

Deputies for Training for the Ministry

Report to Synod 2006

16 March 2006

This report contains 12 pages

Appendices contain 15 pages

DTM-O-ReportSynod-160306

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1 Mandate

1. 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.

2. Deputies met 10 times to discuss matters concerning its mandate.

2 Composition

3. 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.

4. 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

5. 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.
6. Deputies resolved to recommend that Deputies include a Minister of the Word.

3 Financial support Hamilton Theological College

7. Deputies collected A\$222,367 and forwarded A\$219,000 to Hamilton during the period February 2003 to February 2006.
8. 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).
9. Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to Hamilton are contained in Appendix A.

4 Contact with Hamilton and Kampen

10. Deputies conveyed messages of congratulations and fraternal greetings on the occasions of Hamilton's Convocation and Kampen's Schooldag 2003, 2004 and 2005.
11. Deputies also informed Hamilton and Kampen of our appointment and re-constitution as outlined in heading 2 above.
12. 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".
13. However, Deputies have noticed that since the appointment of Rector Prof. dr. G. Kwakkel, Deputies have received responses to their correspondence with Kampen.
14. 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.
15. 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:
 - (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.

16. Deputies wrote to Dr & Mrs De Jong and the Board of Governors of Hamilton concerning Dr De Jong's illness.

17. Deputies wrote to Mrs Faber and the Hamilton College on the passing away of Dr J Faber.

18. Deputies wrote to Professor GH Visscher on the occasion of his 25th anniversary in the ministry of the Word.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. 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.

5 Funds for theological library and theological training

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and held in this fund are contained in Appendix C.

6 Investigation – theological library

28. 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

29. 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.

30. Deputies also contacted the Women’s League to encourage them to collect for an Australian theological library in the model of Canada.

31. 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.

32. 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.

7 Investigation – theological training

33. 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.

34. 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.

35. 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.

36. 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. Deputies resolved not to pursue this aspect further.

8 Publication and promotion

40. 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.

41. 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.

42. Independently of the above advertisement, 2 young men wrote to Deputies seeking financial assistance for planned studies at Hamilton.

43. 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.

9 Financial aid to students

44. 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).

45. 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.

46. Deputies have arranged for the collection of funds for the first of these students.

47. Deputies are in the process of arranging for the collection of funds for the second student.

48. As well as arranging for the financial support, Deputies maintain contact with the students being financially supported to provide encouragement and determine their progress.

49. Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to students during Deputies’ current term are contained in Appendix D.

10 Guest lecturer

50. 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.

51. The total cost (to the Australian churches) of the visit was \$5,520.

52. 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.

53. 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.

54. 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.

55. 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.

56. 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.

11 Involvement with Hamilton's Board of Governors

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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".

60. 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]

61. 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.

62. 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

63. Deputies resolved that Br A Van Leeuwen attend the September 2005 meeting of Hamilton’s Board of Governors.

64. 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.

65. 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.

66. 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.

67. 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.

68. 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.

12 Recommendations

Deputies recommend that Synod decides to:

69. Reconsider the amount and manner of collections for our own theological library and training.

70. Request the churches to contribute A\$50 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2007.

71. Set aside \$6,000 for the costs of a visit to Australia by a guest lecturer from Hamilton or Kampen, together with his wife.

72. 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.

73. Discharge Deputies and to 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 Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
- (g) make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" once every three years;
- (h) to 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.

13 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 A – Financial Statements: Hamilton Theological College Fund

**Appendix B – Address of Br A Van Leeuwen to the 36th
Anniversary Meeting and 31st Convocation of the College at
Hamilton held on 9 September 2004**

Appendix C – Financial Statements: Theological Library Fund

Appendix D – Financial Statements: Needy Students Fund

Appendix E – Lecture Program for Professor Geertsema

Appendix F – Summary: Guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program of Hamilton College