join together and maintain the unity of the church. Yet they do not consider our

refusal to join together with the RCNZ as acting contrary to the ordinance of God. They say that we are not refusing to enter into sister church relations. The amount of time and resources which we have spent over the past years indicates that we seriously desire to join with the RCNZ in a sister church relationship. Yet they consider that we are prevented from doing so by the impediment of the RCNZ's continued relationship with the CRCA. For them it is not a matter of unwillingness but of inability.

Conclusion #4 – True churches are duty bound to admonish churches with which they have unity, and which become unfaithful, and to separate from those assemblies that claim for themselves the name of church, but lack the marks thereof.

Over the years the RCNZ has shown faithfulness in admonishing churches with whom they had unity when they became unfaithful. They have separated themselves from churches that have taken unscriptural stands on various issues.

At the RCNZ's Synod held in 1986 they broke their correspondence relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Synodical) (Acts, Art.104). They also warned that their membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) would be withdrawn if this body allowed the GKN (synodical) to remain a member of this counsel. At the RCNZ's Synod held in 1986 they also decided to open contacts with the GKN (liberated).

When the RES met in 1988, it refused to deal decisively with the GKN (synodical) on its new way of interpreting Scripture, and on its position allowing members to enter into homosexual relations, and even serve as an office-bearer as a practising "Christian" homosexual. The result was that the RCNZ, as well as other churches withdrew their membership from the RES.

At the RCNZ's Synod held in 1995 they decided to apply for membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) of which we and our sister churches were/are members. They decided to suspend ties with the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA). This Synod also recognised us as the FRCA as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, and asked us to make a similar acknowledgement about their churches. It expressed a desire, on the basis of such an acknowledgment, to offer a sister church relationship.

The RCNZ's 1995 Synod also came to the decision to place the RCNZ's relationship with the Reformed Church of Australia (now known as the CRCA) under strain. This was because of concerns about three major issues: women in office, "Word and Spirit," and the acceptance of worship innovations contrary to Reformed liturgy and practise. As a result, if churches within the RCNZ called ministers or candidates from the CRCA they were to be questioned thoroughly in these areas.

The RCNZ's Synod held in 1998 restored the RCNZ's relationship with the CRCA. This was caused by favourable decisions taken by the CRCA's 1997 Synod about the matters of "Word and Spirit," women in office, and worship practises.

The RCNZ's Synod held in 2001 decided to accept an offer of a sister church relationship with the GKN (Liberated) if, as expected, it was offered by Synod Zuidhorn. A sister relationship was also established with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. Moves towards sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches of North America were also agreed to.

The RCNZ's 2001 Synod decided to again put their relationship with the CRCA under strain. The basis for this decision was threefold. First, that the CRCA decided to open the way for women to serve in the office of deacon (although they will not be part of session). Second, because younger children (no younger than 10 years of age) who have a mature understanding of the confessions and demonstrate faith and love for the Lord may profess their faith with a modified version of the form for public profession of faith and then be allowed to attend the Lord's Supper. And third, because of continued acceptance of worship practises which are a departure from traditional Reformed practises.

Further, this Synod also decided to give notice that the RCNZ no longer wished to be bound to the contract under which it supported the Reformed Theological College (RTC) in Geelong, the CRCA's main training school for men desiring to serve as ministers of the Word. The current contract, which involved confessional subscription, would be dissolved after the three-year period for giving notice came to an end. This was because of difficulties that had arisen with two of the professors on the "Word and Spirit" issue. The level of funding support would also be considered at the next synod.

The RCNZ's Synod held in 2005 decided to keep their relationship with the CRCA under strain, primarily due to the CRCA's decision to allow women to serve in the office of deacon. Our delegates to the RCNZ synod have noted that there is increasing support within the RCNZ to break off sister-church relations with the CRCA.

From all this it is evident that the RCNZ conducts itself faithfully in exercising its inter-church relationships. When churches stray from Scripture or confession, the RCNZ exercises warnings and admonitions. When churches refuse to break with sinful decisions, the RCNZ has been consequent and suspended ties with them.

Over the past years the RCNZ has been moving to and fro in its relationship with the CRCA. In 1995 their relationship was declared to be under strain. In 1998 the relationship was normalised again, because of favourable decisions taken by the CRCA. In 2001 the relationship was again placed under strain, and this was maintained by the last synod. Because of the close historic and

family ties between these bonds of churches, this bond is not an easy one for the RCNZ to sever. Yet we may be confident that if the CRCA continues on its pathway of deformation, the RCNZ will be consequent in its actions.

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<p>Conclusion #5 – The Free Reformed Churches of Australia may not establish sister-relations with churches that maintain unity with another church that we regard as lacking the marks of true churches.</p> <p>Conclusion #5, as stated above, indicates that the Free Reformed Churches may not enter into sister church relations with the RCNZ as long as the Reformed Churches of New Zealand continue to have relations with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia which the FRCA regards as lacking the marks of the true church. If the FRCA were to enter into sister church relations with the RCNZ at this time, we would become an otherⁱ Australian sister to the RCNZ, and both of us as sisters of the RCNZ would have differing “forms.” Thus we would willingly buy into the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church.</p> <p>ⁱ In actual fact, we would become the third sister with the RCNZ since the RCNZ also have sister church relations with the PCEA. This triangular relationship, however, is different since we ourselves are striving for unity with the PCEA.</p>	<p>Conclusion #5 – It cannot be said that as a matter of principle, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia may not establish sister-relations with churches that for certain reasons maintain sister-relations with another church that we regard as lacking the marks of true churches.</p> <p>Conclusion #5, as stated above, indicates that the continued sister-church relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA is not in itself a principle impediment to the exercise of a sister-church relationship. Previous Synods of our churches have recognized that the RCNZ displays the marks of the true church (as outlined in Art 29, B.C) and clearly desires to conduct itself in all things in accordance with the instruction of God's Word. Consequently, the principle stated in Conclusion #3: <i>“Two or more true churches who live in close proximity act contrary to the ordinance of God if they refuse to join together and maintain the unity of the church”</i> gives clear direction to the course the churches ought to take. In this connection, it must be understood that we are not talking about the development of a relationship with just any church. We are dealing with a federation of churches that we have been able to recognize as true and faithful churches of the</p>

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	Lord Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that, like ourselves, they have a genuine and informed desire to do all things in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. We express trust that this federation will conscientiously honour this commitment, also in the exercise of relationships with third parties.

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<p>Conclusion #6 – When offering sister relations to another federation, the manner in which that federation exercises sister relations must be considered because of the impact that sister relations have upon that federation itself and on our own federation.</p> <p>In this respect there are some factors that need to be considered when offering sister church relations to the RCNZ while they have sister relations with the CRCA.</p> <p>1. Currently the RCNZ can still call ministers and candidates from the CRCA, and has many of its students for the ministry trained at the RTC in Geelong. It is very difficult to gauge whether, or to what extent, the deformational trends within the CRCA have an influence on the RCNZ. Yet we need to beware of Scripture's warning about how easily a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1Cor.5).</p>	<p>Conclusion #6 – In keeping with the instruction of Scripture, the church must weigh third-party relationships in coming to a responsible decision of its own. Care needs to be taken in establishing sister-church relations with churches that maintain unity with another church that may be becoming (or is) unfaithful.</p> <p>Notwithstanding what was said in regard to the previous conclusion, Conclusion #6 requires us to weigh the sister-church relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA. We point to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The RCNZ has a long-standing historical obligation to its erring sister-church. 2. The RCNZ has faithfully and Scripturally discharged this obligation. They have regularly admonished the CRCA about deviations from Reformed doctrine and practice, and continue to do so. They recognize that there

Version A	Version B
<p>2. The RCNZ could/would address travel/membership attestations to either the CRCA or the FRCA, which promotes the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church. Members from the RCNZ would come to Australia with the notion that they are able to choose either church which differ substantially in “form.”</p> <p>3. Ministers would be permitted to preach in and celebrate the Lord’s Supper in both the CRCA and in the FRCA. This could promote the doctrine of pluriformity in our own churches, giving our members the idea that both are churches of Lord Jesus Christ, and that God can be worshipped in both the FRCA and in the CRCA. Members of the FRCA might be tempted to attend the CRCA in which this New Zealand minister is preaching, since what is permissible for the leaders of the church of Christ must also be permissible for the members thereof.</p> <p>4. If our (young) members attend conferences in the RCNZ, they will have fellowship with and perhaps even establish relations with (young) members from the CRCA who may also attend these conferences.</p> <p>From the above considerations it is our conclusion that as we weigh the practical implications in establishing a sister church</p>	<p>is resistance within the CRCA to unreformed trends, and believe that they still have opportunity, by means of their sister-relationship, to support this faithful segment within the CRCA, and to call the CRCA back to sound Reformed thinking and practice.</p> <p>3. There is some evidence of potential and actual influence from the CRCA on the RCNZ. This is not surprising, given their long-standing historical association, and the deep and extensive personal connections that exist between members of the two churches. This influence can be seen, for example, in some variations in worship practice within the RCNZ. Currently the RCNZ can still call ministers and candidates from the CRCA, and has many of its students for the ministry trained at the RTC in Geelong. It is difficult to gauge whether, or to what extent, the deformational trends within the CRCA have an influence on the RCNZ. Yet we need to beware of Scripture’s warning about how easily a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1Cor.5). At the same time, there is a strong movement within the RCNZ to limit and counter this influence by, for example, strengthening links with conservative Reformed churches overseas. Ministers and candidates are being</p>

Version A	Version B
<p>relationship with the RCNZ, the responsible conclusion is that such a relationship would present pastoral and other internal difficulties for the FRCA. These difficulties would only lessen or be removed if the RCNZ moved further away from the CRCA or broke off the relationship altogether.</p>	<p>called from North America and elsewhere, and prospective candidates for the ministry are often encouraged to complete their studies at Reformed colleges there. In addition, significant progress is being made by the RCNZ in developing their own book of worship.</p> <p>4. The exercise of sister-church relations includes accepting one another's attestations, opening the pulpit to each other's ministers, and allowing each other's members to participate in the sacraments. Concern has been expressed within our churches that situations might arise that would compromise our position with regard to the CRCA, and weaken our own witness in this respect. We note the following as examples:</p> <p>a) The RCNZ could/would address travel/membership attestations to either the CRCA or the FRCA, which promotes the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church. Members from the RCNZ would come to Australia with the notion that they are able to choose either church which differ substantially in "form."</p> <p>b) Ministers would be permitted to preach in and celebrate the Lord's</p>

Version A	Version B
	<p>Supper in both the CRCA and in the FRCA. This could promote pluriformitarian thinking in our own churches, giving our members the idea that both are churches of Lord Jesus Christ, and that God can be worshipped in both the FRCA and in the CRCA. Members of the FRCA could be forgiven if they attend the CRCA in which this New Zealand minister is preaching, since what is permissible for the leaders of the church of Christ must also be permissible for its members.</p> <p>c) If our (young) members attend conferences in the RCNZ, they will have fellowship with and perhaps even establish relations with (young) members from the CRCA who may also attend these conferences.</p> <p>These concerns are real and should not be minimised. But they should be viewed within the broader perspective, as just part of a number of factors. They should not be allowed to take on a life of their own, or dominate our thinking.</p>

D. SUMMARIZING CONCLUSION:

Version A	Version B
We as deputies remain positive towards maintaining a relationship	The principle set out in Conclusion #3: <i>“Two or more true</i>

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<p>with the RCNZ and working to develop that relationship further. The recognition of the RCNZ by Synod as a true and faithful church provides the basis from which further progress can be made. From this report it can be seen that we confirm the principle in conclusion #3: <i>“Two or more true churches who live in close proximity act contrary to the ordinance of God if they refuse to join together and maintain the unity of the church”</i>. However conclusion #5: <i>The Free Reformed Churches of Australia may not establish sister-relations with churches that maintain unity with another church that we regard as lacking the marks of true churches</i>” and conclusion #6: <i>“When offering sister relations to another federation, the manner in which that federation exercises sister relations must be considered because of the impact that sister relations have upon that federation itself and on our own federation”</i> are important principles too. Conclusion 5 is a doctrinal position whilst conclusion 6 is a consequence of practical considerations. We believe the doctrinal and practical considerations are serious enough to prevent the implementation of conclusion 3 – the establishing of sister church relations. It is our view that the offer of sister relations, whilst that continues to be our aim, cannot be responsibly made whilst the RCNZ relationship with the CRCA continues. Synod 2003 required that the offer of sister relationship</p>	<p><i>churches who live in close proximity act contrary to the ordinance of God if they refuse to join together and maintain the unity of the church”</i> provides the basic template for the course of action which the churches ought to take. Having recognized in the RCNZ a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ, living in our close proximity, the exercise of sister-church relations should be the default position. There would need to be compelling reasons for us to decide otherwise.</p> <p>It is open to our churches to decide that, on balance, we would not do well to undertake a sister-church relationship with the RCNZ, perhaps not at this time, perhaps not at all. That is a choice we might make, in good conscience, having regard for all relevant factors, and giving each the weight we believe they deserve. It is not so that we are <i>unable</i> to extend such an offer, but that we make a deliberate choice not to. That is a choice for which we ourselves must take responsibility.</p> <p>In our view, while the reasons to exercise caution are not insignificant, they do not constitute compelling arguments to withhold an offer of a sister-church relationship. The weight of the evidence available to us does not support such a position.</p> <p>On the contrary, there are strong reasons (as outlined above) why engaging in sister-relations with the RCNZ would benefit both</p>

Version A	Version B
should be done with “unity and joy”. The difficulties associated with the triangular relationship remain of such significance that the desired unity and joy which would accompany an establishment of sister relationship is still not evident within the FRCA.	federations, would honour the Lord of the church, and would strengthen the church’s witness in our part of His world.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Version A	Version B
<p>1. To renew the mandate of deputies to for strive relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:</p> <p>1.1. Monitoring the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA, and to encourage the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA where necessary.</p> <p>1.2. Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings, discuss matters or mutual interest.</p> <p>1.3. Reassure the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into sister relationship with them but the matter of triangular relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.</p> <p>1.4. Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod</p>	<p>1. To declare that while the continued sister-relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA is a matter of significant concern to us, it does not constitute a compelling reason for us to continue to withhold an offer of sister-church relations with the RCNZ.</p> <p>2. To extend, with thankfulness to the Lord, an offer of sister-church relations to the RCNZ, in accordance with relevant rules adopted for the purpose by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.</p> <p>3. To renew the mandate of deputies to maintain contact with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:</p> <p>3.1. Carrying out the activities that belong to the establishment and maintenance of relations with sister-churches.</p> <p>3.2. Monitoring the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA,</p>

Version A	Version B
<p>as observers with the privileges mentioned in rules 6 of our “Rules for Synods” (Acts 1998, Appendix 12).</p> <p>1.5. Providing information to the membership of our churches about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.</p> <p>2. To encourage consistories to take note, and act on, Synod’s positive view towards the RCNZ in regard to practical support and interaction where these are not restricted to those between sister churches only e.g. application of membership from former members of the RCNZ, matters pertaining to the mission field and theological and Christian education.</p> <p>3. To convey Synod’s decisions to RCNZ.</p>	<p>and to encourage the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA where necessary.</p> <p>3.3. Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings, and discuss matters of mutual interest.</p> <p>3.4. Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod, with the privileges accorded to delegates of sister-churches as outlined in our “Rules for Synods” (Acts 1998, Appendix 12).</p> <p>3.5. Providing information to the membership of our churches about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.</p> <p>4. To convey Synod’s decisions to the RCNZ.</p>

Submitted for the Consideration of Synod,

The Deputies for Contact with the RCNZ,

Rev A van Delden

Rev J Poppe

Br. L van Burgel

Br. A Plug

Attachments:

1. Report of the visit by brs J Poppe and A Plug to the RCNZ, May 2005
2. Report of the attendance of brs A van Delden and L van Burgel at the RCNZ Synod, September 2005.

Appendix 10a: Report of the visit by Brs J Poppe and A Plug to the RCNZ, May 2005

Date: 23 August, 2005

Re: Report on Visit to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, May 6-16, 2005

Dear brothers,

As per the instruction of the Deputies, we visited the Reformed Churches in New Zealand for 10 days early in May 2005.

The intent of this visit was:

- To allow the brothers and sisters in the RCNZ to get to know us on a personal basis, and so to acquaint them with our churches, with a view to strengthening the relationship between the RCNZ and the FRCA.
- To give the visitors, both of whom were new to the Deputyship, an opportunity to develop first-hand knowledge of the RCNZ, and of the circumstances of their church life.

What follows is a report of the visit.

It is not our intention to provide a detailed, point-by-point account of all our experiences. Rather, we wish to provide a broad overview, outlining our itinerary, highlighting some points of particular note or interest, and coming to a brief summary of conclusions.

We will be happy to elaborate verbally on what follows at our next meeting of Deputies.

Our itinerary:

- We left Perth on Friday, May 6, and arrived at Auckland the next morning. We spent the first weekend of our visit in the Auckland Presbytery, where we attended church services at North Shore and Avondale. We also attended an outreach event and spoke at a congregational meeting in North Shore, and had a number of private conversations. We also had the opportunity to visit some Christian schools in the Auckland/Hamilton Area.
- On Tuesday, May 10, we travelled to the Wellington Presbytery, spent the night with Rev and Mrs Hoyt in Hastings, met with the consistories of the Masterton and Silverstream congregations, spoke at a meeting in Silverstream, had a number of private conversations with ministers and office-bearers, and again, visited several Christian schools.
- On Friday, May 13, we travelled to Christchurch, where we spent the second weekend of our visit. We attended worship services at Dovedale and Bishopdale, met with brothers from the Committee for

Interchurch Relations of the RCNZ, spoke at a congregational meeting, and had a number of private conversations with ministers and office-bearers.

- On Monday morning, May 16, we left Christchurch, and arrived in Perth that evening.

Points of Note:

- **Overall:** We were very hospitably received, and made to feel welcome wherever we went. Once we had explained the purpose of our visit, people spoke to us freely and openly. At every level, we developed a good rapport with brothers and sisters, ministers, office-bearers and ordinary members, including young people. They showed a good deal of interest in us and in the FRCA, and responded positively to our desire for good contact on a personal level.
- **Worship Services:** We attended worship services in four different congregations, led by three different ministers and a vicar. Without exception, it was a joy to be present in the worship services. Services were well-attended. The preaching was true to Scripture, clear, and focused on the unity of doctrine and life. Two of the sermons were taken from the Heidelberg Catechism.

In most congregations, the selection of songs was from the Psalter Hymnal or from a supplementary selection of hymns approved by the RCNZ synod. The Psalms figured prominently, but only a few of them were sung to Genevan tunes.

The order of worship was consistent with traditional Reformed practice, but contained elements not found in our services: the call to worship at the beginning, brief additional prayers at specific points (confession of sin, prayer for the opening of the Word, prayer after the collection), an active role for the duty elder during the service (leading the congregational prayer in the church served by a vicar), and a closing doxology sung by the congregation.

On one occasion, we witnessed the Public Profession of Faith of a member and the baptism of two children. This was clearly experienced as a joyful event for the entire congregation, and a cause for thanksgiving.

- **Congregational Life:** We witnessed a high level of engagement in the life of the church by ordinary members. Meetings were well attended; there is a strong focus on the church's witness to the world, and a willingness to give for the promotion of the Gospel, work in the Kingdom, and the needy neighbour. (Even the most common-or-garden-variety congregational decisions are made with the church's calling in the world in mind.) In this respect, the NZ churches appear to be rather more outward-looking than our own.

While it is true that the RCNZ has drawn its membership from a broad spectrum of believers, we noted a strong sense of unity among all those we met.

- **Meetings with members:** We were able to make presentations to members in three separate locations: Auckland, Silverstream and Christchurch. They were well-attended and those present showed good interest. Questioning was pointed and outspoken, but never hostile. Our sense is that those who attended, left with a clearer understanding of who we are and what we stand for. We were able to correct some misconceptions, and convince those present of the genuineness of our desire for a close and meaningful relationship.
- **Private conversations:** Due to the nature of these conversations, we cannot go into detail. However, we found them, without exception, to be positive and very stimulating. Those who spoke to us radiated a strong sense of devotion to the Lord, a commitment to Biblical thinking within a confessional framework, and thankfulness and enthusiasm for what the Lord is doing within the RCNZ. They were very open with us about their own views and concerns on a number of points, and gave us a unique look into what makes the RCNZ tick. In this connection, we noted a lively interest among young people in the work of the Lord, and we saw evidence of their willingness to think deeply and Biblically about their place as believers in a Reformed community.
- **The Ministry:** We ran into two developments of particular interest:
 - *The Vicariate:* the appointment of a ministerial graduate as a vicar, alongside a serving minister in an existing congregation. This enables the sharing of the workload, as well as the mentoring of a new minister until he has reached the point of taking charge of his own congregation.
 - *Church Planting:* the establishment of a very small core congregation with its own minister, supported by a larger congregation or the bond of churches, with the explicit intention of building a congregation through local outreach.
- **Relationship with the CRCA:** There appears to be a variety of views regarding the relationship with the CRCA, ranging from moderate misgivings to serious concern. We are well aware of the causes: the influence of the “Word-and-Spirit” document, the question of women in office, and some ambivalence concerning the authority of Scripture. As we see it, there is broad agreement within the RCNZ on each of these matters; the difference in view has more to do with the weight that should be given to them. As a result, while some congregations have still recently called ministers from the CRCA, others have been actively looking elsewhere, especially North America.

- **Support for Geelong Reformed Seminary:** The previous comments also apply to the views within the RCNZ concerning the Reformed Seminary in Geelong. At this point, there is keen interest in what will be done to fill upcoming vacancies at the seminary; the quality of choices made will strongly influence the future of the relationship between the RCNZ and the Geelong seminary.
- **Education:** A great area of concern for the brotherhood in the RCNZ is the future of Christian education. Very few Reformed parents see government schools as an option for their children, but because of their small numbers and hostile Government policy, Reformed schools such as we have them appear to be out of reach for most Reformed parents. The range of choices parents make includes:
 - *Cooperation with other Christians:* In some cases, these are schools that were started by Reformed parents. However, over time, financial pressures and a shift in numbers has led to changes in the identity of the schools. We witnessed clear examples of that.
 - *Integration with the State system.* Some Christian schools have in effect become state schools, with state funding, but with their own control of staffing and of the identity of the school. The level of control exerted in the school by the state varies, depending on the terms of the agreement struck between the state and the relevant school board.
 - *Home-schooling.* This can be prompted by a principled choice against either of the above, but may also be influenced by the financial burden of enrolling children at a Christian school. The prevalence of home-schooling is a source of tension within a number of communities, especially where it threatens the viability of already-struggling Reformed schools.

In addition, there is a chronic shortage of Reformed teachers. We visited two schools that are run by Reformed school boards for Reformed children; both had to appoint principals (and one of them appointed teaching staff) who themselves are not members of the RCNZ, simply because there was no-one else available.

Summary and Conclusions:

From the perspective of our stated intentions, this was clearly a very successful visit.

Our visit strengthened the bond that is growing between us. The opportunities we had to meet ordinary members in a number of different locations has allowed them to put a face to a name.

At the same time, we were given a unique opportunity to get to know the RCNZ bond of churches, and to get a first-hand look at them as they really are. We are very grateful for the open and hospitable reception we received, and we recommend that our appreciation for that be placed on record.

Our experience confirms the recognition by previous deputies and endorsed by our Synod that the RCNZ is a true and faithful church of our Lord.

We experienced unity of faith with the brotherhood there, and a desire in all things to regulate their life and faith according to the instruction of Scripture.

We had a busy, but thoroughly enjoyable time, and we are thankful that the Lord has given us this opportunity. May this visit serve to further develop strengthen the bonds between our churches.

Submitted for your consideration,

Joe Poppe

Aart Plug

Appendix 10b: Report of visit by A Van Delden and L. Van Burgel to the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Held Saturday September 3 to Friday September 9, 2005

We (A van Delden and L. van Burgel) departed Perth early Friday morning for a flight to Auckland via Sydney. We arrived safely to be met by Rev S. Bajema from the Reformed Church of Auckland. We stayed overnight with a widower Mr Posthuma before being driven to the Synod by Rev Bajema. The Synod was held in the Reformed Church of Hamilton. Hamilton is a city of about 160,000 people about 2 hours drive southeast of Auckland.

The Synod opened with the usual preliminaries and the election of the moderamen who were Rev J. Haverland moderator, Rev M. Flinn vice moderator, Rev B. Hoyt first clerk and elder R. de Vries as second clerk. In the evening a prayer service led by Rev J. Goris was held. He preached on Revelation 1:9:20 on the "Vision of the Church". We then travelled to the home of Rev Reinier Noppers and his family (wife Trudy – nee Swarts) where we would be excellently looked after. Also staying with the Noppers were Rev J Plug and his wife Marijke. Rev Noppers is minister of the second New Zealand Reformed Church in Hamilton at Hukanui. He and his wife originate originally from Perth.

On Sunday we visited the Hukanui church where Rev Noppers is a pastor. The morning service was led by Rev J. Klazinga formerly a URCNA minister called to the Church at Christchurch. In the evening Rev H. Vaatstra from the Reformed Church at Dunedin led the service. Although there were some differences to our order of worship, we could feel at home with the service, the preaching and the people. The afternoon service seemed well attended. The

main differences in the worship service were the use of the old (grey) Psalter hymnal from the CRC, which includes the Psalms but also a large selection of hymns. Although Psalms sung to the Genevan tunes are in the Psalter hymnal, we had understood from previous visits that they are not frequently used in the RCNZ. In between services we had an opportunity to observe some of the attractive features of Hamilton.

On Monday the Synod reconvened. Sessions were set to commence at 9am and finish at 9pm in the evening. There were generous breaks for refreshments and mealtimes during which we could freely discuss a variety of matters with delegates. We were warmly and openly received. From these discussions an impression could begin to be gained what lives within the various Reformed Churches in New Zealand.

At the Synod the delegates from sister churches were: Rev G. Van Schie and F van der Bom (CRCA), Rev J. Plug (GKN–Lib), Rev D. van der Zwaag (CRC-Neth), Rev P. Kloosterman (URCNA), Mr M. Bube (OPC) and Revs H. Stoker and B. Fourie (GKSA). Prof H. de Waard attended as delegate on behalf of the Reformed Theological College at Geelong. Apart from us as delegates from the FRCA, other delegates included a delegate (Rev P. Boyd) from the Grace Presbyterian Church in New Zealand and Rev Q. Kim from the Korean American Presbyterian Church in Auckland. Some of these delegates presented greetings but attended only a few sessions of Synod.

This was not the first Synod of the RCNZ we had attended so we were quite familiar with the Synod way of working. Each of the 18 RCNZ churches had two delegates. In addition quite a number of people were afforded speaking rights. One could expect that with a full agenda the business would not be completed within a week, but nevertheless this was the case. The rules of debate are governed by “Robert’s Rules” and this seemed to help expedite discussion and lead to an orderly way of conducting the business. With every church represented, most often speakers would introduce their remarks “our session is against, or our session decided...”. Nevertheless we had been assured previously, and this was on occasions evident, that delegates were able to vote contrary to their session’s opinion, although clearly this did not happen often. Some items on this Synod agenda would not appear on a FRCA Synod e.g. Overseas Mission Board, Emeritus Fund, and Long Service Leave Fund

Items of interest to us were the Reports from the Interchurch Relations Committee, the RTC deputies, the Psalm and Hymnody committee, and the committee for Revision of the Forms and Confessions.

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report

Sister church relationship was continued with the CRC(Neth), OPC, RCN (Lib), PCEA, GKSA and the CRCA.

- a. **GKSA:** The deputies reported that the 2003 GKSA Synod decided to allow the ordination of women in the office of deacons.

The deputies report that *“there are strong voices within the GKSA to allow for the ordination of women as elders and ministers and Synod 2003 clearly wanted these issues further investigated”*. The RCNZ Synod decided, in addition to continuing the sister church relationship, also *“to express our deep concern to the GKSA concerning its decision to allow women to be ordained as deacons.”*

- b. **CRCA:** The 2002 RCNZ Synod had decided *“to advise the CRCA our sister church relationship is again under strain because of the decision on Women as Deacons, Children at the Lord’s Supper, and continued acceptance of worship innovations which are a departure from traditional Reformed practice”*. Since that time, the IRC of the RCNZ and the CER of the CRCA have met to discuss differences and also two delegates (Revs Haverland and Flinn) attended the CRCA Synod in 2003. The outcome of these meetings and the report of the CRCA Synod was reported on positively by the IRC. In essence the three areas of concern were narrowed to one: the issue of women in the office of deacon. It is not known why the concerns re the innovative worship practices was not mentioned. The matter of “children at the Lord’s Supper” was clarified as being not an issue of allowing children at the Lord’s Supper without a profession of faith (paedo-communion) but rather at what age children could confess their faith and thereby have access to the table. The CRCA Synod 2003 had rejected a proposal to adopt a special form for children over the age of 10 years professing their faith but instead re-affirmed the same form must be used. They did add the qualification that the second question in the profession of faith form *“1) does not require a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the confessions and 2) the aim of this question is that, through ongoing instruction, we may grow in unity in the truth for which our Lord prayed in John 17:16,23”*. The CRCA decision to remain with one form seemed to satisfy the RCNZ and therefore this issue of concern has fallen away. The one remaining issue of women in the office of deacon (and in some cases deacons being part of the session) was sufficient for the RCNZ Synod to make the following decision: *“to advise the CRCA that our sister church relationship is still under strain because of their decisions on Women as Deacons and their rejection of appeals against this decision”*. A stronger motion to declare the sister church relationship with the CRCA suspended, although receiving support from a number of delegates, was rejected.
- c. **FRCA:** The IRC in their report made note of our decisions of Synod Rockingham 2003 to *“to ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and*

the implication of an offer of sister church relation with them and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy". The IRC report mentions that the FRCA did not ask for the RCNZ to change their way of thinking or action with the CRCA. According to the report *"their synodical decisions speak only of allowing more time so that they can come to a more unified decision to offer sister us relations"*. Accordingly the IRC did not see any mandate for them, as it *"was very much an issue for them to sort out amongst themselves"*. The adopted recommendation then also does not include provision for a delegate at the next FRCA Synod. The decisions were:

1. To continue the offer of a sister relationship with the FRCA
2. To convey by correspondence the offer of a sister church relationship to the FRCA deputies for consideration at their Synod 2006.

In addition the IRC had made some comments in their report that our recognition of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches without offering sister relations i.e. the separation of the nexus of true churches and sister church relationship would allow us to return to the ICRC. They recommended to the RCNZ Synod for it to request the FRCA to consider rejoining the ICRC. However following our explanation that the IRC observation was an oversimplification of the issues involved and the general consensus that this was an internal matter for the FRCA, this recommendation was withdrawn.

2. Deputies Reformed Theological College Report

The previous Synod of the RCNZ had decided to dissolve the partnership agreement (contract) between the New Zealand churches and the ACTE, the organization which administers the Reformed Theological College over issues relating to "Word and Spirit". In the place of the contract the deputies proposed a memorandum of understanding which still allowed meaningful input into the college but no longer hold each other responsible to the strict adherence to the Confessions. The issue that remained was the level and manner of supporting the College financially. After extensive debate it was decided to support the College by way of recommended contribution (which was set at \$63,000pa). This allowed any churches who on grounds of conscience objected to support, the freedom to 'opt' out.

3. Synodical Psalm and Hymn Selection Committee

This committee which was charged with "preparing our own selection of psalms and hymns for worship in our churches" had done an enormous amount of work and had prepared for consideration a selection of

Psalms 1-120 with the exception of Psalm 119. They expected to finish the full selection in 6 months and proposed to print a “provisional psalter”. Synod approved the use of the selected psalms in the worship services and also decided that it was the ultimate goal to produce a book of psalms and hymns. This meant the provisional psalter would not be printed for the time being but once copyright issues are resolved CD’s and other printed material can be provisionally used.

4. Committee for Updating Forms and Confessions

This Committee was mandated to update the liturgical forms and to assess any available language-updated versions of the BCF, WCF and the Canons of Dort. After investigating several version the committee recommended the adoption of the 1989 edition of the Can Ref Churches version of the BCF. Similarly it also recommended the adoption of the 1986 edition of the Canons of Dordt as produced by the Canadian Reformed Churches. In respect of the WCF, the committee recommended that the churches stay with the current edition in use. Synod decided “to reappoint the committee and charge it to continue its study of the CanRC translations of the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, interacting with the churches and the CanRC and bring final recommendations to the next Synod”.

5. Bible Versions

Synod decided “That two other Bible versions be considered for pulpit use in our churches by the committee to study Bible Versions along with the NIV and NASB versions, namely the English Standard Version and the New King James Version.

6. Grace Presbyterian Church

The Grace Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand is a national Presbyterian church. It is in the process of initiating formal relationships with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of America.

The RCNZ Synod decided:

1. *That the Interchurch Relations Committee have meetings with the Grace Presbyterian Church to investigate how the Grace Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand can seek closer bonds.*
2. *That the Interchurch Relations Committee report to the sessions and synodical standing committees outcomes of its meetings with the Grace Presbyterian Church during the intersynodical period.*

7. Overture on Abortion

Synod was asked by a Presbytery to 'ratify' a decision it had made regarding abortion. This unusual step generated a lot of discussion and distress when failure to at first meet with consensus could have left the impression the churches were not prepared to issue a firm statement against the evils of abortion. The Synod, although having decided against the overture by a narrow margin, decided to allow a committee to revisit the decision and subsequently a unanimous decision was made as follows:

1. *That the earlier decision regarding Overture 1 be rescinded, and the record of that decision and the protests lodged as a result be expunged from the minutes.*
2. *To endorse the following statement:*
Since human life begins at conception, wilful abortion is contrary to the sixth commandment, the only possible exception being cases where the life of the mother is in jeopardy, and every reasonable effort has been made to save the life of her unborn child.
3. *That the present understanding of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand is that conception takes place at fertilisation.*
4. *That a study committee be appointed and mandated to study the following questions:*
 - a) *What is conception and when does it occur?*
 - b) *Does the 'morning after' pill, and other emergency 'contraception' prevent conception and/or act as an abortifacant?*
 - c) *Are there steps that may legitimately be taken to prevent conception after rape?*

The study committee shall seek advice from medical doctors in our denomination, and where necessary or desirable, also seek advice from others having expertise with respect to these issues.

8. Conclusion

The undersigned delegates found the experience of visiting the New Zealand churches and the opportunity to observe their Synod enlightening and helpful in an appreciation and understanding of what lives in these churches. We were able to renew old contacts and acquaintances and establish new ones. Discussion on and off the floor of Synod gave valuable insights. We were cordially received. The excellent hospitality extended by our hosts and others was much

appreciated. All in all it was a fruitful visit. May the Lord bless the outcome to the mutual benefit of our churches.

L. van Burgel
A van Delden

Appendix 11: Deputies for Relations with Other Churches – Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia

We, the undersigned, appointed by Synod Rockingham Article 92²⁷,

- 1) In fulfilment of the mandate of Synod Rockingham 2003, Article 81 have implemented the decisions of FRC Synod West Albany 2000, Article 64, with respect to the PCEA, and have had one meeting with W P Gadsby and G Kinder in relation to this.

At this meeting W P Gadsby submitted a detailed written response to FRC Synod Launceston 1998, Article 93, to which deputies responded later by letter.

- 2) Further as mandated by Synod Rockingham 2003, Article 78, we have had discussions with R S Ward about his views on Genesis 1-11.

We have come to the following unanimous positions:

In relation to the above:

- 1) The only matters outstanding were the fencing of the Lord's Supper Table and the Pulpit.

With respect to the LS the deputies can accept the PCEA's fencing of the Lord's table as adequate. Neither our, nor their system is failsafe. Deputies accept that the PCEA does make every effort to only allow true believers to participate. The difference in practice stems from our more 'ecclesiastical' approach and their more 'individual' approach.

Deputies have more difficulty in regarding the PCEA's fencing of the pulpit as adequate. This does not mean that unscriptural doctrines are preached from their pulpits because of this, for it is understood that controversial points will not be dealt with. At the most it can be argued that this practice increases the possibility of error. We have had unscriptural doctrines preached from our pulpits as well. The test is what is done with such cases.

- 2) Deputies have discussed the book of R S Ward, Foundations in Genesis: Genesis 1-11 Today and entered into correspondence with him about it. Deputies cannot accept the teachings promoted in his book as Scriptural. A summary of the main points of deviation is given below.

- a) His view of Scripture is troublesome. He makes room for his interpretation by making Genesis 1-11 history

²⁷ We included the alternate, D Veltkamp, in our discussions and decisions. This led to no material changes in any of the outcomes.

expressed in the terms of the culture within which it was written. The message for sinners is said to remain the same, but the facts are reinterpreted in the light of modern scientific findings. (e.g. p 21 line 3-6) He says the creation account is a sustained polemic against the creation myths of the ancient world, (p 34 point 4) meaning that the manner in which the story is told is also determined by the desire to refute the creation myths of the culture of the time and not simply by the statement of the facts.

Consequently Scripture is interpreted through the lens of both the state of the knowledge of the culture within it was written, the myths it was meant to counter and the 'scientific' (mythical) vantage point of our own culture. In the process what is presented as factual information in Genesis 1-11 turns out to be the cultural framework within which the true facts are obscured. We are not to enter into vain polemics about these things, for the message to sinners remains.

- b) The days of creation are not 24 hour days, but reinterpreted as reflecting structure, relationships and purpose of creation and not scientific chronology. (p 21 line 4; p 39 line 7; p 54 point 5) The earth is possibly 15 billion years old. (p 37 line 2)
- c) This leaves open for him the possibility of a progressive introduction of different species over an extended period of time, (p 57 line 4-6) and a divinely directed evolutionary process is open for discussion. (line10-14) Within this 'hypothetical' framework he argues that animals lived and died before the creation of man. Their death was not the result of the fall. (p 70 line 6) The lack of the words "according to their kind" with the procreation of man gives him the scope to say that the animals, of whom this is said, break up into different species and man not. (p 62 line 10-15 28) R Ward believes that there could have been other human like creatures before Adam's time, and even entertains the thought that they may have been related by ancestry to Adamic man. He retains Adam's unique status by reducing Adam to religious progenitor of our race. (p 81 line 12-19)

²⁸ "According to their kind" means, since God has created the many animals, so each will reproduce according to its kind. However, since He only created the one man, the words are not necessary with Adam.

- d) The snake is most probably not a real snake, but simply Satan is described as a snake. (p 102 line 1)
- e) The flood was not universal. (p 159, 178 line 3,4) More humans than Noah and his family survived. There was not one universal language before Babel. Others from pre-flood time came together and worked on Babel. (p 196 paragraph 3)

Deputies were told by W P Gadsby that similar approaches to R S Ward's have a long history in the Free Church of Scotland from the nineteenth century onwards (e.g. Thomas Chalmers, first Free Church Moderator 1843) and have been tolerated. The PCEA, coming from that church, therefore, would not be proceeding against R S Ward.

Deputies do not consider that the differences in practice under point 1 above are of such weight that we may deny the PCEA the recognition that she is a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their intention is certainly to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, although in the fencing of the pulpit their practice is less than ideal.

The matter of R S Ward is of a somewhat different nature, for, although his opinion is not shared by other ministers of the PCEA, they permit this doctrine to be held/taught in their federation. This deputies find this to be a grave weakness and raises the question what erroneous doctrines can be taught from the pulpits of the PCEA without censure.

Deputies have debated what the implications of this are for recognition of the PCEA in light of our relationship with our sister-churches in the Netherlands, where the same grave error is being committed. Although we consider the PCEA to be delinquent in the matter of R S Ward, deputies, in good conscience, cannot deny that the PCEA is still a true and faithful church of the Lord. Deputies would be comfortable in simply recognising them as true and faithful without attaching to this the normal consequences such as exchange of attestations, or opening up our pulpits to each other²⁹. In the circumstances we are unable to recommend a sister church relationship with the PCEA. We consider the differences sufficiently great to make this type of union unwise.

In our meeting with the PCEA deputies, W P Gadsby intimated that the PCEA also was not seeking organisational unity, but a more distant fraternal relationship. He told us that the PCEA were looking at a two tiered fraternal relationship with respect to the calling of ministers, those coming from the second tier undergoing a greater scrutiny. We would fit into the second tier.

We pray that God may guide the Synod in its deliberations.

²⁹ Article 67, Synod Launceston 1985, would seem to invalidate the deputies position, but that article will be appealed at the upcoming Synod.

Appendix 11: Deputies Relations – Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia

Rev J G R Kroeze
Rev A Veldman
J Wielstra
G Reitsema
Alternate: D Veltkamp.

Appendix 12: Report Deputies for Training for the Ministry

Mandate

Article 88 of Acts of the 2003 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Rockingham) records Deputies' mandate to:

- (a) collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
- (b) continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
- (c) collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
- (d) continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological library and to do so if possible;
- (e) continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry, including the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT);
- (f) ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
- (g) continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
- (h) make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" once every three years;
- (i) to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible.

Deputies met 10 times to discuss matters concerning its mandate.

Composition

Synod 2003 appointed Reverend C Bouwman as convener of Deputies and the Brothers A Van Leeuwen, M Plug and H Faas as the remaining Deputies with Brother R Heerema being the alternate.

Reverend Bouwman accepted a call to one of our sister churches in Canada and accordingly, Deputies were re-constituted in March 2005 as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) | Convener: | Brother A Van Leeuwen |
| (b) | Secretary: | Brother H Faas |
| (c) | Treasurer – Theological Students: | Brother M Plug |
| (d) | Treasurer – Theological College: | Brother R Heerema |

Deputies note and support the usual practice that the convener of Deputies is a Minister of the Word to allow Deputies to have actual experience of training for the ministry.

Deputies resolved to recommend that Deputies include a Minister of the Word.

Financial support Hamilton Theological College

Deputies collected A\$222,367 and forwarded A\$219,000 to Hamilton during the period February 2003 to February 2006.

During the period, the churches were levied at a rate of A\$40 per communicant member (in accordance with decision 3 of Article 88 of the Acts of the 2003 Synod).

Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to Hamilton are contained in Appendix A.

Contact with Hamilton and Kampen

Deputies conveyed messages of congratulations and fraternal greetings on the occasions of Hamilton's Convocation and Kampen's Schooldag 2003, 2004 and 2005.

Deputies also informed Hamilton and Kampen of our appointment and re-constitution as outlined in heading 2 above.

Contact with Kampen remained low key. Other than the above greetings and contact regarding a guest lecturer (see heading 10 below), Deputies received the "schooldagkrant 2003", "schooldagkrant 2004" and "schooldagkrant 2005".

However, Deputies have noticed that since the appointment of Rector Prof. dr. G. Kwakkel, Deputies have received responses to their correspondence with Kampen.

Given our mandate to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible (please see heading 11 below), contact with Hamilton was substantial.

Deputies received Hamilton's Handbooks (the latest being for the year 2005 – 2006), course calendars (the latest being for the years 2005 – 2008) and financial reports (the latest being for the year ended 31 December 2004). In addition, Deputies also received the following:

Appendix 12: Deputies Training for the Ministry

- (a) Full agendas and supporting material (including reports) and minutes for meetings of Hamilton's the Board of Governors held in September 2003, January 2004, September 2004, January 2005 and September 2005.
- (b) Agendas and minutes for meetings of Hamilton's Finance and Property Committee
- (c) Agendas and minutes for meetings of Hamilton's Academic Committee.

Deputies wrote to Dr & Mrs De Jong and the Board of Governors of Hamilton concerning Dr De Jong's illness.

Deputies wrote to Mrs Faber and the Hamilton College on the passing away of Dr J Faber.

Deputies wrote to Professor GH Visscher on the occasion of his 25th anniversary in the ministry of the Word.

Brother A Van Leeuwen visited Hamilton for the occasion of the 36th Anniversary Meeting and 31st Convocation of the College in Hamilton and a meeting of the Board of Governors of Hamilton in September 2005.

Br Van Leeuwin received opportunity at the Convocation to extend greetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The address delivered at the Convocation Meeting is contained in Appendix B.

Deputies also corresponded Hamilton's Board of Governors concerning:

- (a) participation of the Australian churches in the Pastoral Training Program; and
- (b) the possibility of distance education.

Funds for theological library and theological training

Deputies wrote to the Churches by letters dated 11 February 2004 to request the Churches to contribute the proceeds of 3 full collections per year for our own theological library and theological training.

Deputies interpreted the phrase "3 full collections" to mean 3 double collections i.e 3 Sundays if the collections were held both in the morning and afternoon worship service or alternatively 6 Sundays if e.g. a collection were held only in the morning or the afternoon worship service.

The responses were as follows:

- (a) Free Reformed Church of Bunbury – by letter dated 4 March 2004 noted that the request for collections was declined and nothing will be paid.
- (b) Free Reformed Church of Rockingham – by letter dated 8 March 2004 noted that request for collections was declined but instead will pay \$10 per communicant member per year.

Deputies collected A\$9,403.92 from the churches as funds for a theological library and theological training during the period January 2004 to February 2006.

To date, not all churches have forwarded the funds collected by them, keeping them in reserve. It has come to Deputies' notice that some churches are not collecting and contributing funds. Deputies also note discrepancies in the interpretation of "three full collections". Some churches collect three times in the year for a single collection, whilst others collect doubt the amount.

Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and held in this fund are contained in Appendix C.

Investigation – theological library

Deputies considered this aspect of their mandate under the following headings:

- (a) collecting / acquiring books – books may be donated from older church members or retired ministers – a system may be set up for the regular purchase of new titles – electronic versions of books and periodicals should be considered
- (b) housing books / allowing lending of books – the John Calvin Christian College or one of the ministers may be able to house the books
- (c) care and maintenance of the library of books – depends on where books housed
- (d) funding – Synod 2003 has requested churches to collect 3 times a year – suggestion that the Australian Women's League be motivated to follow the Canadian model in raising funds for a theological library

Deputies wrote to the Support Office of the John Calvin Schools by letter dated 27 June 2005 to see if it would be possible to house a library with the Support Office.

Deputies also contacted the Women's League to encourage them to collect for an Australian theological library in the model of Canada.

The Support Office of the John Calvin Schools has agreed to combine with Deputies to set up a joint library. Deputies are in discussion with the Support Office to further advance this project.

Deputies have received a small collection of study books which were donated towards this venture. These are written primarily in the Dutch language. At present these are stored at the Support Office of the John Calvin Schools.

Investigation – theological training

Deputies considered what was envisaged by the phrase "possibilities of theological training by extension (IT)" concerning our mandate to continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry.

After some preliminary investigation, Deputies wrote for information to several ministers of the Australian Churches and to Reverend R Boersma of our sister churches in South Africa who runs a seminary-by-email for Portuguese students.

Reverend Boersma provided some interesting and informative material about how distance education (which is not a new concept) can work in the modern environment. This was by e-mail of 28 November 2003.

Reverend J Poppe wrote to Deputies outlining his vision for a future theological college and training by extension. This was by way of letter of 4 December 2003.

Deputies then considered the matter further and wrote to Hamilton's Board of Governors by letter dated 22 July 2004 seeking their input on the possibility of IT distribution of the teaching that occurs at the College in Hamilton – making it possible for Australian students to remain in Australia for at least part of their theological education.

Hamilton's Board of Governors asked the Senate to look into that matter. The Senate recommended not going into this direction due to the difficulty of teaching languages and exegesis without direct contact between teacher and student. In addition, the College lacks expertise, manpower and equipment to carry out a distance learning project. The Academic Committee endorsed this recommendation from the Senate and the Board adopted it at its meeting held on 8 September 2005.

Deputies resolved not to pursue this aspect further.

Publication and promotion

Deputies arranged for the publication of various “College Corner” articles in the *Una Sancta*, thereby keeping the church membership informed concerning matters at Hamilton, its staff and students. These included the regular articles on the semester-to-semester activities of the College as well as the farewell to Dr J De Jong, the welcome to Dr AJ de Visser and “in memoriam” on the passing away of Dr J Faber.

Deputies arranged for an advertisement in the *Una Sancta*:

- (a) drawing attention to the fact that both Kampen and Hamilton had written to Deputies indicating that there are currently too few theological students;
- (b) encouraging young brothers to consider whether they are called to preach the Gospel and minister to the Churches; and
- (c) informing interested persons that copies of the latest handbooks for Hamilton were freely available via Deputies.

Independently of the above advertisement, 2 young men wrote to Deputies seeking financial assistance for planned studies at Hamilton.

Deputies also received notice from a brother that he wished to commence studies as a mature age student at Hamilton and would be in a position to support himself. Deputies were able to assist with information about the pre-requisite language studies.

Financial aid to students

Deputies received approaches from 2 students concerning financial assistance, both with the support of the consistory of the church of which they were communicant members. These were Brother Cornelis Kleyn (Mount Nasura) and Brother Arend Witten (Albany).

Deputies were pleased to be able to confirm to both students that the Churches would support them financially in accordance with Art 18 CO as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994.

Deputies have arranged for the collection of funds for the first of these students.

Deputies are in the process of arranging for the collection of funds for the second student.

As well as arranging for the financial support, Deputies maintain contact with the students being financially supported to provide encouragement and determine their progress.

Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to students during Deputies' current term are contained in Appendix D.

Guest lecturer

Professor J Geertsema visited Australia to present a series of lectures to the churches during October and November 2003. The lecture schedule is contained in Appendix E.

The total cost (to the Australian churches) of the visit was \$5,520.

Deputies wrote to Kampen by letter dated 8 September 2004 inviting Kampen to suggest the name of a guest speaker to visit Australia some time in 2005.

Following further correspondence, Deputies were informed a serving Professor would not be able to take the time required (approximately 6 weeks) and that Deputies should write to a retired professor from Kampen directly to determine whether he would be interested to travel to Australia and present a series of lectures to the churches in Australia.

Deputies wrote to a retired professor from Kampen to determine whether he would be interested to present a series of lectures to the churches in Australia.

Following the response of the retired professor and a further response from Kampen, Deputies noted that there is little chance of a speaker from the Netherlands with a strong link to Kampen being available for any time more than 2 weeks.

In any event, Deputies resolved to try to stagger the timing of a guest speaker so that it would not take place in the same year as Synod and Deputies will attempt to arrange a guest speaker for some time in 2007.

Involvement with Hamilton's Board of Governors

Hamilton's Board of Governors (BOG) sought legal counsel regarding the possibilities of changing the Theological College Act 1981 to allow persons not serving in the Canadian Reformed Churches to be appointed to the Board of Governors.

The outcome of this legal advice was that the Act needed to be amended by an act of the Parliament of Ontario. However, the timeframe for such a change and the cost are unknown, and this matter would consume a fair bit of the Board's time and energy to pursue, without any certainty about the result.

Hamilton's Board of Governors considered the legal advice at their meeting of 9 January 2004 and decided to let us know "that this matter has been investigated and that the time and cost and energy required do not make it very feasible to pursue".

Deputies were informed of this decision by letter dated 12 January 2004 wherein the chairman of Hamilton's Board of Governors also wrote:

"We hope that this decision is acceptable to you. We really have little choice since changing an Act of Parliament via a private members' bill is not a very simple matter. We sincerely appreciate the support the college receives from the Australian churches, and we will certainly acknowledge you as if you have official representation on the board by sending you the reports of our meetings and any relevant information so that you may be fully up to date on what is happening at the college. Any questions or input from you would also continue to be most welcome." [Deputies' emphasis].

Deputies wrote to the Board of Governors accepting their decision and (having resolved that a deputy should attend a Board of Governors meeting) sought the input of the Board of Governors on the most appropriate meeting to attend.

The Board of Governors responded that:

- (a) they would be delighted to receive a delegate from among the Australian deputies and receive in this personal way the input of the Australian churches; and
- (b) suggested that the regular September meeting in 2005 would be the most appropriate.

Deputies resolved that Br A Van Leeuwen attend the September 2005 meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors.

Br Van Leeuwen attended the meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors held on 8 September 2005, being made welcome and invited to full participation.

Matters discussed at this meeting pertaining to the Australian Churches were as follows:

- (a) In the discussion of the Budget for 2006, the Chairman expressed gratitude for the substantial contribution to their budget from the Australian Churches.
- (b) The Pastoral Training Programme (PTP). A letter from Deputies dated 20 March 2005 was discussed in which information was requested of possible inclusion of the Australian Churches in this program. The Academic Committee (AC) recommended approving this request in principle, provided that the Australian churches follow the adopted guidelines of the program and also bear the costs of any student working in Australia; and provided that a student himself desires to work in Australia. A positive aspect of this possibility is that students working in Australia from June to August would be exposed to the full range of activities in church life including teaching the Catechism and participating in home visitation. The Board endorsed the recommendation of the AC.
- (c) Video education – see the material under the heading 7 above.

Deputies note that in relation to the PTP:

- (a) The Australian students have indicated to be interested to participate in the PTP in Australia when the time comes; and
- (b) A copy of the guidelines will need to be obtained and the practical implications will still need to be considered by Deputies.

Based on the positive feedback from the Board of Governors and Br A Van Leeuwen, Deputies resolved to recommend to Synod that an Australian representative should attend the September meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors every 2 years.

Deputies have now received but not yet considered a copy of the guidelines for the PTP. A summary has been prepared and is contained as Appendix F.

Recommendations

Deputies recommend that Synod decides to:

1. Reconsider the amount and manner of collections for our own theological library and training.
2. Request the churches to contribute A\$50 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2007.
3. Set aside \$6,000 for the costs of a visit to Australia by a guest lecturer from Hamilton or Kampen, together with his wife.

Appendix 12: Deputies Training for the Ministry

4. Set aside \$3,500 for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2007.
5. Discharge Deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - j. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - k. continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
 - l. collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
 - m. continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological library and to do so if possible;
 - n. ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 - o. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
 - p. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" once every three years;
 - q. to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
 - r. consider the practical implications of including the Australian churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and, if considered feasible, advise the Australian Churches accordingly.

Greetings

Deputies send fraternal greetings to Synod and wish the brethren God's blessing on the work to be done.

Br A Van Leeuwen, Convener

Br H Faas, Secretary

Br R Heerema, Treasurer – Hamilton Theological College Fund

Br M Plug, Treasurer – Theological Library Fund / Needy Students Fund

Appendix 12a: Financial Statements: Hamilton Theological College Fund

Hamilton Theological College Fund

Statement of Receipts and Payments February 2003 to February 2006

Opening Balance \$22471.21					Hamilton \$21207.78		NSF \$1263.43	
Receipts \$	2003	2004	2005	Total \$		Payments \$		
Albany	9,440.00	8,920.00	8,680.00	27,040.00	2003	Hamilton	73,000.00	
Armadales	12,040.00	5,840.00	17,240.00	35,120.00		J Geertsema Tour	5,520.12	
Bunbury	700.00	2,300.00	1,880.00	4,880.00		Bank Charges	111.00	
Byford	8,160.00	5,840.00	6,240.00	20,240.00				
Darling Downs		3,640.00	3,320.00	6,960.00				
Kelmscott	5,760.00	6,240.00	6,480.00	18,480.00				
Launceston	4,120.00	4,000.00	4,280.00	12,400.00	2004	Hamilton	70,000.00	
Legana	2,380.00	2,300.00	1,160.00	5,840.00		Bank Charges	60.00	
Mount Nasura	8,200.00	7,520.04		15,720.04				
Rockingham	3,060.00	10,020.00	7,600.00	20,680.00				
West Albany	6,760.00	7,040.00	7,200.00	21,000.00				
West Kelmscott	8,000.00	8,400.00	8,720.00	25,120.00	2005	Hamilton	76,000.00	
Synod Treasurer	5,520.12			5,520.12				
Interest	826.42	1,162.72	1,378.31	3,367.45		Bank Charges	60.00	
			Total	222367.61		Total		
								224,751.12

Appendix 12: Deputies Training for the Ministry

Total	Received	\$222,367.61	ANZ V2Plus	
	<i>Bank Feb 03</i>		Passbook	
	<i>Hamilton</i>	\$21,207.78		
	<i>Bank Feb 03 NSF</i>	\$1,263.43		
	Total	\$244,838.82	Total	<u>23,855.70</u>
	Less Payments	\$224,751.12	NSF	3,768.00
	Balance	<u>\$ 20,087.70</u>	Balance	20,087.70
<u>Total preserved for NSF</u>	_\$5031.43			

Appendix 12b: Address of Br A Van Leeuwen to the 36th Anniversary Meeting and 31st Convocation of the College at Hamilton held on 9 September 2004

Esteemed Board of Governors, Brothers and Sisters in the Lord.

It is a great honour and privilege to be in your midst once again and to extend greetings to you in the name of our Lord on behalf of Deputies Training for the Ministry for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

I was privileged to address you at the 26th Convocation 5 years ago.

This was on the occasion of the opening of the Theological College's new Library.

You could easily ask the question, what is he then doing here again!

Let me quickly explain. Rev C Bouwman was scheduled to be here this time, but since he accepted the call to the Canadian Reformed Church at Yarrow BC and thus has left the Australian Churches and consequently his role as Convener of Deputies, yours truly who was appointed to take his place.

Thank you for the warm welcome and the opportunity to be in your midst this evening.

As sister churches we share so much for reason of our common heritage, the history of the Church and the basis of our Reformed Confessions. We are members of the same household of faith, we as God's people belong to a church chosen to everlasting life. That is precisely what binds us together and that is why we feel at home with each other.

We are thankful for the Lord's rich blessings that we receive through your Theological College in our ministers of the Word. Yes, we do call some of your ministers away from Canada, but we also let some return to you. On the other hand, we are also thankful to see a good number of Australian students enter the doors of the Hamilton College.

The theological training of our students is very close to the heart of our Churches. Subsequent Synods have included in the mandate for Deputies to investigate

“the long term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library”.

Deputies submitted a comprehensive report to Synod 2003 in which a number of models were studied.

The conclusion based on this study was: “To recognize that establishing an own seminary is out of reach for both the present time and the foreseeable future”.

Synod decided to recognize that establishing our own seminary may be out of reach for the present time, but one does also need to look to the future in faith.

The Lord teaches us not to despise the day of small things (Zech 4:10). Remember as Canadian Churches your humble beginnings of theological training during the sixties. The brothers acted in faith!

Consequently, the Australian deputies' new mandate included to

“continue to investigate avenues to start up our own theological library and to do so if possible;

continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry, including the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT).

In addition, Synod also decided for Deputies “to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of the Theological College in Hamilton as is practically possible”.

When Deputies were conducting the investigations and deliberations concerning theological training in Australia, it was noted that the central concern was that the **churches** are called to be responsible for the training of their ministers (Art 17 CO, FRCA) [This is Art 19 CanCO].

With this in mind Deputies contacted the Board of Governors to request their views on having Australian representation on the Board.

The Board's Governance Committee sought legal advice regarding the involvement of changing the Theological College Act adopted by the Legislative Assembly of the province Ontario in 1981 to allow for persons not serving in the Can Ref Churches to be appointed to the BOG. As a result of this advice our Deputies have accepted the findings of this legal advice namely

“that the time and cost and energy required do not make it very feasible to pursue”.

As an alternative suggestion, the Deputies have accepted the invitation of the Board to send a delegate to attend the September meeting. Hence my presence here and my attendance at the Board of Governors meeting last night have proven to be very valuable to Deputies as well as to the Board.

We express our appreciation for this, but also the information that is provided by the Board to the Deputies throughout the year.

In this way we are informed and involved with all relevant material.

Presently there are 12 Churches in our federation served by 10 ministers of which 8 have graduated from the Hamilton College. There are two vacant congregations busy with their calling work. Ministers beware!

In addition, the Church of Armadale conducts mission work in Lae PNG. Rev Ian Wildeboer has recently completed a post graduate advanced mission course here and in the Netherlands. He has returned and is presently about to commence his ministry in that mission field. The Church of Mount Nasura

carries out mission work in Southern India. Br Jacob, an Indian Reformed Missionary is actively involved there in the gathering of God's people. The Church of Rockingham is involved in a mission field in Sumba.

So you see that the bond between the two Church federations is close. At the moment you have two Australian students, the Brs Andrew VanderHeide and Cornelis Kleyn. Recently, another family has joined you as our brother Rodney Vermeulen will commence his first year at the College. Back home, as far as I am aware of, at least two other students are preparing for commencing studies here next year.

Brothers and Sisters, be assured that the College, Professors, Lecturers and Students are regularly remembered in the prayers during our worship services. We gladly continue to support the work of training for the ministry with our financial contribution. The Lord bestows His rich blessings upon us in many ways and we gladly share these with you.

From time to time we are privileged to have one of your professors in our midst. Fondly we remember the Australian visits of the late Prof and Mrs J Faber in 1990, Prof and Mrs C Van Dam in 1999 and the last who visited us was Prof. and Mrs J Geertsema in 2003. We treasured these visits to the Churches very much and the lectures and speeches were also well received. In this way too, the training for the ministry comes closer to the hearts of the church members.

Mr Chairman, in closing let me say that the strong bond between the Canadian and the Australian Churches can only remain strong if we both continue to walk on the path of faithful obedience to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions. For this we need each other and especially the true preaching of the Gospel. May then the teaching at the College be instrumental to mould the students to become faithful preachers of the Cross, that glorious Gospel of Salvation. May He thereto endow the professors, lecturers and students with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Your sister churches in Australia greet you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thank you for allowing me to address you on this Convocation and Anniversary Meeting.

A Van Leeuwen
9/09/05

Appendix 12c: Financial Statements: Theological Library Fund

*Australian Theological Library Fund
Statements of Receipts and Payments
March 2004 - March 2006*

Opening Balance	\$0.00
Receipts	
Albany	\$0.00
Armadale	\$2,966.55
Bunbury	\$0.00
Byford	\$1,226.55
Darling Downs	\$0.00
Kelmscott	\$1,286.00
Launceston	\$0.00
Legana	\$690.50
Mt Nasura	\$0.00
Rockingham	\$0.00
West Albany	\$0.00
West Kelmscott	\$2,807.60
Interest	\$66.72
Total	\$9,043.92
 Balance	 \$9,043.92

Appendix 12d: Financial Statements: Needy Students Fund

Needy Students Fund
Statements of Receipts and Payments
March 2003 - March 2006

Opening Balance	\$1,263.43
Receipts	
Albany	\$1,844.50
Armadale	\$2,422.50
Bunbury	\$399.50
Byford	\$994.50
Darling Downs	\$705.50
Kelmscott	\$1,377.00
Launceston	\$850.00
Legana	\$59.50
Mt Nasura	
Rockingham	\$1,615.00
West Albany	\$1,530.00
West Kelmscott	
Total	\$11,798.00
Payments	
Support to student	\$8,000.00
Bank charges	\$30.00
State duty	
	\$8,030.00
Balance	\$5,031.43

Appendix 12e: Lecture Program for Professor Geertsema

Itinerary for Prof Geertsema

Date	Day	Topic	Location	Attendance
October 5	Sunday	Preach	2 metro	
October 11	Saturday	Office-bearers	Kelmscott	All WA office-bearers ³⁰
October 12	Sunday	Preach	2 metro	
October 13	Monday	College	Armadale	Armadale, Byford, Darling Downs, Rockingham
October 14	Tuesday	College	Kelmscott	Kelmscott, West Kelmscott, Mt Nasura
October 16	Thursday	Free topic One ³¹	Armadale	Armadale, Byford, Darling Downs, Rockingham
October 17	Friday	Free topic One	Kelmscott	Kelmscott, West Kelmscott, Mt Nasura
October 19	Sunday	Preach	Bunbury	
October 20	Monday	College	Bunbury	
October 21	Tuesday	Free Topic One	Bunbury	
October 23	Thursday	Free Topic Two ³²	Bunbury	
October 26	Sunday	Preach	Alb/W Alb	
October 27	Monday	College	Albany	Albany, West Albany
October 28	Tuesday	Free Topic One	Albany	Albany, West Albany
October 29	Wednesday	Women's League ³³	Albany	All sisters in WA
October 30	Thursday	Free topic Two	Albany	Albany, West Albany
November 2	Sunday	Preach	2 metro	
November 4	Tuesday	Free topic Two	Armadale	Armadale, Byford, Darling Downs, Rockingham
November 5	Wednesday	Free topic Two	Kelmscott	Kelmscott, West Kelmscott, Mt Nasura
November 6		Travel to	Tasmania	
November 9	Sunday	Preach	Tasmania	
November 10	Monday	College	Launceston	Launceston, Legana
November 12	Wednesday	Free Topic One	Launceston	Launceston, Legana
November 14	Friday	Free topic Two	Launceston	Launceston, Legana
November 16	Sunday	Preach	Tasmania	

³⁰ The title of the paper is entitled "Christ as Foundation and Starting Point for all our Pastoral Work." An invitation has been sent to the Consistories of WA.

³¹ The first Free Topic is on "New Hermeneutics and Old" – about how to read the Bible.

³² The second Free Topic is on "Christ Jesus redeems what God first Created through Him."

³³ The speech is entitled "Appeal for Practical Perfection in Christian Life in James."

Appendix 12f: Summary: Guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program of Hamilton College

Following is a summarised overview of the Guidelines of the PPP prepared by the Theological College in Hamilton and presently in use by the Canadian Reformed Churches in which the tasks of the students and the mentor are described.

The complete guidelines are available from deputies for perusal.

The guidelines include a draft letter of Agreement between local Consistory and the student for the 3 months internship and is signed by both parties.

If the churches adopt to participate in this Program, then the financial implications will have to be addressed.

Deputies may be mandated to develop proposals how to implement the Program and the financial obligations to the churches.

Orientation session in the first year.

Goal: To give the students a somewhat less 'romantic' but more 'realistic' view of the work of a minister.

Then follows a list of topics for discussion.

These include:

- time management
- cooperation with elders and deacons
- how to conduct visits
- how to prevent unrealistic expectations from the side of the congregation
- importance of personal devotion
- defend your priorities: preaching and teaching

One week in house training of the students' second year

Goal: To give the student a first impression of various aspects of the ministry, and to show him the need for self-disciplined structure, as well as flexibility.

The student is expected to follow through with the mentor in all his activities during this particular week.

He will accompany the mentor in a number of pastoral visits.

He has to prepare a sermon outline on the same text as the mentor is planning to preach on the next Sunday.

He will attend a consistory meeting.

Training for catechism Instruction during the students' 3rd year

Goal: To make the student more familiar with the necessary skills for effective instruction in the doctrine of the church.

The student observes two evenings of Catechism instruction given by the mentor. The mentor discusses his method, the material that he is using, as well as other aspects of his teaching.

The student takes some of the mentor's classes for a minimum of 4 evenings in a row.

Three months (Can) summer internship between 3rd and 4th year

Goal: To give the student some first hand experience in the practical aspects of the ministry and to assess the student's abilities to function as a pastor.

A prerequisite is the successful completion of the classical examination for permission to speak an edifying word.

The student is obligated to prepare and deliver one sermon per week throughout his internship. Submit the sermon to the mentor for proofreading and supervision.

Over the period the student should be making a total of about 50 pastoral visits.

In the earlier part together with the mentor and after that by himself. Some visits should be made with elders and/or deacons.

In consultation with the mentor and with the consistory the student will be asked to chair a number of meetings.

At the completion of the internship reports will be received from the mentor and the student.

If the report is favourable he will be recommended that the Senate issue the Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency to the student for his preparatory Classical examination.

Appendix 13: Report Deputies Nominating Authorities – Marriage Act 1961

Esteemed brothers

Synod 2003 made the following decision with respect to Nominating Authorities (Article 101):

1. To thank the deputies that they have completed their mandate and their report has been received.
2. To discharge the present Authorities noting that unlike a Synod the Nominating Authority is a permanent entity.
3. To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961.

Background

On 22 September 1999, the Governor-General declared the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to be a “recognised denomination” for the purposes of the *Marriage Act 1961*.

This designation allows all FRCA ministers, by virtue of that fact, to become registered as marriage celebrants.

The Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department, which administers the *Marriage Act 1961*, requires the churches to appoint a person as nominating authority to sign the nomination forms on behalf of the church and to take responsibility for the administration of the process. To that end, deputies are required to be appointed by each Synod.

Execution of Mandate

Deputies have been able to execute their mandate over the past 3 years.

In summary, the following has been carried out:

- New ministers have been nominated by deputies to the relevant State Registrar, and these ministers have become registered as marriage celebrants.
- The relevant State Registrars have been advised of ministers who have left the FRCA.
- Various ministers previously registered under their own name have been nominated to come under the FRCA as “recognised denomination”.
- Information disseminated by the Commonwealth A-G has been forwarded to all ministers within the FRCA.

Over the last few years, the requirements for marriage registration and celebration have become more stringent. The Government's aim has been to "raise the professional standards in celebrancy services". Prospective applicants are now required to undergo an interview process in order to ensure that they are competent. Also, numbered marriage certificates have been introduced in order to enhance security over these official documents.

Deputies consider that it is administratively convenient that the FRCA remain a "recognised denomination" and that 2 deputies be appointed for the task of nominating ministers and circulating information.

Recommendation

Deputies recommend that Synod 2006 resolve:

1. To appoint new deputies officially designated as *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961.

Respectfully submitted

Warnar Spyker

Tim Houweling

Appendix 14: Report Deputies for Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents

Deputies for Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents
c/o J Eikelboom
3160 Albany Highway
Mount Nasura 6112, Western Australia.

The Synod of
The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

19 December 2005

Esteemed brothers,

Synod 2003 appointed me (Acts Article 92) to have copies of the texts of the Ecclesiastical Documents together with the Rules for Synods prepared for use by the Churches and Classes (Acts Article 90).

Rev G van Rongen has kindly done this preparation work for me, and at my request also sent copies of the finished products to the Churches and Classes (around October 2003). He informed me at that time that additional copies are available from him for the price of two dollars plus postage.

I take this opportunity to express my thankfulness to him for his efforts.

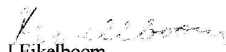
I also report that I had copies printed (and distributed to the churches) of the revised Church Order, incorporating the changes that were adopted by 2003 Synod.

Unfortunately, the text in Article 41 has an error, stating that "Classes shall be held at least once every three months." This should read "... every six months."

I submit that this error is not serious enough to warrant a re-print of the document.

I enclose a copy of the booklet prepared by Rev van Rongen.

With Christian greetings,


J Eikelboom
(Deputy)

Rev.G.van Rongen

PO Box 163

Kelmscott WA 6991

gvrongen@upnaway.com

To the Consistories
of The Free Reformed Churches
of Australia

5 October 2003

Dear brothers!

The recently held Synod of our churches decided to appoint a deputy to have copies of the texts of the Ecclesiastical Documents together with the Rules for Synod prepared for use by churches and classes (Acts Article 90).

It appointed br. J.Eikelboom as deputy for this purpose, adding me as his advisor (Acts Article 92).

Because he knew that I had all these texts available, br. Eikelboom has requested me to send these texts to the churches and classes.

This is why enclosed you find a booklet including these texts.

They are not under copyright, so you are free to multiply them.

If you would like to 'take it easy', I am willing to do this for you. The estimated expenses will be \$ 2 per copy plus postage.

With Christian greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. van Rongen', with a long horizontal line extending from the bottom of the signature.

Rev. G. van Rongen
PO Box 163, Kelmscott WA 6991
Ph: (08) 9390 8432
gvrongen@upnaway.com

Mr J.Eikelboom
3160 Albany Highway
Mount Nasura WA 6112

5 October 2003-11-05

Dear br.Eikelboom!

Hereby I send you two copies of the booklet including the Ecclesiastical Documents and Rules, as required by Synod 2003.

One copy is for you personally, the other for your report to the next Synod.

I added an accompanying letter for the churches, also in duplo, for the same purposes.

I hope to have taken this task from your hands in a satisfactory way.

With Christian greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. van Rongen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Appendix 15: Report Deputies to Investigate a Second Appeal Court

Synod Rockingham 2003 gave the following mandate to deputies (Acts Article 38):

- a) *To investigate whether it is necessary, advisable and possible in the Australian church situation to have a second appeal 'court' in ecclesiastical matters in between Classis and General Synod, convening every year.*
- b) *To submit their report to next synod according to the rules of synod.*

Grounds:

1. *Till the decision of Synod 2000 to divide the FR Churches of Australia into two Classis [Acts Synod 2000 art. 36] the consistories and church members could appeal – before they eventually would appeal to the General Synod – to the second appeal church according to the regulations as formulated in the Australian Church Order art. 31 in italics, up till Synod 2000.*
2. *In the history of the Reformed churches the scriptural basis and necessity of a second appeal 'court' [the Provincial and Regional Synod] has been upheld [compare Bouwman, Gereformeerd Kerkrecht, het recht der kerken in de practijk; Kok/Kampen 1934 vol. II. Page 187ff].*
3. *In important issues pertaining to church and church life especially church discipline as a matter of 'life and death' [Matt. 18:17-19] it takes too long to wait for the next General Synod to be held every three years.*

Deputies notice that Synod Rockingham already recognized how in the past the churches knew a second court of appeal to be *necessary* (ground 2) and that it is morally *important* (ground 3).

In our mandate Synod specified that we are to see whether it is *possible in the Australian church situation to have a second appeal 'court' in ecclesiastical matters in between Classis and General Synod* (our emphasis).

We find that it is not possible within the framework of our present *Church Order*, which specifies that:

Article 28 *Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained...*

Article 31 *...has been wronged by a minor assembly, he shall have a right of appeal to the major assembly...*

Ground:

The bond of churches is too small to institute regional synods.

Nevertheless we serve the synod with the following proposals, which either go beyond our mandate, or do not remain within the bounds of our present *Church Order*.

Proposal One:

This proposal goes beyond our mandate because here we do not propose an assembly between *Classis* and *General Synod* but do give the possibility for a second appeal.

Synod decides: to appoint “appeal churches” from within the classical regions as the first appeal court. Those that are not satisfied with the decision of the *appeal church* may appeal to *classis* and if necessary, then to *synod*. Thus *classis* becomes the second appeal court.

Grounds:

- e. The neighbour church as an appeal body worked for both first and second appeals in the past.
- f. In agreement with Article 28 of the Church Order, no other assembly is established besides the three agreed upon.
- g. Although not entirely in agreement with Article 31 of the Church Order for the appeal first moves from one minor assembly to the next, after that, it does move from minor to major assemblies.
- h. Only ordained office-bearers deal with appeals.

Proposal Two:

Note: This proposal goes beyond our mandate because here we do not propose an assembly between *Classis* and *General Synod* and is not in agreement with Article 31 of the Church Order which rules that appeals are to move from minor to major assemblies, but does give the possibility for a second appeal.

Synod decides: to return to the system whereby we appoint appeal churches and second appeal churches. This means that *classis* will no longer deal with appeals.

Grounds:

- 1. In the past it has been proven that this system regarding appeals works;
- 2. Only ordained office bearers will be involved;
- 3. Only a small number of office bearers that may subsequently be appointed to a General Synod have also become involved with the matter (here we think especially of ministers – for while there are only two classical regions, at least half the number of ministers at synod would have dealt with the matter).

4. Classis meetings do not come under strain with the danger that an unbalanced decision is made when complicated appeals have to be dealt with under the pressure of time [due to the distance some of the churches are apart, it is not always easy nor financially prudent to adjourn Classis for any length of times so that some work of investigation can be done].

Proposal Three:

Note: This proposal is in agreement with our mandate but goes beyond Article 31 of the *Church Order*, which says that appeals move on from minor to major assemblies.

Synod decides: to appoint an “appeal church” from both classical region as a second appeal court: (every Synod would appoint new “appeal churches” so that, for example, for a three year period between synod, Armadale is the appeal church in Classis South to serve the churches of Classis North, next Synod appoints Byford etc. It could be done in this alphabetical order to avoid any indication of bias.)

Grounds:

1. The neighbour church as an appeal body worked for both first and second appeals in the past.
2. In agreement with Article 28 of the Church Order, no other assembly is established besides the three agreed upon there.
3. Only ordained office-bearers deal with the appeals.
4. By using the appeal church system the least number of office-bearers that may subsequently be appointed to a General Synod have also become involved with the matter.

We have given these proposals in the order we think to be most logical and acceptable. We see that the advantage of proposal one is that in agreement to the *Church Order* matters move from minor to major assemblies. The advantage of *proposal two* is that this way the least number of office-bearers (in particular ministers) would have dealt with a matter that may also be delegated to Synod. We added the third proposal as the only way we see possible within the strict confines of our mandate.

Humbly submitted:

Br. J. Eikelboom
Rev. W. Vander Jagt
Rev. PKA de Boer

Appendix 16: Report Deputies Book of Praise

Synod Rockingham 2004 appointed deputies with the mandate

1. To ascertain the desirability and necessity for the publishing of an Australian version of the Book of Praise (also by asking the churches for feedback)
2. To monitor ongoing developments in the Canadian Book of Praise and report to synod on their plans re: the updating of language of the psalms and hymns, the confessions, and liturgical forms, especially considering the CanRC's ongoing contact with the United Reformed Churches.

Conclusion and recommendations

1. Desirability and Necessity

- i. The churches were engaged via the letter attached to this report.
- ii. Responses were received by all churches except Byford.
- iii. Two sister churches (Armadale & Launceston) proposed a wait and see strategy; the vast majority preferred to make preparations to print a Australian Book of Praise, with the majority recommending that a Australian Edition of the Book of Priase be printed. On that basis an Australian Book of Praise is considered to be desirable.
- iv. The preference to maintain unity with Canadian Reformed Churches, "as much as possible" was echoed by several Churches.
- v. Many of the churches who responded listed and engaged in matters that will have to be determined prior to printing. These topics are summarised as
 - Selecting a Bible translation
 - Using "thee & thou" or "you and your"
 - Using Australian forms
 - Highlighting some opportunities to make corrections

2. Monitor Developments in the Canadian Book of Praise

- i. The Canadian Joint Song Book committee is continuing to deliberate, and as the needs/preferences of the FRCA are outside of their mandate, there was no formal mechanism to engage the committee and request that the committee forecast likely outcomes.

- ii. Anecdotal feedback emanating from the Joint Song Book committee, suggests that if all things go well it would take the committee 5-6 years to be in a position to print a revised Joint Song Book.
- iii. The current printer of the Book of Praise indicated an ongoing commitment to serve both the Canadian and Australian Churches. Minimum print run of the Book of Praise is 2000 copies which equates to 2 years consumption for both Federations.
- iv. As the FRSA seeks certainty with regards to the content of the Book of Praise, and as the Canadian Joint Song Book Committee is not mandated to consider the needs of the FRCA, it is considered desirable to prepare to publish an Australian Book of Praise.

3. Sundry notations

As a private person holds copyright to 45 tunes, used in the current Book of Praise, the copyright fee would have to be agreed at the time of publishing. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia are price takers in this transaction. As a guide in 2002 the copyright holder advised that C\$75 was a reasonable sum per tune, compared to C\$50 per tune paid in 1978.

4. Recommendations:

1. Deputies are discharged.
2. Synod acknowledges the Churches desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise and decides the following timetable to publish the Australian Book of Praise, namely:
 - a. Have deputies report on all material matters, such as use of Bible Translation, You vs Thou, copyright negotiations, consider opportunity to compose/use alternate tunes, revised budgets/quotes, production timelines, for Synod 2009 to determine;
 - b. The following Synod can then instruct deputies to commence the work of publishing the Australian Book of Praise.
3. Synod considers instructing the deputies to commence work on having alternate tunes composed, as this is likely to be a time consuming process.

This report humbly submitted by deputies:

D Pot
W Amoraal
E

Swarts

Appendix 17: Appeal re Lanka Reformed Church

Observations:

1. The Church of West Albany proposes “that synod instruct Deputies to reply to the Lanka Reformed Church that with regret The Free Reformed Churches of Australia at this juncture are not able to extend the help they request”.
2. The church of West Albany gives as reasons a lack of available resources owing to involvement in Mission work, and the extensive church contacts already in place.

Decision:

Synod adopts West Albany's proposal, without endorsing its reasons.

Grounds:

1. There is no proposal on Synod's table to extend the requested help.
2. Synod is unable to conclude from the available material that the churches lack the necessary resources.
3. The Letter from the Lanka Reformed Church needs to be answered.

The Free Reformed Church at Byford request synod 2006 to overturn the decision of Synod 1998 and to decide:

To give the deputies Sister churches [section Asia] the mandate:

10. To investigate whether it is possible to enter into a sister church relationship with the Lanka Reformed Church;
11. To visit the Lanka Reformed Church during which visits the deputies will organise workshops, lectures, courses etc for both [potential] office bearers and church members to strengthen the Reformed character of the churches; these visits are subject to available finances;
12. To ask the consistories within the FRCA to make their minister available to assist the Lanka Reformed Church;
13. To investigate the opportunities for mission projects the FRCA can undertake in support of the Lanka Reformed Church;
14. To discuss with the Lanka Reformed Church the way the FRCA can organise the support for the Lanka Reformed Church and their financial accountability;
15. To encourage the congregations to give the Lanka Reformed Church financial support to continue with their mission project of

Reformed education in a similar was as the support of the Indonesian churches has been organised pending the outcome and report of deputies mentioned under a;

16. To ask Mission Aid Australia to investigate the possibilities to support the educational project of the Lanka Reformed Church;
17. To encourage members of the congregations [esp teachers and graduates] to assist the Lanka Reformed school in short term mission projects in teaching at their Reformed mission school;
18. To report back to Synod 2009 according to the rules.

Grounds

1. The Lanka Reformed Church has shown to be to be reformed. They have adopted the Tree Forms of Unity as their confessional standard as well as the Westminster Standards. The Church Order of the Lanka Reformed Church is based on the Church Order of Dort.
2. The Lanka Reformed Church has been recognised by the government of Sri Lanka as an instituted church. That the church has become very small does not alter the fact that Christ is gathering His people in Sri Lanka; Rev. 3: 8: "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name." Belgic Confession Article 27: "This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects. This holy church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world, although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man."
3. The FRCA have decided to "concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility." [Acts Synod 1990, Article 58].

The Canadian Reformed Churches have, according to this principle, brought the Lanka Reformed Church to our attention.
4. The financial problems of such a small church as the Lanka Reformed Church is a Scriptural reason to offer assistance, [Exo 23: 11; Lev 19: 10; Lev 25: 25; Deu 15: 4.7f; Ps 10:2.9; Ps. 12: 5; Ps. 41: 1; Ps. 68: 10; Ps. 72: 12; Prov 14: 21; Prov 21: 13; Prov 22: 9; Jer 22: 16; Amos 2: 6; Matt 19: 21; Matt 25: 36; Rom 15: 26; 1Cor 16: 1; Gal 2: 10; Jas 2: 16].
5. That the Reformed school project is seen by the Lanka Reformed Church as a mission project is one of the points of which our Church Order says that "On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected" [CO Article 46].

6. Via private initiative within the FRCA, the Lanka Reformed Church and its mission project has already been supported for several years, so the argument of the submission of West-Albany 1998 is not valid. Especially also now the deputies sister churches [section Asia] come with the proposal to terminate the contacts with the churches in the Philippines.

Appendix 18: Overture – Indexing Synod Decisions

To: Synod West Kelmscott

From: Classis South

Date: 17th November 2005

Proposal from Classis South Re: Indexing Synod Decisions

Dear Brothers,

Background: At every synod of our churches we receive a letter from Rev G van Rongen, asking for permission to use the Acts of our synods to update his documentary book, *Church Order of Dordrecht*, with the standing decisions of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. This document lists all the synodical decisions relating to the articles of our Church Order.

This indexing of the decisions of synods is a great benefit to all the churches. It is given to all the consistories and their members.

At this time Rev G. van Rongen, at the age of 87, cannot complete this task anymore. He has asked that someone else take over. It would be a shame if this worthwhile project was stopped in its tracks. Rev G. van Rongen has all the relevant material on computer. Thus it need not be repeated but can now easily be updated after each synod. At present, Rev G. van Rongen himself is photocopying decisions of the 2003 Synod, in small booklets. After this he wishes to 'retire' from this project.

Classis South on the 28th October 2005 endorsed the attached proposal from the Free Reformed Church of Armadale to be submitted to Synod West Kelmscott 2006, for consideration.

Proposal: "That Synod, appoint a deputy or deputies to continue the work of Rev G. VanRongen, for the churches with the mandate":

To continue the work of Rev G. VanRongen in collating the decisions of synod as they relate to articles of the Church Order.

- i. to publish updated versions in the best format, (e.g. binder style) to allow more additions from future synods.
- ii. to have the Synodical Treasurer pay the initial cost of publication.
- iii. to authorise the selling of these books, at a normal cost, to the churches and to its members.

Grounds

- i. This-project is really designed for the churches for easy access to synodical decisions. Thus it makes sense to have the churches

together responsible for it. Appointing a synodical deputy or deputies seems the best way to continue this worthwhile project.

- ii. The deputy or deputies can decide with Pro-Ecclesia Printers which is the best format in which to publish such a book which will continue to grow.
- iii. The initial cost might be expensive. It seems best that the Synodical Treasurer be asked to do so.
- iv. The appointed deputy(ies) can arrange for the sale of the booklets to the consistories and church members. A normal cost means the churches will recover the initial costs. In future the costs should be minimal.

With Brotherly Greetings

Rev A. vanDelden
Chairman

Alf Woonings
Clerk

Classis South, held on the 28th October 2005

Appendix 19: Treasurer's Reports

24 May 2006

Esteemed brothers,

Synod treasurer's financial report.

I herewith submit the **Statement of Receipts, Statement of Expenditure and Statement of Funds for the period 5 March 2003 to 11 April 2006**. My apologies for being late, but I was not requested by the convening Church to submit the report and I had to instigate auditing the books.

The books were eventually audited by the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott on 15 May 2006.

Receipts

Receipts were close to budget with slight variances as shown.

- Receipt of outstanding 2002 contributions from 3 Churches received after the books were closed was omitted from the budget and consequently an additional \$3,049.41 is shown in the receipts. Variations in Church contributions from budget reflect changes in Church membership numbers from the 2003 yearbook statistics which were used to prepare the budget estimates.
- No refunds were received from any of the Churches for the Acts of Synod as Synod did not forward accounts to the Churches for their copies. Consequently Synod Treasury paid for all the Acts printed and issued to the Churches.

These higher receipts meant that income was some \$2,300 higher than budgeted.

Annual accounts were sent to the Churches at the end of the calendar year and were adjusted to reflect communicant membership numbers as shown in the year book for that year.

Expenditure

The following points should be noted on expenditure:

- Synod 2003 costs came in \$1,700 over budget mainly due to expenditure on the setting up of amplifying equipment which was not budgeted for.
- Deputies contact other Churches came in \$9,600 under budget. No claims were made for Perth/Albany travel costs. No trip was made to the Philippines. Una Sancta subscriptions have been cancelled. PCEA travel was only a fraction of budgeted amount and some savings were made on

some other trips. The trip to Holland exceeded the budget. In hindsight, this should have had a higher budget amount.

- Deputies Training of Ministry was as per budget.
- Synod Archives had minor expenditure to relocate the filing cabinet to the Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura. A new filing cabinet is not required at present, so the budgeted amount will not re-appear on future budgets.
- Budget was adequate to cover expenditure by other deputies.
- Overall the expenditure was \$9,000 under budget.

With the higher receipts and lower expenditure, the Treasury balance is some \$11,400 higher than budgeted, that is, \$41,469.63.

Synod funds

Synod funds are kept in a cash management account with Challenge Bank.

Draft budget

Requests have been sent to the deputies and the Churches seeking their input into the draft budget. The draft budget will be forwarded to Synod via the convening Church in time for Synod.

Electronic Copies of Reports

These documents have been prepared in MS Office 2000 software and will also be emailed to the convening Church.

Some reflections by the Synod Treasurer

As Synod Treasurer, I am probably the only person who fully understands what is spent where in total. Various Deputies make their proposals to Synod and it appears these are considered in isolation during Synod. In other words, when a decision is made to send Deputies here or there, does Synod take into account what is happening to the overall budget? Therefore I take the trouble to bring this to your attention.

Over the past few Synods it appears that little attention is paid to the Synod finances by either the Synod delegates themselves or the Synod Deputies. In years gone by, Treasurer reports are considered so important that they are often left out of the Acts. The fact that a report was not even requested this year bears evidence of this yet again. Further evidence is the continued unrestrained spending by the Synods and Deputies. The expenditure last period of \$8,800 by the Deputies Training Ministry is a case in point. Bringing Professors over here at great expense must be questioned. What is conveyed at a public forum could have just as well been done in an article in the US for a few dollars. Also, does someone from here have to travel to Canada to extend greetings to the College at a Board meeting? Again, an email or a letter does

the same and costs nothing. I believe the draft budget proposes another \$10,000 of expenditure in this area. That may be in the order of 10% of the total budget. The money can be better donated to the College and put to much better use. Similarly, travel costs by Deputies Other Churches continues to increase from Synod to Synod, and it seems to become a norm that all Synods of other Churches should be represented by two delegates from Australia. I understand that some restraint is shown in only sending delegates every other Synod or so in some cases, but even then, looking at the budgets over the past years, one sees a steady increases in expenditure and more and more travel. It should also be noted that the budgets actually adopted are considerably higher than expended because some travel is not done or carried over to subsequent years.

The table below shows how the expenditure by the Deputies Other Churches has grown in comparison to Synod costs.

	Deputies Other Churches	Synod Costs	
Synod 1989/92	\$4,778	\$9,760	49%
Synod 1992/94	\$14,846	\$12,047	123%
Synod 1994/96	\$5,707	\$14,031	40%
Synod 1996/98	\$8,374	\$19,645	42
Synod 1998/00	\$13,973	\$42,984 (In Launceston)	
Synod 2000/03	\$15,464	\$26,603	58%
Synod 2003/06	\$22,388	\$36,957 (Two sessions)	60%

Another area of concern is the amount of money required for IT and sound at Synod. The brothers appointed propose far more than is probably needed, eg 2 persons in attendance every evening to manage the sound system! Also, do we need expensive networks set up for two weeks? The brothers propose a budget of \$3200 and I advised them it was unacceptable and they should convince Synod it is necessary. Does Synod receive a report from the sound deputies on Synod sound assets?

Synod must analyse whether the cost benefits are really there for each and every proposed synod expenditure. That is not the task of the treasurer. Further, when one considers that these deputy visits to other Churches often takes a Minister out of his congregation for a week or more, the cost benefits must surely be in doubt. I again, as in past years, urge Synod to show restraint

on the travel budgets and to seriously consider the necessity of sending delegates overseas. Please consider using video conferencing or other electronic means in lieu of travel. Another area where restraint can be shown is the printing of Deputies reports. Last Synod expenditure on this alone was \$1,334, mainly for Deputies Other Churches. The current Report is some 250 pages and some 200 copies were printed costing some \$800. All material that is repeated in the Acts at a great use of paper. Maybe Deputies should be instructed to limit the size of their reports.

Trusting you will take my concerns to heart and can appoint a new treasurer as I must take down my shingle after some 18 years.

With Christian Greetings,

A. Hordyk
(Synod Treasurer)

Appendix 19a: Statement of Funds 2003-2006

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

SYNOD TREASURY

STATEMENT OF FUNDS AT 11 APRIL 2006

Starting balance 4 March 2003	\$48,098.65
Income received	\$64,275.60
Total	\$112,374.25
Expenditure	\$70,904.62
Balance at 11 April 2006	\$41,469.63

All funds are held in a cash management account with Challenge Bank.

Income includes GST refunds.

Expenditure includes GST component.

SYNOD TREASURY					
COST SHARING FOR 2006/2009					
CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FROM THE CHURCHES					
	COMM'T MBRS 2006	%	2006 SHARE	2007 SHARE	2008 SHARE
FRC Albany	234	12.01	\$1,910.19	\$1,910.19	\$1,910.19
FRC Armadale	269	13.80	\$2,195.91	\$2,195.91	\$2,195.91
FRC Bunbury	54	2.77	\$440.81	\$440.81	\$440.81
FRC Byford	169	8.67	\$1,379.58	\$1,379.58	\$1,379.58
FRC Darling Downs	92	4.72	\$751.02	\$751.02	\$751.02
FRC Kelmscott	156	8.00	\$1,273.46	\$1,273.46	\$1,273.46
FRC Launceston	105	5.39	\$857.14	\$857.14	\$857.14
FRC Legana	66	3.39	\$538.77	\$538.77	\$538.77
FRC Mt Nasura	188	9.65	\$1,534.69	\$1,534.69	\$1,534.69
FRC Rockingham	197	10.11	\$1,608.16	\$1,608.16	\$1,608.16
FRC West Albany	183	9.39	\$1,493.87	\$1,493.87	\$1,493.87
FRC West Kelmscott	236	12.11	\$1,926.52	\$1,926.52	\$1,926.52
TOTALS		1949	100	\$15,910.12	\$15,910.12
Total From Churches					\$47,730.37
Other Income					
	Miscellaneous Refunds		\$200.00		
	GST Refunds		\$1,500.00		
	Interest		\$1,500.00		
	Treasury Balance At 11 April 2006		\$41,469.63		
Sub-Total Other Income			\$44,669.63		\$44,669.63
TOTAL INCOME REQUIRED					\$92,400.00

Consistory of the Free Reformed Church at Mt Nasura

REPORT ON ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD

As archivist and librarian of synod I hereby submit my report in accordance with 'Instructions for the Archivist', Acts 1992, Appendix K, point 3 (as confirmed by Synod 1996, Article 26, Decision 5): *"The archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; and who has received or seen items and the items involved"*.

CONTENTS OF SYNOD ARCHIVES

ADDITIONS TO ARCHIVES AFTER APRIL 2003 REPORT

Synod 2000: Items 00.00 – 00.69

Synod 2003: Items 03.01 – 03.121

*** A detailed chronological listing of all documents added to the synod archive collection since April 2003 can be found in Appendix One and on the enclosed computer disk.

CONTENTS OF SYNOD LIBRARY

ADDITIONS TO LIBRARY AFTER APRIL 2003 REPORT

Acts of the 2003 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia –
Rockingham

Brochures 1: Om de rechte wegen des Heren
2 Laten wij ons bekeren
3 Sabbat en Zondag
4 Blijft in mijn liefde

**** A detailed chronological listing of all documents added to the synod library since April 2003 can be found in Appendix One and on the enclosed computer disk.*

INSPECTION

The archives were inspected by two representatives of FRC Byford on 11th May 2006.

With sisterly greetings,

Mrs A.C.Hordyk

APPENDIX ONE

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX TO SYNOD ARCHIVES

(Items added after last report dated 4th April 2003)

EXTRA-ORDINARY SYNOD 2000

- 00.23 Documents re. examination of Dr.B.A.Zuiddam
 - 1 Letter of call, plus attachments
 - 2 Declaration of the acceptance of call
 - 3 Declaration of eligibility
 - 4 Declaration and attestation by Church of Ermelo
 - 5 Declaration by classis Harderwyk
 - 6 Declaration of calling church

SYNOD 2000 - AGENDA, CREDENTIALS

- 00.00 Agenda
- 00.01 Credentials FRC Albany
- 00.02 Credentials FRC Armadale
- 00.03 Credentials FRC Byford
- 00.04 Credentials FRC Kelmscott
- 00.05 Credentials FRC Launceston
- 00.06 Credentials FRC Legana
- 00.07 Credentials FRC Mt Nasura
- 00.08 Credentials FRC Rockingham
- 00.09 Credentials FRC West Albany
- 00.10 Credentials FRC West Kelmscott

SYNOD 2000 – CORRESPONDENCE INWARD

- 00.11 FRC Byford – appeal against Art. 93 Acts 1998
- 00.12 FRC Byford – appeal against Art. 122 Acts 1998
- 00.13 Rev G VanRongen – request to use Synod Acts
- 00.14 FRC Mt Nasura – regarding proposed change to Church Order
- 00.15 FRC Launceston – request for preaching exam.Dr.B.A.Zuiddam
- 00.16 FRC West Albany – proposing date for next synod
- 00.17 FRC West Albany – report of Deputies Training for the Ministry

- 00.18 FRC West Albany – proposal regarding relations with the RCNZ
- 00.19 FRC Albany – proposal regarding relations with RCNZ
- 00.20 FRC Mt Nasura – proposal regarding contact with RCA
- 00.21 FRC Mt Nasura – proposal re printing of Australian Book of Praise
- 00.22 FRC Launceston – re Art.10 of Acts of Special Synod 2000
- 00.23 FRC Launceston – Re Travel arrangements to Synod.
- 00.24 Rev Van Delden – Acts of Extraordinary Synod 1 and 2 March 2000.
- 00.25 Canadian RC– Declining invitation to attend Synod.
- 00.26 Archives and Library of Synods
- 00.27 Inspection of Archives and Library of Synods
- 00.28 Synod treasury – Financial Report
- 00.29 Synod Treasury – Draft Budget Synod 2000
- 00.30 Synod Treasury – Auditor's Report
- 00.31 Relations with Other Churches Report
- 00.32 Supplementary Report– South Africa
- 00.33 Supplementary Report – Netherlands
- 00.34 Supplementary Report– Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- 00.35 Supplementary Report – Reformed Churches of Australia
- 00.36 Training for the Ministry
- 00.37 Nicene Creed
- 00.38 Civil Registration of the FRCA
- 00.39 Formation of Classes
- 00.40 Article 48 & 46 Church Order
- 00.41 Article 66 Church Order
- 00.42 Audit report – Deputies for Training for the Ministry
- 00.43 Needy Churches – Report
- 00.44 Synod Sound System– Report

SYNOD 2000 – CORRESPONDENCE OUTWARD

- 00.45 To Synod Archives – Classes decision. (cf 00.39)
- 00.46 Certificate of Admission Rev Zuidam.
- 00.47 Rev van Rongen – (cf 00.13)

SYNOD 2000 – REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

No copies of any correspondence were received for archiving.

SYNOD 2000 – LETTERS OF THANKS

No copies of any correspondence were received for archiving.

SYNOD 2000 – LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT

No copies of any correspondence were received for archiving.

SYNOD 2000 – OTHER

00.48 – 00.69 SEE CLOSED SESSION 2000

SYNOD 2000 – ACTS OF CLOSED SESSION

No copy received for archiving.

SYNOD 2003 – Agenda, Credentials

- 03.01 Agenda

- 03.02 Credentials Classis South
- 03.03 Credentials Classis North

SYNOD 2003 – CORRESPONDENCE INWARD

FRC Mt Nasura –

- 03.04 Appeal re. Article 93 Synod 2000
- 03.05 Appeal re. Articles 17 & 19 Classis W. Kelmscott 2002
- 03.06 Overture re. - pluriformity re. entering into sister relationship
- 03.07 Overture re. - Relationship Presbyterian Church Korea (Kosin)
- 03.08 Overture re. - Church Order
- 03.09 Overture re. - relationships PCEA

FRC Rockingham

- 03.10 Proposal- re. next convening Church
- 03.11 Proposal to amend Synod rules 1.5 and 3.2
- 03.12 Proposal re. guidelines for support for Indonesia
- 03.13 Appeal to rescind decision Article 93 Synod 2000

FRC Albany

- 03.14 Proposal to re-evaluate Art 55 Synod 2000
- 03.15 Proposal re. Article 93 Synod 2000

FRC West Albany

- 03.16 Proposal re. RCNZ
- 03.17 Submission re. Article 45 Church Order

FRC Launceston

- 03.18 re: - Deputies report Book of Praise

FRC West Kelmscott

- 03.19 re. - Church Order revision

FRC Byford

- 03.20 re: - Article 93 Acts 2000
- 03.21 re: - Notes on the RCNZ
- 03.22 re: - English copy of “Call to Reformation”
- 03.23 Submission re. Submission of proposal sent to Synod
- 03.24 re: - Article 41 Acts of Synod 2000

FRC Armadale

- 03.25 Proposal re. Presbyterian Church of Korea

FRC Kelmscott

- 03.26 Proposal re: copies of Provisional Draft Agenda
- 03.27 Appeal re. Art.17 &19 Classis North 2002
- 03.28 Minority Appeal re. Art.17&19 Classis North 2002
- 03.29 Appeal re. Article 93 of Synod 2000
- 03.30 Appeal re. Article 17 and 22 Classis North 2003
- 03.31 Information re. Appeal

Classis South

- 03.32 Proposal re. Term Missionaries
- 03.33 Proposal re: second appeal court
- 03.34 Letter in relation to Report of the Deputy Synod 2000

Rev G Van Rongen

- 03.35 Request to use Synod Acts and text of Church Order

Convening Church of Synod 2003

- 03.36 re - Distribution of Agenda for Synods

Deputies Training for the Ministry

- 03.37 Updated Appendix B re. Hamilton Theological College Fund
- 03.38 Updated Appendix B re. Needy Students Fund

Dr. P. van Gorp

- 03.39 Letter re. Liberated Churches in Holland

Advisory committee

- 03.40 Proposal re: procedures for discussing and voting on the appeals

Appeals

- 03.41 Br.& Sr. K Versluis – Appeal re. Classis North Article 19
- 03.42 Br & Sr L Woonings – Appeal re. Classis North Decisions
- 03.43 Br. D vanden Dool - Appeal re. Classis North 2003 Article 24
- 03.44 Br. D vanden Dool - Appeal re Classis North 2003 Article 22.1
- 03.45 Br. D. vanden Dool – re Inadmissibility of submissions
- 03.46 Br D. vanden Dool - re - Appeal Classis North 2003 on page 6
- 03.47 Br. & Sr. CJ Byl - Appeals on Classis decisions
- 03.48 Br J. Byl - Appeal decision Classis North 2001
- 03.49 Br. L. Schoof - Appeal re. Classis North rules
- 03.50 Br. L. Schoof - Appeal re. Approval of Acts after Classis closed
- 03.51 Br.L. Schoof - Appeal re. inadmissibility of appeals Classis North

SYNOD 2003 – DEPUTIES' REPORTS

- 03.52 Archives and library of Synods

- 03.53 Inspection of Synod Archives
- 03.54 Synod Treasury- Financial report
- 03.55 Synod Treasury – Auditor's Report
- 03.56 Auditing the Books for Deputies for Article 17,18 Church Order (Training for the Ministry)
- 03.57 Nominating Authorities for Marriage Act 1961
- 03.58 Deputies for Book of Praise
- 03.59 Deputies for Training for the Ministry
- 03.60 Supplementary Report – Deputies for Sister Relations 2000-2003
- 03.61 Relations with other Churches
- 03.62 Revision of Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents

SYNOD 2003 – CORRESPONDENCE OUTWARD

Letters dated 11.7.2003 and sent to the following regarding their appeal and advice of advisory committees that have been set up:

- 03.63 FRC Mt Nasura + final response
- 03.64 Br. & Sr. K Versluis+ final response
- 03.65 Br. D vandenDool (see closed session for final response)
- 03.66 Br. & Sr. C.J.Byl (see closed session for final response)
- 03.67 Br. & Sr. L Woonings (see closed session for final response)
- 03.68 Br. J Byl (see closed session for final response)
- 03.69 Br. L Schoof+ final response
- 03.70 FRC Kelmscott (see closed session for final response)

REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

FRC Rockingham

- 03.71 Synod rules 1.5 and 3.2 (cf 03.11)
- 03.72 Deputies Guidelines (cf 03.12)
- 03.73 Article 93 Synod 2000 (cf 03.13)

FRC Byford

- 03.74 Synods handling of correspondence (cf 03.23)
- 03.75 Contact with Dutch Sister Churches (cf 03.22)
- 03.76 Deputies report re RCNZ (cf 03.21)
- 03.77 Article 93 Synod 2000 (cf 03.20)
- 03.78 Article 41 Acts 2000 (cf 03.24)

FRC Mt Nasura

- 03.79 Matters affecting Sister Relations (cf 03.6)
- 03.80 Request to change Article 50 of the Church Order (cf 03.8)
- 03.81 PCEA –Dr R S Ward (cf 03.9)
- 03.82 Article 93 Synod 2000 (cf 03.4)

FRC Launceston

- 03.83 Error made by Synod 2000 FRCA (cf 03.18)

FRC Armadale

- 03.84 Contact with Presbyterian Church of Korea (cf 03.25)
- 03.85 Proposal concerning the term “Missionary”

FRC Albany

- 03.86 Reformed Church of New Zealand (cf 03.15))
- 03.87 Proposal concerning the term “Missionary” (cf 03.16)

FRC Kelmscott

- 03.88 Proposal to change the rules of Synod (cf 03.26)
- 03.89 Article 93 Synod 2000 (cf 03.29)

FRC West Albany

- 03.90 Reformed Churches of New Zealand (cf 03.16)

FRC West Kelmscott

- 03.91 Revision of the Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents (cf 03.19)

Dr P van Gorp

- 03.92 Contact with Dutch Sister Churches (cf 03.39)

Rev.G.Van Rongen

- 03.93 approval to use Synod Acts (cf 03.35)
- 03.94 Correspondence from Synod to - Synod PCEA
- 03.95 Correspondence from Synod to all the Churches advising date of 2nd Session

LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT / THANKS / DISCHARGE

- 03.96 Relations with Sister Churches: Rev.W. Huizinga (convenor), Rev. C. Bouwman, A. Breen, A.M.C. Bruning, H.J. Dekker, G. Veendendaal, (Alternate = N. Louw)
- 03.97 Relations with other Churches (Reformed): Rev. A .Van Delden (convener), Rev J. Poppe, J. van Burgel, A. Plug, (Alternate = H. Ballast)
- 03.98 Relations with Churches Indonesia / Philippines: Rev. P.K.A. deBoer (convenor), B. Bosveld, J(ohn) Bosveld, W. Geurts, Rev. W. van der Jagt, R. Huizinga , (Alternate -P. Van Dyk)
- 03.99 Relations with other Churches (Presbyterian): Rev. J. Kroeze (convener), Rev. A. Veldman, G. Reitsema, J. Wielstra, (Alternate = D. Veltkamp)
- 03.100 Deputies Australian Book of Praise: D. Pot (convener), W. Amoraal, E(lton) Swarts.

- 03.101 Deputies Training for the Ministry: Rev. C. Bouwman (convener), H. Faas, M(urray) Plug, A. vanLeeuwen, R(ichard) Herema.
- 03.102 Ecclesiastical Documents Prepared/Published: Rev. G Van Rongen (Advisor), (Alternate = J. Eikelboom)
- 03.103 Nominating Authorities FRC Australia: W. Spyker (Primary Responsibility), T. Houweling. Letter of discharge to S.R. Herbert
- 03.104 Synod Technical Equipment: Thank you / Appointment. E. t'Hart, A. vanderWal
- 03.105 Church order: Articles 48 & 76: Classis South: Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, Rev. A. Veldman, (Alternate: Rev J. Kroeze). Classis North: Rev.W. Huizenga, Rev. W. van der Jagt, (Alternate = Rev. A. Van Delden)
- 03.106 Investigate Second Appeal Court: Rev.W.van der Jagt(convener) Rev. P.K.A. de Boer, J. Eikelboom, Rev. G Van Rongen (Advisor)
- 03.107 Church order Article 66 (Days of Prayer): FRC Launceston.
- 03.108 Auditing Books for Deputies Article 17 & 18: FRC Mt Nasura.
- 03.109 Archives and Library of Synods: FRC Mt Nasura.
- 03.110 Inspection of Archives of Library of Synods; FRC Byford
- 03.111 Auditors for Synod Treasury: FRC Kelmscott
- 03.112 Convening Church for Next Synod: FRC West Kelmscott
- 03.113 Treasurer of Synod: A Hordyk (Alternate = G.J. Versluis)

SYNOD 2003 – OTHER

03.114 - 121.SEE: 2003 CLOSED SESSIONS

SECRET ARCHIVES

2000 CLOSED SESSION

- 00.48 FRC Kelmscott, - appealing decision of their classis and second appeal church
- 00.49 J.Lenstra - appeal decision of consistory and classis-church
- 00.50 A.TeWierik -appeal classis-church decision

Church visitation reports

- 00.51 Albany 19.11.1998
- 00.52 Albany 21.10.1999
- 00.53 Armadale 13.11.1998
- 00.54 Armadale 23.9.1999
- 00.55 Byford 23.11.1998
- 00.56 Byford 20.9.1999
- 00.57 Kelmscott 23.10.1998
- 00.58 Kelmscott 28.10.1999
- 00.59 Launceston Nov.1998
- 00.60 Launceston 22.9.1999
- 00.61 Legana 16.11.1998
- 00.62 Legana 23.9.1999
- 00.63 Mt Nasura 29.10.1998
- 00.64 Mt Nasura 18.11.1999
- 00.65 Rockingham 12.11.1998

- 00.66 Rockingham 2.12.1999
- 00.67 West Albany 19.11.1998
- 00.68 West Albany 22.10.1999
- 00.69 West Kelmscott 24.9.1999

2003 CLOSED SESSION

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

- 03.115 Br. A. Byl – dealt with at 2nd session
- 03.116 Br. J. Byl – response to appeal – 2nd sessions (cf 03.48)
- 03.117 Br. D. van Den Dool – response to appeal –2nd session (cf 03.43-46)
- 03.118 Br. C.J. & Sr. I.K. Byl– response to appeal –2nd session (cf 03.47)
- 03.119 Br. P.O. Posthuma– 2nd session
- 03.120 Br. L. & Sr. M.J. Woonings– response to appeal –2nd session (cf 03.42)
- 03.121 FRC Kelmscott– response to appeal –2nd session (cf 03.27,28,30)
- 03.122 Synod 2003 Appeal Interviews on disc.

Church visitation reports

None received.

CONTENTS OF LIBRARY

ACTS OF SYNODS

FRC AUSTRALIA 2003

BROCHURES

- Brochure no. 1 – Om de rechte wegen des Heren
- Brochure no. 2 – Laten wij ons bekeren
- Brochure no. 3 - Sabbat en Zondag
- Brochure no. 4 – Blijft in mijn liefde

Appendix 21: Synod 2006 Budget

BUDGET FOR 2006/2009				
EXPENDITURE	ACTUAL 2003/2006		BUDGET 2006/2009	
Synod Costs				
Venue Hire			\$1,000	
Furniture and Equipment Hire	\$1,526.01		\$500	
Stationery and Consumables	\$1,512.88		\$600	
Catering	\$1,565.33		\$2,000	
Postage and Telephone	\$247.34		\$300	
Presentations	\$0.00		\$500	
Miscellaneous Expenditure	\$2,450.53		\$3,000	
Loss of Income Delegates Synod 2006				
	\$12,990.00		\$14,400	
Travel Costs to Synod 2006	\$6,050.84		\$2,980	
FRCA Web Page	\$640.00		\$800	
Synod Typist	\$1,125.00		\$1,200	
Printing Acts of Synod 2006	\$7,514.95		\$1,000	
Printing Reports to Synod 2006	\$1,334.22		\$900	
Networking and Sound Setup	In misc		\$3,500	
		\$36,957.10		\$32,680
Deputies Book Of Praise				
Incidentals	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$200	\$200
Deputies Revise Church Order				
Incidentals	\$303.60	\$303.60	\$400	\$400
Deputies Contact Other Churches				
Books Etc	\$379.17		\$400	
Travel Costs Perth / Albany	\$0.00		\$1,120	
Travel Costs Overseas Indonesia	\$1,428.00		\$6,000	
Travel Costs Overseas RCNZ	\$2,971.99		\$2,500	
Travel Costs Canada	\$2,622.74		\$0	
Travel Cost PC Korea	\$1,989.00		\$2,000	
Travel Costs South Africa	\$1,200.00		\$2,500	
Travel Costs Netherlands	\$4,473.32		\$5,000	
Travel Costs Philippines	\$0.00		\$0	
Una Sancta Subscriptions	\$0.00		\$150	
INCIDENTALS (Postage, Telephone, Typing, Printing Etc)	\$196.91		\$300	
Public Meeting July 2006			\$50	
		\$15,261.13		\$20,020
Deputies Training Ministry				
Guest Speaker 2007	\$5,520.12		\$0	
Travel Board Meetings	\$3,122.11		\$3,500	
Incidentals	\$162.36		\$200	
		\$8,804.59		\$3,700
Treasury Administration Costs				

Appendix 21: Synod 2006 Budget

Incidentals	\$45.45	\$45.45	\$200	\$200
Synod Archives				
Incidentals	\$227.27	\$227.27	\$200	\$200
GST Payments	\$2,178.39	\$2,178.39	Included in above	\$0
Total Expenditure		\$61,599.14		\$57,400
Treasury Operating Funds		\$30,000.00		\$45,000
(Includes funds required for 2009 Synod)				
TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT		\$91,599.14		\$92,400

All budget expenditure figures include GST which is refunded.

Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006
Index

- address to synod, 1, 21, 29, 35, 52, 69, 102, 104
- agenda of synod, 2
- Appeal Article 106, 21, 25
- Appeal Article 14, 11
- Appeal Article 67, 25, 31, 40
- Appeal Article 72, 46
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