

DEPUTIES REPORTS

(as mandated by Synod West Kelmscott 2006)

to the

2009 Synod

Of the

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

To be held at

Legana, Tasmania

June 2009

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The Free Reformed Church of Legana
Convening Church
Synod 2009.

General Secretary's Report

1. Mandate.

Synod West Kelmscott 2006 gave the following mandate to the General Deputy

General Secretary Deputy

The duties of the general secretary deputy are to:

- a. take care of the central post office box;
- b. distribute the mail;
- c. be responsible for the website of the FRCA; and
- d. acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary to pass it on to the churches
- e. 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.

2. Activities

2.2 The only correspondence received, not applicable to any other deputies, was from the Committee of Contacts Abroad – Reformed Churches of Brazil. These churches are sister churches of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The letter informs us of their desire to have contact so “that we can grow together”. Rev JG Kroeze has translated the letter and a copy is attached to this report. The letter has been acknowledged.

2.3 All deputies reports received (apart from that of the treasurer) have been collated and printed in a bound volume. A few smaller reports were not received even up to 8 weeks after the deadline set by synod. The list of reports not received is shown below. The churches were requested to indicate the number of copies required and informed they would be asked to pay for extra copies for members. A number of copies of the bound volume of the reports have been made available to the Free Reformed bookshops for sale at cost.

2.4 FRCA Web Site

Synod placed under the duties of the general secretary the web site of the FRCA for the first time in 2003. Br M. Pot has been an able and diligent webmaster who has maintained the site.

I did report to synod 2006 that *"Synod 2003 did not give any guidelines as to how the web site would be administered or any rules regarding its use. If required, the secretary continues to apply the practice as used by the Church Bulletin editors i.e. only organisations which by their constitution restrict their membership to the FRCA are allowed to place material on the web site. Each church can have its own address and is responsible for the content within that link."*

3. Appointment of Alternate

Synods prior to Synod West Kelmscott 2006 appointed a General Convenor and a General Secretary without appointing alternates. In the two recent cases the General Convenor was unable to complete his task due to a overseas call and there was no alternate to take his place. Synod West Kelmscott 2006 did not appoint a general convenor as this task was redundant, but it again appointed a general secretary (with a vastly increased mandate of collating and printing the reports) without appointing an alternate. It is recommended that Synod extend the practice of appointing an alternate also to the position of General Deputy.

4. Recommendations

1. The churches take note of the request from the Reformed Churches of Brazil
2. Synod Legana provide the General Secretary Deputy with guidelines relating the use of the church web site
3. Synod when appointing a General Secretary Deputy also appoints an alternate.

J.L. van Burgel
General Secretary

List of Deputies reports not received for publication:

Deputies Auditing books art 17, 18 the Church of Mt Nasura

Deputies Archiving and Library Synods - the Church of Mount Nasura

Deputies inspecting Archives and Library - the Church of Byford

Appendix 1: Letter from Reformed Churches of Brazil

From: CCIE-IRB – Comissão de Contato com Igrejas no Exterior – Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (Committee of Contacts with Churches Abroad) – Reformed Churches of Brazil

To: J.L. van Burgel

C/C to: Synod 2009 - The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Dear brothers,

The synod of the Reformed Churches of Brazil, during its synod accomplished in November 2006, in Maragogi, city of Alagoas, Brazil, decided to amend the mandate of the Committee of Contacts with Churches Abroad, with the mission of “research and look for initial contacts with the Reformed Churches of Australia.”

The reasons which stimulated the churches to come to that decision were the followings, according to the minutes of that synod:

- a. Those churches (Australian) have fraternal contacts with our sister-churches in Canada and Holland;
- b. We will have contacts with one more church faithful and involved with the Word of God;
- c. These contacts will create the possibility of exchange of advice and experience for Reformed Faith and Practice.

Because we want to accomplish our mandate we are looking for this first contact with you, beloved brothers, so that we can grow together.

It is with happiness and satisfaction that we show you our desire to develop these fraternal contacts.

We would like to apologize for contacting you too late, since this makes your participation in one of our synods as visitors impossible, because our next synod is will be held on October (11 – 17). But others opportunities will come, this being only our first contact.

We hope and pray that the Lord blesses your confederation and we look forward for to positive answer about our desire to develop fraternal contacts.

If you have any questions about our confederation, you can contact us by e-mail: Elias Barbosa da Silva elijahbs@gmail.com or correspondence:

Elias Barbosa da Silva
Travessa Tancredo Neves, nº 01 Qd 58,
Conjunto Village Campestre II, Cidade Universitária
CEP: 57073-450 – Maceió, Alagoas, Brasil

General Secretary's Report

We would also remind you that our next synod in October, will probably appoint new deputies for the Committee of Contacts with Churches Abroad. When these are we will contact you to update the names and addresses.

Fraternally, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Committee of Contacts with Churches Abroad, on September 22nd of 2008.

Br. Elias Barbosa da Silva – chairman
Elder. Hermes Lins dos Santos – secretary
Rev. Alexandrino Araújo

Deputies for Sister Church Relations

A. General Report

1. Deputies

Synod FRCA 2006 (Article 121) appointed as Deputies:

Br. A.C. Breen, Br. A.M.C. Bruning, Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer, Rev. W. Huizinga (as convener), Br. G.B. Veenendaal, Rev. A. Veldman with Br. J. Bruning (snr) as alternate. All appointed deputies could fulfill their positions.

In general we divided our duties as follows:

Br. A.C. Breen – RCN + RCN(r) + FRCSA

Br. A.M.C. Bruning – PCK

Rev. P.K.A. DeBoer - CanRC

Rev. W. Huizinga – PCK + RCN

Br. G.B. Veenendaal – FRCSA + CanRC

Rev. A. Veldman – RCN + RCN(r)

2. Meetings

The Deputies for Sister Relations have met on nine occasions as deputies. One meeting will be held as yet to discuss the final report and/or any supplementary report, and make final preparations/arrangements for visitors invited to the Synod.

3. Declarations

Ministerial Declarations were received by deputies from the following ministers:

Rev. M. Retief from the FRCSA

Rev. S.G. Hur from the PCK

Ministerial Declarations were issued by deputies to:

Rev. P.K. DeBoer to CanRC

Rev. W. Huizinga to CanRC

Rev. E. Rupke to GKN

Rev. A. Veldman to GKN

Rev. A. Van Delden to CanRC

Delegate Declarations were issued to:

Br. G.B. Veenendaal to FRCSA Synod

Rev. W. Huizinga to PCK General Assembly

Br. A.C. Breen to RCN Synod Zwolle-Zuid

Rev. A. Veldman to RCN Synod Zwolle-Zuid

Rev. A. Veldman to RCN(restored) Synod Hasselt

4. Invitations from Sister Churches

Deputies of the FRCA received invitations to attend the synods of our following Sister Churches -

1. Canadian Reformed Churches, Smithers. No delegate attended, as the planned meeting of the Canadian Theological College did not coincide with the Synod, therefore deputies for theological training could not attend. A letter of greeting was sent.
2. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Zwolle-Zuid 2007. Rev A Veldman and Br A.C. Breen attended.
3. From the GKN-restored. Rev A Veldman attended as he was in Holland at the time, prior to the Synod of the sister churches in Zwolle-Zuid.
4. Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, Cape Town 2008. Br GB Veenendaal attended.
5. Presbyterian Church of Korea (G.A.) Rev Huizinga attended in 2007, a letter of greeting was sent for the G.A. of 2008.

5. Invitations sent to Sister Churches

Deputies have sent out invitations for the FRCA Synod 2009 – Legana, to the four Sister Churches, RCN, FRCSA, CRC and PCK.

6. General Comment

Deputies have worked together over the three years and have prepared the following four reports relating to the Sister Churches in our mandate. Unanimity could not be achieved on the RCN report recommendations, therefore the RCN report which was supported with a majority has been supplemented with a minority set of recommendations to which comment from the majority of deputies has been made. Similarly the report and recommendations for the RCN(r) has an alternative report and recommendations, with comments relating to these also included.

B. CRC - Report from Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches

1. Mandate from Synod West Kelmscott 2006

(Article 85: Canadian Reformed Churches (Refer Appendix 3))

1.1 Material:

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

1.2 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).

2. Activities by Deputies

We have carried out our mandate as follows:

1. Attempted to have a delegate present at Synod Smithers 2007 but were unsuccessful because the timing between Synod and Theological College meetings did not coincide.
2. Provided our sister church deputies with copies of our Acts, and received a copy of their Acts.
3. Provided a report based on the Acts of Synod Smithers 2007 and published this in the *Una Sancta*.
4. Provided this report to Synod Legana 2009.

3. Deputies Report to Synod Legana 2009

When reflecting on Synod Smithers 2007 as a whole, one can

only conclude that the Canadian Reformed Churches are a federation that really long and aim to remain faithful to the Lord. As far as can be ascertained from these Acts we can only conclude that these Churches remain faithful as confessed in Article 29 of the *Belgic Confessions*.

Relative to the approach taken in our Australian churches, the Canadian Churches have more readily accepted sister church relations even when there are still substantial differences under discussion such as proper supervision of the Lord's Supper, confessional membership, pulpit supply,, the place of children in the covenant and so forth. This was recognized by our Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches in their report to Synod Rockingham 2003 (see (Appendix – Report of Deputies Relations with Other Churches p. 19). Upon entering into these relationships past Canadian synods (i.e. Synod Chatham 2004 and previously) made a commitment to continue discussing these differences and mandated their deputies accordingly.

However, Synod Smithers 2007 took a different view by stating, for example in their Consideration 3.5 (Art 131), that *“Synod Chatham had mandated the CCCA ‘to continue the discussions with the OPC on the existing differences.’ This mandate cannot be repeated because it does not take into account the decision of Synod Neerlandia to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC. The establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship means that unity of faith is recognized”*. The mandate given to their deputies subsequently also changed. Instead of giving deputies a mandate to discuss existing differences, they simply ask deputies to raise such matter **when appropriate**, *“As the CCCA fulfils its mandate according to these rules, the outstanding matters of confessional membership and supervision of the Lord's table are to be raised when appropriate”* (Art 131 Rec). The same approach was used in relations with other sister churches such as RCUS and ERQ.

What, in practice, is the effect of the change to the proposed Article 41 of the *Church Order*¹ particularly with regards to the URCNA practice and the desire for the two churches to be united in one federation? It would be good to seek clarification and discuss this further with our Canadian deputy counterparts.

In our (written) address to Synod Smithers, we (as deputies)

¹ See above, in the section concerning the URCNA

indicated to them that *We would have loved to see your deputies more engaged so that we can support each other in our relations with our sister churches “to mutually assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world” and to “mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy” (Rules for Sister Church Relations).* In fact, the mandate that the Canadian synod gave to their deputies regarding the RCN and RCN(r) is quite extensive and spells out at least 5 tasks with respect to the Dutch churches. Regarding the matters of concern, there are both similarities and differences among the Canadian and Australian federations regarding both which matters of concern are being dealt with and the approach taken. It would be good to discuss with Canadian deputies some of these matters of concern so as to support and encourage each other.

It is apparent that our inability to be physically present at the synod of our sister churches has as a result that we do not have as good an insight into the directions and decisions of their synod. It would be good that, considering the close relationship we share in many ways, that we do send a delegate (being a deputy for sister church relations, rather than a deputy for training for the ministry).

We recommend the following to Synod Legana 2009:

4. Recommendations:

1. Express thankfulness for how the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to show the marks of a true church as confessed in Article 29 of the *Belgic Confession*.
2. *Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.*
3. Mandate deputies to:
 - a. Monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules.
 - b. Seek clarification and discuss with Canadian deputies matters including the proposed Art 41 C.O.(61), approach to addressing outstanding differences with other churches, concerns with RCN and RCN(r), and changes to Psalms and Hymns.
 - c. Send one delegate to the next General Synod in 2010.

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 need to foster mutual understanding and support regarding matters that our respective federations face.
- c. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and personal contact at the synodical level reinforces our contact with them

Appendix 1: Report on Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches

The Canadian Reformed Churches held a synod in Smithers, BC, May 9-22, 2007. The Australian 2006 Synod had decided that a deputy for theological training would attend both their deputies meeting and this synod at the same time. However, the Canadian deputies meeting for theological training did not coincide with their synod so that consequently no Australian deputy was present at this synod. Instead, we sent a letter of greetings and have received their acts of synod.

As is evident from these Acts, the synod proceeded in a brotherly way. There was a long list of items for the agenda including reports from various deputies, and appeals from various churches and members. As can be expected, most of the work interchurch relations.

There were a number of delegates from their sister-churches and churches with which they have contact, including: the Presbyterian Church of Korea, United Reformed Churches of North America, l'Église Réformée du Québec², Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) of the Nederland³, Orthodox Presbyterian Church⁴, Reformed Churches of New Zealand⁵ and the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa⁶.

Appeals

A number of appeals and submissions made by members among the churches are declared inadmissible mainly because these are not clearly appeals against decisions of regional synods. An appeal regarding the method of celebrating the Lord's Supper, using individual, rather than communal cups, was denied⁷. Concerning the use of grape juice in the place of wine, when responding to an appeal, synod makes clear that wine is to be used *normally* while an *exception* is possible⁸. Also an appeal objecting to how a previous synod decided to bind a standardized *Form for Subscription* among the churches is rejected⁹.

ICRC (International Conference of Reformed Churches)

In a matter of an appeal regarding voting at the ICRC as to which

² Acts Article 45

³ Acts Article 46

⁴ Acts Article 47

⁵ Acts Article 48

⁶ Acts Article 49

⁷ Acts Article 65

⁸ Acts Article 112

⁹ Acts Article 67

churches may be joined, the synod makes a distinction between *true church* and *sister church*. In its considerations it says that the appealing church: *is not correct in assuming that recognizing as true church is the same as accepting as sister church. A church may be a true church but that does not mean that it is automatically also a sister church. If a church is not a sister church, we cannot sponsor that church, but we can still vote in favor of admission of this church if this church adheres to the Reformed faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed faith*¹⁰. The practical consequence of this distinction is shown in another appeal regarding the status of a minister that is no longer a member of a *sister church* but of a recognized *true church*.¹¹ The synod decided that the Canadian Churches would continue to participate in this organization.

The synod, upon suggestion of the chairman, agreed on a *general discussion* whether it is *necessary to continue the ongoing discussion with the churches that hold to the Westminster Confession*, what the differences are *between these churches and the CanRC* and what *our purpose should be in having these ongoing discussions and how such a mandate could be concluded*¹². An appeal seeking synod to give priority to *effect a positive change in continued outstanding differences since they remain in violation of our scriptural principles* in this regard, in particular regarding the *celebration of the Lord's Supper, confessional membership, the doctrine concerning the covenant and church* is denied because the appealing church does not *demonstrate its case*¹³.

NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)

The Canadian Churches have requested membership in this organization. It is noted that the churches previously declined membership because the Christian Reformed Churches of North America (CRCNA) were a member. These churches have now been expelled and the *CanRC have close contacts with five of these eight churches*.¹⁴

RCNZ (Reformed Churches of New Zealand)

Synod decided to recognize the RCNZ as a *faithful church of God* and *accept the invitation of the RCNZ to enter into a Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship according to the established rules*. Concerns

¹⁰ Acts Article 27

¹¹ Acts Article 28

¹² Acts Articles 33, 40,

¹³ Acts Article 55

¹⁴ Acts Article 140

and words of caution were submitted by eleven churches, referring also to the New Zealand churches relation with the CRCA. In coming to this decision the Canadian Synod considered that: *With respect to the concern that the FRCA have not been able to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCNZ because the RCNZ still have contact with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, it should be noted that the FRCA did not see this as a problem. They spelled out that this prevented them from entering into ecclesiastical fellowship because it “presents a problem of triangular relations within Australia” (Report 9.4). The FRCA specifically stated: “we don’t believe we can extend that beyond one’s own country.” They simply request that upon entering ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCNZ, synod “encourage the RCNZ to take seriously and act upon the FRCA’s concerns and objections about the deformation in the CRCAus.”*¹⁵ In their decision, synod decided to “request that the RCNZ take note of and take seriously the concerns of the FRCA regarding the CRCAustralia.”

ERQ (l'Église réformée du Québec)

The Canadian Churches also decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with these churches in the Canadian province of Quebec. From the observations of synod it appears that the deputies to look into this matter had informed the ERQ of their practice of supervising the Lord's Supper table, confessional membership and supervision of their pulpit. In reply to this, the ERQ interchurch committee informs them that: **On admittance to the celebration of the Lord's Supper:** *“the present practice of the ERQ congregations involves celebrating monthly communion during which the pastor addresses a clear verbal invitation and warning to all those who are present.... With respect to visitors, the same verbal invitation and warning are addressed without requiring a written attestation.”* **On confessional membership:** *“at present, we do not require professing members to be bound to or to adhere to the Reformed doctrine articulated in our confessions.”* **On supervision of the pulpit:** *“Most of the councils have restricted themselves to ordained ERQ pastors and approved candidates, while a limited number of councils have permitted non-ERQ pastors to fill their pulpits.”* In view of this, a number of churches expressed their reservations about the proposal to enter into this relation. When coming to its decision, the synod considered the ERQ practices mirror *“what the Canadian Reformed Churches have agreed to in discussions with the OPC.”*¹⁶

¹⁵ Acts Article 66

¹⁶ Acts Article 75

FCS and FCC (Free Church of Scotland) and (Free Church Continuing)

The synod decided to continue its relation of *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* with the FCS in Scotland but to discontinue its relationship with the FCC. It agreed with its deputies that the relationship with the FCC should never have taken place for it was an illegitimate breaking of the churches contrary to what is confessed in Article 28 of the *Belgic Confession*. Regret was expressed for entering into this relation in the first place. The synod encouraged these churches in their efforts to be reconciled. From among the Canadian Churches concern was expressed whether the outstanding matters regarding supervision of the Lord's Supper, confessional membership and the view of the covenant was receiving attention as has been decided. One of the churches also expressed concern about paedo-communion in the FCS. The synod noted that in practice this was *still relatively infrequent* and that the FCS *requires a credible profession of faith for children*.¹⁷

OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

An appeal, to the effect that the decision to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC while the divergent ways of supervising the Lord's Supper remained unchanged, was rejected because no new grounds were given.¹⁸

The decision is to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod considered that *Synod Chatham had mandated the CCCA "to continue the discussions with the OPC on the existing differences."* This mandate cannot be repeated because it does not take into account the decision of Synod Neerlandia to establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC. The establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship means that unity of faith is recognized... In an existing relation of ecclesiastical fellowship, these topics-of-the-day need attention as much as the outstanding matters of confessional membership and supervision of the Lord's table. As the CCCA carries out its work with the OPC according to the adopted Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, it should pursue the outstanding matters where appropriate. Synod then decided As the CCCA fulfils its mandate according to these rules, the outstanding matters of confessional membership and supervision of the Lord's table are to be

¹⁷ Acts Article 79

¹⁸ Acts Article 83

*raised when appropriate.*¹⁹

RCUS (Reformed Church of the United States)

The decision of synod is to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship and that *matters of concern raised by the churches* (see Obs. 2.7-2.11) *may continue to be raised when appropriate.*²⁰

These matters include Lord's Supper celebration for shut-ins, fencing of the table, confessional membership and Lord's Day observance.

PCK (Presbyterian Church of Korea – Kosin)

Although the deputies and some of the churches express concern about lack of communication with these churches and question whether it is really functioning, it was decided to continue the Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The deputies are charged to *work diligently on improving our relationship...*²¹

URCNA (United Reformed Churches of North America)

The Canadian Churches have previously decided to work towards federative unity with these churches. This is to be done in phases. It appears that at this time there is no movement forward. There have been questions and discussions regarding *federal vision, justification, common grace, covenant of works, internal and external covenant, etc.* It is noted that responding to these matters is *complicated by the fact that synod does not wish to make extra-confessional statements and that there is no other means to answer on behalf of the churches.* However the Synod does express gratitude for the committee of the URCA commitment to *provide written response to the CanRC inquiry regarding the Framework Hypothesis.* Subcommittees previously appointed to assist in coming to unity, including the *Church Order Committee*, the *Theological Education Committee* and the *Common Songbook Committee* are encouraged to continue their work. An additional committee, *Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee* is appointed²².

Synod decides to receive the *Church Order* that the *Church Order Committee* proposes and recommends it for *discussion and evaluation by the Churches*²³. One Article that is different from previous is the proposed *Article 41* which reads: *The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made*

¹⁹ Acts Article 131

²⁰ Acts Article 107

²¹ Acts Article 86

²² Acts Article 98

²³ Acts Article 99

public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Visitors may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided that, as much as possible, the consistory has secured confirmation of their biblical church membership, of their proper profession of faith and of their godly walk of life. This is a change from the present CanRC Church Order which reads: The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct²⁴.

The *Theological Education Committee* appears to have been especially busy with determining whether a *church seminary* is mandatory. Synod came to the conclusion to *express the strong preference for at least one federative seminary*. This shows that Synod considered this to be a matter of preference, not mandatory.

As evident from the number of submissions, the *Common Songbook Committee's* work received much attention. The joint committee agreed that *at least one of each Psalm rendition must be a complete Psalm, that all 150 Psalms are represented in the Psalter section and The Psalms will have the Principal place in the singing of the congregation and therefore in the churches Song Book*. In its decision the Synod makes a *clear commitment for an eventual Common Songbook before federative unity is achieved*. By its decision the Canadian Churches maintains its *strong preference for a complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter within the Common Songbook* but also says that this *may not be a defining obstacle to federative unity*.²⁵

FRCNA (Free Reformed Churches of North America)

Deputies had been appointed to see whether future federative unity would be possible with these churches. In view of deputies report the Synod decided to *cease discussions with the FRCNA*. The FRCNA deputies had informed the Canadian deputies that on their part there was not *much motivation* to meet. The reasons given: 1) *the ongoing discussions and movement of the Canadian Reformed Church towards unity with the United Reformed Churches in North America* and 2) *our meetings are too much from the top down*.²⁶

OCRC (Orthodox Christian Reformed Church)

The deputies report that there has been no correspondence and Synod decided that the deputies are to *send a letter to the OCRC asking if there is interest in further discussions*²⁷.

²⁴ Deputy Reports, Volume 3 page 65.

²⁵ Acts Article 104

²⁶ Acts Article 105

²⁷ Acts Article 106

FRCSA (Free Reformed Churches of South Africa)

The Synod decided to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with these churches and noted that it is worthy to continue and increase *prayerful and financial assistance, to help them with their extensive mission work... and compassionate pursuit among the disadvantaged.* The Board of the Theological College is also mandated to *encourage and aid the FRCSA in the quest to redesign their Theological Training ...*²⁸

PCEA (Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia)

The Synod decided *not to enter into relations with the PCEA and inform the PCEA and the FRCA.*²⁹

URCM (United Reformed Churches of Myanmar)

Synod decided to decline its request for Ecclesiastical Relation considering the *lack of familiarity* and that *there is no apparent benefit.*³⁰

IRCK (Independent Reformed Church of Korea)

Synod also decided to decline a request from this Church to enter into sister church relations *At this point it would seem sufficient to leave the contacts with the IRCK to meeting at the ICRC.*³¹

IRB (Igreja Reformadas do Brasil)

It is decided to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with these churches.³²

IPB (Igreja Presbyteriana do Brasil)

A request to reconsider a previous decision not to look into possible relations with these churches was denied.

GKN (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands)

The Synod decided to continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with these churches. It further decided to *end the discussion about the proportion of psalms and hymns* and considers its deputies have fulfilled its mandate in discussion regarding the *new Marriage Form* as well as *The Fourth Commandment and Sunday*. Concerning this last point it was decided that the deputies are to *monitor developments to see how the decisions ... work out in practice.* The deputies were further mandated to *discuss... the new approach to divorce in order to get answers to the hermeneutical concerns highlighted by the committee with respect to "the style-of-*

²⁸ Acts Article 124

²⁹ Acts Article 125

³⁰ Acts Article 126

³¹ Acts Article 127

³² Acts Article 128

*the-kingdom” approach to divorce and remarriage. Attention should also be paid to the suggested revision of the Church Order about discipline in cases of divorce and remarriage... and further instructed to monitor the situation in the GKN, keeping in mind the concerns expressed by the churches... It also directed deputies to express appreciation for the way the GKN has sought to engage the GKH in unity talks...*³³

GKH (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – restored)

The synod expressed sadness over these churches' separation from the GKN and does not accept its request for sister church relations. Instead it decides to *urge the churches to pray for the restoration of unity* and the deputies are mandated to *admonish* them in a brotherly manner for *its unlawful separation*. In coming to this decision the synod considered that the issues raised that led to this separation has had the attention of the deputies and were still *able to conclude that the GKN has remained faithful*. It is further noted how the GKN is considered a *false church* while the GKH claims to be the *lawful continuation*. The synod agrees with its deputies in speaking about *the separation that occurred as ‘schism’* and that *this action is not scripturally valid according to Belgic Confession Article 28*.³⁴ Later on in synod a request was granted to revisit this decision³⁵ but the proposal to change it was defeated³⁶.

GGRC-NTT (Reformed Churches of Indonesia - Calvin)

It is decided to delay entering into *sister church relations*. The reason for this delay includes that *the reasons why the FRCA have not as yet entered into ecclesiastical fellowship are understood and evaluated*.³⁷

GGRI-NTT (Reformed Churches of Indonesia)

It is decided to also *delay accepting the invitation from the GGRI to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship until the necessary information ...* with respect to the GGRC. The considered reasons includes that one of the churches thinks it important to *deal with both Indonesian church federations in tandem*...³⁸

KPCA (Korean Presbyterian Church in America)

The previous synod had mandated deputies to contact these churches. Although they were successful in making some initial contacts, *further attempts have not proven fruitful*. It was therefore

³³ Acts Article 133

³⁴ Acts Article 143

³⁵ Acts Article 146

³⁶ Acts Article 167

³⁷ Acts Article 150

³⁸ Acts Article 151

decided *not to renew the mandate because cultural and language barriers presently hinder contact.*

FRCA (Free Reformed Churches of Australia)

Synod decided: 1) *To maintain the existing Relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules.* 2) *To thank the FRCA for their continued support for the Theological College in Hamilton.* 3) *To suggest that the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise maintain regular contact with the Australian committee in order to advise them of our direction.* Synod did not want to act on the Canadian deputies' recommendation *to encourage the CanRC operating mission work in the region of Australia to contact the deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia because mission work is a local matter...*³⁹ the deputies do not provide any support for their recommendation.

RPCNA (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America)

Concerning these churches the deputies are instructed *to confirm whether the marks of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are evident and to study the status and content of the "Testimony" the exclusive psalmody and their views on ordaining women as deacons to see whether this is a hindrance to the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.*⁴⁰

The Theological College

The board of governors' report shows that the Theological College continues to run well. The Canadian Churches have initiated a form of internship for prospective ministers of the word known the as *Pastoral Training Program*. Although supported by the college it is not part of the college curriculum. The synod decided to make this program *mandatory for all students aspiring to the ministry of the Word among the Canadian Reformed Churches...*⁴¹ A request from the Board of Governors to appoint a fifth professor is not accepted. Instead the mandate is given to *initiate a full and independent review and to consider alternative options for the delivery of programs such as appointment of part time lecturers.*⁴²

Administration of the Lord's Supper to "shut-ins"

In reply to an overture from a Regional Synod, Synod considered that there is *no need to make special provisions in the Church Order for*

³⁹ Acts Article 160

⁴⁰ Acts Article 163

⁴¹ Acts Article 78

⁴² Acts Article 130

*the administration of the Lord's Supper to shut-ins possible. It was therefore decided to make no such special provisions in the Church Order*⁴³. Shut-ins refers to those who are not able to attend the normal gathering in a worship service and thereby also attend the Lord's Supper.

Form for Subscription

After some amendments made at Synod, a *Form for Subscription* for use in Consistories and a separate one for use by Classis are adopted⁴⁴.

Bible Translations

Concerning Bible translations, synod decided to *continue to recommend the NIV for use within the churches but to leave it in the freedom of the churches should they feel compelled to use ... the NKJV, the NASB or the ESV*. The new mandate of this committee includes a request to the responsible committees *in regard to promoting an agreed upon English translation for use in the liturgical forms and confessions of an eventual common songbook...*⁴⁵

Women voting

It was decided to appoint a committee to finish a mandate extended by a previous synod. This includes to; *examine the biblical teaching on headship and voting...*⁴⁶

Book of Praise

Synod decides to *adopt the proposed updated prose section of the "Book of Praise" with the NIV Bible references...*⁴⁷ to *retain the capitalization of the personal pronouns referring to God*⁴⁸, but to keep the *overleaf musical notation on hold pending the progress of developing the common songbook*⁴⁹. The standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* has been mandated to *initiate a thorough review of all 150 Psalms and to publish revised and update Psalm versions as they become available*⁵⁰ and to *provisionally approve the 28 hymns for a three year period of testing in the churches*. The aim is to come to a

⁴³ Acts Article 96

⁴⁴ Acts Article 111

⁴⁵ Acts Article 134

⁴⁶ Acts Article 136

⁴⁷ Acts Article 141

⁴⁸ Acts Article 166

⁴⁹ Acts article 164

⁵⁰ Acts Article 148

final *proposal concerning the hymn section to Synod 2010*.⁵¹ Concerning its publication, the committee is to *welcome input from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia*.⁵²

Synod further decides that the wording of Lord's Day 27 Q.A. 74 be changed *Therefore, by baptism ... they must be grafted* (now changed to *incorporated*) *into the Christian Church*. It is also decided to change the phrase in the *Form for the Lord's Supper* where it reads: *By His perfect obedience He has fulfilled for us all the righteousness of God's law* into *He has for us fulfilled all the righteousness of God law*. The reason is to remove the ambiguity so that it is not *for us all* but rather, as in the original Form *...all the righteousness*. It was also decided to change the phrase: *the weight of our sins and the wrath of God* into *the weight of the wrath of God*. The reason for this change is that the previous wording implied two things *weight* and *wrath* while the revised wording is closer to Answers 17 and 37 of the Catechism. The phrase *innocently condemned to death* for grammatical reasons is changed into: *Though innocent, He was condemned to death...* and a correction is made in Article 25 of the *Belgic Confession* changing *to order our life in all honour* into *to order our life in all honesty*. A further nine corrections are made to the grammar, printing and textual references⁵³.

Church Order

Synod decided to add a sentence to Article 63 of the *Church Order* so that it now reads (the new sentence is in italics): "*The Word of God teaches that marriage is a union between one man and one woman*. The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers..." The reason for this change is Canadian law has changed the definition of marriage into: *the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of others*. This addition to the *Church Order* is meant to help overcome the *potential risk or liability on the part of ministers who refuse to solemnize a same-sex marriage*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Acts Article 149

⁵² Acts Article 165

⁵³ Acts Article 172

⁵⁴ Acts Article 156

C. Korea - Report from Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches

1. Mandate

The 2006 Synod of West Kelmscott took the following decision re our sister churches, the PCK, in Korea:

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.

2. Lines of Communications (decisions 2+3).

These lines of communications, established before the Synod of 2006, have continued. Our liaison person, Dr HaeMoo Yoo, Professor of Dogmatics at their Theological Seminary and a deputy for relations with sister churches, has continued strongly to aid good communications. At the General Assembly (GA) in 2007 he translated our address into Korean, displaying it on a large screen so that all delegates could either follow the English presentation or read a Korean translation. He also translated an agenda with specified points for a meeting with their fraternal

relations committee. He acts as translator as well in meetings. Moreover, he and his wife act as host and hostess for foreign delegates. Our delegate received excellent accommodation, transport and help during his visit there. Moreover, he has ensured that there is continuing contact on other items. The attached report on the visit mentions some tensions at their seminary. He continues to inform our deputies and even solicits advice. Thus there is an excellent working relation.

3. Visit to PCK in 2007 (decisions 1+4).

Rev W Huizinga visited the sister churches in September of 2007. The address with photos were published in *Una Sancta* in line with the mandate given. This was a very fruitful visit. Normally a foreign delegate has a quick and polite address of 2 minutes, enjoys a lunch with the fraternal relations committee (frc) and leaves. We were given 20-30 minutes. Dr Yoo also responded to our address. This had never happened at their GA before, and was done purposely by mutual agreement with Dr Yoo to set a new precedent. Also, the meeting with their frc lasted three hours and involved some in-depth discussions about our relations. The report on this visit along with a report on the meeting with their FRC is attached. It should be self explanatory. There was much sharing of information in order to get to know each other better. Certain areas of church life in the PCK were explored, i.e. the place of instruction, reformed education, the role of the elder, and the use of the confessions. At this visit one did not expect to go into too much discussion. This takes years. Also, one needs to overcome the language barrier. Though most of their members in the FRC know a smattering of English, translations are needed. This means that much work needs to be done through Dr Yoo in order to make meetings successful. Also, much needs to be left to Dr Yoo afterwards in their own internal meetings of the FRC.

An agreement was made with our sister churches in Canada and The Netherlands to pay visits there on a rotational basis. In 2008 delegates from Canada would pay a visit and in 2009 it would be The Netherlands' turn. We agreed to send reports of these visits to each other. Brs John Vanderstoep and Harold Leyenhorst on behalf of the CRC visited their 2008 GA. We have not as yet received a report of the visit of the Canadian delegates. We did pass on the report of our visit in 2007 to both Canada and The Netherlands.

We sent a letter of greetings to their 2008 GA.

We have received English summaries of their 2007 + 2008 GAs. In the summary of the 2008 GA we noted that the tensions at their seminary, concerning a number of their staff, are in the process of being resolved. Dr Yoo, personally, had explained the tensions and the professors involved. He himself did not take sides in the troubles. This matter was discussed at the 2007 GA but your delegate did not hear it and could not follow it, even if he did hear it, the Korean language mystified him! Dr Hur (asked to be adviser to GA) and Dr Yoo however took a strong reformed stance. They informed your delegate about it. At the 2008 GA one professor, under suspicion for wrong doctrine, has resigned and another professor was suspended for 6 months. It was a sad time and they hope it is now behind them.

4. Other Reformed Churches in Korea.

The report of our visit to their 2007 GA mentions contacts with a small group, the ***Independent Reformed Churches of Korea (IRCK)***, 5 small churches, who use the Three Forms of Unity and the Genevan psalter, and who try to introduce reformed education. The two teachers in the Support Office of JCCC have visited Korea to help with reformed education. The visits made and the help offered were only given after permission and encouragement to do so was received from the fraternal relations committee of the PCK. In 2008 we were introduced by Dr SG Hur to a second bond, the ***Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK)***. Over the past few years these two small bonds have received help from Dr Yoo, Dr Hur, ministers from our Canadian sisters and Dutch sisters and now from ourselves. One young student member of these churches was directed to our churches for his one year work-visa (Sungwon Yoon, who joined FRC Armadale). It is now time to introduce these two bonds of churches.

We need to clarify that at this point we do nothing more than offer any help that we can, when requested, and keep in contact with them. It was agreed with the fraternal delegates of our sister churches (PCK) that they set the agenda in this respect. At this moment we explain why we took up contact with these churches who are in contact with our Korean sister churches.

The PCK must initiate any relations and we will wait for them to encourage us to do the same. Unfortunately the Christelijke

Kerken in The Netherlands have already offered sister relations to the IRCK. We find this action too quick and precipitous.

4.1 Independent Reformed Churches of Korea.

The report of the 2007 visit describes what was done to help these churches. They use much of our literature and translate it. They also work on the Genevan Psalter. Though they are small churches, do not think they are struggling because of it. Their church buildings are very spacious and functional. Their worship is vibrant, the singing is enthusiastic and in four voices, often accompanied by piano. The children are part of the worship services and sing heartily. They do what they can to train the many children in the Bible. They operate classes in the church buildings for this purpose. Reformed education is very difficult to establish in Korea owing to the state laws re education.

These churches come from a variety of backgrounds, many from the HapDong churches. They have adopted the Three Forms of Unity. Most of the IRC (3) do not have elders as yet. This gives them the appearance of being episcopal (a bishop who rules the whole church in contrast to the reformed form in which a minister with a council of elders rules the church). However, this impression is incorrect since they are trying patiently to work toward the goal of the reformed system of church government. But it takes time, since they want well-qualified elders. Elders, appointed for life in Presbyterian circles, are often a source of trouble, especially for ministers. Thus there is caution and patience.

They maintain contacts with the Kosin PCK, our sister churches, and also with the HapDong churches as well as with the other reformed churches in the Pusan area.

They solicit our help and contacts with us, and appreciated the speeches and help offered.

4.2 Reformed Churches of Korea.

Dr Hur wrote a very joyful letter, enthusing about the entrance of the reformed faith with the Three Forms of Unity on Korean soil. He had not expected it in his lifetime. He helps a second bond of reformed churches, the RCK. He also directed one of their members to us. Again, they are a bond of 5 smaller churches, mostly in the southern parts of South Korea. They

have fully translated our Book of Praise, using all the psalms and hymns, confessions, creeds and liturgical forms! Since it seemed to us that these two bonds of reformed churches bypass each other, and duplicate efforts to translate the Psalms and Book of Praise, we wrote to our contacts, Dr Yoo and Dr Hur as well as ministers of both bonds, so that good communications can result.

4.3 Further developments with these churches.

Some of the ministers of the RCK asked to come here to Perth to come to know the reformed faith better, to receive instruction and to learn English better. Since one of these ministers came from a sister church in Korea and there had been troubles, we first consulted with our Korean counterparts. Caution and patience were advised. We await their reply and advice.

We would ask synod to include in our mandate the task to stay informed about these churches, to encourage our sister church in Korea to help them and to work toward sister relations if possible, and, if possible and requested, to offer help where we can. In our contacts we should also encourage these two small bonds to work together if possible and to help each other.

5. Recommendations:

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 continued improved lines of communications.
3. To authorise deputies to send one delegate to visit the PCK once in the next three years subject to available funds.
4. To ask the deputies to stay informed about the IRCK + RCK through the sister relations with the PCK and to offer any help that is possible and practical.

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 years have helped to build better lines of communication and a growing, mutual understanding of each other.

- c. Pledges have been given for a good line of communication, as well as regular English summaries concerning their annual general assemblies.
- d. The initial contacts with the IRCK + RCK, which came via the PCK, are very encouraging and we should extend whatever help we can to these small bonds who strongly desire to build up reformed churches.

Appendix 1: Address to the 2007 General Assembly of the PCK.

Brotherly greetings in the name of our Triune God from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, your sister churches.

Mr. Chairman and delegates of this general assembly, brothers and sisters, it is an honor for me briefly to address your general assembly and communicate to your assembly 'brotherly greetings' from your brothers and sisters in Australia. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and in particular Dr Yoo and his wife for the fabulous way in which you have received me and shown hospitality. Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality. The fellowship with brothers from around the world is heartening to me personally.

Last year, at our synod we welcomed Dr Yoo, HaeMoo and Rev Jun, Tae. Rev Jun spoke to us on your behalf. We were thrilled that two delegates came to visit us. This has not happened before. We valued this visit very much. Your delegates brought a report back to your churches. We read it. Thank you for this kind report on our synod last year.

Your delegates remarked on the procedures followed for our meeting. This somewhat surprised us because we become accustomed to our meeting procedures. Your meetings are finished within one week. Our synods sometimes continue for two or three weeks! Maybe we should learn something from you! Yes, it is good to share how we do things.

We are reciprocating by attending your 2007 general assembly in the hope that our official sister relations between our two church federations may continue to grow. In 2004 brother Maurice Bruning addressed your assembly and impressed the need for better communications and relations. And indeed things have really improved. We are thankful that you allow Dr Yoo to remain as your representative on the fraternal relations committee and that he can act as the contact person for English-speaking churches. This is very helpful.

We have made arrangements with our sister churches in Canada and The Netherlands to visit your General Assembly every year. In this way we from our side hope to improve relations. So one of these sister churches will visit you each year. This year it is our turn.

Who are the FRCA?

Just in case some of you do not know our churches, allow me to introduce them briefly. At your 2004 General Assembly our deputy, Br Maurice Bruning, addressed your assembly. He gave quite an outline about the history of our churches. Let me update you on our churches.

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia came into existence in the 1950s after a period of migration from The Netherlands. Some of the migrants came to Western Australia in Perth (Armadale), some to Albany and others went to Tasmania. From these three churches we have now grown to 13 congregations. In the past year a new church was instituted near Rockingham, on the coast near Perth. The Lord continues to give growth, and we number nearly 4000 members at present. For you this is small. We are indeed a small bond of churches. Yet we wish to be faithful.

Our churches enjoy three assemblies – the consistories, two classes and a synod. The two classes meet twice per year or more if needed. A synod is held every three years. The next one is to be held in 2009 in Legana, Tasmania.

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 catechetical teaching belongs to the church, but the task of raising children is the task of parents. So parents, grandparents and even those without children banded together to form a school association. Parents, indeed, virtually all the members of the FRCA worked together and in 1957 established our own John Calvin Christian School to educate their children. We now have primary schools for the children from ages 5-12, middle-school for the ages from 13-15 and high-schools the ages 16-18. The Lord has blessed us with some seven primary schools, three middle-schools and three high schools. Almost all our children, without exception, attend these Christian schools. They are a tremendous blessing to us. Together with training in the Scriptures at home and in the church – catechism classes for children aged 13- 20, this educational ministry via the schools molds our children's minds and hearts for life. Our Lord continues to bless this working together to train our children in godly wisdom. For hardly any of our children leave the church. They normally all publicly profess the reformed faith and their love for the Lord and neighbor. We thank the Lord for this rich blessing.

The 13 congregations of the FRCA all function in a similar way. The churches offer bible study clubs for all ages (younger youth, older youth, men's and women's clubs). We have an association for our disabled/handicapped members – the Eucalypt Home. We also enjoy a retirement village and hostel, where our senior members can enjoy Christian neighbours and good care. Some of our senior members are

quite old – 97 + 98! We also do some emergency relief work in cases of global disasters.

The FRCA has also been active in its Mission mandate. In the past mission work was done amongst the aboriginal people of Australia. This was very difficult with very few results. Currently our churches do mission work in Papua New Guinea, in Indonesia (various places) and in China. Evangelism via radio broadcasts and local projects is also done.

Brothers, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia has a very rich, reformed heritage. Our roots go back to the Great Reformation of the 16th Century. Via the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands we have taken this heritage with us to Australia. Owing to the migrant population, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia still have strong ties with The Netherlands but in these days of much overseas travel there are increasing ties with Canada and also with South Africa. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia give support to the Theological College in Hamilton, Canada. Our students also study there. Many families have relations in The Netherlands, Canada or South Africa.

We are very thankful that one of your ministers and professors, Dr SG Hur, served two of our churches in Australia. Recently his book about your churches here in Korea was translated into English. We can now read all about your past history from the 1800s to today. Dr Hur's book about your churches, The Church Preserved through Fires: a history of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, certainly has opened many eyes to what the Lord has done here on the Korean peninsula. His book not only serves you but has served our churches as well.

There remain huge challenges ahead for you as well as for us today. To meet these challenges we trust that we share with you the rich heritage of the reformed faith. Your past history shows an impressive record of biblical faithfulness. May the Lord keep it like that!

In closing I refer both to your past and to your future. In the past the Lord greatly blessed your churches. The harvest from the Korean Pentecost was unbelievably large. How richly our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, blessed you! You are a large bond of churches, with many churches and members. From the past we recall how you enjoyed many churches in North Korea as well, especially in the region of Pyongyang, the capitol. This is from your past.

In the present all those churches are closed. The door stands firmly shut to the gospel in North Korea. It is thus understandable that you

pray to the Lord of the church to open this closed door into North Korea. How will this happen? Here is where your future comes in.

Here is also where I want to challenge you to remain faithful. For it is so easy over the years for a large bond of churches to become complacent, easy-going, and to put growth in numbers ahead of growth in faithfulness. One sees this in large bonds of churches like the synodical Reformed Churches in The Netherlands or the Christian Reformed Churches in North America. The challenge for you is to remain faithful. Then the Lord keeps you ready for your task in the future, also with respect to North Korea.

In Revelation 3 our Lord Jesus Christ addresses the church of Philadelphia. Note how Jesus opens his letter – *He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens*. It is Jesus, not North Korea nor you who controls your future, including the opening of doors into North Korea. What does Jesus look for from you? Jesus writes,

You have kept my word, and have not denied my Name...you have kept my command to persevere...hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown (verses 6-11).

Jesus looks for faithfulness from you – *do not deny his Name, keep his Word, persevere in his commands and hold fast to the reformed faith and heritage* He gave you. As a result the Lord says to this faithful church, *See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it*. You would love to see the door into North Korea opened. We would love to see Jesus place an open to you to have the gospel preached in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. But it can only happen when you remain faithful to what the Lord has given you.

Be faithful and the Lord will keep the future open for you. Our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 48 explains the second petition of our Lord's Prayer – *your kingdom come!* It teaches us this prayer:

So rule us by your Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to You.

Preserve and increase your church.

This prayer combines the petition to expand God's kingdom with a request to preserve the church in the truth. In this way the church will also increase.

To remain faithful in good, peaceful years is not easy. In difficult times as during the Korea War you suffered persecution and imprisonment. You then stood up for the Lord and accepted suffering in his name. Yet that time is past. Today you enjoy freedom and peace. This often does not make it easier to remain faithful. In Korea, and in Australia as well, Christians have been pampered with decades of liberty to serve God. Your time of imprisonment for the faith is finished. May the Lord of the church make you prosper in faithfulness during these good times.

We pray for you. We too pray that King Jesus opens the borders with North Korea. Allow me to quote from Dr SG Hur's book,

The Kosin Presbyterian Church is a young, virile church, still growing with the God-given responsibility never to cease reforming itself! The prayer goes out to her to leave a beautiful chapter from each day of her history until the end of time, and to be a shining lampstand performing *semper reformanda*.

Yes, we pray for you. On 12 August in all our churches prayers were sent up for your Korean brothers and sisters who are held hostage in Afghanistan by the Taliban. We kept praying for their safety and release. With joy and thanks we heard that the Taliban are releasing the hostages, your brothers and sisters. The Lord has heard prayer, from you and from Australia.

I leave you with these words of encouragement from what Paul writes to the church in Philippi (3:12-4:1)

May God's blessing remain on you and your churches!

Rev W Huizinga, delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Appendix 2: Report on visit to the PCK Sept 7-15/07,

The undersigned was heartily welcomed and shown warm hospitality in the home of Dr and Mrs Yoo who live nestled in the high hills in a village just 20 minutes away from Cheonan and the Kosin Theological Seminary, where he is professor of dogmatics. They both speak English and Dutch, Dutch being preferable. Thus good communications were possible. All aspects of church life and life in Korea could be discussed. Dr Yoo thoroughly understands our reformed way of life.

On Sunday they took me along to Seoul, a two hour drive along the freeway. Dr Yoo is also an assistant minister of the Jam Sil Joong Ang

Presbyterian Church in Seoul. It is a very large church with many ministers. It holds three services on Sundays and two gatherings for the youth. I was invited to deliver God's Word in the second and third services. About 1200 people attended each! Dr Yoo (who had received my sermon and translated it) translated in dynamic fashion, which worked very well. The worship is very well organised, very respectful and includes a number of prayers. After the third service lunch was served for everyone in the basement (of a five storey building) where they have a huge, commercial kitchen and cafeteria. Most members travel long distances and thus they organise things in this fashion. They also try to continue the biblical practice of the agape-feast (love-feast). In a meeting with the consistory greetings could be exchanged and questions answered. It was a good exchange. At 2 p.m. we travelled back to Cheonan.

On Monday they took me to a restaurant for a typically Korean meal in Korean style - squatting under a low table equipped with gas stoves on which one cooks the food. Four members of the Fraternal Relations Committee - Rev Jun (chairman), Rev Kim (secretary), Elder Kim (treasurer) and Dr Yoo - could attend. Only two attended the General Assembly (GA) and others live far away with work commitments. In order to make the meeting fruitful Dr Yoo did some preparatory work in translating my information and questions. A sheet is attached with information from our side, with items about our churches we would like to share and questions so we could learn from them. Dr Yoo translated this into Korean and each received a copy. An attempt was made to begin to address certain areas where Dr Yoo sees changes are needed in the PCK and where we indeed would like to see changes. The following points are noteworthy:

1. The committee consists of 9 members who serve for three years and are then retired. Dr Yoo serves permanently. Rev Jun retired during the GA and Rev Kim is now chairman.
2. The PCK has 36 presbyteries and each sends delegates to the GA, according to its size. 505 were commissioned to this GA!
3. They have sister relations with the CanRC, GKV, ChrGerKerken in Nederland, OPC, RCJapan, and they have contacts only with the PCEA. This is all. As the questions and notes on the discussion state, the issue of women-deacons in the GKSA was explained to the fraternal relations committee. The PCK has no sister relations with the FRCSA but only enjoys contacts via the ICRC.
4. Our method of staying and learning about them was seen as very positive. It was hardly done before. They would try to

reciprocate. They also appreciated how we agreed with two sister churches to attend their GA every year.

5. They have recognised the HapDong churches and the churches which separated from the HapDong (HapSin) as true churches and allow occasional pulpit exchange. It happens only rarely, apparently. The IRC asked for sister relations but the IRC are small, do not all have elders and are not at the point to do this. I assured them we would work toward unity between these churches and urged them to do so too.
6. The church members in the local churches work very hard during the week in church activities. There is the mid-week service on Wednesday evenings and a Friday evening prayer meeting. Besides this they attend at least 1-2 Bible studies during the week (they occur every day). The members pray long every day and often have their own Bible studies with neighbours in their area. They also give very generously for church work, for example, for a new church building.
7. They appreciated our love for our confessions, especially the Heidelberg Catechism (HC). They said it was good to hear this and to learn from it.
8. They appreciated our strong educational accent and said they needed to adopt a similar approach. The use of the HC was encouraged. The example of the RCNZ (where the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession form the confessional basis and where 'catechism sermons' are used) was given.
9. As far as equality among the office bearers goes, this is a ticklish issue among them, and therefore it was raised by telling them about our approach. They were intrigued. In their system the elders are for life. This causes practical problems in that these elders can sometimes become lazy and even power hungry. Many pastors thus resist the effort to ordain more elders! Dr Hur has suggested to the PCK to use a rotational system to avoid these problems.
10. They do not know the Genevan tunes, but use hymns in church (like the Trinity Hymnal).
11. They really appreciated the worthwhile meeting and the way it was prepared. They would like to see this used in the future with other visits from sister churches.

On Tuesday morning the GA set aside time for foreign delegates to address the assembly. We came first. Dr Yoo had translated the address and the Korean version was put on the big screen at the front. This meant all commissioners could read along as it was

presented. Dr Yoo then immediately responded to me. His response was in English but a Korean version was again on the screen. This method was well received and the address was well received as well. Many can understand English but speaking English poses a real challenge. Thus not too many dare to come up and speak to us. Yet some did. It was also the first time a response was made to an address by a sister church.

B Fourie represented the GKSA (Dopperkerken). Otherwise there were no other foreign delegates. But they did have delegates from their own denomination, who work overseas, address them. As well, a military chaplain with representatives from all the armed forces marched into the assembly, saluted, and then addressed them. They have 15 military chaplains serving their men. Korea does draft young men for military duty. Also, missionaries addressed them. They have 288 missionaries working abroad.

We were then treated to a lunch, western style, at a nearby restaurant.

I attended the GA for the rest of the day to meet delegates, to enjoy an evening meal with them, and to view the seminary. A two hour talk with Dr SG Hur was also included. He explained certain features of the PCK, especially the elders. In his doctoral dissertation, *Presbyters in Full Rights*, Dr Hur defends the office of the elder as a 'presbyter' in full rights overagainst Hodge and others who saw the presbyter as referring to the office of minister only. This means that the elders should also function fully as overseers, teachers and leaders with experience. In the PCK the elders do act in a governing capacity but not always fully as overseers who visit, counsel and teach.

The General Assembly was impressive. The generosity of churches remarkable – one church paid for all the food that day and its members took care of the catering, along with decorations with flowers.

The visit was enlightening. Korea was a mysterious land for me before. Now the mystery starts to lift. It is a land steeped in history, a land that the LORD visited to bring the gospel in a powerful manner. The Korean Pentecost was just amazing. During the Japanese occupation our Korean sisters proved faithful to the Lord. From poor beginnings the Lord has blessed them richly. Yet today they face the challenges which most churches face. It is good that we get to know each other better that we may be a hand and foot to each other.

Independent Reformed Churches

This is not an official part of the visit, and yet it is worthwhile to report on it.

Travelling by the express train (KTX), which travels at speeds of up to 300 kmph to D/Taejon, I was taken to the Holy Grace Church of which Rev Kim is pastor. It is part of the Independent Reformed Churches (IRC), which consists of four congregations – one in Taejon, one just outside of Taejon and two in Seoul region. These churches come from a variety of backgrounds, many from the HapDong churches, and they have the Three Forms of Unity. Most (3) do not have elders yet. They maintain contacts with the Kosin PCK, our sister churches, and also with the HapDong churches as well as with some other reformed churches in Pusan area. An introductory booklet was supplied, which we might like to photocopy for our benefit.

After a supper together at their own church-building, the service began at 7 p.m. Parents and even young children all attended. Rev Kim led the service. I delivered God's Word as confessed in LD 21 (54) of the Heidelberg Catechism. Rev Heon Soo Kim translated, again, very ably as with Dr Yoo. The service took till 8:30 p.m. but this did not pose any problems. Afterwards Rev Kim and I greeted all the members, even the mothers with babies who sat in a room behind glass to watch and listen along. To do so one politely bows to the persons in each bench, keeping your eyes on the ground.

I also spoke for the same congregation, again the whole congregation as well as deacons and minister from the neighboring congregation, on the work of the deacons, using the Form for Ordination of Deacons and a speech about the biblical basis of the office, the role of the deacons, and the practical aspects of some of their tasks. They had asked specific questions. It took about 2 hours. Afterwards a discussion took place and this lasted over an hour.

With Rev Kim I traveled on the KTX express to Seoul. Here two members, Jenny and David Kang (she has been member in our sister church in Toronto, Canada), gave me a memorable tour of the main royal palace, royal buildings and gardens in Seoul. David is a professor of history and could explain the history and architecture, etc of the royal buildings, Korea's pride. Afterwards a visit was made to one of their churches in Seoul, a church building which includes a publishing house, which stocks all their publications, of which there are very many. A booklist was given and can be supplied. They have three full-time staff working on translation and editing and publishing.

Rev Kim has translated a number of our booklets and other books, including the Heidelberg Catechism which is one of their best-sellers.

He has also composed rhymings of 110 Psalms in Korean, with Genevan tunes. He is quite a musician. The congregation sings them sometimes in four part music, with some stanzas for the women or men or children.

Later they took me to the Kang Byun IRC of which Rev Byoung Kil Chung was one minister. Here I spoke about the work of the elders. All the office bearers from three of their churches – about 20 in all – attended. The biblical basis of the office, the role of elders, and some particular issues were highlighted. A very full discussion ensued in which it became evident that in Korea elders are not used to making home visits to the members. This was something new to them. It was a very good evening.

Overall Conclusion of the Visit to the PCK + IRC

In general I took the approach of trying to build bridges between the IRC and the PCK. I tried to introduce the concept of using the Heidelberg Catechism for preaching and instruction in the PCK. This is one beloved feature of the IRC which they do not want to lose! Who would? Also, I introduced the issue of the IRC at the meeting with the fraternal relations committee of the PCK. I assured them we will work for unity, not division. On the other hand, I tried to engender the need for unity and not total independence in the discussions with the IRC. One can understand that the IRC does not want to become 'swallowed' up by the PCK. They have the continental reformed standards and love them. The model of the RCNZ who have married the two traditions and who have four forms of unity was presented to them.

W Huizinga, Nov/2007

Appendix 3: Questions for Fraternal Relations Committee - Monday, 10 Sept/07

1. Good relations and Communications - we try to understand you, each other, better. Best is - face to face! So I was thankful for the invitation to preach in your church in Seoul. In this way we get to know each other better. It is not just an official and superficial relationship but we get to know each other in the Lord. We want sister relations where we know each other, help each other, and even dare to reprove each other. We expect you to do this for us. We will try to do so with you. Your delegates stayed with us for 1-2 weeks - we like that. We hope to spend time with you.

2. Exchange of official Acts - I have brought Acts of our last synod

along. These are official Acts. We did place Acts on our website and you may use these.

3. Arrangements. We were happy that you appointed Dr Yoo as contact person. We really need someone who can communicate easily in English and who knows our churches, and also one who does not change every year! Also, we can inform you that we have arranged with our sister churches in Canada and The Netherlands that one of us visits each of your annual general assemblies.

4. Decisions of our Synod. FRCA decided to continue sister relations with you. The improved contacts give hope for fruitful relations. We are small - only 13 churches, and not like you - large. So we like to keep our sister relations not too many and to use them well. I would like to quote the decision.

5. Learning about us. We have sister relations with the GKV in The Netherlands, the VGKSA, and the CanRChurches. We have very close relations with the CanRC and support their Theological Seminary in Canada. We also share with them a Book of Praise. Our relations with South Africa and The Netherlands are also good and very meaningful. Many come from South Africa and The Netherlands to us and we go to them. Do you have questions about these sister relations? For example, you have relations with the Dopperkerken in SA while our sisters do not. Can I share some information with you?

6. Learning about you. With whom do you have sister relations?

7. Learning about you. Do you have relations or contacts with churches inside Korea? What about the HapDong churches? What about the IRC?

8. Learning about you. Can you tell something about the set up of your church federation - divided into presbyteries, etc?

9. Learning about you. Can you tell something about the normal weekly life of your churches and church members?

10. Sharing with you and Learning about you. We would like to share and learn. Our teaching ministry is very important. Parents teach their children at home - Bible reading and speaking about the faith. Parents take their children to church to hear sermons which preach the Word of God as we confess it in the Heidelberg Catechism. Parents send their children to church to be instructed in the doctrines of O+NT - lessons from the Heidelberg Catechism. They memorise the Heidelberg Catechism and proof texts and they do exercises.

Parents also send their children to our own christian schools so that all learning is godly and based on the Bible. So we prize the teaching ministry at home, at school and in church. Do you teach your children at home the doctrines of the OT+NT as promised by parents at baptism? Do the parents take their children to church to have the church instruct them in the teachings of the O+NT.

11. Sharing with you and learning from you. We have the TFU and the Church Order of Dordt. We love our confessions. On Sundays we use the Heidelberg Catechism to take us through the teachings of the Bible. For we like to do what Paul did - teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). We read the Bible and then use the catechism to guide us through the Scriptures to teach us the whole plan of God for our salvation. During the week the children at catechism classes memorise the catechism. So we love and use our confessions. How does that work in your churches? May I also ask if you ever thought of adopting and using the Heidelberg Catechism for teaching in the churches?

12. Sharing with you and learning from you. We use the Church Order of Dordt. This means we have ministers, elders and deacons. The ministers and elders form the consistory. For some things the deacons are added to avoid hierarchy. We have equality among the leaders. That means I cannot claim seniority though I am the oldest serving minister! In the consistory I have just one vote just like the other leaders - elders and deacons. The elders make many visits to the members, also for discipline. The deacons promote the work of mercy. How does this work in your churches?

13. Sharing with you and learning from you. We use the Book of Praise. This means we use the 150 Psalms and a number of hymns. The psalms have Genevan tunes, introduced by John Calvin. We use organs and pianos in the church services. How is the worship of God organised in your churches.

W Huizinga

D. South Africa - Report from Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches

1. Mandate

Decision of Synod West Kelmscott 2006

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.

2. Activities of Deputies

1. Deputies organized an information evening on South Africa for the churches in the Perth metropolitan area. Rev M Retief, who was delegated to Synod West Kelmscott 2006 on behalf of our South African sister churches, did a presentation which was held in Armadale in November 2006.
2. We received an invitation to Synod Capetown of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa commencing 12 May 2008. Br B Veenendaal attended and passed on greetings from our churches in an address (see Appendix A) to their synod.
3. A report on the visit to Synod Capetown 2008 was tabled for deputies and also published in the Una Sancta. See Appendix B for the report. Synod acts have not yet been published or received.
4. We received an urgent request on 17th June 2008 from the South African Deputies for Needy Churches via their Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad requesting the Australian churches to support the church at Bethal for capital funding for a home for a minister whom they desire to call (have made the decision in principle subject to obtaining appropriate funding). In line with our obligations towards our sister churches, as deputies we are coordinating this and have sent a letter to the churches requesting their willingness and

capacity to support this. The responses of the churches are being collated and a response will be sent to South African deputies in December 2008.

5. The letter from South Africa referred to above indicates the likelihood in the future for similar requests. In order to be able to handle such requests in a more timely manner, it is important that deputies' responsibilities are clearly outlined. In our discussion as to how to handle requests for assistance, it was considered that the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad are the best-placed (not Deputies for Needy Churches since they are at Classis level) to respond to such requests. They can then involve other deputies and/or the churches, as appropriate, in order to be able to address the request.
6. Given that there are many South Africans immigrating to Australia, and given that many have joined our churches in recent years, deputies considered how we can better "advertise" the existence of our churches to them. We have approached South African deputies, both for Relations with Sister Churches as well as for Relations with Churches within South Africa for advice on how best to pursue this in South Africa.
7. Deputies are aware of other joint initiatives between South Africa and Australian churches, particularly that of the South Africa Support Committee (appointed under the Church at Kelmscott) supporting the national reformation work in South Africa, and the Bethal Headmaster Support Committee, an adhoc committee supporting the school in Bethal. Sadly, the latter effort has been disbanded due to the school closing down in Bethal.

3. Recommendations to Synod Legana 2009

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 (2011).
3. To mandate deputies to coordinate responses to any requests received, and to involve the churches and/or other deputies as appropriate.

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.
- c. Our South African sister churches are receiving our support and will continue to do so in the future. Requests for support need to be responded to and coordinated in a timely manner.

Appendix 1: Address to Synod Capetown 2008

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is indeed a privilege to once again be here in your midst in response to the invitation to your synod. What a rich opportunity to be able to share in the meeting of your churches where together you speak about God's church-gathering work in this part of the world. It is beautiful to be here in the Cape, a gem in South Africa, and a wonderful part of God's creation.

I bring along the greetings of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to your synod and churches. Three years ago I had the privilege of attending your synod of Pretoria-Maranata and almost two years ago Rev Retief could attend our synod West Kelmescott. Both of our synods in their respective decisions recognised the fact that God continues his church-gathering work through us, His covenant people, and that we can support each other, learn from each other and encourage each other. For that we may be thankful to our Heavenly Father, that He continues His work, including here in South Africa.

In preparing to come here, I did a Google search of "Capetown, South Africa" and the first two items appearing at the top of the page were of keen interest! The second item was to do with my interests for my daily work - a Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium to be held in Capetown in 2009. This is to do with using imagery from satellites, airplanes and on the ground to map and manage places like Capetown – and you certainly have much to be proud of here from Table Mountain to the beautiful white sandy coastline along the Cape. Capetown is well and truly on the map! That was the *second* item.

Now would you believe, the *first* item was labelled "Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk.. - Reformed Churches of South Africa.. " and linked to the brief report of your synod Bethal in the year 2000! So now, I'm really impressed with Google! They know what is important! Mapping the Cape and Free Reformed Synods! When Google gets its search engine updated, I expect to see synods Johannesburg, Pretoria-Maranta, and eventually Capetown up there.

The third link from my Google search gave much information about Capetown, its history, culture, etc. It referred to Capetown as the *mother city* of Africa. The term is also used in 2 Sam 20:19 where Joab assembled against the city of Abel in Beth Maachah in pursuing Sheba who rebelled against David. A woman, on behalf of the citizens, defended the city and referred to it as a "**mother** in Israel". That city was famous for its wisdom. It had a good reputation and it

was a guide and nurse to the towns and region around it. That is what Capetown purports to be, according to this website.

But Capetown has more than the tall expanse of Table Mountain and the glistening sandy beaches of the Cape; it has God's church gathering work in progress and that is evident here at your synod. The Lord uses you as churches and covenant people to be a lampstand in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation to spread His light, His Word. You have the mission posts here at your doorstep – Belhar, Wesbank and Leiden – and also at the doorstep of the churches in Pretoria, namely in Soshunguve, Mamelodi, etc. Your churches also continue to reach out to those in other federations, people who recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd in your churches. And of course, every week from the pulpits, the sheep may hear the rich gospel message of God and His work through Christ Jesus and His Holy Spirit. That is truly what makes a mother city, the city of the church being a guide and nurse to the towns, and townships, and region around it.

And the mother city does not stop with Capetown, or Pretoria, or Johannesburg or Bethal, but continues to the final coming of the new city, the new Jerusalem. In Revelation 21:10 an angel "showed me [John] the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." How awesome that light will be, exceeding even that of the Cape!

As sister churches of yours in Australia, we do recognise the opportunities that you have here, but also the difficulties that you face. It is not easy to live and work in a country which economically, socially and politically is deteriorating and where a lack of security and dangers surround you constantly. We may not understand fully the situation that you encounter, for in Australia we live in relative freedom and safety, and our economy, particularly in Western Australia is booming. We do, however, recognise that God has indeed richly blessed us, materially and spiritually, and that we also have the duty, yes even the privilege, to share with our brothers and sisters overseas. We have done so in various ways, through the support of the National Reformation work (the verontrusten), although that is in abeyance at present, through support of the school at Bethal, and of course also through our prayers in the worship services and individually. Where we are able to be of assistance and support in these and other endeavours, we would like to do so and we openly welcome opportunities for us to share in your work here, spiritually, materially and prayerfully.

At the same time, we recognise also where we have been able to learn and benefit from you as our sisters. We have been blessed with Rev M Retief who has come from your midst and now serves the church at Kelmscott. We also receive a large number of migrants from your churches and other churches here in South Africa who have since joined our churches forming quite a large South African-become-Australian community in our midst. We are seeking ways of making our churches better known among the migrants from South Africa, and so we welcome any suggestions for opportunities to make our light shine. The influx of South African migrants is also a blessing for our churches since we gain first-hand knowledge of the joys and struggles faced by our sisters across the Indian Ocean. Through the families and close contacts between South Africa and Australia, we too have shared in sorrow of the recent murder of a member of your church in Pretoria.

As we continue to learn more about you and understand the joys and struggles you face, we are humbled before God and realise that it is God who is at work in our lives and in leading us in His Grace – all these things that you face have a rich purpose, the foremost of which is God's greater Glory and Honour. We too must be constantly reminded of that fact that all that we have is by Grace alone. The struggle against the attacks of our sinful flesh, the world and Satan are as strong in our post-modern world in Australia as in South Africa.

In Australia, we are now some 13 churches of 4000 persons with the latest addition being Baldavis instituted in July 2007. As of last month, Baldavis now too has a minister of the Word, leaving us with only one vacancy – that of West Albany – for which we can truly be thankful indeed. Among our churches, we continue to support mission work in Lae in Papua New Guinea, Sumba in Indonesia, and in China where we work together with our Canadian brothers and sisters.

Brothers, your synod has a full program and you have much to be busy with. At the same time you have much to be thankful for. May our Heavenly Father give you His guidance and blessings in your deliberations. May God bless your endeavours here and among your churches and may you continue to be a light in this world, being a guide and nurse to your cities, towns and surrounding regions, that together we may look forward to the true mother city, the coming of the New Jerusalem and our Lord Jesus Christ. As we read in Rev 22 (v 14,20,21) *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ..He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am*

coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Thankyou, B Veenendaal

Appendix 2: Report on Synod Capetown 2008

Capetown is a large metropolis of city, suburbs and sprawling townships nestled at the base of Table Mountain on the neck of Cape Peninsula with the Cape of Good Hope at its southern tip. With its location at the far southwest corner of South Africa, it somewhat resembles our Western Australian southwest with moderate climates and seasons similar to ours. The population of Capetown of 3.5 million persons makes it more than double the size of Perth.

Capetown is significant to Australia as a major milestone on the shipping trade route between Europe and Australia in the 16th and subsequent centuries. Whereas the English simply used it as a stopping point, the Dutch began to settle it in the mid 1600s. This, together with the coloured history of the Great Trek and the Boer War has led to a wide-spread reformed background among Afrikaners. Without adding any further detail, the end result is that although there are a range of “reformed” churches, our sister churches, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, are few in number with only one church located in Capetown, namely that located in the Cape flats of the Bellville suburb east of city center. In the nearby surrounding townships are the two main mission posts, Belhar and Wesbank, and also a small group in Leiden.

Commencement of Synod

The church at Capetown was the venue for the 35th synod (this includes quite a number of ad hoc synods in addition to the regular ones, now every 3 years) of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa which took place on 10-14 May 2008. In the prayer service prior to the opening of Synod, Rev Kleyn preached on the text of Acts 2:42 *“And they [the early Christians] continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”* The focus was on what we need to be busy with – holding on to the Word and confessions, the doctrine and teaching of the apostles, fellowship, breaking of bread, expressing their unity, and recognising their source of strength and thankfulness through prayer. It was a fitting start to the commencement of synod. The chosen moderators for synod included Rev Viljoen as chairman, Rev VanAalten as vice-chairman, and Elder DeWit as clerk.

Language

Proceedings of synod was all done in English (as it was for the first time at the previous synod) and the complete official acts of this synod will be published (for the first time) in English. A version will be translated in Afrikaans and made available, but this will be an unofficial version. All deputies reports to synod were submitted in both Afrikaans and English languages. This will continue to be done because of the large number of members in the white churches and coloured mission churches/posts (ie. near Capetown) where Afrikaans is their only language.

Theological training

There are a number of students, mostly from the black and coloured mission churches, that are studying theology, and four of them are in their final year. The churches have set up a Minister Training Structure (MTS) to facilitate the training of Ministers of the Word for both the churches and the mission activities in South Africa. The MTS involves a National Coordinator who is responsible for overall facilitation and management including cooperation with other reformed institutions. Currently this position is held by Rev Breytenbach who is also missionary for the mission church of Belhar in Capetown. The structure also includes Regional Coordinators, Rev Boon (North region eg. Johannesburg, Pretoria etc.) and Rev Breytenbach (South region eg. Capetown). Synod instructed the Curators to further research and investigate the possibilities for developing training programs and to investigate possibilities of work with other reformed institutions (eg. sister church deputies and colleges for theological training) and their materials.

Mission

The churches in South Africa continue to be heavily involved in mission work with it's many and varied activities and expanding work. You may remember that two mission posts have been instituted as churches and are integrated into the sister church bond (including classis and synod activities). These two churches are those of Soshanguve North (Rev Piet Magagula) and Mamelodi (Rev Tobogo Mogale). The existing mission posts in the Pretoria region are Soshanguve Central, Soshanguve South, Soshanguve Southeast and Nellmapius. The latter is a mission post of the church at Mamelodi (with assistance from the church at Pretoria Maranata). Rev Pieter Boon is the missionary in Soshanguve Central and Rev Jerry Mhlanga is the missionary in Soshanguve South. Rev Boersma who previously missionary in this region, was called and accepted the task as missionary again in Soshanguve. He has moved back to South Africa from our sister church, the American Reformed Church at Denver, Colorado. In the Capetown region, there are 3 mission posts as

mentioned above, Belhar, Wesbank and Leiden, with the hope that Belhar will be able to be instituted within a year.

It is a beautiful thing to see the greatly expanding work of mission bear fruit in growing faithful members and the institution of new churches. We can be thankful for the Lord's work in bearing a vibrant and active harvest among especially the black and coloured population in South Africa. The increasing numbers of church institutions brings with it the added burden of an increasing number of financially needy churches arising out of the mission work. Synod has to work out the best process to handover these churches from being the responsibility of mission deputies to the responsibility of deputies for needy churches (CO Art 11). The deputies for needy churches are mandated by synod to organise a national conference within the churches to discuss the growing national needs in the short, medium and long terms. To address the immediate needs, Synod decided to double (per member!) the contributions to the Needy Churches fund. This works out to 200 Rand per member; for the black churches, this is impossible and they contribute what they are able to.

Liturgical Music

Synod wants to work towards a common set of guidelines and criteria for selecting hymns. Various guidelines have been used in the past and were proposed by deputies, but this work needs to be broadened to include, not only Afrikaans hymns, but also Sotho hymns for use (or currently being used) in the Sotho-speaking churches.

Relations with other Churches

Synod decided to continue sister church relations with its three sisters: the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated).

Regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – liberated, synod decided to also call on their own churches in South Africa to remember these sisters in their prayers, and to beseech the Lord that the ecclesiastical divisions that have occurred in The Netherlands will be healed through His grace and blessings.

Also, Synod decided to continue low-key contacts (ie. just exchange some information) and utilise the ICRC for maintaining further contacts with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. In addition, they simply want to keep informed regarding developments in the churches in North America, Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and the Johannesburg Korean Church.

Through the mission work, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa have had contact with other reformed churches on the African mainland. Synod decided to attend synods and strengthen ties with the (and mission contacts where appropriate).

The FRSA will send a delegate to our churches in 2009, but rather than attending at our synod, they propose to send a delegate in October in conjunction with the ICRC meeting in New Zealand in October. This is due to financial constraints.

Relationship with RCSA (Dopperkerk)

Prof Coutzee of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) and a professor at their theological college in Potchefstroom, addressed the FRCSA synod and gave an overview of the Dopperkerk churches and where their relations were at with the FRCSA. The current issues concern women in office, hermeneutics, and relations with Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa and Nederduits Hervormde Kerken in South Africa. In past discussions, the deputies encountered obstacles in that the RCSA deputies were reluctant to formulate their view regarding a confessional basis for church unity and relations with other churches.

Synod mandated deputies to (further) discuss differences regarding women in office and the underlying hermeneutical differences in understanding and applying Scripture, the view on the church and the relationship between local churches and federation of churches, use of the confession in church unity and relationships with other churches. Deputies will draft a document regarding the view on the church and relationships and use that as a basis to further discussions with the RCSA deputies. Deputies will also draft guidelines for the churches in the bond to further their contacts with local churches of the RCSA.

Bible translation

There is a new Afrikaans translation of the Bible being undertaken by the Bible Society of South Africa. Whereas in the past one of the deputies of our sister churches attended this organisation as observer, now this Bible society has invited the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa to send two delegates as full members. Synod decided to take up this offer and also mandated deputies to involve themselves in this development. Some questions were raised especially regarding Bible translations in English for use in English worship services and events when they occur, and more importantly, Sotho translations of the Bible for the Sotho-speaking churches in the bond.

Correspondence with Government

The Synod appoints deputies who are responsible for corresponding with government in matters pertaining to the interests of the country, the preaching of the gospel and where/when the government transgresses God's law. Synod further mandated the deputies to investigate and, if possible, be represented at a Parliamentary Desk which provides the opportunity to give a public testimony or witness to the National Parliament.

Liturgical forms and Church Order

Deputies have made some modifications to the Afrikaans Form for Baptism. The Church Order and Synod Rules are now published in both Afrikaans and English. Deputies are mandated to make the Church Order and Liturgical Forms available in the Sotho language.

The Deputy for a Day of Prayer, being the church at Capetown, called a Day of Prayer for 18 March 2007 in connection with the prevailing drought in parts of the country. Another Day of Prayer is to be held, the Lord willing, on 25 May 2008 in conjunction with the escalating crime as well as the uncertain economic prospects in the country.

Opportunities for supporting our sister churches

A visit to the South African churches makes one stand in awe at God's church gathering work. Considering that in South Africa is a sister bond of churches that is similar in age to our churches, yet the Lord has guided them in a different ways. From the relatively small number of churches (4 churches from largely Dutch background, 1 church from Afrikaner background, and 2 churches from native African background) and small amount of (especially human) resources, there is a huge effort expended towards mission and theological training. This is supported by these churches (with the help of sister churches) where essentially 4 out of 7 churches are needy churches. With the increasing migration out of South Africa, the sizes of the white churches are decreasing and the number and membership of the black/coloured churches is increasing. This is continuing to bring an increasing financial burden on the churches in South Africa.

Our deputies have additionally received requests for financial assistance, and from all accounts, they will continue to need prayerful and financial support. This is an area in which we, as Australian churches, are richly blessed and are able to share and contribute from what God has given us to use in His Service. May our prayers and support go out to our sister churches in South Africa. May God bless the brotherhood and the work being done there!

B Veenendaal

Deputy for Sister Church Relations

E. General Report on the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)

E1. Mandate

Decision

In article 94 the 2006 Acts of Synod West-Kelmscott decided:

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 addressing 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. To 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. To instruct deputies to send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN.

Grounds:

- a. The RCN gives 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.

E2. Report

With respect to the mandate mentioned above, some of the discussions synod asked for were done via letters prior to synod (1) others were done during synod (2), mostly by an active involvement in the discussion at synod floor with respect to two critical issues: the relationship with the NGK and the report M/F in the church.

It should be noted that whilst in The Netherlands, the agenda was fully booked by the deputies of our sister churches; hence there was no time for a separate official meeting to convey some of the concerns expressed by Synod West Kelmscott 2006. Yet these concerns were conveyed in an informal way by speaking with quite a number of the deputies individually. Amongst others, we expressed concerns with respect to the influence of the charismatic movement, 'bevrijdings pastoraat', the inclusion of 'opwekking's liederen', and the impact of modern hermeneutics.

With respect to point 3 of the mandate above, in the official address to synod, we made a strong appeal to continue to reach out to the RNC (res). In response to the unwillingness of the RCN-res to entertain the invitation to discuss matters in a combined meeting of representatives of both churches, Synod Zwolle Zuid decided to acquiesce in this. Meanwhile the appeal of Synod Amersfoort still stands. As it was mentioned by the chairman of Synod Zwolle Zuid, this decision is not meant to say farewell, so to speak. The hurt about so much misunderstanding regarding synod decisions and lack of trust with respect to intentions still remains, as well as the prayer for restoration of the relationship.

Finally, deputies have been busy to stay in touch with the developments in The Netherlands, looking at some of the websites, which express concerns, but also via a meeting with "Gereformeerd Blijven" (see our report). Deputies did not see it as their mandate to look at all kind of local situations. Deputies studied the various reports to synod (3), of which some caused great concern. Yet it should be noted that some of these reports did not receive favour in the eyes of a vast majority of synod members and were therefore not accepted. See Synod decisions (4)

Summarizing, though deputies too have concern regarding certain developments within RCN-lib, we firmly believe that as far as synod decisions are concerned, there is a real desire to listen to the Word of God and to make decisions accordingly. Deputies see as the greatest concern that decisions made by synod are not always upheld by the local churches. There is a measure of independentism growing within those churches. Let us stand next to our sister churches in fighting this battle.

Three examples of 1:

1.1 re Engelsma

1.1.1

On 26 April 2007 deputies received the following letter from BBK.

DEPUTATEN BETREKKINGEN BUITENLANDSE KERKEN
COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE
REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS POSTBUS / P.O. BOX
499 8000 AL ZWOLLE THE NETHERLANDS
(section 4 Asia and Australia)

Secr.: Mrs. H.S. Nederveen-van Veelen
Sterrenweg 3
2651 HZ Berkel & Rodenrijs
The Netherlands

To:

Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Deputies for the relation with other churches
c/o M. Bruning
20 Wallangarra Drive
Bedfordale
Western Australia, 6112
Australië

April 26th 2007

Dear brothers,

As deputies of your sister churches in the Netherlands we would like to formally address an issue with you which increasingly concerns us.

There is an email distribution list current within the FRCA, maintained by br. P. 't Hart, which publishes articles critical of (developments within) our churches. We have no quarrel with that, in principle. If we are sincerely concerned about our neighbour's wrong, then we have a responsibility to correct him, and if necessary warn others of the danger he poses. That principle may be applied also to churches.

However, the Lord's commandment is clear: He requires us to love the truth, to speak and confess it honestly, and to do what we can to defend and promote our neighbour's honour and reputation. We are increasingly concerned that our brother 't Hart is doing the opposite. We have addressed this with him on a number of occasions, with no visible effect.

The most recently distributed article is attached. Please judge for yourselves. In our view, the testimony of Professor Engelsma about the Reformed Churches (Liberated) is painfully and demonstrably false. This begins in the very first paragraphs, where he disqualifies the Reformed truth maintained in the Liberation as a 'covenant doctrine of universal, resistible grace'. The rest of his article is an equally distorted rendition of the facts. He says things which are simply not true. He says other things which are out of context, and therefore deceptive. And he says still other things which only the Lord could know, if they were true. We find this article an ugly, damaging thing, and its distribution an offence. Not only to the church, but also to the Lord of the church.

We think that you, as deputies responsible for relations with our churches, should come to their defence, and with this letter we would like to ask you to

do so. We appreciate that you may have no formal authority with which to exercise influence over the actions of an individual church member. But we think that you may speak with some moral authority, and we ask you to apply it as best you can.

Yours in Christ's service,
for section 4,
Mrs. H.S. Nederveen-van Veelen.

1.1.2

In order to defend the honour and reputation of the Dutch sister churches deputies wrote the following letter to br P 't Hart on 27 September 2007.

Dear brother P 't Hart,

The FRCA deputies for sister church relations have read the article of dr DJ Engelsma *Deepening Darkness over Reformed Netherlands*, which you have sent to your e-mail subscribers. Deputies would like to correct some mistakes and misunderstandings in Engelsma's article, and ask you to distribute their comments to your subscribers. In doing so we defend the honour and reputation of our Dutch sister churches.

With brotherly greetings
on behalf of deputies
AC Breen & Rev A Veldman

Deputies' response to dr DJ Engelsma's article *Deepening Darkness over Reformed Netherlands*

General comments (underlining is from us)

Engelsma:

- "The most precipitous and dramatic falling away from the faith of "The Three Forms of Unity" is that of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* ("*vrijgemaakt*") (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ["liberated"])."
- "The seminary in Kampen promotes the apostacy. ... Professors deny the inspiration of Scripture."
- "Heretical synods, like heretical preachers, throw a smoke screen over their false teaching in order to deceive the people."
- "Sovereign also over the apostasy of the churches, God is realizing the apostasy of the Dutch churches. In His awful providence, He sends the churches strong delusion, that they should believe the lie and be damned (sic)."

Deputies:

The FRCA, together in Synod West-Kelmscott 2006, have spoken differently. Synod decided:

"To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations" (Acts, p 64).

The first ground for this decision was:

"The RCN give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order" (Acts, p 65).

Synod's decision came after thorough examination of the Dutch sister churches. A substantial part of the Acts deals with them (more than 200 pages).

Specific comments (underlining is from us)

Engelsma:

- o "According to this [Dutch] synodical decision, Sunday observance is merely a good practice of the New Testament church."
- o "In response to the alarm of the people over the [Dutch] synodical decision nullifying the fourth commandment,"

Deputies:

This is not what the FRCA, together in Synod West-Kelmscott 2006, have said about the Dutch synodical decisions. Synod decided

"To accept Amersfoort's decision as largely allaying our concerns" (Acts, p 60)

One of the grounds reads:

"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" (Acts, p 60/1).

Engelsma:

- o "Another synod of these churches [RCN] has recently decided to approve membership in the churches of those who divorce for any reason, and remarry."

Deputies:

Deputies want you to pay attention to what the FRCA, together in Synod West-Kelmscott 2006, have decided about the RCN decision in relation to divorce and remarriage. Although Synod regretted that Amersfoort didn't give explicit guidance regarding the danger of moving in a direction that allows divorce for reasons beyond adultery and willful desertion, Synod decided first: "To express thankfulness that our Dutch sister churches could take a strong Scriptural stance regarding God's teachings against divorce and remarriage" (Acts, p 61).

The first ground for this decision reads:

"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" (Acts, p 61).

Engelsma:

- o "It was the conditional covenant theology of these churches [RCN], ..."
- o "In former years, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") ... always excepting their covenant doctrine of universal, resistible grace in the generations of believers."

Deputies:

Deputies want to highlight that the RCN and the FRCA do not have a "conditional covenant theology".

First of all they have no covenant *theology*, but confess the covenant on the basis of Scripture and Confessions.

Second, they do not embrace a *conditional* covenant theology, but confess that God comes to His covenant people with the promise of blessing in Christ, and the obligation to believe in Christ.

The RCN and the FRCA never have explained the "obligation to believe" as a condition we have to fulfill in order to merit the "promise of blessing". Neither have these churches ever explained the promise as a *universal* offer of grace which can be resisted or accepted, as if the reality of the covenant would depend on our acceptance.

These churches always have defended *unconditional* election over against conditional election, and *invincible* grace over against resistible grace.

Especially after the Liberation-1944 the RCN and the FRCA have made clear that God's promise does not come without the obligation, and that the fulfillment of the promise is not *because* of our faith, but not *without* our faith either.

According to Engelsma God's covenant is established with the elect. The RCN and the FRCA confess that God has established His covenant of grace with the believers and their seed.

In conclusion

It doesn't mean that we have no concerns about the developments within the Netherlands, but Synod decided to continue sister relations with the RCN since they give evidence of continuing faithfulness to Scripture, Confessions and Church Order. Let's defend the honour and reputation of our sister churches.

1.1.3

On 23 November 2007 br P 't Hart wrote back to the deputies saying that he saw nothing be gained by distributing the comments of the deputies.

1.2 re Harinck

1.2.1

In relation to the commotion as a result of an interview with prof dr G Harinck this is what Rev J Plug sent to deputies on 11 Feb 2008.

Statement

On January 26th 2008 part of a radio interview with prof. dr. G. Harinck appeared in the Nederlands Dagblad. In the paper of February 5th he placed a further clarification under the rubric *Vrijplaats*.

Dr. Harinck is on staff at the Theological University (TU) at Kampen. He is not a professor of the churches, but has tenure as specialist professor in a chair governed by the deputies responsible for the Centre for Archives and Documentation. That is the nature of his association with the TU, aimed particularly at academic research and coaching of those pursuing higher degrees.

Personal

During the three-hour radio interview which the journalist Peter Bergwerff conducted with him, in which his historical, literary and cultural views are reviewed, the journalist also broached dr. Harinck's personal faith life. His response was very open, revealing in its candour. Certain passages, in particular from this part of the interview, which appeared in the newspaper, raised question in the days after their publication.

In this part of the interview dr. Harinck does not develop an ecclesiastical program of action. Nor is it a theological discussion being carried on. Dr. Harinck is speaking of his personal experience of faith and how he, as human, feels about things.

Even taking into account that in an interview answers are improvised, there was occasion enough in what was said to raise questions. Indeed, that happened, publicly as well as in the circle of those closely concerned with the academic chair of dr. Harinck. In the first place, this involved the rector of the TU and the supervising board of the special chair. Next, the supervising board of the TU and the deputies for Archives and Documentation were involved. Also the article of February 5th did not sufficiently answer all questions. On Wednesday, February 6th, a conversation took place between all those responsible for the chair and dr. Harinck. It was a frank discussion about the questions raised, in the hope that they might be adequately answered.

The questions concerned various themes, centering on dr. Harinck's statements about the person and work of Christ, his approach to Scripture in matters such as homosexuality and women in office, and participation in the mass. In order to do justice to dr. Harinck, we summarize what he said about these things.

Christ

In the discussion about the significance of Christ's sacrifice and its place in our faith and confession, dr. Harinck declares that he wholeheartedly and without any reservation shares the faith that Jesus Christ died for our sins. That He in Person is the one in whom God has revealed Himself fully, and that the Scripture speak of Him. In the interview, dr. Harinck expresses how he experiences the gospel in daily practice. Even if the gospel is concentrated on the cross – and it is – that does not mean that in the everyday practical life of faith our relation to God may often also be coloured by many other things: seeking support with the God of the Psalms, seeking wisdom from your heavenly Father, choosing for life and against death (Deut 30). In examining his faith as reflected in daily practice, it is largely aimed at God the Father. He truly sees in the cross on which Christ hung God's punishment, borne by Christ in our place. But he does not think of himself as hanging on a cross.

Bible

In the discussion about handling Scripture and the way Christians of Reformed confession use the Bible, dr. Harinck declares that he definitely recognises the normative character of God's Word and the authoritative applicability of specific texts. This applies to the life of faith with the Lord as well as theological and ethical reflection. His remarks about the Bible texts respecting women are not meant as a personal hermeneutic, but as a reproduction of his personal stance in this matter. His view on 'women and office' developed at an earlier stage in his life on the basis of Scripture. It goes without saying that this is more than contained in the one text he cited in the interview. What he intended was to say that he personally feels no need

to again go through the same discussions with the repetition of largely the same arguments. Though he has his own view, he accepts that in the churches to which he belongs, women cannot be office bearers. With respect to male friendships which he said were 'fine by him', he declares that he meant relations of friendship, and not relations comparable to those of husband and wife. On that issue the Bible is clear, also according to dr. Harinck, in disapproving homosexual conduct.

Roman mass

In the discussion about 'taking part' in the mass, dr. Harinck declares that with this he does not mean partaking in what is called communion, but being present in a Roman church service. 'If it so happens', he added in the interview, and with that he meant a situation in which visiting another worship service is not possible.

On the part of the university the interview was initially read quite differently than dr. Harinck has now explained. And they were not the only ones to do so. Some reactions were correspondingly severe and strong. Under pressure of those dr. Harinck issued his clarification in the paper of February 5th.

On the next day a conversation took place in Kampen in which we addressed each other both pointedly and brotherly. By speaking our minds unreservedly, we found each other in our love for the Word of our Lord and for the churches. In this setting dr. Harinck recognised that un-careful formulations and inadequate sense of church context led to misunderstandings concerning his views. This he is sorry about, and this had not been his aim.

Trust

Together we realise that we are now in a situation which places high demands on trust and confidence in the churches. It concerns important issues, which have caused damage to the name of our Lord and of our churches. As well as those of the university and of dr. Harinck.

We have expressly assured each other that together we wish to continue on in subjection to the Word of God and bound by the Reformed confessions. This renewed commitment to Scripture and confession we wish explicitly to relay to the churches. On both sides there is much homework to be done. We have noted that the sense of community in Kampen needs to be strengthened. We hope that we, having learned from the intensive process of the past weeks, will carry on together with greater unanimity in our concrete tasks for church and society. Of that intention we have explicitly assured each other. And that we also do towards the churches. We ask them to grant us their trust. And also their support in prayer and upbuilding words. May our good God help us in this through his Spirit.

G. Harinck

Governing Board TU, P. Niemeijer
Deputies Archives and Documentation, J. Messelink
Board of Supervision, academic chair ADC, E.A. de Boer
Rector TU, C.J. de Ruijter

1.2.2

The deputies brs AC Breen and Rev A Veldman brought the following to the attention of BBK deputy Rev J Plug, and they

promised to express their disappointment in the address to Synod Zwolle-Zuid.

Just read, it doesn't say what it says.

It's clear from their responses to the interview with Dr Harinck, that some found him courageous, in saying out loud what others might be thinking, but don't dare to say aloud. It is our conviction that it would have been courageous to openly retract these controversial statements. Let's not beat around the bush. This is what he said:

1. "Of course, within my circle, homosexuality is a controversial matter, but I really don't have a negative attitude towards it. I'm not going to get caught up in discussions about Scriptural prohibition and suchlike."

According to Harinck's further explanation, he was talking about relations of friendship. But there has never been "Scriptural prohibition and suchlike" in relation to friendship. This explanation is unsatisfactory. However, we are thankful that Harinck now states that Scripture clearly denounces homosexual acts.

2. "The question, whether or not women are permitted in the office cannot simply be answered with the Bible in your hand (...) We should have had women in office yesterday, already."

According to Harinck's further explanation, these comments were not meant as some kind of 'personal hermeneutic', but to express where he personally stands on this matter. But is it possible, in your personal life, to come to different conclusions from those which we, on the basis of Scripture, have come to? This explanation, also, is unsatisfactory. However, we are thankful that Harinck now states that in the churches to which he belongs, woman may not serve as office-bearers.

3. "For that matter, I have great regard for the Roman Catholic Church. And I have no great problem with it if Reformed people, if the occasion leads to it, should take part in a mass (...) Yes, I suppose some people would be startled at the thought of a Liberated professor taking part in a mass."

According to Harinck's further explanation, he wasn't referring to "taking communion", but to attending a Roman Catholic church service. But everyone understands that attending a church service is not the same as taking part in a mass. This explanation, also, is unsatisfactory.

4. "It's not that I want to cross off Jesus Christ, of course not. But when I think of God, I especially think of Him as my Father. Of course, I believe that Jesus Christ is also God. He isn't just a man, and I believe all those Reformed things about Him too."

According to Harinck's further explanation, he has put into words how he personally experiences the Gospel in day-to-day life. But that does not justify the manner in which he speaks about Jesus Christ as God. We do not believe "Reformed things about Him". This explanation, also, is unsatisfactory. However, we are thankful that Harinck states that he does see, in the cross on which Christ hung, God's punishment which Christ bore in our place.

The worst may well be over now, but confidence in Dr Harinck as a Reformed professor has been seriously damaged. In addition, he is now 'damaged goods', both for those who supported his controversial statements, as well as for those who opposed them. Those who appreciated what he brought forward, who may even have seen it as a "breath of fresh air", will be disappointed that he didn't mean what they thought he meant. And those who were outraged by his comments, will of course be no less disappointed, since he hasn't retracted any of them.

Sadly, we are now expected to be content with a "just read, it doesn't say what it says". We are not content with that.

AC Breen
Rev. A Veldman

1.2.3

On 16 May 2008 Synod referred to the Statement of dr G. Harinck, the Governing Board TU, P. Niemeijer, the Deputies Archives and Documentation, J. Messelink, the Board of Supervision, academic chair ADC, E.A. de Boer, and the Rector TU, C.J. de Ruijter. In this Statement dr. Harinck acknowledged that his inaccurate formulations and lack of understanding of the ecclesial context have caused misunderstanding about his opinions. He regrets this and he never has intended it. Synod decided that it is not correct to come back on comments made before this statement. Synod said further that the statement points correctly to the personal setting of the challenged interview in which dr Harinck did not develop a church action plan, but spoke in a vulnerable way about his personal belief by which reformed convictions unfortunately could become discredited.

1.3 re dialogue RCN – RCN^r

When we urged the RCN to engage in meaningful dialogue with the RCN^r the RCN deputies made clear to us how difficult this is as long as the RCN^r do not accept RCN's offer to discuss the things which caused their separation. Synod Amersfoort had sent an appeal to the RCN^r which they rejected. In relation to the letter of refusal as a response to Synod Amersfoort's appeal, Synod Zwolle-Zuid decided to acquiesce in the refusal of the RCN^r to talk. Synod also said that this was not a goodbye since it maintains Synod Amersfoort's appeal.

Two examples of 2, in combination with 3:

2.1 re NGK

Regarding the Dutch deputies' *Interim Statement* on discussions with the NGK on confessional subscription the Dutch deputies

were divided. The majority no longer sees the matter of confessional subscription as a hindrance on the road to ecclesiastical unity. The minority, however, states in their report that the *Interim Statement* does not indicate that, with respect to the concrete issue of confessional subscription there is a real change with the NGK. Especially their national decision to open the special offices for women makes this clear. Also the FRCA made use of the opportunity to participate in Synod's discussions in an advisory way. See Appendix: General Report on the visit to the GKV.

2.2 re women in office

Dutch deputies suggested two things: 1) to invest in thorough study of Scripture, even if quick answers will not be gained that way; 2) to try take a number of short term (temporary) practical decisions. Also regarding this topic the FRCA made use of the opportunity to participate in Synod's discussions in an advisory way. See Appendix: General Report on the visit tot the GKV.

Examples of 4:

3.1 Synod Zwolle-Zuid: decisions:

3.1.1

Synod decided to accept with sadness that the discussions with the NGK have not taken away all the objections in relation to their decision to open the special church offices to women.

Synod decided further to mandate deputies *Kerkelijke Eenheid* to continue investigating ("verkennende") discussions with the NGK about the binding to the Confessions and the women in office.

The RCN have just started with the exploratory phase of the study course about *M/F in the church*. The NGK have already decided to open the special church offices to women. At the moment this is a barrier to make a decision to intensify the discussions aimed at unity. With this Synod followed the main thought of the minority report.

3.1.2

Regarding an appeal in relation to the pastoral work with homosexual inclined brothers and sisters Synod declared:

Starting point for Synod is that sexual intercourse between people of the same sex is unacceptable in the light of God's law of love.

The consistory concerned should reject a situation in which homosexually inclined brothers and sisters with an affective relationship and promising to abstain from sexual intercourse live together.

3.1.3

The late Rev M Nap has asked Synod for further instruction in relation to Reformed hermeneutics from the Theological University Kampen.

Synod decided to note his letter with thankfulness, to agree to the desire to study further on hermeneutics, but not to mandate the TUK with it since the TUK already acknowledge this to be its task.

3.1.4

Synod adopted another 69 hymns from the *Liedboek voor de kerken* plus 18 hymns from their own midst.

According to the 'Direction 2002' that's enough. No more *Opwekkings-liederen*.

3.1.5

In relation to the letter of the RCNr as a response to Synod Amersfoort's appeal, Synod decided to acquiesce in the refusal of the RCNr to talk. This is not a goodbye since Synod maintains Amersfoort's appeal.

3.1.6

Synod decided to mandate deputies *M/F in the church* to stimulate thinking within the churches about the role of men and women in the church – the TUK will receive money for special theological investigation – and to investigate within which frameworks men *and* women may serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks.

3.1.7

Synod defeated the recommendation of the majority of deputies *Kerkelijke Eenheid* who had asked for the possibility of a local *eenheidsgemeente* (cooperation) of GKV, NGK and CGK. Synod declared not to create a local merger while there is no national unity. Members of *samenwerkings-gemeenten* (amalgamation) stay at their own bond of churches.

Examples of 5c:

Investigating and Monitoring. Synod 2006 gave deputies a mandate to monitor certain developments in our Dutch sister churches (art 94 I.3 on the Fourth Commandment and III.4 on the new hymns and V.2 on contacts with NGK).

4.1 Some monitoring has been reported. Deputies spoke with their Dutch counterparts, spoke personally with them, spoke with concerned ministers of *Gereformeerd Blijven*, read websites and church magazines and publications. With respect to contacts with the NGK there was much interaction.

4.2 Above it was said that deputies did not involve themselves in issues of local churches. Deputies should only deal with issues reaching the general synods. On the local level and in the minor assemblies the churches in The Netherlands should deal with the decisions of the general synods. It may be true that there are issues on the local scene, as it may be true in the FRCA, but this is for their minor assemblies to deal with. Deputies should not start reporting on these issues.

4.3 With respect to the new hymns, this issue was addressed and is reported on again.

E3. Overall recommendations concerning the RCN

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 regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.
3. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing tensions within these churches.
4. To beseech the Lord by his grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions that occurred until the recent past.
5. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Discuss with the RCN deputies BBK:
 - i. The concerns expressed in the Report of Rev M Nap of which Synod has pronounced to agree with the desire of further hermeneutic study
 - ii. The way deputies *M/F in the church* formulate and discuss with the RCN the framework in which

men and women serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks

- iii. The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns
 - iv. The recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity.
 - v. How the RCN can work towards reconciliation with the RCNr on the basis of truth, love and humility.
- b. Send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN
 - c. Report to the next Synod.

Grounds:

- a. Although there are worrying tendencies within the RCN which come up in the Dutch press, concerned internet sites and deputies' reports, it appears evident from the Synod's decisions that the RCN remains faithful 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 have been given opportunity to participate in Synod's discussions in an advisory way. This is in the spirit of the rules for sister relations to which both our church bonds have committed themselves.
- c. In view of the intensive nature of contacts, it is important that the sister relationship is supported by attending each other's Synod. We have the mutual task to encourage, comfort and guard each other by the truth of God's Word.
- d. The FRCA acknowledge the RCNr's desire to be Reformed, but are of the opinion that the separation from the RCN was unlawful (see further Report on RCNr).

E4. Overall recommendations concerning the RCN (Minority Recommendations)

- 1. To continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted rules for sister relations, and using these relations to express concerns (as indicated in Decision 5 below).
- 2. To express our thankfulness to the RCN regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.

3. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing tensions within these churches.
4. To beseech the Lord by his grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions that occurred in the recent past.
5. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Discuss with the RCN deputies BBK:
 - i. The concerns expressed in the Report of Rev M Nap of which Synod has pronounced to agree with the desire of further hermeneutic study,
 - ii. The way deputies *M/F in the church* formulate and discuss within the RCN the framework in which men and women serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks,
 - iii. The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns
 - iv. Our concerns regarding the RCN decisions on Divorce and Remarriage (refer Art 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006),
 - v. Our concerns regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel (refer Art 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006),
 - vi. The view of the RCN towards recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity,
 - vii. The RCN dealings with view on hermeneutics, work of the Holy Spirit and the application of church discipline (refer Art 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006), and
 - viii. How the RCN can work towards reconciliation with the RCNr on the basis of truth, love and humility.
 - b. Monitor the application of the RCN decision regarding the Fourth Commandment and Sunday (refer Art 94, Acts Synod West Kelmscott 2006).
 - c. Provide a discussion paper on the RCN dealings with views on hermeneutics to assist deputies and synods in their discussions as per 5a (eg. (i) and (vii)) above.
 - d. Send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN and provide a synopsis of synod decisions for the benefit of our Australian churches.
 - e. Report to the next Synod.

Grounds:

- e. The RCN desires to remain faithful to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order, but there are worrying tendencies within the RCN which come up in the Dutch press, concerned Internet sites and deputies' reports.
- f. Our deputies have been able to correspond with Dutch deputies in a good and brotherly way and have been given opportunity to participate in Synod's discussions in an advisory way. This is in the spirit of the rules for sister relations to which both our church bonds have committed themselves.
- g. Deputies did not complete their mandate from Synod West Kelmescott 2006.
- h. In view of the intensive nature of contacts, it is important that the sister relationship is supported by attending each other's synods. We have the mutual task to encourage, comfort and guard each other by the truth of God's Word.
- i. The FRCA acknowledge the RCN's desire to be Reformed, and need to encourage the RCN to discuss the issues (and struggles) of concern in humility and love.

E5. Comments from the body of deputies on minority recommendations

The whole deputyship discussed the above, alternative recommendations put forward by two deputies. If one reads carefully, one notes that this alternative set of recommendations goes in a completely different direction. It is clear that this extended set of recommendations also wants to go further than the main set of recommendations. As this set of recommendations works within the mandate given to deputies, it was unanimously decided to pass it along to synod. However, those four deputies who could not agree with it make the following comments:

- 1. The ground for continuing sister relations with the RCN is quite different. Instead of stating that there is evidence of continuing faithfulness it now states that the RCN *desires to remain faithful*. Also, it immediately turns negative by saying, *but there are worrying tendencies within the RCN which come up in the Dutch press, concerned Internet sites and deputies' reports*. This is unusual in the way we decide to continue sister relations and in the way we give grounds for it. Basically, not too much has changed since

last time, and yet this recommendation with grounds becomes very negative.

2. 5.a.v refers to our previous decision re the sacraments as administered to the military in war zones and other isolated military places. This item received ample attention during the last deputyship (see 2006 Acts, pp 352-354). In fact the Dutch deputies at that time directed us to the deputyship responsible for this matter. Rev P Niemeyer (pastor at DenHelder where there is a naval base, and where numbers of church members are in the military) fielded further questions at our last synod and then he also answered many queries, including our concerns, in writing in *Nader Bekeken*. His points were that the decision was not outside or against the Church Order. As on a mission field, they used the principles of the Church Order, and fight against interdenominationalism. Deputies read this. They also discussed this item with the Dutch deputies. The answer from the latter was that they carry out synodical decisions but do not make them. All they could do was repeat the decision and state that they could not go further. Thus nothing further is put in the main report. But it is not right to say that this mandate was not carried out and needs repetition.
3. Re 5.a.vi. This received ample attention at the visit to their 2008 GS and contradicts the positive outcome at the GS Zwolle. Please read the report. This point is vague, broad and unclear, and thus impractical.
4. Re 5.b. Monitoring has become a headache for deputies. One needs to allow a church bond time to work with decisions of a GS. Church visitors ask consistories if they keep to synodical decisions; classis have supervision of churches in their district. If churches do not abide by these decisions, then it is up to the church-bond to address these. It is not the task of deputies to monitor local developments. Deputies have had discussions with their Dutch counterparts, and kept their ears and eyes open (see main report), and will continue to do so, but this is all that can be done. To repeat this mandate will only lead to more frustration for all concerned.
5. Re 5.c. This point is adequately covered by 5.a.1. Why do this work all over? General topics about hermeneutics should come up for discussion only when concrete issues are discussed, as has happened (see main report).

F. Report on the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – restored (RCNr)

F1. Mandate:

1. To request deputies to investigate further whether or not the decision to 'liberate' was lawful.
2. to maintain official contact with the RCNr in order to work for reconciliation with RCN.

F2. Re 1:

Ground a for the above decisions read, *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.* Since this report to our 2006 Synod is extensive, we do not reprint it. We refer synod to this document in the 2006 Acts, pp.310-365 or to our FRCA website under deputy reports to the 2006 Synod.

For further investigation deputies FRCA have used the previous documents referred to above as well as to two other documents:

- a. the Letter, dd 4 Feb 2005, of the RCNr's deputies for contacts with churches abroad to the FRCA, in which the RCNr give proof of the legitimacy of their liberation
- b. the booklet *Do not take words away from this book of prophecy* in which the RCNr defend their liberation.

Deputies have focused on the Letter since this was written as a proof of the legitimacy of their liberation in 2003. In this Letter the RCNr asked the FRCA for continued sister relation. The booklet defends the legitimacy of their liberation and maintains the same view on the topics dealt with in their Letter. In this report deputies respond to that Letter and to one of the new items in the booklet.

RCNr Letter, 4 Feb 2005	RCNr booklet, Sept 2006
1. Fourth Commandment	6.1 Sunday
2a. Eccl unity with CGK + NGK	6.5 Eccl unity with the Chr Ref Churches
2b. Bible criticism	6.4 Liberal criticism of the Scriptures
2c. Liedboek songs	6.3 Liturgy + Liedboek
4. 7 th Comm + new Marriage Form	6.2 Marriage and Divorce
5. Unity with PCEA	-----
6. Lord's Supper + the army	6.6 Lord's Supper
7. Blessing by a non elder	-----

F3. Response to the RCNr's grounds for the new liberation

1. Fourth Commandment

To say that GS Zuidhorn 2002 has allowed the opinion that Sunday rest is merely a good human institution is not true.

In Ground 4 Leusden 1999 regrets that Rev Ophoff's sermon has lead 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 (J Douma, *The Ten Commandments*, 1992)."

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'. Why is it not to be condemned? Because it is correct? Synod didn't say that! It is not condemnable because in the past leaders such as Luther, Calvin and Gomarus who denied that our Sunday rest flows *directly* from the 4th Commandment were not condemned for holding that view. 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 deputyship *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. So, room was still left to interact with Synod's decisions.

Leusden was right when it pronounced that within the Reformed churches in the Netherlands there has always been room to think differently about the *Scriptural* foundation:

Sunday as day of rest is based on a direct Divine command, which means Sunday is NT Sabbath, OR, Sunday as day of rest is founded upon the responsible choice of Christ's church based on Scriptures. But you can ask further: is our Sunday directly related to the OT Sabbath, which as *sabpattu* referred to the day of full moon, the day of Passover, OR, is our Sunday directly related to the fulfilment of Passover, namely Christ's resurrection? That means: do we celebrate the OT Sabbath today on Sunday, OR, do we celebrate Sunday as the NT fulfilment of the OT Sabbath? In other words: do we copy the OT worship and rest, OR, do we celebrate worship and rest in Christ?

The RCN could at least have waited for GS Amersfoort which had to deal with the answers to these questions which we can find in the deputies' report *HEERlijke dag*.

2. Ecclesiastical unity and biblical criticism

To say that GS Zuidhorn has allowed tolerance towards heresies is not true.

There are differences between the CGK and RCN in dealing with publications which raise questions about the authority of Scripture. The Letter refers to the discussions around prof Oosterhoff at the Dutch Synod of Arnhem 1981. However, the CGK have solved the problem, be it "behind closed doors". The letter also referred to dr Loonstra. However, the CGK have never accepted the publications of dr Loonstra. Neither did the RCN. Drs DeBruyne, in his articles in *Woord op schrift*, rejected Loonstra's ideas after a thorough (also eminent) investigation.

That DeBruijne alters the function of the commandments of the Lord into guidelines and examples rather than regarding them as literal norms is not true. What he says is that when there is no direct commandment of God which we can use in a certain situation, then don't say that we stand with empty hands. There are a lot of guidelines, and even from historical events we can derive rules for our behaviour. And don't forget the importance of the congregation in following Christ. Why not mention all the articles of DeBruijne in *De Reformatie* and *Nader Bekeken* in which he clarified his intents and thoughts and even corrected some, instead of only stating an unsubstantiated criticism?

Synod Zuidhorn said that with regard to the way CGK deal with publications which touch the authority of Scripture the Committee for Ecclesiastical Unity should discuss this further with the CGK's Committee. Deputies of the CGK have told the deputies of the RCN that their GS did not make legal statements about dr Loonstra, although implicitly they did so. What the RCN say in their *Call*, namely that in the CGK critical views of the Scriptures in publications of ministers have been left as they are for more than 25 years is not true. Neither what they say in their *Act of liberation*, namely that liberal criticism of the Bible is accepted in the RCN via decisions regarding unity with the CGK.

Regarding the NGK, Zuidhorn couldn't decide to cooperation, because of their view related to the binding to the Confessions. It's not for nothing that the FRCA deputies finished their speech to Synod Amersfoort with severe rejection of the last NGK decision regarding women in the special office. [And the have continued to do so in Zwolle-Zuid, 2008].

3. Liedbook songs

If hymns for children are Scriptural then we may not condemn them as "childish" and refuse them to sing in church to which children belong. If the church is not for an elite number of intelligent adults, then Scriptural hymns for children ought to have a place in the worship service.

For the rest we feel sympathy for the RCN's heartfelt cry against the Liedboek. That's why this item was in our deputies' Responses, written Address and speech in Amersfoort-Centrum 2005! But we also said that there should be freedom in liturgical matters as long as all the liturgical elements in the worship services are grouped around and are not disturbing the four main elements: God's Word (reading and preaching); the two sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper); calling upon the LORD (prayers and praises); charity (offertory).

A number of GSs of the RCN were busy with Liturgy, and also Amersfoort has dealt with it. What is said in the *Act of liberation* (2003) that "everyone does as he sees fit" is not true.

That dr K Deddens would have said in 1973/4 in *De Reformatie* that “the Liedboek songs” could not be accepted for use in worship services is not true. On the basis of an analysis of a limited number of hymns he came to a dismissive judgement of the Liedboek which at that time only could be used in the RCN if they would have adopted the *whole* Liedboek. The editors of that Liedboek didn’t give permission to make a *selection* at that time. Today the RCN can select what they want.

4. Seventh Commandment and Marriage Form

To say that Zuidhorn *continued* with deputies’ report is not true. Zuidhorn did not accept the report and asked deputies to come with an abridged accessible version *in which all the critical comments at synod are incorporated* (art 41).

To the second version FRCA deputies have responded. One can find their comments back in the third edition of the Dutch deputies’ report. FRCA deputies still had criticism which they openly brought forward to Amersfoort in their written Address! At least the RCN^r could have waited for Amersfoort. Main point is that we should not *add* permissible reasons to divorce to the Bible, but that we should *apply* what is revealed in the Bible.

Regarding the new marriage form. The word “onderdanig” (submission) already was replaced in the 80’s when the RCN revised their forms. It’s not true that the new form says that the bridegroom should precede instead of lead. The form says: “Bruidegom, ga haar voor in een leven met de Here.” The Dutch word “voorgaan” here means *take the lead*, which is not the same as to precede.

Let’s stick to what we said to deputies in our report in line with Canada, namely that the new form strengthens the Biblical teaching about marriage, for example, in explaining what true, Christ-like headship is.

5. Unity with PCEA

To say that the FRCA in 2004 were of the conviction that a sister relationship with PCEA cannot be established is not true. In spite of the impediments for sister unity at that time GS Rockingham *also* said that the FRCA make a sincere effort to re-engage the PCEA in effective discussions *on the*

basis of the assurance that the FRCA believe the PCEA to be true church of our Lord Jesus Christ (art 81).

6. Lord's Supper and army

To say that Zuidhorn's decision was contrary to Scripture, e.g. 1 Cor 11:23-29, is not true. There will be no Lord's Supper with those who do not proclaim the Lord's death, because beforehand they have to confess what they *believe*. No Supper with those who do not examine themselves. They should live a godly life. No Supper with those who do not discern the Lord's body, because they have to confess *what* they believe.

We said that there is the danger of inter-denominationalism, and we said that RCN's decision seems to be in conflict with their Church Order, art 60. Zuidhorn explicitly stated that the rule for such an extremely unusual situation gives no reason to suppose that in the RCN federation there is room for an open Lord's Supper table. It's not true that the specific decision for a specific situation fits to the idea for a more open Lord's Supper celebration.

7. Blessing by a non elder

FRCA have said to leave it. That also means that RCN's decision regarding this ought not to be a reason for people to walk away.

As deputies we do not agree with RCN's decision that the blessing is merely a liturgical act on behalf of the consistory. On the other hand the statement that the importance of the offices in the church cannot be overestimated only is true if we state that the importance of the enlightened congregation full of prophets, priests, and kings cannot be overestimated either.

F4. Evaluation

Deputies had to evaluate whether in 2003 the time had come to separate from what according to the RCN-res had become a false church. It should be noted that at that time the way of appeal to synod was still an open avenue. It's sad that after Synod Amersfoort 2005, from the side of the RCN-res there was an unwillingness to interact with these decisions and to sit together to discuss the items that kept brothers and sisters of the same faith separated. Synod Marienberg decided, *"not to entertain the*

invitation of the appeal" (made by Synod Amersfoort 2005) on the ground that *"in this appeal there is no sign of recognition for the need of a return to Scripture, Confession, and the Church Order."*

Having studied the material available deputies can come to other conclusion than that the Act of Liberation was not obedience to the Word of God, and the mentioned GS decisions of Zuidhorn were not against God's Word. There are a lot of concerns and the RCN have to deal with it. We have to encourage and admonish our sister, as she has to do the same to us.

The Letter and the Booklet of the RCN^r to us is full of wrong judgements. The Liberation of 2003 was not lawful. We have to tell them, that beside the 4th and 7th Commandment there is also a 9th, and a 6th! And what about the commandment of love! And 1 Cor 12!

We will conclude with one quotation.

K Schilder "was a formidable critic of opinions and standpoints offered by A Kuyper and his pupils (...) But one thing he never did. In these discussions he never showed his fellow churchmen the door. (...) He also had his faults, but making the church a club of people who all think the same, was not one of them." (J Kamphuis, in: *Not beyond what is written*, p 23)

F5. Re 2:

In the report of the visit to the RCN^r you can read that deputies have fulfilled this mandate not only by attending the synod of the RCN^r, but also in meeting with their deputies. With respect to urging the RCN^r to work towards reconciliation, this was what was said in the official address:

Synod Amersfoort 2005 has sent you an Appeal in which they express how the separation - being no longer united around the same pulpit, font and table - feels even worse than an amputation. They asked you and your ecclesiastical assemblies to consider their appeal before the face of God, and told you that they are prepared to explain their appeal to your Synod at any time. They made clear to you how they have given authority to their deputies for church unity (assisted by the moderamen of the Synod in Amersfoort Centre) to do this. They have been authorised to speak with you by means of an agenda, which would be drawn up mutually, in order to make recommendations to their next Synod. If necessary, they could even request the assembling of an interim extraordinary Synod. In all sincerity, they expressed the hope that the separation wouldn't turn out to be permanent, but that you both would search for and find each other as Christians and as churches. They sincerely prayed for God's blessing over you and the wisdom of His Spirit in your considerations and decisions.

Brothers, do not forget this and therefore don't dig yourselves in an entrenched position, but reconsider your task also with respect to those

brothers. If we as Australian churches can be instrumental in initiating this contact, we are willing to help you any time.

F6. Recommendations

1. Not to accept the accusations against our sister churches, the RCN, but to defend the honour and reputation of the RCN.
2. Not to acknowledge the RCNr as “the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands”.
3. To maintain official contact with the RCNr, so that we can work for reconciliation between them and the RCN, on the basis of truth and love.

Grounds

- a. The Letter of the RCNr, dd 4 Feb 2005, in which they explain their liberation of 2003, and the booklet of Sept 2006, in which they defend their liberation and maintain to be the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, have not substantiated their claim that the RCN has no right any more to the title of true church.
- b. It is a serious matter to separate when it is not warranted. The injunctions to remain one in the Lord (e.g. John 17 and Eph 4), sometimes even when serious problems arose as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible.
- c. The RCNr have the strong desire to be reformed. Therefore we should use contacts with them to urge them to work for reconciliation with our sister, the other Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, who struggle to remain reformed.

G. Minority Report⁵⁵ – Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Restored)

G1. Mandate

Concerning these churches, Synod West Kelmscott 2007 made the following decisions:

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

⁵⁵ This Minority Report is submitted by two of the deputies for Relations with Sister Churches since it was not agreed to by a majority.

their liberation is lawful. Now that our churches have made decisions about some of these crucial areas (refer Articles) 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 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 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."

Ground:

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.

Synod 2006 West Kelmscott directs 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.*

The first grounds given for this request is: *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.*

As can be ascertained from the Deputies Report to Synod 2006 and their *Deed of Liberation and Return* the reasons for the RCN(R) to liberate from the RCN include:

1. The RCN decisions relating to the fourth commandment.
2. The unity the RCN has with the CGK and the NGK which churches accept false doctrine.
3. The RCN decisions relating to the seventh commandment.
4. The RCN Proliferation of Hymns and practices introduced into the worship services.

These matters were all appealed by various members and churches to various RCN Synods. These appeals were by and large rejected or not met with responses satisfying the RCN(R).

Besides these matters the RCN(R) *Call for Reformation* also refers to:

1. New things introduced in the liturgy
2. A new direction in the preaching
3. Far-reaching Bible-critical views expressed in various publications are being tolerated
4. Church members (non-office-bearers) that read in a church service and pronounce the blessing.
5. Official representation of non-Reformed Church in the Church services.
6. The use of the *Good News Bible* translation.
7. The changes in the *Forms for marriage* and for *the Celebration of the Lord's Supper*.

8. The *superficial* establishment of sister relations with foreign churches.

There is no clear evidence that the members of the RCN(R) appealed the above points 5 – 12 to the Synods of the RCN but they are included in a general call for the RCN church members to come to reformation. This general call for reformation in 2003 and was made after and in response to the Synod of Zuidhorn.

G2. Regarding Point One Above:

The RCN decisions regarding the fourth commandment

The background of this matter is how what a minister said in a sermon was appealed through the various minor assemblies and to the General Synod of Leusden 1999. This synod decided that *the understanding of Rev. D. Ophoff that the Sunday as rest day is not grounded on a godly command, is not to be condemned*. This decision was appealed to the next Synod at Zuidhorn 2002 - 03 which did not uphold these appeals. It decided that the arguments brought to the fore could not be received for they were already considered at Synod Leusden. However, this same Synod Zuidhorn did decide (Article 13), upon request of a Regional Synod, to appoint deputies *Fourth Commandment and Sunday* to serve the churches by reaching out with a positive position regarding the ethical use, as believers of the church in the 21st century, with regard to the celebration of the Sunday as day of the Lord in the light of the fourth commandment.⁵⁶

The RCN(R) liberated from the RCN before these deputies did their work. At that time they argued that the matter had now has been appealed to two synods; Luisden and Zuidhorn, and having no new grounds, there was no room left to appeal further.

⁵⁶ Acta GS Zuidhorn 2002-03, art. 13, *besluit 1: aan de verzoeken (waarvan dat van de Particuliere Synode Holland Zuid in de weg van art. 30 KO is voorbereid) te voldoen door een deputaatschap 'Vierde gebod en zondag' in te stellen en deputaten op te dragen de kerken te dienen met een handreiking waarin een positieve standpuntbepaling geboden wordt inzake het ethisch handelen als gelovigen en kerken in de 21e eeuw met betrekking tot het vieren van de zondag als dag van de Here in het licht van het vierde gebod*.

We, as deputies, will leave it to Synod's judgment to determine whether these appeals to two consecutive synods are sufficient to determine whether in this regard the RCN(R) can and should be considered *lawful* with respect to this matter. Seeing that all the grounds for objections in this matter have been submitted to two consecutive synods leaving no new grounds, any further appeal in this matter has become impossible.

It should be noted that the Synod Kelmscott 2007 decision in relation to the RCN to: 1. *To accept Amersfoort's decision as largely allaying our concerns* (i.e. regarding the fourth commandment). 2. *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 reflects on a report that was made after the RCN(R) liberation took place.*

We, as deputies, understand from Synod's decision that the Amersfoort decision, *largely* but not *entirely* allayed the concerns of Kelmscott Synod 2007. We also understand the mandate to *monitor the application of this decision* in this context.

We, as deputies, have not done this *monitoring* but only question to what extent it can really be done. We seek clarification on just what the intention is because it appears unrealistic for deputies to spend time in the Netherlands to see how the fourth commandment is observed in various places. Are we expected to send a survey to all the Churches in the Netherlands to ask them?

We do note that at the recent General Synod of Zwolle N of the RCN there were several requests for revision and clarification concerning this matter. These requests included that synod would still make clear whether there is a Scriptural obligation to rest from non-essential work on Sundays. These appeals were denied. From these requests it may be noted that the deputies report to Synod Amersfoort, *Sunday, Lordly Day* has no binding status.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ ...not to grant the request ...

Grounds

1. *the request to revisit the declaration of the GS Amersfoort-C 2005 and still make a general statement about the relation between the fourth commandment and Sunday-celebration is in fact a request to fix an ecclesiastical binding interpretation of HC Lord's Day 38. The GS*

G3. Regarding Point Two Above:

Relations with the CGK and the NGK

The RCN have considered the CGK to be true to God's Word and sought unity with them ever since the Liberation of 1944. However, the CGK have declined this unity. An open invitation to unity remains till this day, In the 1990 Synod of Leeuwarden the RCN requested the CGK to take a clear stand of objection to the NGK who had broken away from the RCN in the late 1960's. In 1993 the NRC Synod of Ommen expressed disappointment that the CGK tolerated the teachings of Prof Oosterhof who brought the history of the first chapters of Genesis into question. The RCN

Amersfoort-C 2005 rightly refused to grant such binding above Scripture and Confession.

2.
 - a. *with regard to the conviction that the rules of the National Synod of Dort 1618 – 1619 have the weight of a doctrinal statement, GS Amersfoort-C 2005 rightly declared that the rules of Dort have official authority, but not the weight of a doctrinal statement (Acts art. 26 decision 1). This is evident from the fact that the Synod of Dort did not put these rules on one line with the three forms of unity that it endorsed. Dort did not require the signing of these rules.*
 - b. *GS Zuidhorn 2002-2003 rightly declared that the statement of GS Leusden 1999 "the the understanding that the Sunday as day of rest is not grounded on a godly command is not to be condemned" was used as a declaration in an appeal matter and not as a doctrinal statement. The GE Amersfoort-C 2005 said in its introduction to the reaching out (report) that "it is along with the strength of (fourth) command that we celebrate the Sunday as the day of Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection."*
3. *the GS Amersfoort-C 2005 has – in agreement with decisions of previous synods – not wanted to make any explicit statement about the ground on which the Sunday rests. The GS did not say that the fourth command as an instruction for the new testament congregation to rest has fallen away, but pointed to the continuing, remaining and new aspects in handling the fourth command of God's law. Br. Van der Hoeven does not does not interact with the Scripture proof offered.*
4. *the mentioned Scripture proof presented to affirm that the Sunday rest is grounded on the fourth commandment ever since creation, is when weighed in view Article 31 C.O., as evident from the deputies' report Sunday Lordly Day foundational to the decision of GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art. 22, decision 2 and from the committee report of the material Sabbath and Sunday of General Synod Zuidhorn 2002-2003, attachment 3.11. Br. and zr. Bolt do not interact with the mentioned Scripture passages that were dealt with;*
5. *the objection that the reaching out "Sunday, Lordly Day" has no binding status and gives an unclear conclusion, ignores that GS Amersfoort-C consciously did not give this reaching out as a binding decision, but to make available as testimony to the churches at this time*

See Appendix One for the entire decision in Dutch.

Synod of 1999 had to deal with serious questions concerning the teachings of the CGK Rev. B. Loonstra with regards to Scripture authority. The Synods determined that the teachings of Rev. Loonstra are only his own and are not the official position of the CGK, but brings into question how the CGK can permit error in its midst. In the mean time local congregations of the RCN and the CGK practice unity.

The same can be noted with regard to the NGK. These are churches that left the RCN in the late 1960's mainly questioning the need to bind one another to God's Word as maintained in the Confessions. The FRC Synod at its Synod of 1972 Article 42 decided not to accept attestations from members of these Churches⁵⁸. In spite of their refusal to be bound to God's Word as maintained in the Confessions and on account of this refusal were no longer accepted in the RCN talks with them have continued. These talks include the need for confessional binding, but no such agreement has been reached. In the mean time, in various instances their members have been permitted to the Lord's Supper of RCN congregations.

While the members of the RCN(R) could find agreement with synod decisions in these matters since the late 1960's these decisions do not seem to be fully upheld and through the appeal route even appear to be breaking down. The problem and question really becomes how serious the RCN are about their own confessional binding while those who neglect this binding are permitted to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁵⁹

There is no clear evidence that those who later formed the RCN(R) were involved in addressing the synods concerning this matter; this remains a point that needs further investigation. No effort has been made to ascertain whether there are any further grounds concerning these matters that could have been used in an attempt to seek return from this. We do note that a point is made of it when sending out a general call for the churches to

⁵⁸ Acts Article 42 *...in the midst of these Churches serious objections are raised against re-establishing a confederation of Churches in accordance with the principles and rules of the Church Order; and as still teachings that are in conflict with the Reformed Confession are found and tolerated in these churches, - attestations issued by these churches cannot be accepted, ...*

⁵⁹ See for example, Synod Zuidhorn Acts Articles 126 – 127.

reform. Concerning this matter there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the conclusion to librate in 2003 was lawful or not.

There is evidence that after 2003 this practice was formalised⁶⁰. The recent Synod of Zwolle-Zuid continues in this way when rejecting appeals. The positive way the majority report of deputies regarding the divergent ways of binding to the confessions was received gives further reason for concern⁶¹.

G4. Regarding Point 3 Above:

The RCN decisions relating to the seventh commandment.

Synod Kelmscott decided as recorded in Article 94 of the Acts that:

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 (Matt 19 and 1 Cor 7).

The recent Synod at Zwolle-Zuid dealt with various appeals concerning this matter, which, by and large were rejected, giving no change to the direct set by Synod Amersfoort-C. While it may be questioned whether this was a valid ground for the RCN(R) to librate in 2003, legitimate concern is shown when *approval of divorces for reasons beyond the Scriptural reasons of adultery and wilful desertion* are not *explicitly excluded* and appeals to do so are denied.

⁶⁰ See Synod Amersfoort Acts Article 132

⁶¹ Synod Zwolle-Z decision: See appendix 2

G5. Regarding Point Four Above:

The RCN Proliferation of Hymns and practices introduced into the worship services.

We understand the RCN(R)'s heartfelt cry against the Liedboek. That is why this item was in our deputies' Responses, written Address and speech in Amersfoort-Centrum 2005! There is freedom of liturgy in the church service so long as it does not extend beyond what is confessed in Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism of which the four main elements are: God's Word (reading and preaching); the two sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper); calling upon the LORD (prayers and praises); charity (offertory).

A Church service is a meeting of the Lord with all His people together and therefore should not focus on certain groups of people within the congregation. Thus there should be no specific hymns for children nor for any other specific group (eg. for intellectuals, for uneducated, for teens, for adults etc.)

A number of GSs of the RCN were busy with Liturgy, and also Amersfoort has dealt with it. There is some ground for recognising what is said in the *Act of liberation* (2003) that "everyone does as he sees fit" while various elements beyond what is confessed in Lord's Day 38 are permitted in the church services including; various groups singing, having youth dramatize parts of Scripture, music bands.

There is no evidence to show that members who considered liberation to be necessary appealed this activity, but the various synods did deal with appeals regarding liturgy. This point, however, is mentioned in their general call to reformation. While it may be questioned whether this is sufficient grounds on its own for liberation, it appears as an additional reason.

G6. Evaluation

The understanding that Synod Kelmscott expressed *that the RCN(R) have concerns with decisions and directions of the RCN*, remains. These concerns have not been alleviated by consequent decisions and actions of the RCN Synods. The question of whether the RCN(R) liberation being *lawful* relates to the how the FRCA regard the RCN. The determination of just when concerns become such a deviation that liberation becomes lawful is difficult and should not be made hastily.

G7. Recommendations

1. While defending the honour and reputation of the RCN by recognising their sincere desire to remain faithful to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order, there is evidence of worrying tendencies.
2. To refrain from deciding at this time whether RCN(R) is “the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands”.
3. To acknowledge the RCN(R) desire to be Reformed and continue contact with view to encouraging the RCN(R) to discuss the issues (and struggles) of concern in humility and love.

Grounds

- a. The Letter of the RCN(R), dd 4 Feb 2005, in which they explain their liberation of 2003, and the booklet of Sept 2006, in which they defend their liberation and maintain to be the lawful continuation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands show that there are serious concerns regarding the direction of the RCN.
- b. It is a serious matter to separate and may never been done hastily nor without exhausting every effort to maintain the unity of the faith. The injunction to remain one in the Lord (e.g. John 17 and Eph 4), sometimes even when serious problems arose as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible. It is very difficult for the FRCA to determine whether all efforts to maintain the unity have been exhausted.
- c. Before the FRCA can conclusively decide that the RCN(R) liberation was lawful or not, time is needed to address its own concerns of trends in the RCN and evaluate its responses.
- d. The RCN(R) show faithfulness to God’s Word as upheld in the Reformed Confessions. While refraining from a decision as to the lawfulness of the liberation, the FRCA share many of the concerns for which they liberated from the RCN. Contact with them can be helpful in efforts to maintain the unity of faith with the RCN on the basis of God’s Word as upheld in the Reformed Confessions and agreed upon in the Church Order.

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)

Appendix 1:

13-06-2008

Revisieverzoeken verhouding vierde gebod en zondag

Voorstel: Commissie Holland-Zuid

Materiaal:

1. Acta Generale Synode Amersfoort-Centrum 2005: artikelen 22, 25, 26 en 70;
2. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Ten Boer d.d. 29 juni 2006 waarin zij verzoekt om revisie Acta GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art. 25 en vraagt om alsnog een algemene uitspraak te doen over de verhouding tussen het vierde gebod en de zondagsviering;
3. brief van ds. J.M. Goedhart d.d. 8 januari 2008
 - a. waarin hij naar aanleiding van Acta GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art 26, vraagt uit te spreken het tweede deel van besluit 1 van artikel 26, luidende: "Dat deze regels wel officieel gezag hebben betekent overigens niet dat ze de kracht van een leeruitspraak hebben", weg te nemen, omdat dat deel ten onrechte aan het eerste deel van het besluit is toegevoegd. Met als grond: de Handelingen en Acta van de Afscheiden Kerken van 1834 en de Verenigde Kerken van 1892 tonen duidelijk aan dat de bedoelde regels (de regels van de synode van Dordt 1618-1619, sessie 164) wel degelijk de kracht van een leeruitspraak hadden en hebben;
 - b. er verder bij de synode op aandringt de uitspraak van de Generale Synode van Leusden 1999, Acta art. 25, besluit 4.3, radicaal weg te doen, daar de 'beide' uitspraken van die synode met elkaar radicaal en vierkant in tegenspraak zijn, nl. dat het vierde gebod wel en geen Goddelijke gebod is;
4. brief van br. B. van der Hoeven d.d. 18 februari, waarin hij verzoekt Acta GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art. 22, besluit 2, de punten 3.1 t/m 3.3 van paragraaf 3 te vervangen door de volgende tekst: "Onder het 4e gebod verstaan wij hier de tekst van Exodus 20 : 8 t/m 11 en Deuteronomium 5: 12 t/m 15, niets meer en niets minder. Dit gebod heeft God tot op heden nooit opgeheven of herroepen en geldt daarom vandaag de dag nog precies eender voor ons. Daarom is op dat gebod, en op niet anders, de rust gegrond, die wij nu op de zondag in acht nemen."
5. brief van br. en zr. D.J. Bolt d.d. 22 februari 2008 naaraanleiding van de uitspraak van de GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art. 70, besluit 5, waarin zij een tweetal verzoeken doen:

- a. het door hen gegeven schriftbewijs alsnog naar de regel van art. 31 K.O. inhoudelijk te overwegen;
 - b. in het onderwijs van de Handreiking te verwerken dat het rusten van het dagelijks werk op onze wekelijkse rustdag gegrond is in het vierde gebod;
6. brief van br. J.P. Dwarshuis d.d. 23 februari 2008 naar aanleiding van de uitspraak van de GS Amersfoort-C 2005, Acta, art. 22, waarin hij bezwaar maakt tegen de handreiking "Zondag, HEERlijke dag" om reden dat
 - a. deze geen bindende status heeft ontvangen en
 - b. dat onduidelijk blijft of de rustdag een scheppingsinstelling is;
7. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Nijmegen d.d. 3 november 2005 naar aanleiding van de uitspraak van de GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art. 22, waarin zij uitspreekt te hopen, dat het rapport "Zondag, HEERlijke dag" als handreiking voldoende overtuigend zal blijken te zijn op het punt, dat de kerk altijd heeft geleerd, dat de zondag als rustdag gegrond is op een menselijke instelling en op een goddelijk gebod en dat niet de mogelijkheid wordt opengelaten, dat beweerd kan en mag worden, dat de zondag slechts op een menselijke instelling is gegrond;
8. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te 's Hertogenbosch d.d. 8 april 2008 naar aanleiding van de uitspraak van de GS Amersfoort-C 2005, art. 22, besluit 2, waarin zij vraagt met betrekking tot de handreiking "Zondag, HEERlijke dag" te verwezen of niet alsnog tot meer eenduidigheid is te komen.

Besluit 1:

niet te voldoen aan de verzoeken in de onder materiaal 2 tot en met 6 genoemde brieven.

Gronden:

1. het verzoek de uitspraak van de GS Amersfoort-C 2005 te herzien en alsnog een algemene uitspraak te doen over de verhouding tussen het vierde gebod en de zondagsviering, is in werkelijkheid een vraag om een interpretatie van HC Zondag 38 kerkelijk vast te leggen. De GS Amersfoort-C 2005 heeft daaraan terecht niet willen voldoen om niet boven Schrift en belijdenis uit te gaan;
2. wq
 - a. ten aanzien van de bewering dat de regels van de Nationale Synode te Dordrecht 1618-1619 de kracht van een leeruitspraak hebben, heeft de GS Amersfoort-C 2005 terecht uitgesproken, dat de regels van Dordt officieel gezag hebben, maar niet de kracht van een

leeruitspraak (Acta art. 26 besluit 1). Dit blijkt uit het feit, dat de Dordtse Synode deze regels niet op één lijn heeft gesteld met de door haar aanvaarde drie formulieren van eenheid. Ondertekening van deze regels werd door Dordrecht niet gevraagd;

- b. de GS Zuidhorn 2002-2003 heeft terecht de uitspraak van de GS Leusden 1999 "dat de opvatting dat de zondag als rustdag niet gegrond is op een goddelijk gebod niet te veroordelen is" bevestigd en gehandhaafd als een uitspraak in appèl en niet als een leeruitspraak. De GS Amersfoort-C 2005 sprak in de inleiding op de handreiking uit: "het is mede krachtens dit (vierde) gebod dat wij de zondag viëren als de dag van de opstanding van onze Heer Jezus Christus.";
3. de GS Amersfoort-C 2005 heeft - in overeenstemming met besluiten van eerdere synodes - geen expliciete uitspraak willen doen over de grond waarop de zondagsrust is gebaseerd. De GS heeft niet gezegd dat het vierde gebod als opdracht tot rusten voor de nieuw-testamentische gemeente vervallen is, maar heeft gewezen op de voorlopige, blijvende en nieuwe aspecten in de hantering van het vierde gebod van Gods wet. Br. Van der Hoeven confronteert zich niet met het hierbij geboden schriftbewijs;
4. het aangevoerde 'Schriftbewijs' voor de stelling, dat de zondagsrust is gegrond op het vierde gebod dat vanaf de schepping heeft gegolden, is naar artikel 31 K.O. gewogen, zoals blijkt uit het deputatenrapport "Zondag HEERlijke dag", dat ten grondslag ligt aan het besluit van de GS Amersfoort-C 2005, Acta, art. 22, besluit 2 en uit het commissierapport over de materie van sabbat en zondag van de Generale Synode van Zuidhorn 2002-2003, bijlage 3.11. Br. en zr. Bolt confronteren zich niet met de daarin gegeven behandeling van de genoemde Schriftgedeelten;
5. het bezwaar dat de handreiking "Zondag, HEERlijke dag" geen bindende status heeft en een onduidelijk besluit is, gaat er aan voorbij dat de GS Amersfoort-C 2005 bewust die handreiking niet als bindend besluit maar als getuigenis in deze tijd aan de kerken ter beschikking stelde.

Besluit 2:

de brieven onder materiaal 7 en 8 voor kennisgeving aan te nemen.

Grond:

deze brieven kunnen niet als revisieverzoek worden aangemerkt. Het ontbreekt de GS aan mogelijkheden de verwoorde hoop

en verwachting te realiseren. Tot de handreiking "Zondag, HEERlijke dag" is juist besloten om de vrede in de kerken te dienen en die handreiking behoeft daarvoor geen belemmering te zijn.

Appendix 2:

Relatie met de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken

Voorstel: deputaten kerkelijke eenheid

Materiaal:

1. rapport van de deputaten voor kerkelijke eenheid (DKE), hoofdstuk 5 met de bijlagen II, III en IV;
2. aanvullend rapport van DKE, hoofdstuk 2;
3. minderheidsrapport met betrekking tot het document *Waar staan we nu?* (verder: *Balans*) over de binding aan de belijdenis en een vervangend voorstel voor het hieronder vermelde besluit 1;
4. minderheidsrapport met betrekking tot de conclusies die in het deputatenrapport worden getrokken uit de gesprekken met de Commissie voor Contact en Samenwerking (CCS) van de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) over het besluit van de Landelijke Vergadering Lelystad 2004 van de NGK inzake vrouwelijke ouderlingen en predikanten en met vervangende voorstellen voor de hieronder vermelde besluiten 2, 3 en 6.2.;
5. brief van de Landelijke Vergadering Zwolle 2007 van de NGK d.d. 11 januari 2008, met de besluiten van de LV Zwolle 2007 over de verhouding met de Gereformeerde Kerken;
6. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Ten Boer d.d. 29 juni 2006, waarin zij haar zorg uit over de ontwikkelingen met betrekking tot de verhouding met de NGK en uitspreekt van mening te zijn dat het tijd is geworden de gesprekken met de NGK op te schorten totdat deze kerken duidelijk uitgesproken hebben dat ze onverkort willen en zullen vasthouden aan Gods Woord en de belijdenisgeschriften en de besluiten rond vrouwelijke ambtsdragers hebben teruggenomen;
7. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Apeldoorn-Centrum d.d. 16 januari 2008, waarin zij hartelijke adhesie betuigt met de *Balans* over de binding aan de belijdenis;
8. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Smilde d.d. 4 februari 2008, die als een bezwaarschrift wordt gepresenteerd tegen hetgeen deputaten rapporteren en voorstellen betreffende de contacten met de NGK. Met name wordt bezwaar gemaakt tegen de inhoud van de *Balans* over de binding aan de belijdenis en tijd en wijze van de publicatie ervan door deputaten;
9. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Rijnsburg d.d. 8 februari 2008, met bezwaren tegen het rapport van deputaten op het punt

van de zaak van vrouw en ambt (rapport, par. 5.1.3) en op het punt van de binding aan de leer (rapport, par. 5.2.2);

10. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Vroomshoop d.d. 18 februari 2008, die als een bezwaarschrift wordt gepresenteerd en waarin zij grote bezorgdheid uit over wat deputaten rapporteren over de gesprekken met de CCS van de NGK en instemming betuigt met de bezwaren die de deputaten ds. K. Folkersma en ds. G. Zomer hebben geuit (zie materiaal 3) , alsmede met de tekst van hun vervangende voorstel;
11. brief van de Gereformeerde Kerk te Drachten-Oost d.d. 22 februari 2008, waarin zij bezorgdheid uit en bezwaren maakt tegen hetgeen deputaten rapporteren betreffende de gesprekken met de NGK over de binding aan de belijdenis en de vrouw in het ambt;
12. brief van ds. J.M. Goedhart te Zwolle d.d.18 februari 2008, waarin hij bezorgdheid uitspreekt over en kritiek uit op ontwikkelingen in de NGK, met name betreffende hun uitspraken en besluiten inzake vrouwelijke ambtsdragers. De predikant is daarom van mening is dat we dienen te stoppen met het samenspreken met de NGK;
13. brief van br. J.P. Dwarshuis te Assen d.d. 23 februari 2008, waarin hij bezwaren maakt tegen hetgeen deputaten in hun rapport voorstellen over voortzetting van de gesprekken met de NGK. De broeder is van mening dat de contacten met de NGK zowel landelijk als plaatselijk zouden moeten worden verbroken, zolang zij niet terugkomen op het besluit om de zusters toe te laten tot alle ambten.

Besluit 1:

met dankbaarheid kennis te nemen van het document, getiteld *Waar staan wij nu?*, over de binding aan de belijdenis, als tussenbalans van de ontmoeting tussen deputaten kerkelijke eenheid van de Gereformeerde Kerken en de Commissie voor Contact en Samenspreking (CCS) van de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK), in de lijn van de vragen die de generale synoden van Berkel en Rodenrijs 1996, Leusden 1999 en Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 aan de NGK stelden.

Grond:

aan de besluiten van genoemde synodes om het gesprek over de binding aan de belijdenis te voeren is uitvoering gegeven op een wijze die dankbaar stemt, ook al zijn de gesprekken over de binding nog niet afgerond.

Besluit 2:

1. met dankbaarheid te constateren dat er tussen DKE en CSS overeenstemming is bereikt over de noodzaak tot ondertekening van de belijdenis en dat de Landelijke Vergadering Zwolle 2007 besloten heeft de kerken, die deze ondertekening niet kennen, op te roepen daartoe over te gaan;
2. uit te spreken dat deze overeenstemming het vertrouwen geeft dat ook andere hindernissen met betrekking tot de binding aan de belijdenis overwonnen kunnen worden.

Gronden:

1. uit de overeenstemming over de noodzaak tot ondertekening van de belijdenis en het besluit van de Landelijke Vergadering Zwolle 2007 blijkt de uitgesproken intentie om de binding aan de belijdenis serieus te nemen en blijkt dat de vrees voor juridisering van de binding aan de belijdenis overwonnen wordt. Daardoor is het gesprek over de kerkelijke omgang met afwijkingen van de belijdenis een stap dichterbij gekomen;
2. de genoemde overeenstemming stimuleert om verder te spreken over de andere hindernissen die eerdere synodes voor een gesprek met het oog op kerkelijke eenheid zagen en die met deze overeenstemming nog niet weggenomen zijn. Het is namelijk nog niet duidelijk wat de bereikte overeenstemming betekent voor de kaders waarin bij de NGK de ondertekening staat, te weten de Preambule, art. 17 en 34 van het Akkoord voor kerkelijk samenleven (AKS) alsmede voor de manier waarop in het verleden het onderscheid tussen Christus als het fundament en zaken in de belijdenis die het fundament niet raken werd gebruikt.

Besluit 3:

met instemming kennis te nemen van de wijze waarop is doorgesproken over de uitspraken die de LV Lelystad 2004 heeft gedaan over de openstelling van de ambten voor zusters in de gemeente en met dankbaarheid kennis te nemen van de toenadering die is gebleken in de gesprekken over het Schriftverstaan en de Schriftuitleg.

Gronden:

1. de wijze waarop deputaten deze gesprekken zijn aangegaan is in overeenstemming met het besluit dat daartoe door de Generale Synode van Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 is genomen;
2. er kwam herkenning, c.q. verheldering terzake van de omgang met de Schrift; dat bleek uit:

- a. het spreken over de contextbepaaldheid van sommige Schriftgegevens, de verantwoordelijkheid van de mens in het verstaan van de Schrift, en geloofwaardigheid en cultuur;
 - b. de erkenning dat het niet goed is om vanuit algemene hermeneutische overwegingen en niet vanuit exegese de eventuele normatieve kracht van concrete teksten (1 Korintiërs 11 en 1 Timoteüs 2) te relativiseren;
3. al hebben die gesprekken nog geen definitief resultaat opgeleverd, wel kan worden geconstateerd dat de gesprekken vertrouwen hebben ingeboezemd en dat er op een aantal punten verheldering is gekomen ten aanzien van het Schriftverstaan in het rapport *Vrouwelijke Ouderlingen en Predikanten?* (VOP).

Besluit 4:

met verdriet te constateren dat de gesprekken, hoe intensief ook gevoerd, nog niet alle bezwaren ten aanzien van de uitspraak van de LV Lelystad 2004 over de openstelling van de ambten voor zusters in de gemeente en het Schriftverstaan dat ten grondslag ligt aan het rapport VOP, zoals die leefden bij de Generale Synode van Amersfoort-Centrum 2005, hebben weggenomen.

Grond:

1. in de gesprekken is gebleken dat de bezwaren ten aanzien van de spanning tussen Schriftverstaan en Schriftuitleg terecht waren;
2. een moeilijk punt is dat het besluit van de LV Lelystad 2004 over het openstellen van de ambten voor de zusters van de gemeente er nog steeds ligt;
3. omdat binnen de NGK de uitkomst van de gezamenlijke bezinning op het rapport VOP nog niet duidelijk is, zijn de bezwaren niet weggenomen.

Besluit 5:

met begrip kennis te nemen van het feit dat er nog geen gesprek heeft plaats gevonden over het doel van het door de NGK gewenste classicale-regionale overleg over concrete zaken van leer en leven.

Grond:

deputaten hebben terecht de voorrang gegeven aan de bespreking over de binding aan Schrift en belijdenis en aan het rapport VOP en hebben aannemelijk gemaakt dat er daardoor geen gelegenheid meer was voor de bespreking van genoemd classicaal-regionaal overleg.

Besluit 6:

eveneens met begrip kennis te nemen van het feit dat nog niet aan de orde geweest is dat 'de bezinning en discussie over vraagstukken van leer en leven een natuurlijke plek te geven op de kerkelijke ergaderingen' waarover de LV Lelystad 2004 sprak, ook echt vorm moet krijgen.

Grond:
deputaten hebben duidelijk gemaakt dat er vanwege door hun gestelde prioriteiten (binding aan Schrift en belijdenis, bespreking rapport VOP) geen expliciete aandacht kon worden gegeven aan deze zaak.

Besluit 7:

aan deputaten kerkelijke eenheid de volgende opdrachten te geven:

1. de gesprekken met de Commissie voor Contact en Samenspreking van de Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken voort te zetten. In deze gesprekken dient te worden doorgesproken over:
 - a. de verschillende wijze waarop in de kerkelijke praktijk binnen de GKV en de NGK met de binding aan de belijdenis wordt omgegaan;
 - b. de verschillende wijze waarop in de kerkelijke praktijk binnen de GKV en de NGK met concrete en voortgaande afwijking van de belijdenis wordt omgegaan;
 - c. de zaak van de vrouw in het ambt en het feit van het openstellen van de ambten voor de zusters der gemeente door de NGK;
2. in de gesprekken na te gaan wat het doel kan zijn van het door de NGK gewenste classicale-regionale overleg over concrete zaken van leer en leven.

- Gronden:
1. het document *Waar staan wij nu?* en de reacties daarop van de LV Zwolle 2007 geven voldoende aanleiding en vertrouwen om de gesprekken met de NGK voort te zetten, biddend, dat van de verkennende gesprekken op termijn kan worden overgegaan tot gesprekken gericht op kerkelijke eenheid;
 2. het gesprek over de binding aan de belijdenis is nog niet afgerond omdat er over de wijze waarop de binding aan de belijdenis behoort te functioneren nog geen overeenstemming is bereikt;
 3. de gevoerde gesprekken over het Schriftverstaan en de Schriftuitleg hebben geleid tot een zodanige toenadering en

herkenning, dat zij voldoende aanleiding en vertrouwen geven om de gesprekken met de NGK voort te zetten;

4. de GK zijn gestart met de oriënterende fase van een studietraject over M/V in de kerk. De NGK hebben reeds besloten tot openstelling van de ambten voor de zusters. Dit feit vormt een belemmering om op dit moment al een besluit te nemen tot verdere intensivering van de gesprekken;
5. de gesprekken over de onder 7.1 genoemde onderwerpen hebben tot doel de eventuele nog bestaande belemmeringen te lokaliseren en zo mogelijk weg te nemen.

G8. Comments on this alternative set of recommendations.

This alternate set of recommendations by two deputies was discussed by all deputies at a special meeting on Dec 16/08. Four deputies could not endorse this alternate report as a report to synod. They had to leave it to the two deputies who are responsible to synod. However, we want to make clear why four of your deputies could not endorse it as a report to synod.

1. The report does not work within the parameters of the mandate given but shows more the characteristics of an appeal. Four deputies thus advised the two deputies to work with their consistories to send an appeal to synod. Reasons for saying this are:
 - a. Synod positively decided *to continue sister relations with the RCN* on the ground that *they give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their reformed confessions and the Church Order*. This report alters this quite sharply by recognising only a sincere desire to remain faithful, while at the same time underlying *there is evidence of worrying tendencies*. This is quite a different point of departure.
 - b. Synod after synod has continued sister relations with the RCN on positive grounds. This report has a different point of departure. It refers to our (FRCA) *own efforts to maintain unity with the RCN must be exhausted* and says contacts with the RCNr *can be helpful in efforts to maintain the unity of faith with the RCN*. Thus they view our present sister relations as already under strain, even coming to an end. It is clear that this report feels we need to exhaust all efforts to stay one with the RCN and only then can we accept the request of the RCNr.
 - c. At the same time this report positively endorses the RCNr - *the RCN(R) show faithfulness to God's Word as upheld in the Reformed Confessions*. None of our synods have made such a positive endorsement, but have had reason to criticise and question the RCNr.
2. This report goes over and questions matters already covered. Evidence of this:
 - a. They go back to the appeal at the GS Leusden, 1999, about a sermon on LD 38. They state that this decision was appealed and the appeal was turned down. Thus nothing further could be done. This report thus accepts

the charges against the RCN by the RCNr. Our Synod of 2003 received a full report about this. It decided (art 41) to instruct deputies *to stay informed about the developments and decisions in the RCN with respect to the 4th commandment re the Sunday*. There is no reference to dissatisfaction with the hotly debated decision about the appeal. (This was not a theological statement but a verdict on an appeal.) Instead the grounds mention discussions should continue *especially with a view to the Dutch deputyship studying this matter*. This study would give theological direction and guidance. Our 2006 Synod accepted the decisions (based on a lengthy report - we thanked the Dutch for the solid biblical view they gave in the report) as principally allaying our concerns. Thus this is quite a different approach and indeed questions and challenges the stance of our previous synods.

- b. Regarding relations with the CGK + NGK this report adopts the position of the RCNr. It criticises the RCN for its recognition of the CGK, using the charges made by the RCNr. Nowhere does this report indicate that this material was addressed earlier (see 2006 Acts, section 8 about these exact issues, pp 339-341, and also section 9 about supervision of doctrine, pp 341-343)). Our Dutch sister churches addressed them in their booklet, Not above what is written, and in their synodical letter to the RCNr. Thus this report repeats old accusations by the RCNr, accusations which have been dealt with.
- c. Re RCN decisions about divorce and remarriage, this report negates our synodical decision which *expresses thanks that our Dutch sister churches could take a strong Scriptural stance regarding God's teachings against divorce and remarriage*. It only quotes the negative aspect that synod regretted that explicit prohibition of divorce beyond adultery and wilful desertion was not given. By implication it is prohibited. GS Zuidhorn sent the deputies' report back due to dissatisfaction with this point and the final report at GS 2005 was not fully endorsed. Thus this report does not work within the confines of its mandate from synod.
- d. Re the RCN proliferation of hymns and liturgical practices. Again, this report in an uncritical manner accepts the charges of the RCNr against the RCN. In the report to our 2006 Synod deputies reported in a

different vein, though the proliferation of hymns continues to concern us (see Acts, section 10 on pp 343-345). The previous deputies' report also examined some of these hymns in a balanced manner, giving both positive and negative scrutiny.

3. In an overall sense this report does not accept that much investigation was finished and reported on at our 2006 Synod. This synod then asked further investigation be made because the RCN made important decisions on some of these items, because we wanted to see if progress in mutual discussions between the RCN+RCNr could be made, and because the RCNr were having a synod as well. The feedback from what transpired since 2006 is that the RCNr does not accept any of the decisions of the RCN in 2005, that they refuse mutual talks with them, and that the gulf is widening, rather than narrowing. In spite of this, this report wishes to wait further. It accepts the RCNr charges, waits for our sister relations with the RCN to become exhausted, and questions our previous work and decisions. This is not according to the mandate given.

H. General Report on the visit to the RCN, sister church, in 2008 AD

1. General matters

On Tuesday, May 27, we were welcomed in *Buitengood Fredeshiem* in Steenwijk by BBK (*Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken* : Relations Foreign Churches). From there we would be transported daily by coach to the Koningskerk in Zwolle for the meetings with the General Synod, Zwolle-Zuid 2008.

On Tuesday evening we spoke with the CanRC, the PCK-K, the VGKSA, the URCNA, the OPC, and the RCNZ about the two themes we would discuss at the Synod's floor: subscription and binding to the Confession, and the role of the women in the church. We were all of the same opinion that the RCN should not enter into a church unity dialogue with the NGK as long as the NGK hold to their national decision to open the governing church offices for the sisters of the congregation.

All meals were provided by BBK. At the dinner on Tuesday we were joined by some members of the RCN congregation of Steenwijk.

Approximately 30 delegates from different countries came in the Netherlands together to meet with the various sections of the BBK and the General Synod. Here they are:

Rev J Visscher	CanRC
Rev J Moesker	CanRC
Rev F Dong	CanRC
Rev P Boon	VGKSA
Prof H Yoo	PCK-K
Rev SB Kim	PCK-K
Rev JC Choi	PCK-K
Rev JK Kim	PCK-K
Rev A Veldman	FRCA
Mr AC Breen	FRCA
Rev DJ van Garderen	RCNZ
Rev D Moes	URCNA
Rev LA Curto	OPC
Mr MT Bube	OPC
Rev I Martin	FCS
Rev DS Fraser	FCS-C
Rev AJ Lucas	EPC (Ev Presb Ireland)
Rev M Ball	RPCI (Ref Presb Ireland)
Rev J de Segovia	IRE (Espana)

Rev C Rodriguez	IRV (Venezuela)
Mr C Bello	IRV
Rev SE Akoru	RCEA (Kenya)
Rev MK Maina	RCEA
Rev D Mathuva	AEPC (Afr Ev Presb Kenya)
Rev JM Mutemi	AEPC
Prof D du Plooy	GKSA (Dopper)
Dr N Smit	GKSA
Rev T Ishihara	RCJ (Japan)
Mr LK Pulamte	RPCNEI (North East India)

During our time at Fredeshiem we enjoyed the opportunity to meet with these delegates at meals and over coffee.

Wednesday morning, May 28, a conference was arranged by BBK on the RCN and DVN (De Verre Naasten) with synod members in attendance.

Deputies *BBK* are concerned with the international ecumenical contacts of the RCN. They maintain the bilateral relations that the RCN has with other churches in foreign countries and represent the RCN at ecumenical meetings such as the ICRC (International) and the ECRC (European). Deputies *BBK* consist of 18 “professionals doing volunteer work”. There are five sections:

- Section 1: policy and ecumenical organisations
- Section 2: Public Relations (web-site, magazine *Lux Mundi*, church press)
- Section 3: contacts in the USA, Canada, and Europe (excl Spain and Portugal)
- Section 4: contacts in Asia, Australia, and the Pacific
- Section 5: contacts in Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and Africa

Deputies *BBK* meet several times per year as a whole. At these general meetings matters that will have to be submitted to a general synod are decided upon. The deputies are supported in their work by an office with two part-time workers.

DVN is a professional organisation that works in various parts of the world in various missionary activities, sometimes on its own and sometimes in conjunction with other parties (in particular Wycliffe and MAF). Under guidance of the two directors *DVN* consists of four separate sections:

1. Public Relations and Funds: responsible a.o. for publication of the monthly missions magazine and the bi-annual *DVN*-day

2. Intercultural Reformed Theological Training (www.irtt.nl): responsible for training those that are sent out by the GKV; for training foreigners, both in the Netherlands and on-site; and for developing missionary policy
3. Administration
4. Foreign activities (further subdivided into regions)

DVN has projects in the following countries: Benin, Brazil, DR Congo, Curaçao, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia (various islands), Kenya, Middle East, Nigeria, the Philippines, Siberia, South Africa, Surinam, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Venezuela.

DVN is a member of *Prisma*, a Dutch association for Reformed and Evangelical Christian Assistance (www.prismaweb.org).

2. GS Zwolle-Zuid decisions re sister churches and other contacts

Decision 1: to charge deputies BBK to maintain relation with the following 29 sister churches in order to learn from each other, to support one another and praise and glorify together the name of Jesus Christ.

1. The African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (in Kenia) (AEPC)
2. The Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
3. The Église Réformée Confessante au Congo (ERCC)
4. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Ireland) (EPC)
5. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)
6. The Evangelical Reformed Churches in the Union of Russia (ERCUR)
7. The Free Church of Scotland (continuing) (FCC)
8. The Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
9. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)
10. The Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC) / Gereja Gereja Reformasi Musyafir (GGRM)
11. The Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-NTT)
12. The Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-Kalbar)
13. The Iglesia Reformada en Venezuela (IRV)
14. The Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (IRB)
15. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)
16. The Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) (PCK-K)
17. The Presbyterian Free Church Council (Kalimpong) (PFCC)
18. The Presbyterian Free Church of Central India (PFC(CI))
19. The Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ)
20. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
21. The Reformed Church of East Africa (in Kenia) (RCEA) (*decided at this Synod*)
22. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)
23. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland (RPCI)
24. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI)
25. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)
26. The Reformed Presbyterian Church Taiwan (RPCT)

27. The Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA)
28. The Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (VGKSA)
29. Nongu u Kristu u Ken Sudan nen Tiv (in Nigeria) (NKST).

Decision 2: to charge deputies BBK to work towards establishment of sister church relation with the following 3 churches in order to learn from each other, to support one another and praise and glorify together the name of Jesus Christ.

1. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
2. The United Reformed Churches (URCNA)
3. The Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB).

Decision 3: to charge deputies BBK to maintain contact with the following churches and institutes, and other ICRC members as well, in order to learn from each other, to support one another and praise and glorify together the name of Jesus Christ.

1. Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary and Ref congregation in the Baltic States
2. The Bat Tsion Commission for Israel (BTC)
3. The Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines (CRCP)
4. The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian – Harare Synod in Zimbabwe (CCAP)
5. The Église Réformée Confessante au Bénin (ERCB)
6. The Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS: First en Covenant)
7. The Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-Papua)
8. The Iglesias Reformadas de España (IRE)
9. The Igreja Crista Presbiteriana de Portugal (ICPP)
10. The Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK)
11. The Kar El Dobarah Evangelical Church (te Cairo in Egypte)
12. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCAm)
13. The Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapshin) (PCK (Hapshin))
14. The Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU)
15. The Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Dehra Dun, India) (PTS)
16. The Reformed Free Church of the Philippines (RFCP)
17. The Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship in Myanmar (RPFM)
18. The South Indian Reformed Churches (SIRC)
19. Église Réformée du Québec (ERQ)
20. Églises Réformées Évangéliques Indépendantes en France (EREI)
21. The Evangelic Ref Church Westm Conf (ERKWB) (Austria and Switzerland)
22. Evangelisk-Reformerta Kyrkan in Sverige (ERKS) (Sweden)
23. Reformed and Presbyterian contacts in Pakistan
24. Gereformeerde Kerk te Gent ; CGK te Antwerpen-Deurne (Belgium)
25. Hungarian Ref Churches (HGK),
Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE)
and other
Reformed groups in Hungarian language area
26. Minsk Reformed Church (Wit-Russia)
27. Ukraine Evangelical Reformed (of Presbyterian) Church

Decision 4: to delete the Lanka Reformed Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka from the list of contacts because there is not a real contact with these churches.

3. Participation in GS session

Thursday and Friday, May 29 and 30, the foreign delegates were invited to participate in the discussion on the floor of Synod. RCN General Synod Zwolle-Zuid had decided to discuss two topics in the presence of foreign delegates. These are the role of women in the church and confessional subscription.

- a. Speech about the binding to the Confession: response tot the RCN deputies' report on the *NGK* (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken)

Regarding the deputies' *Interim Statement* on discussions with the NGK on confessional subscription the Dutch deputies were divided. The majority does not longer see the matter of confessional subscription as a hindrance on the road to ecclesiastical unity. The minority, however, states in their report that the *Interim Statement* does not indicate that, with respect to the concrete issue of confessional subscription there is a real change with the NGK. Especially their national decision to open the special offices for women makes this clear. Also the FRCA made use of the opportunity to participate in Synod's discussions in an advisory way. This is what FRCA deputy ACB said on the floor of Synod.

Sisters, brothers delegates, deputies of Synod and deputies from churches abroad,

First of all, we will express our appreciation to you, members of Synod, for the opportunity given to us to participate in your discussions in an advisory way. Thank you that we may assist you in your considerations on the reports on the discussions with the NGK in relation to the binding to the confessions.

When Frederick III of the Palatinate, who had asked Ursinus and Olevianus to write a catechism, was ordered to retract the so called Calvinist innovations in his Heidelberg Catechism at the Diet of Augsburg (1566), he said,

"What men understand by Calvinism I do not know. This I can say with a pure conscience that I have never read Calvin's writings. "My catechism, word by word, is drawn, not from human, but from divine sources, the references

that stand in the margin will show.” (J Visscher, *Clarion* 1987, p 456).

Indeed, the catechism, lit. *kata-echoo*, is an echo of the Bible. When Rev Pérégrin de la Grange was arrested and interrogated together with Guido de Brès in Valenciennes (1567), and was asked “Why do you follow Calvin and not the doctrine of the Roman Church?” he answered, “I do not follow the doctrine of Calvin. I follow the doctrine of Scripture!” (J Kamphuis, *W&W55*, p 46).

And since our Confessions are drawn from God’s Word as shown by all the Scripture references in the margin or in footnotes, we do not follow the doctrine of Calvin or De Brès or Ursinus or Gomarus, but subscribe to the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures when we bind to the confessions.

Scripture teaches us that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). The church of the living God has to bear the truth of God’s Word. This truth rests in its foundation and is visible on its pillar. The truth has to be carried and carried out, and the lie must be kept out. Paul said to Timothy: “Guard what was committed to your trust.” (1 Tim. 6:20). This still applies: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” (Hebr. 10:23).

Our confession does not *add to*, but makes us *wise in* God’s Word, and prevents anything to be taken from His Word under the pretext of being a Biblical explanation. The confession is the protection of the Bible, the alarm bell which alerts us when the Bible is being broken into. Our Confessions do not want anything other than to maintain God’s Word. We confess them as reporting the true and repelling the false doctrine. They guide us into the Holy Scriptures.

To question the confession and Scripture’s authority and to bind to extra-Scriptural and extra-confessional doctrine make the churches prone to a self-willed and liberal subjectivism. Therefore, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands liberated themselves in 1944 from the binding to what was above and against the Bible. And, in 1967, the General Synod in Amersfoort said ‘no’ to *The Open Letter* because of its ambivalent feelings about the confession, and flirtatious feelings towards the synodical churches which were close to pushing aside the decision of Assen 1926 in order to swap the unchangeable authority of the Word of God for the changing opinions of scholars.

In the light of what we have said so far we cannot understand the way of reasoning of the majority Report, section 5.5 (Evaluation: p 105). We read in 5.5.1 that your deputies are thankful and joyful that there is significant agreement with the NGK in relation to the binding to the confession and the desirability of subscribing to the

confessions. Then we read that because of this the NGK stand on the same foundation of Scripture and confession.

However, we would say that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Not the desire to subscribe to the confessions is decisive, but the actual subscription is. De Interim Statement says under the heading *Binding to the Confessions* that there is no difference of opinion between the GKV deputies and the NGK deputies that within the churches a broad-minded and loyal binding to the confessions can be expected. Brothers, we friendly ask you to reformulate this sentence: GKV en NGK continue their church discussions providing that also the NGK commit themselves loyally and without “buts” to the confessions.

Not the desirability to bind but the actual binding is decisive. No woman will marry a man who says that he *desires* to love her but still claims the freedom to read their agreement *differently* than she does.

The same applies to what we read in 5.5.2. The NGK acknowledge that the Bible is the Word of God. But in the meantime the NGK have decided to open the special offices of minister, elder and deacon to sisters in the congregation. That means that they explain the Bible as Word of God totally differently than the Reformed churches who confessed and still confess today in BC, art 30, that spiritual governors will be chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.

We hope you will understand that the decision of the NGK in relation to the spiritual church government is in conflict with this, as we will discuss tomorrow DV in relation to the role of men and women in the churches.

We cannot understand how the Interim Statement can say (under 5.5.2: p 91) that the differences between the GKV and the NGK may not permanently keep these churches separated, and that the way is open for discussions with a view to church unity. We want to impress upon you (because you are in our heart) to have these discussion *after* the NGK have taken back their decision about the female church government.

We really cannot understand deputies draft decision 2: “to note with agreement the way in which discussions with respect to the declarations of the National Meeting of Lelystad 2004 concerning the opening of the offices to sisters in the congregation have taken place.”

We would say, “church unity is not to be established on nice discussions.” We don’t understand ground 3 of this decision which says that the way in which these discussions have been carried out

has inspired trust. Are the deputies of the opinion that the NGK in the nearby future will recant their decision?

Three years ago, when we addressed Synod Amersfoort-Centrum, we said,

“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!”

After what we have said so far it goes without saying that we call you to follow the line of the minority report which explains that it is incorrect to draw the conclusion that, at any rate, the issue of confessional subscription is no longer a hindrance to further and more intensive ecclesiastical contact with the NGK in the form of discussions, aimed at church unity. There is a hindrance as long as the NGK maintain their decision about female church government, which is contrary Scripture and confession (BC, art 30).

We strongly advise you to adopt the proposal of the minority report to give new deputies the mandate “to continue discussions about the justified objections that were raised at GS Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 against the VOP decision and the report underlying it and in doing so to clearly raise the issue of binding to Scripture and confession.”

Your decision to a mandate to continue discussions aimed at unity with the NGK who have actually opened the governing offices to the sisters of the congregation, which is in conflict with Scripture and confession, will surely have consequences for the relation with the FRCA.

We pray that the Lord may bless you with a lot of wisdom.

- b. Speech about women in the church: response to the GKV deputies' report on *M/F in the church*

RCN deputies suggested two things: 1) to invest in thorough study of Scripture, even if quick answers will not be gained

that way; 2) to try take a number of short term (temporary) practical decisions. Rev WF Wisselink introduced the discussion with the foreign delegates by highlighting the importance of the mothers in the church. They have taught us to pray. This is what FRCA deputy ACB said on the floor of Synod.

Sisters, brothers delegates, deputies of Synod and deputies from churches abroad,

We will again express our appreciation to you, members of Synod, for the opportunity given to us to participate in your discussions in an advisory way. Thank you that we may assist you in your considerations on the road to your decisions in relation to the role of men and women in the church of Jesus Christ. Yesterday we promised you to explain, today, why we urged you to follow the line of the minority report. In order to make clear what is at stake we will go into more detail now.

We speak about women in the church of *Christ*. That means that all the members of His church share in Christ's anointing as prophet, priest and king. All those who belong to Christ hold the office of prophet and prophetess, priest and priestess, king and queen.

LD 12 confesses the *office of all believers* over against the Roman Catholic dichotomy of *clergy* and *laity*. All who are Christ's share in His anointing. There is no distinction between man and woman here. "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," says Paul to the Galatians in chapter 3:28.

And LD 21 understands by the *communion of saints* that "believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts." There is no distinction in the church between the so called clergy and laity, or between man and woman.

And yet, LD 19 highlights another aspect of God's gifts. Speaking about Christ's sitting at God's right hand and how His glory benefits us, we confess that by His Holy Spirit Christ pours out heavenly gifts upon His members. Since the Catechism refers to Eph 4:7-12 here we know that with "*these heavenly gifts*" it refers to those who equip the members of Christ's body.

There is a special, that is equipping office of spiritual government:

- government by preaching and teaching (office of the minister),
- government of oversight, including pastoral care (office of minister and elders),
- government of the ministry of mercy (office of deacons).

The question now is: what is the role of men and women in relation to these special offices of equipment?

Your deputies propose a two-track policy: a foundational study in the long term with respect to the doctrine of office, and practical decisions in the short term with respect to the involvement of men and women in the church.

However, the core question in relation to *both* tracks should be what we believe and confess about the government of Christ's church on the basis of Scripture. Also practical decisions you make in obedience to Scripture and bound to the Confessions. Going by train is only then comfortable if the two rails run parallel and are connected by the same beams.

And here we are in the heart of the theme for today as far as we are concerned. *What* does the Bible teach us about the position and office of men and women in the church?

The Reformed Churches confess in Belgic Confession, art 30 that the true church must be governed according to the Spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word. There should be a council of the church, including ministers, elders and deacons. All three offices are part of the spiritual *government* of the true church. That's what we confess. The Church Order then makes some arrangements between the council (with deacons) and consistory (without deacons). In the same article 30 of the BC we confess further that people should be elected to these governing offices according to the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.

So, our Reformed starting point is to listen in obedience to what Scripture, in particular the First Letter from Paul to Timothy, tells us about the government of Christ's church.

The rules of 1 Timothy 2 and 3 deal with the church, the power station of God's kingdom, ruled by Christ and run by His Spirit. We read about the church of Christ, to Whom Eve could work, bearing children (2:15), and for Whom women, the Lord willing, may still bring covenant children into His world. Chapter 2 ends with the increase of Christ's church, chapter 3 starts with the spiritual government of His church.

1 Timothy 2 and 3 deal with the church of Christ and the key-bearing office in His kingdom. It is not about the management of a company by capable men and women, but about the government of Christ's power station in His kingdom. In chapter 3:11 we read about women in the section about the deacons.

1 Tim 3:11: Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things (lit.: "women likewise reverent..."); Discussing the role of women in the church we will apply the two

Reformed hermeneutical rules: compare Scripture with Scripture + explain Scripture in its context.

Hermeneutical Rule 1: Compare Scripture with Scripture

- God created them, male and female, in His image (Gen 1:26-28)
- the 5 daughters of Zelophehad, who died without having sons, were given the possession of inheritance among their father's brothers (Numbers 27,36) as if they were brothers
- Huldah the prophetess announced God's judgement because of the violation of God's law (2 Chr 34:22ff)
- whether male or female, we are one in Christ (Gal 3:28)
- it was not only Aquila but also his wife Priscilla who explained to Apollos the way of God more adequately (Acts 18:2,18,26)
- in Rom 16:3 Paul called Priscilla his fellow worker in Christ Jesus
- in the same chapter Paul mentions Phoebe, a servant (in Greek: *diakonos*, which probably means here: a special delegate) of the church in Cenchrea
- Rom 16:6: Greet Mary who laboured much for us: "laboured", in Greek *kopiaio*: a verb which is often used in relation to mission work and congregational work (1 Cor 15:10)
- in Phil 4:2ff we read about Euodia and Syntyche who laboured with Paul in the Gospel with Clement and the rest of his fellow workers
- Acts 21:9: the daughters of Philip were prophetess
- 1 Cor 11:11, lit.: "Nevertheless, 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, but all things from God."
- Col 3:16: both to male and female apply: to teach in the congregation
- that women teach *in* the congregation doesn't mean that they teach the congregation as special office bearer with governing authority: 1 Tim 2:12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, for Adam was formed first, then Eve."
- compare 1 Cor 14: women do not participate in the teaching during the worship services but "are to be submissive as the law also says" (the Greek word for "submissive" (*hypotassomai*) doesn't say anything about the status of a person, but indicates the task and place someone has been given; Anderson)
- the rules of 1 Tim 2 and 3 deal with the church of Christ and the key-bearing office in His kingdom: elders and deacons are male according to these chapters

Hermeneutical Rule 2: Explain Scripture in its context

At least four explanations can be considered:

- a. “women” are female deacons as members of the church council of spiritual government of the church
- b. “women” are women in general
- c. “*their* wives” are the married wives of the deacons
- d. “*their* women” are the women who serve under the responsibility of the deacons

It's not the place here to consider the explanations. Moreover, many have done this before. For us it is important that the exegesis of 1 Tim 3:11 corresponds with the first hermeneutical rule. The explanation “*women*” are *female deacons as members of the church council of spiritual government of the church* is in conflict with that rule and therefore is out.

No matter how we explain 3:11 Paul doesn't speak about female deacons who are part of the ruling council of the church. Compare what John Calvin writes in his *Institutes*, book 4, ch 3.9: “The care of the poor was entrusted to the deacons. However, two kinds are mentioned in the letter to the Romans: “... the one sharing in simplicity; ... the one showing mercy in cheerfulness.” (Rom 12:8)” (p 1061).

This means that Calvin distinguished the governing and the caring deacon; regarding the caring deacon he says: “Of this sort were the widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy (1 Tim 5:9-10).”

The caring deacon we may call deaconess which is not the same as the female deacon. Regarding the Spiritual gifts Scripture teaches us that the Lord deploys the gifts of men and women differently: not because they have different gifts, or because they differ in value, but because *He* wants them to use *their* gifts in the church in different offices and in different ways.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord,

We probably would have said that women are better elders than men. My wife, Agdi, is a ten times better listener than most of the elders (including me) and sees through people ten times quicker than most elders do (again, including me). But the Lord decided for His good reason that some *men* should be called for the responsibility of church government, and that beside them (“side by side”) *women* should stand in *their* service in the church. She does not *cost* him an arm and a leg. She *is* his arm and leg. Yes, his rib, or in the words of Dr EA de Boer: “zijn zijde”: zijn zij.

Women are essential on the field of the deacons. And that is a huge field. And the task of emergency is a huge task with a huge responsibility: a task not free of obligations.

We pray for the blessing of the Lord for your considerations in relation to the special service of women, not in the council of the church, but actively involved.

And my mother, she's still praying, in heaven.

[Post Scriptum

This is what GS Zwolle-Zuid decided on Saturday 22nd June 2008: Not to set course for church unity with the NGK; i.e. not to intensify the discussion with the NGK aimed at church unity, but to continue the exploring conversations ("verkennende gesprekken") with the NGK, especially regarding the binding and subscription to the Confessions, and the NGK decision to open the special church offices for the sisters of the congregation.]

4. Excursion to Kampen

Thursday afternoon, May 29, we were welcomed at the RCN Theological University in Kampen. Prof dr H Yoo from the PCK-K (an alumnus of the TUK) delivered a guest lecture entitled *A Challenge of Evangelicalism and the Legacy of the Reformed Tradition*. His speech was a call to defend and promote the reformed heritage. A few quotations.

I look back with nostalgia to the 1980's of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. It is comparable to an inclination often noticed in immigrants. In a certain sense I am like an immigrant who visits regularly his hometown. Apart from this reformed background I cannot identify myself with anything else. To very open with you, when I come back in the Netherlands, I also feel myself a stranger here. An identity crisis!

In Korea, I have to warn against the shortcomings of Evangelicalism, but in the Netherlands I see it marching into my sister churches. Now that the reformed organizations are urgently needed in Korea, I observe nevertheless that here in the Netherlands they are changing their characters and activities.

The reformed tradition is so dear and precious to us that we have to hold fast to it at all costs. Therefore, we have also to be alert to protect it from every kind of challenge from within and from without.

Other highlights in Kampen were the inspiring lecture of Prof dr G Kwakkel on Gen 1:1 and the beautiful boat trip on the IJssel river. The connection: what Kwakkel explained about God's creation in class we experienced in God's creation on the boat.

5. Official FRCA speech for GS Zwolle-Zuid / Answer RCN (FRCA - Rev A Veldman)

Esteemed Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, one of your fellow sisters, I may pass on our warmest greetings. We are thankful that we can do this in person.

Over the last 10-15 years, at most instances there were representatives of your churches at our synods, whilst we have tried to be present in person as much as possible at your synods. Over the years, we have also experienced how important these personal visits are. It often prevents misunderstanding and it helps also in the periods between synods in being truly a hand and a foot to each other. We have experienced this in particular in the period leading up to Synod Amersfoort 2005. During that period, our deputies took a real effort to digest the reports of your various deputyships. They expressed concerns and made comments and in quite a number of instances, we could find these comments back the final decisions taken by Synod Amersfoort 2005. We thank you sincerely for listening to us. Thus, over the years we have been able to work together fruitfully in contending earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. We hope and pray that we can continue to do so, standing together on that same foundation of apostle and prophets, of which our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the church, is the chief corner stone.

As regards Synod Amersfoort 2005, in general we can find ourselves in the decisions taken by this synod, even though we still have concerns with respect to certain developments within your churches, as it is also reflected in the decisions taken by our latest synod, Synod West Kelmscott 2006.

Before highlighting some of these decisions, first I would like to mention that at this synod in West Kelmscott, we received also delegates of the Reformed Churches (Res.), who asked us to enter into a sister church relationship. Synod denied this request concluding that further investigation is necessary to decide whether or not the decision to 'liberate' was lawful. In this same decision it also reads that Synod wanted to defend the honour and reputation of our Dutch sister churches. This last element was added, since at Synod Kelmscott 2006, the delegates of the RCN(res) claimed you as our sister churches to be false churches. We realize there are concerns, as we also registered them in the past, e.g. with respect to fourth commandment, marriage and divorce, liturgical changes and others. And, as I mentioned it already, even your last synod did not take all these concerns away. That's why we are here to discuss these concerns further with you. And we hope and pray that once again we may find a listening ear.

So denying the request of the RCN(res), Synod West Kelmscott decided to continue sister relations with you as dear sister. As regards the

concerns of which some were taken away and others not, I would like to pass on part of the decision made by Synod West Kelmscott regarding you as our sister church. I quote from Art. 94 of Acts, where it read Synod decides:

- To accept Amersfoort's decisions as largely allaying our concerns. Yet deputies were mandated to monitor the application of this decisions.
- To express thankfulness that our Dutch sister churches could take a strong Scriptural stance regarding God's teaching against divorce and remarriage. Yet to express regret that, while the issue regarding the approval of divorces of 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.
- To express appreciation for not developing a separate order of worship on the basis of the *Ordinarium* texts and also for not releasing for use in the churches the order for the teaching-service as presented by the deputies. Synod expressed concern about the continuing proliferation and the content of the hymns from the "liedboek voor de kerken" and has mandated deputies to keep monitoring further decisions in this respect in accordance with Rule b) of the Rules of Sister Relations, which reads, "to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith".
- Synod also expressed concern 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 administration of the sacraments.
- As regards your contacts with the NGK, to encourage you 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.

These are some of the decisions with respect to the more detailed issues. More could be mentioned, but I leave it to this.

In general, there is thankfulness for the way in which together we could arrive at this point and we would like to travel onwards together in the same direction. We also hope that the decisions taken by this synod may reflect that same desire.

As to the mandate that our last synod gave to us as deputies, the expression '*monitoring further developments*' seems to be dominant in the decision that was taken by Synod Kelmscott 2006. As deputies, we had to come to grips with this mandate of our synod. The main reason is that we as deputies have to digest synod decisions and on the basis of these decisions have to examine whether a specific church upholds the

truth. Hence, we did not see it as our mandate to digest all that has been published by websites like Een in Waarheid, De Vijfhoek, Gereformeerd Blijven and others. At the same time, not being total strangers in the Dutch ecclesiastical world, one cannot ignore all these concerns as expressed at those various websites. Having been mandated to monitor further developments, as deputies we could not close our eyes for all these concerns either. In this context, we think of the interview with Prof. G. Harinck, the discussions about Reformed Education and the triangle between school, home, and church. We also think of the discussion regarding the sincere hindoe. When looking at all these things together, one cannot escape that change is taking place. Now in itself change is not wrong, as long as we still base these changes on the infallible Word of our faithful covenant God. It is on this basis that we indeed do have concerns, not simply with respect to the things I just mentioned, but also regarding some of the reports of your deputies.

Our main concern is what we would call a new way of hermeneutic thinking. This way of thinking already came to the fore in the rapport re marriage and divorce, when it says that the congregation guided by the Holy Spirit may establish also other reasons for divorce beyond what the Lord Jesus Himself has explicitly said about this issue. We do not deny that the Holy Spirit gives the church guidance in applying the norm of Scripture, as long as the outcome is not contrary to what Scripture teaches. Yet it is wrong when on the basis of this principle guidelines are made contrary to what Scripture clearly teaches. We cannot escape the impression that this way of thinking also dominates some of the other discussions current in your churches. The same way of thinking we also find reflected in some of your deputies reports, especially in the report of deputies for “Kerkelijke Eenheid” and the report of deputies regarding women in office. We find there a tendency, which has been detected also within your own circles, where the start is no longer made from the Word and from there on to decide how live, but instead the reversed order, whereby the starting-point is people's lives, so as to from there to consider the Word. We recognise in this the influence of the (postmodern) world in which we live, be it unnoticed and not necessarily caused by a deliberate choice. According to our impression we find this train of thinking reflected in some of the discussions we have followed, e.g. in the discussion regarding the offices in the church, in which there is a trend of adapting Scripture to today's praxis, instead of submitting today's praxis to the norm of Scripture. We should have greater trust in one another, even when someone expresses opinions, which are against what we have confessed together in The Three Forms of Unity. We refer here to the statement of the Board of Governors of the TU in response to the interview of Prof. G. Harinck: We continue to do our work together in confidence.

We mentioned already the report of deputies for “Kerkelijke Eenheid”. Your Australian sister has great difficulties with what is written in the majority report of your deputies. This report states that the Interim

Statement gives sufficient cause and confidence to intensify contact with the NGK, despite the fact that NGK has already adopted a report that opens the way for women in office. The question is: what is left to discuss further, if the other discussion partner has already made up his mind.

We recognize here a trend, which was already there for a long time, namely in your contact with foreign churches, accepting them as sister churches, even though certain aspects regarding how they uphold the confessions and the adopted church order were not completely ironed out beforehand, leaving room for different approach. We realize this room should be there, due to different traditions and background. This applies in particular to foreign churches. However, as far as the NGK is concerned, you know how the confession and the church order functions among them. In this respect, there has not been a radical change since 1967. How then is there sufficient cause and confidence to intensify the contacts? We plead with you to adopt the minority report of the deputies Kerkelijke Eenheid, which is much more balanced and warns not to steam ahead in untried waters.

Esteemed Brothers, much more could be said, yet time is running out. Ten minutes are by far not enough to tell you all what we would like to tell you. Yet we hope that our main concerns are clear. We also like to stress that we have said these things out of love for a beloved sister.

Just in closing, let me tell you that at our last synod, we have dealt at length with the relationship we have with you as sister. We appreciated it that in particular Rev. Niemeijer made a strong appeal on us to take your battle for the truth serious, and not to listen to slander, which is out there as well at times. Listening to this appeal – even though there was also sympathy for the brothers of the restored churches – we continued our relationship with you as sister, for you are dear to us. We pray that the Lord through His Spirit may give you wisdom but also courage to stand firm for the truth as we find it in Scripture and as it summarized in the Confessions adopted by our mutual bonds of churches. We also pray that on the foundation of this infallible truth also after this synod we may continue as sisters travelling together towards the New Jerusalem. Whilst you are still travelling, may God bless you in every respect.

Thank you.

(RCN – Rev J Plug)

Dear brothers, Antoon and Bert,

1. You came with full hands. Well, perhaps not full, but you were certainly not empty-handed. At least one of you is forever in my wife Marijke's good books for bringing her this: *Promite*. Does anyone know what this is? My guess: Karlo (Australia-raised). Dirk (New Zealand). And perhaps some of our brothers from Africa...?
2. *Promite* is as foreign to the Dutch palate as *zoute drop* is to the Australian. Yet there is an important point of comparison. Mixed with

its sweetness is a mighty proportion of salt. *Zoute drop* is for soothing the throat, an important gift in Holland's miserably rainy climate. *Promite* – a spread for toast and sandwiches – replenishes the salt which is removed from the body by the copious perspiration which takes place in a hot country. Both *drop* and *Promite* are an acquired taste. For most people a first acquaintance is highly unpleasant. But give it a chance, and you may well discover that you cannot imagine living without it.

3. The same may be said about words of warning. Very few of us are naturally inclined to appreciate them. We may well react allergically, as if stung by salt in sensitive areas. This is true on a personal level. It is also true in relations between church bodies. Yet the pain, the unpleasantness, is short-term. The word of God is true and apt: no discipline is pleasant at the time, but painful, Heb 12.11. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of peace and righteousness for those who have been trained by it. Our need for discipline, and our tendency to shy away from it, are both the result of the human condition. Sin. Our submission to discipline, and its wholesome effects on us are not our natural inclination, but fruit of the redeeming Spirit. An acquired taste, indeed.
4. You did not come empty-handed. Your churches have done their homework well. As you, their deputies, have done. Your words of greeting, your contribution to our discussions at synod, were not merely polite exchanges, but substantial. We have tasted your concern and hope to benefit from your insights. Your message was salty. And sometimes the salt stung. But it was not salt rubbed into open wounds, designed to hurt. On the contrary, it was clearly your intention to help us maintain that which the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of: you are the salt of the earth. Mindful of what He added: Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again... We sincerely thank you for that.
5. But perhaps we could give you something in return. It strikes me – as I also suggested at your previous synod – that that our mutual conversation is not as balanced as it might be. I offer you this observation tentatively, but with genuine concern. In my experience you are better at responding to concerns in our church life, than you are at sharing with us the challenges you face in your church life, and seeking our help with those. Ecclesiastical relations should be marked by reciprocity, it seems to me. And I observe that the discussion of concerns, also during this visit, is largely one-sided. Dare to divulge to us your struggles, reveal to us your vulnerabilities, seek our support in finding your way forward. Let us walk together, in a two-way partnership.
6. Brothers, I love my wife. As I ought to. She is in your debt, and so am I. The same may be said of our churches. Thank you for bringing us *Promite*. Please leave a little room in your suitcase for *zoute drop*.

6. Report on the visit to the RCN^r in 2008 AD

6.1 Meeting 17 May 2008

Preliminary note:

Earlier during the week, I was approached by phone by. Br. R. DeBoer from Hardenberg re the recent split that had taken place there, and his position as second scribe at synod, since he too had been suspended from his office as elder. The Friday evening prior to the meeting of May 17th synod replaced Br. de Boer by someone else, nothing was mentioned during the meeting in which I was present. I did not consider it appropriate to raise this item in a public meeting, since on the evening before this matters was dealt with in closed session.

This matter was discussed more generally in a meeting of your deputies with the deputies BBK of the RCN^r – see report there)

Rev. S. DeMarie, as chairman called the meeting to order by 10 am. We sung Ps. 33 : 1,2,5. He read Rev. 3, 14 – 22, whereafter he led in prayer. Next, he gave a meditation on the section of God's Word, which was read. A hearty welcome was extended, especially to the Australian delegate, who straightaway received the floor to address the meeting.

Address Rev. A. Veldman

Esteemed Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, I thank you for your invitation to attend one of the meetings of your synod. We would have loved to be here with two delegates, yet my fellow delegate who will be here later on this month joining me in attending the synod of our sister churches, could not stretch his time off work so long to make it also to this synod. Hence, I'm on my own today.

As regards the invitation received, normally we would not send delegates to a federation of churches with which we have no sister church relation. Yet in line with the decision taken by Synod West Kelmscott 2006, we thought it would be beneficial to be present in person, rather than sending you a letter. For the benefit of the delegates present at this synod, perhaps it would be good to put our decision regarding your churches in the historical context of 2006. May I do this by way of a little anecdote.

It's about 40 years ago, if I want to be completely accurate it was 39 years ago, that as a 19 year old high school student, living in Hoogeveen I attended many a session of the general synod who at time was meeting

in my home-town. When this synod came together on April 15, 1969, it faced the awkward situation of having to deal with two sets of credentials from the churches in the Regional Synod Noord-Holland. A committee was appointed to deal with this problem, during which time synod did not meet. It was in May 1969 that synod continued its meetings and made a decision to accept only one set of credentials. I can vividly remember, how during this debate delegates were discussing the issue with tears in their eyes, because of the pain in their heart.

You may wonder why I call this to mind today. The reason is, when the FRCA came together in synod in 2006, we also met with two set of delegates from the churches in The Netherlands, who both claimed to be the true church. On that day, as chairman of this synod, I was literally moved to tears, when on the morning of July 11th both sets of delegates rose to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity, whilst on the evening of that same day, one of the delegates of your churches literally called our sister churches a false church. Of course, they had to do this since they had broken away from a church they no longer could regard as a true church.

How did we as churches deal with this situation, especially in view of the fact that you as Reformed Churches restored made a request for sister church relationship and urged us to be more firm with our sister churches in The Netherlands, especially concerning deviation from the truth.

Your delegates may recall that lengthy discussions were held on the subject of the developments of church life within The Netherlands. Also within FRCA there is concern about these developments, and we did not hide this from our sister churches. In the period leading up to Synod Amersfoort 2005, our deputies have been very busy in digesting the reports of the various deputyships. They expressed concerns and made comments and in quite a number of instances, we could find these comments back in the final decisions taken by Synod Amersfoort 2005. In general, we could find ourselves in the decisions taken by this synod, even though we still have concerns with respect to certain developments within their churches, as it is also reflected in the decisions taken by our latest synod, Synod West Kelmscott 2006.

During Synod Kelmscott 2006, our deputies have tried to arrange a meeting between your delegates and the delegates of our sister churches, since we thought it was a unique opportunity to have talks face to face about the issues at stake. It's a pity, that from your side there was not much willingness for such a meeting. Even informally, it was at times hard for you to look each other in the eye. Brothers, even though since that time a lot of water has gone under the bridge, so to speak, and further developments within our sister churches may give you cause for even greater concern, we still believe that you should not let go off brothers and sisters, who still want to stand with you on that same foundation. We pray that those whose heart is bleeding for the truth may unite and do not go separate ways.

It's within this historical context that you must read the decision Synod West Kelmscott made regarding your request for sister church relations. Our synod decide – and I quote here literally from the Acts – *“Although we understand that the RCN (R) have concerns with the 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.....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 was lawful... 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...”* Synod made reference to the situation in Corinth, a congregation that surely also had it's problems. We as FRCA have met with a listening ear, when our deputies discussed concerns with our sister churches and so we question that in 2003 you had not yet come to the end of the road. It's on the information at hand at that time, that we could not accede to your request for sister relations.

At the same time, synod decided to maintain official contact with you, so that we can work for reconciliation between you and our sister churches on the basis of truth and love. We made this decision, since we hear in the voice of you as our brothers a strong desire to remain reformed. It is out of sincere appreciation for this desire that we want to continue contact with you, and perhaps in this way can be instrumental – if the Lord gives it – in the reconciliation between you and our sister churches.

Brothers, the Lord alone knows what the future hold, dark clouds may arise at the horizon, yet in faith we only have to live one day at the time. In that faith, we will attend the synod of our sister churches later on this month and again voice our concerns and we will plead with them to stand up for the truth. May the Lord hear this fervent prayer and on the only true foundation may He reunite those who since 2003 have gone separate ways. There are brothers out there who together with you dearly love the truth.

Synod Amersfoort 2005 has sent you an Appeal in which they express how the separation - being no longer united around the same pulpit, font and table - feels even worse than an amputation. They asked you and your ecclesiastical assemblies to consider their appeal before the face of God, and told you that they are prepared to explain their appeal to your Synod at any time. They made clear to you how they have given authority to their deputies for church unity (assisted by the moderamen of the Synod in Amersfoort Centre) to do this. They have been authorised to speak with you by means of an agenda, which would be drawn up mutually, in order to make recommendations to their next Synod. If necessary, they could even request the assembling of an interim extraordinary Synod. In all sincerity, they expressed the hope that the separation wouldn't turn out to be permanent, but that you both would search for and find each other as Christians and as churches. They

sincerely prayed for God's blessing over you and the wisdom of His Spirit in your considerations and decisions.

Brothers, do not forget this and therefore don't dig yourselves in an entrenched position, but reconsider your task also with respect to those brothers. If we as Australian churches can be instrumental in initiating this contact, we are willing to help you any time.

In conclusion, we wish you wisdom from above in your deliberations at this synod. We also pray that on the basis on the infallible truth of the living word of our faithful covenant God unity can be restored between those, who now have gone separated ways. Later on during the course of this month, I will say the same to the brothers delegates at the synod of our sister churches, urging them to have an open ear for the concerns addressed to their synod and in doing so to take a firm stand in the battle for the truth.

In this secularized world, where Satan relentlessly attacks the church and so many so-called Reformed churches have already deviated from the truth – in this battle we need one another, and so we pray that unity may be restored not at the cost of the truth, but to maintain this truth against the attacks made on it. May our gracious God help you here in the Netherlands and us in Australia to fulfil this task in faithfulness.

Thank you

Response Rev DeMarie

Rev. DeMarie responded saying how much they appreciated the brotherly bond with the brothers and sisters in Australia. The RCN^r have seen it as their duty, straightaway after the liberation in 2003 and 2004, to maintain and to seek contact with churches elsewhere in the world, who in truth want to follow the Lord Jesus Christ as the only head of the church. That's why we as churches consider it a very important obligation that the sister church relations, which there were before the liberation of 2003, should be continued on the basis of recognizing and acknowledging each other according to the norm of God's Word. That's why already in 2005 our mutual deputies have had contact, with subsequent correspondence following from this contact. The intention of this contact was to make clear from our side that we still regarded you as our sister, since the RCN^r are the legitimate continuation of the RCN.

The next section of the response was a review of the history prior to the liberation and why there was no other way than to call for a return to the truth and to break with which was no longer a true church. It was a reiteration of what has been said before and is recorded also in the speech delivered by Br. P. Drijfhout at synod

West Kelmscott 2006. It was also mentioned that with the recent developments within the RCN the gap has only grown wider.

Rev. DeMarie concluded his speech with a number of questions he would like me to respond to in the meeting.

1. Do you recognize some of the same problems, which in The Netherlands led to liberation, also with your churches. If so, which matters are these and how are you weighing/judging them?
2. What is your reaction at the brochure we sent you *“Do not take words away from this book of prophecy.”* Also, what is your reaction to Acts of GS Marienberg 2005-2006, in which the decisions of the synods of RCN 1993 – 2003 were dealt with?
3. How can we help you in coming to a proper judgment regarding the legitimacy of the liberation of 2003.
4. What is your position with respect to recent developments within the RCN.

Response Rev Veldman

Rev Veldman, in response, mentioned the following:

- a. I highlighted that the response I would give was personal, since I could not converse with a fellow delegate. I pleaded with them to consider this response in this light.
- b. Regarding Q 1 – I mentioned that one cannot deny that the battle is on worldwide and that Satan is attacking the church surely also in Australia. We too have our battle with the influence of the evangelical movement and slackness in the attendance of the second worship service. We too have breakdown in marriages and as a result marriages that end up in divorce. There are even different viewpoints within the FRCA on the matter of remarriage after divorce. Yet this has nothing to do with a matter of new hermeneutics. It would be an overstatement to say that the same problems that led to liberation in The Netherlands also play in a similar way in Australia. I also emphasized that we should be careful not to import these problems, by just making them our own. We live in Australia and we should not play The Netherlands.
- c. Regarding Q 2 – I mentioned that the content of the brochure did not differ much from what was said before and therefore did not really interact with the decisions of GS Amersfoort 2005. It literally mentioned the same things as mentioned in the letter of 4 Feb. 2005 written to our deputies. I referred to the extensive documentation of

our deputies regarding the meeting held with their deputies in 2005 (see our Acts) which interacted which this letter, on the basis of which Synod West Kelmscott could not conclude that the liberation was legitimate. It's obvious that there is a different taxation of the decisions of the synod of Amersfoort 2005. You ask us to reconsider our position, at the same time you do not really want to reconsider your own position. I highlighted that we speak here about the legitimacy of 2003 and not about what might happen as a result of recent developments.

- d. Regarding Q 3 - I explained our synod decision, highlighting also our mandate of monitoring recent developments. Hence, we would also speak with those who are presently very much concerned within the RCN (lib). Also, being present at this synod helps us in a clearer understanding of your view on matters. After synod Zwolle, we will look at the total picture. Regarding the legitimacy of the liberation of 2003, our next synod has to make a decision on this on the basis of the information available, yet the synod decision of synod West Kelmscott seems to say implicitly that it was too early, otherwise sister churches could have been offered.
- e. With respect to the last question, I mentioned that we too have our concerns about recent developments and that we would also mentioned this at the synod of our sister churches. At the same time, we will await the decisions of this synod.

This discussion took up the whole morning session and was continued after lunch. In this discussion I stretched very strongly not to forget the concerned brothers and sisters within the RCN and to keep trying to stay in contact with the RCN and not to refuse the outstretched hand as it was made by Synod Amersfoort 2005. I added that I would say the same to the brothers meeting in GS Zwolle-Zuid, when I would address them later on during the month of May.

Next, the report of deputies BBK was discussed. Amongst others, the following decisions were made,

To charge deputies

- 1. to continue in seeking contact with the foreign churches, since God calls us to unity on the basis of Scripture and confessions.

2. on the basis of God's Word to continue in warning these churches that keeping up contact with the RCN will have negative consequences for these foreign churches. Who supports injustice will receive injustice.
3. to intensify contact with other churches mentioned in the instruction.
4. to continue contact with the group of believers, which has made itself known as LRC in Sri Lanka.
5. to investigate what opportunities there still are to continue contact with the CRC after the decisions of GS Smithers 2007.

Regarding point 5, I pleaded with them to keep the door open and not close it completely, in a similar way as we kept the door open to you.

Finally, in the afternoon session synod also dealt with the contact with Hesteld Gereformeerde Kerk Nederland, these are churches from Hervormd origin, who did not join the PKN. A concept letter was adopted, in which unity was sought with these churches, yet the same letter also clearly stated that first certain stumbling blocks had to be removed. In very strongly language, there was a call to return to the truth first, a call for repentance. Voices within synod that queried whether it was wise to put all this in a first letter to these churches, almost as a pre-condition, before even a first meeting, were only a minority and by majority vote defeated.

In my farewell word, I wished the brothers God's blessing and wisdom from above in further discussions and decision making.

At 4 pm the meeting was closed in a Christian way.

6.2 Meeting 2 June 2008

Monday afternoon, June 2, 2008, your two deputies met with the deputies BBK of the RCN in Hasselt. Present were: (RCN) brs Admiraal, Drijfhout, Griffioen, Houweling and VandeNiet; (FRCA) brs AC Breen and Rev A Veldman.

Br Houweling, chair of the restored BBK, opened. We read from John 13, sang from Ps 95 and prayed.

Our first question was, "Why is it that many concerned people in the RCN when they have to liberate from the RCN will not join your church?"

The RCN deputies don't understand this because our confession says that all and everyone are obliged to join the true church and unite with it. They are convinced that the concerned RCN brothers and sisters have no other choice than to join the RCN.

Our second question, “Why is it that 3 churches of your very small bond of churches have already split?”

RCNr deputies mention the following reasons:

1. You can compare it with the immigrants to Australia. In the first years there was disunity amongst the people who were all strong characters and independentists. Then it is not easy to build a church together. You go through “the crisis of the youth”.
2. It’s almost a second nature of the new liberated people not to trust consistories. They had to fight against them for so many years. There is weed amongst the wheat which should be removed via discipline. Not all the intentions for the new liberation were pure at that time.
3. All our members were *against* the decisions of the RCN synods. Now they have to be *positive* and to build together and to trust each other. And that’s not always easy.
4. The last ten years our members were not accepted within the RCN. That means that there are no men within our churches who have the experience of having been an elder in the church. We lack experienced office bearers and ministers refused to liberate.
5. The last years there was no discipline in the RCN. Now the RCNr administers discipline again. That hurts people who were not used to it. Within the RCN everything was possible. There was no rope around the church. Now we have put electric barbed wires around the church. That hurts, but it is life saving. Especially for the youth. We give the antithesis meaning again.

Our third question, “What are you doing with the appeal of Amersfoort-Centrum 2005?”

For the RCNr deputies it is clear that they cannot comply with their request as long as they maintain their decisions which are in conflict with Scripture and confession. They compared it with the request of the synodical churches after the Liberation of 1944 to talk together. They have learnt from K Schilder who has said in that time that we only can speak about the official documents. Further, “many years we have appealed and they have not listened!”

They had also a question for us: “The problems in relation to the *antithesis* in your churches, are they in your churches only, or are

they consequences of the developments in the Netherlands and Canada?”

This is what we answered.

We don't have a problem with the *antithesis*. We recognise the *antithesis* or *enmity* of Gen 3:15. No one denies it. The schools emphasise the importance of the *anti-synthesis* which actually is the real meaning of what we call the *antithesis*. Students should understand how to defend and promote the anti-synthesis with the sinful world and the worldly sin: no compromise. As B Holwerda said: your being Christian in the world is not a *snoepreisje* (tour of indulgence) but a *dienstreisje* (tour of duty). Though we have no problem with the *antithesis* not everyone gives the same meaning to this concept. The understanding varies from “anti the world” (anti-thesis of the world) to “anti the compromise” (anti-synthesis of the church). As long as everyone understands that we are Christians in the world. In the Netherlands it's necessary to emphasise: “Yes, we are *in* the world, but certainly not *of* the world.” In Australia we sometimes like to emphasise: “Yes, we are not *of* the world, but certainly *in* the world”. Therefore our message is: Fight and be a light!

At the end of the meeting br Admiraal closed in prayer.

7. Report on Meeting with Brothers of “Gereformeerd Blijven”

The meeting was held on Tuesday 27 May at 2 pm in the Gereformeerde Kerk in Dalfsen.

Present were: Revs. H.G. Gunnink, E. Heres, E. Hoogendoorn, R. deWolf, P.J. Storm + Br. A. Breen and Rev. A. Veldman. There were apologies from Revs. A. Bas and R. deVisser.

Note:

In preparation for this meeting we had studied “Een balans...”, published by “De Vijfhoek”, the response to this ‘balans’ by Rev. B. Luiten in “De Reformatie” and the final response to this “open Letter’ of Rev. Luiten by Rev. A. Bas, also published in “De Reformatie”. After this study we had formulated a number of questions, which we wanted to put to the brothers.

7.1 Meeting 27 May 2008:

Rev. E. Heres opened the meeting in a Christian manner, after which we received the floor to ask questions, since we had asked for this meeting.

Upon mentioning “De Vijhoek”, we were informed that “Gereformeerd Blijven” as such is not related to “De Vijhoek”, even though some of the ministers have addressed meetings organised by “De Vijhoek”. However, “Gereformeerd Blijven” is a group of ministers, who on a completely personal basis keep contact with each other, since they are all 6 greatly concerned about the developments, that have taken place within the RCN (lib) over the last number of years. Yet in the taxation of these developments and how to respond to them they differ even among one another. Some feel very close to the RCN (res), others don't want to go in that direction at all.

Because of having no formal relations with “De Vijhoek”, we deviated from our planned route and did not put to them the questions we had prepared, instead we had a more general discussion about the developments with the RCN (Lib), sharing each other concerns. Amongst others the following concerns were mentioned:

1. First, we spoke about ‘listener-directed-sermons’, which often goes at the expense of the exegesis. Of course, we have to take into account to whom the sermons are addressed, yet do we start with the hearer or do we start God's Word. The impression is that lately the hearer becomes more important than what God's Word says. It becomes more and more difficult to say ‘Thus says the LORD...’ At the latest ministers’ conference, even Prof. C. DeRuyter must have said that recently sermons lack depth.
2. Other concerns are that there seems to be a tendency to be more friendly towards those who live in a homo-sexual relationship. Next, there is also a strong influence of the charismatic movement.
3. It was mentioned that in 90's of the previous century there came criticism on the ‘verkramptheid’ of life within the church, of this we now see the consequences in a total bursting of dams. It's not so much the younger generation that ask for all kind of new elements to be introduced, but more the age group between 30 – 45. In general, the young people are more positive, although they are easily

influenced when the generation above them introduces all these new things.

4. Next we spoke about the Harinck' interview. It was stated that which respect to the issues mentioned by Prof. G. Harinck, he actually has put into words what lives among more members within the churches. It was also mentioned that the actual interview was even worse. Prof. Harinck must have said "Ik houd het er nog uit..."
5. Regarding guests at the Holy Supper Table – in practise the synod decision is interpreted much broader. Some churches have simply a guestbook you can sign (adopted within Classis Utrecht) With respect to Art. 27 – 29 BC no longer the church is at the centre, but the bond with Christ. In 'Groot Zwolle' RCN, NGK and CGK work together, whereby the issue of women in office is no longer a breaking point, but rather a discussion point. This decision was made, even before synod had discussed the report "Kerkelijke Eenheid"

Some concluding remarks:

- a) We basically listened to what the brothers wanted to share with us. They all were greatly concerned and asked us for help. We mentioned that in our address at synod we would highlight some of these concerns: the Harinck interview, and also that we too see that there is a trend of adapting Scripture to today's praxis, instead of submitting today's praxis to the norm of Scripture. We also mentioned that we have great concerns about the majority report of the deputies for 'Kerkelijke Eenheid' and will advise synod to adopt the minority report. We even mentioned that we could foresee that in case the majority report would be adopted this could become a breaking point in our relationship with the RCN.
- b) Finally, we wished the brothers strength and wisdom from above, highlighting that when we put our trust in God, He will guide us. Also, in faith we may lay the course of the church in His almighty hands. The only thing we have to do is to be faithful today in the place where God has set us, without worrying about tomorrow, realizing that God's grace is sufficient for each day.

At 4 pm Rev. A Veldman closed the meeting in prayer.

AC Breen
Rev A Veldman

Report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches — Indonesia

1. Mandate

According to Article 58 of the Acts of Synod 2006, deputies were appointed and given this mandate:

1. To thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a) Regarding GGRI:
 - i) To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
 - ii) To continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance;
 - iii) To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
 - iv) 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;
 - v) To support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause;
 - vi) To financially support evangelist Benjamin 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;
 - vii) To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
 - viii) 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
 - ix) 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:

- i) To continue contact with the GGRC;
 - ii) To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance;
 - iii) 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;
 - iv) 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;
 - v) To financially support Rev Yawan Bunda 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;
 - vi) To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
 - vii) 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:
- i) To discontinue attempts to contact both Reformed Churches of the Philippines;
 - ii) To maintain deputies as an address so that if these churches are still interested in contact they can contact deputies.

2. Report regarding Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) *The Reformed Churches of Indonesia*

2.1 Regarding our mandate :*"To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules"* we may gladly report that we have done so. One of the privileges that members of our churches have enjoyed while visiting

Indonesia is the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and on one instance a minister was permitted to preach in a service wherein an evangelist was ordained as Minister of the Gospel. Also, a sister of the FRCA congregations and a docent of the Theological College in Waingapu, Sumba, were united in marriage. Two FRCA congregations also work together with two congregations of the GGRI in the work of mission.

- 2.2 We were also mandated "to continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance." Deputies have attended one synod and one conference. A report of each is attached. From the report of the visit to Synod, it should be noted that this GGRI Synod decided to continue to strive for ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. This GGRI Synod also appointed deputies to meet with deputies from the GGRC (Gereja Gereja Reformed Calvin) and the GGRM (Gereja Gereja Reformasi Musyafir) to speak about the possibility of unification between the GGRI and the GGRC/M.

To understand some of the recommendations that were reached at the 2008 conference in Kalimantan Barat, the reader should be aware of the fact that because of the vast distance between some of the provinces of Indonesia, there are three separate federations of GGRI in Indonesia—one in the Provinces of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), one in Papua and one in Kalimantan Barat (formerly Borneo). Each of these federations has its own synods. Currently, the FRCA have only sister relations with the GGRI – NTT. We have asked ourselves why this is so, and have concluded that in all likelihood, it is because this is the federation which is closest to the majority of the FRCA churches. We deputies of the FRCA would likely have encouraged the churches to pursue sister church relations with all three of these federations, but a decision taken at the conference makes this superfluous. The conference delegates from all three GGRI federations resolved to propose to their respective forthcoming synods to form one national federation of GGRI, having one synod on a three-yearly basis. The recommendation also includes each province forming a Regional Synod, which various classes in each Region. If the forthcoming Synods of the three federations of GGRI agree to form one federation, the FRCA will have, whether by default or by decision, a sister church relationship with this single federation of GGRI. Judging by

the spirit that prevailed at the conference, this recommendation will likely be accepted, and a single federation formed by 2012.

In the past these three federations have each supported their own college for the training of ministers. Sadly, the college in Boma, Papua has not been operating for some time already. The college in Bengkayang, Kalimantan Barat is supported by some churches in the Netherlands, and has a beautiful facility (which unfortunately is situated in a very remote and hard to access location). The delegates at the conference resolved to maintain their own theological colleges (if possible) for the initial training that equips men to be evangelists. These local colleges would coordinate their curriculum, so that those students who wish to pursue a Bachelor's Degree of Theology, can complete their preliminary studies at their local theological college, and thereafter attend the one theological college that would offer this higher degree. It was resolved to have the college in Sumba, NTT offer this higher degree.

It was heartening to hear the firm resolve of the delegates of the GGRI to have their evangelists and ministers trained in a college that is established and governed by the GGRI churches, rather than have them attend an interdenominational theological college, such as SETIA.¹

In general, deputies feel that sending delegates to the synods and conferences of the GGRI is well worth the time and money. The GGRI are very appreciative of the support that we can offer them, and are eager to ask for our input and work with it. While at the conference, the delegates from Kalbar and especially from Papua lamented the fact that we did not have relations with them, and that we do not offer them the same support that we offer to the GGRI-NTT.

- 2.3 Synod also gave us as deputies the *mandate "to support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches."* As deputies grow in their understanding of developments in the GGRI in general, they are able to ask questions and offer advice on different matters. However, there were no specific requests for support for activities such as seminars that would build up the reformed character of

¹ At which one of the ministers from our sister churches in the Netherlands teaches, who tries to steer the college in a more reformed direction.

these churches. The churches in the Netherlands still send Rev J. Boersema on a regular basis, and he offers them the support which they require in this respect.

- 2.4 A part of our mandate was *“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.”* This support was given for the first of the past three years. However, the Board of the Theological College now provides all financial support for Rev. Njuka, and thus this support is no longer required. We recommend that this not be added to the new mandate given to deputies.
- 2.5 We were also given the mandate *“to support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause.”* This would undoubtedly be the largest role that we have played in supporting the GGRI. We have continued to support the operating costs for theological training. This involves largely the stipend of the docents. However, some support has also been given to enable the relocation of the college from the mountain village of Waimarang to the capital city of Waingapu. In the opinion of us deputies, this was a good and necessary move.

The present location is temporary. They are using the church building of the Kalu church, and have built some dorms beside the church to house the students. We have assisted in the costs of building these dorms, which amounted to approximately \$10,000 AUS. It is expected that these dorms will still be useful even if the College is relocated to a permanent location, since the a property for the college is expected to be quite close to the Kalu church.

We have been encouraging YASTRI (the board of the Theological College) to purchase suitable land for some time now. To us, the progress in this matter is frustratingly slow. One of the reasons given is that there is not much suitable land available, and that which is available is very costly. There has also been some disagreement regarding the relocation of the college, and so perhaps not as much effort has gone into seeking land as could have been if there was good harmony. However, we continue to offer positive encouragement.

We suspect that when land is found, the FRCA will be asked to support a good portion of its purchase, as well as the

construction of the necessary buildings, since the Indonesian churches struggle already to simply maintain the ministry of the gospel in the local churches, which includes the building of church and manse and the payment of the minister's stipend. Because of the slowness in purchasing land, we have accumulated \$90,000. Although this seems a large amount, more will undoubtedly be required to purchase land and erect suitable buildings for the theological college. We can expect suitable land near Waingapu to cost approximately \$35,000 to \$55,000. The estimated cost of building for the Theological College(depending on size and number of rooms) could range from \$90,000 to \$120,000. Besides this there will also be the cost of library books etc. Therefore we recommend continuing to seek the same assistance from the churches in the future as we have in the past.

Deputies feel that it would be beneficial for synod to offer the GGRI greater involvement of the FRCA deputies in the monumental task of upgrading both the educational level and the buildings of the theological college. This might require more frequent visits, but such costs would be a small part of the overall costs of building up the college.

We would also recommend that deputies be given the mandate to discuss with the Dutch deputies the importance for the GGRI to maintain their own college to thoroughly train their ministers, and to encourage and work with the Dutch sister churches in supporting this college as much as possible.

- 2.6 Assigned to us was the mandate *“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.”* Since prior to the last synod we had supported the study of Rev Yan Parialaminya of the GGRI, it was decided to give first opportunity to Rev Yawan Bunda of the GGRC. After many attempts to do so, it became evident that Rev Yawan Bunda would not be coming to Australia for reasons of which we are not entirely certain. Health may have been one factor. We plan to have Evangelist Benyamin Rohi come to Australia mid 2009. The GGRI deputies and YASTRI (the board of the theological college) requested to have Rev Paulus Pakereng

come to Australia to study English at Phoenix English Language Academy, and to become acquainted with church life. Although Synod had not mentioned him by name in our mandate, we decided to approve this request for several reasons. First, Rev Yawan Bunda was not coming, and so Rev Pakereng could take his place without any unexpected cost to the churches. Furthermore, YASTRI mentioned that as docent in the theological college, Rev Pakereng would greatly benefit from formal English lessons. Lastly, supporting a docent of the college was within the scope of the mandate given to deputies to support the Theological College.

- 2.7 The mandate was given to us *“to provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.”* Some support was given to Rev Pila Njuka for some computer and internet costs, since he was the only one that has access to internet at home, and a lot of communication between Australia and Sumba passed through him. But YASTRI felt that this should be a cost supported by them, and no further support was given. We anticipate that when and if internet becomes available in the area where the theological college is now situated, the church office of the GGRI may wish to set up communication possibilities.
- 2.8 Synod assigned us the task of monitoring and reporting developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. We were also to encourage these churches, where possible, to fully practise the unity they already recognise. This has been done on several occasions. However, from what we could ascertain, the GGRI deputies have only sent one letter to the GGRC requesting dialogue on unification, to which no response was reportedly received. Judging by the attempts made to pursue unification, we do not see an earnest desire and determination on either side to work for unification, and we feel at a loss as to how we can stimulate this more than we have.²
- 2.9 In response to the mandate “to encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 4,5,6,7 above” we may report that the churches have been very supportive of our activities. We have kept the churches informed of the state of our finances by sending a yearly budget and statement of our accounts.

² Cf. Point 4 regarding the GGRC on the following pages.

Deputies also recommend that newly appointed deputies also receive a mandate to keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Canadian sister churches regarding the Indonesian churches, since it would be beneficial for all churches involved.

3. Recommended mandate regarding the GGRI:

We recommend that synod appoint deputies with the following mandate:

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 support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause. In light of the importance for the GGRI to maintain their own college to thoroughly train their ministers, deputies should encourage and work with the Dutch sister churches in this matter as much as possible. Also, to offer additional support of the FRCA deputies in the monumental task of upgrading both the educational level and the buildings of the theological college
5. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and to familiarize themselves with the Australian churches for three months subject to a financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches.
6. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.
7. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to achieve federal unity with the GGRC.
8. To keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Canadian sister churches regarding the Indonesian churches.
9. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 4,5,6,7 above.

4. Regarding Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC) *The Calvin Reformed Churches*:

- 4.1 We were given the mandate to continue contact with the GGRC. From our side, we have contacted the GGRC by having one of our deputies meet with the deputies of the GGRC in February 2007. Also, two deputies passing through Kupang on the way to the 2008 GGRI Conference in Kalbar arranged to meet with the deputies of the GGRC on their way back from the conference, but the GGRC deputies made bookings for other activities for the arranged evening, and so sadly the meeting did not eventuate. The only contact from the GGRC to FRCA deputies concerned point 5 of our mandate below. It would seem, although we could be mistaken, that the GGRC has little desire or sees little value in having contact with the FRCA for some reason which is not clear to us. We would recommend that the next deputies be mandated with the task of assessing whether the GGRC still desires and values continued contact with us.
- 4.2 Synod gave us the task *“to continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance.”* We received an invitation to attend the Synod of the GGRC, but this synod was convened with considerable speed, and we were not able to make the necessary arrangements in the time that was available.
- 4.3 Deputies FRCA were *“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.”* Although this offer was extended to the GGRC, no requests for support for this purpose were received. They have been active in conducting seminars for their elders, evangelists and ministers, and do not appear to require the support of the FRCA. Therefore we would recommend that this be deleted from the mandate given to the next deputies.
- 4.4 We were *“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.”* This matter arose

during the visit of our deputy in January 2007, and was also on the agenda for the cancelled meeting planned for August 2008. From what we can observe, there have been no real attempts and appears to be little desire to work towards federal unity the GGRI. Furthermore, we have not been informed about any invitation from the GGRI to include Rev Yonson Dethan in the theological training in the theological college of the GGRC.

We would recommend that this part of the mandate be changed for the newly appointed deputies, so that the FRCA encourages the GGRC to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, especially in view of the anticipated unification of the three federations of the GGRI.

4.5 Synod mandated us *“to financially support Rev Yawan Bunda 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.”* Information initially received indicated that Rev Yawan Bunda suffered from ill-health and was not able to come to Australia. After a visit in Feb 2007 it became clear that Rev Bunda's health had been restored thanks to medication provided by the Canadian churches, and we from our side invited and did what was necessary to enable Rev Bunda come to Australia. When we received no news of his anticipated coming, we sought further clarification. We were informed that “Rev. Yawan Bunda did get his passport ready since Juli/August 2008. The problem was that he did not go to have his medical check up on time for his visa arrangement. He will not be able to get his visa without the medical doctor recommendation. “ Thus deputies have now informed the GGRC deputies that the offer for Rev Yawan Bunda to come to Australia has now lapsed. At this time deputies do not make a renewed recommendation that students/ministers from the GGRC be invited to Australia.

4.6 We were to provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues. No request for support of this nature was received, and there does not seem to be a need for such support either. Means of effective communication are in place already, and we can contact the chairman of the deputies easily by way of email or phone. We recommend

that this item also be dropped from the mandate given to new deputies.

- 4.7 Deputies were also given the mandate 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. As mentioned previously regarding the GGRI, the churches have been very supportive of the deputies' activities.

5. Recommended mandate regarding the GGRC:

We recommend that synod appoint deputies with the following mandate:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC, and assess whether the GGRC still desires and values continued contact with the FRCA, and whether there is still value for the FRCA to have contact with the GGRC.
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance.
3. To encourage the GGRC to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, especially in view of the anticipated unification of the three federations of the GGRI. Also, to monitor and report on developments regarding developments in this area.
4. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 2 above.

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

Synod decided "to discontinue attempts to contact both Reformed Churches of the Philippines; and to maintain deputies as an address so that if these churches are still interested in contact they can contact deputies. " We have not received any communications from these churches. Therefore we recommend that this item be deleted from the mandate given to the new deputies.

Appendix 1: Opening day of the Theological College in Sumba of our sister churches in Indonesia.

On the 1st of August 2006 the Theological College of our sister churches in Indonesia officially opened again after many years of being closed.

Our sister churches in Indonesia have been longing for this day for many years already and this event gave much joy to our brothers and sisters in Indonesia.

The Theological College is also being supported by our Dutch sister churches as well as by the Australian sister churches.

Each congregation in Indonesia also support some of the cost of the College by way of assessment of the number of communicant members they have. We do need to keep in mind that most members of our sister churches in Indonesia live below the poverty line.

The opening day also consisted of a church service which was lead by Rev Njuka.

The Text of the sermon was taken from the book of Luke chapter 10:1-12. The theme he used for the sermon was: God the owner of the harvest sends out His workers into the fields to bring in the harvest.

In his sermon Rev Njuka also mentioned that the Lord sends out His workers into every city and place. The church needs to be busy sending out workers not just to the remote villages but also into the cities. He also pointed out that the workers bringing the gospel should be working full time harvesting the field. They should not be busy most of the time doing other work to support their family. Therefore the congregations were also encouraged to see their responsibility in giving liberally to support the workers in the harvest. The workers of the harvest were also told that they were being sent out as sheep among the wolves, so they may also face opposition in their work, but they needed to trust in God and His protection.

The task of the Theological College was to train young men in the scriptures so that they could be well prepared and equipped to work in God's harvest, the harvest is plentiful but the workers few.

After the church service was finished there was various addresses given by Yastri the Committee for the Theological College as well as from the Government and from the Indonesian sister churches.

After all the speeches were given we shared a delicious meal together to celebrate this joyous occasion.

As deputy for contact with Indonesia, I was asked to pass on the greetings from the sister churches in Australia, as I had planned to be in Sumba to visit the mission work being supported by the FRC of Rockingham.

Greetings passed on at the opening of the Theological College in Waiamarungu.

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters in God our Father in Heaven, at our last synod in Australia held this month, Rev Pramalina passed on the greetings from the GGRI. He also explained to the synod, that the Lord willing the theological College from the GGRI would be opened again on the 1st of August this year.

In his address he also invited the synod to send a delegation from the FRC of Australia to witness this important event.

The deputies for relations Churches abroad (section Indonesia) requested me to pass on our greetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Last week all the Free Reformed Churches of Australia remembered the opening of the Theological College in prayer. They thanked the Lord, our Father in Heaven, for making this event possible. The Theological College has already been closed for many years, and the opening of this College is a very important day for the Churches in Indonesia.

Studying Theology for the young men of the church is very important, we know this because God gave the command to the church, to be busy with preaching God's Word to His people and to preach His Word to those who as yet do not believe in Him.

In the book of Romans chapter 10: 11-15 the apostle Paul writes "For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him 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!"

Each synod of the GGRI since the Theological College in Waiamarunggu has closed, has had the topic of the Theological College on the agenda.

In the discussion at synod level about the Theological training of young men, the delegates from the FRC of Australia were able to hear through these discussions that the GGRI see this as very important, and that they are very eager to teach Reformed Theology. We thank our Father in Heaven for this.

The Free Reformed churches of Australia also understand and know that the opening of the Theological College is very important and needs to happen. For this reason the churches in Australia sponsored brother Pila Njuka (now Rev Njuka) to travel to Hamilton Canada to study Theology over there. During the time we sponsored brother Njuka to study in Hamilton Canada, it was our hope and prayer that one day, brother Pila Njuka would be appointed lecturer at the Theological College.

This day makes us very glad and thankful. Brother Pila Njuka studied diligently while in Canada. Brother Pila Njuka passed all his exams and was then called by the church of Kataka and was ordained as minister.

Synod Kalu last year appointed Rev Doko, Rev Pila Njuka, Rev Paulus, and Rev Huki to all become lecturers at the Theological College.

Yes our Father in Heaven has blessed the GGRI with faithful men who are able to teach God's Word to other young men, so they can also be sent to preach God's Word.

May God bless the opening of the Theological College, and give wisdom and understanding of God's Word to those who will teach at the College. So that they in turn can teach Reformed Theology based on God's Word. May God also give strength to those young men who desire to become ministers of God, so that they can be faithful workers in God's field.

On behalf of the deputies I want to again express our thanks for the invitation to this important event. It is our prayer that we are able to continue to work together as sister churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thankyou.

Translated copy of greetings passed on by Brian Bosveld at the opening of the Theological College in Waiamarunggu Sumba.

Appendix 2: Report on visit to conference Kal-Bar August 2008.

I was delegated by the deputies to travel to Kalimantan to visit the conference of Indonesian churches. We received no agenda regarding the topics that would be discussed. Therefore I received no mandate other than to visit the conference and report back to the deputies.

Rev van Delden was delegated by Rockingham consistory to visit the mission field in Sumba around the same time as the conference so we decided to combine a trip to Sumba and to Kalimantan. Rev van Delden accompanied me as a delegate to visit the conference.

While we were in Sumba we met with the docents of the Theological College and had arranged to meet with Yastri as well. Unfortunately this meeting was cancelled due to most members not being able to attend this planned meeting.

Meeting with docents:

Rev Njuka reported that YASTRI had agreed to move the Theological College from Waimarangu to Waingapu. Arrangements were made to build some rooms at Kalu to accommodate the students, and to complete the church building of Kalu (fit the doors and windows) so that for the time being this facility could be used until a property could be purchased and a new school built.

As soon as the building had begun and plans were finalized YASTRI then said to stop the planned building and continue to teach at Waimarangu until a new property and buildings are built in Waingapu. This caused quite some tension between the docents and YASTRI. The docents in response threatened to resign from teaching at the College. As deputies we reminded the docents that they could not act in this way. They needed to listen to YASTRI as this is the body appointed by synod to run the College. If the docents felt that things were not going well, they should report this to the next synod via their church, or 2 classes needed to call a special synod to resolve this matter. It is best however to try and work things out together with YASTRI and perhaps have a good outcome.

We also sensed that the docents had given up on Theological training in Sumba as Rev Pila Njuka also suggested that perhaps it was best after all to close the College and send the students to Kalimantan. He had heard that they had just completed a beautiful building. They would consider a recommendation at the conference concerning the future training of the Theological students. As deputies we reminded

them that they should not make proposals direct to the conference as it is up to their synod to deal with this matter.

As deputies we tried to "light a fire" under YASTRI and the docents to be serious about Theological training and reminded them of the importance of this training "by the Church, for the Church, from the Church." We again reminded them of their synod decision and that as Australian churches we want to support them with this decision.

After further discussion the Docents got excited about the work and came with a suggestion to look at a number of pieces of land which may be available. We looked at three different pieces of land. One we felt to be a very good location. After further investigation this piece of land is owned by a Chinese person and the asking price is approximately \$35,000.00. Market value should be around \$20,000.00. This piece of land is one km from Kalu church and is on the main road, but it is only just over 1000 m². This will be large enough for the College building, but too small to include accommodation rooms for the students.

As deputies we still feel that this property should still be considered and that for the time being the new rooms built at Kalu could be used for accommodation. Later another property could be found within walking distance from the College to build student rooms.

Later in our report from the conference we will deal with this matter of Theological training again.

On our way to Sumba we travelled via Kupang for two nights. While there we tried to meet with Rev Johnson Dethan and the deputies but unfortunately he could not make it. We therefore made arrangements to meet with Rev Johnson Dethan on Monday evening, August 25th when we returned to Kupang, and before we left for Kalimantan via Jakarta early Tuesday morning. When we arrived back in Kupang on August 25th, we contacted Rev Johnson Dethan to confirm our meeting with him, but he informed us that he could not make it because earlier that day he had been asked to lead a bible study service from 8pm to 10pm. He said if we wanted to meet with him, we could come to the bible study evening and if there was any time left we could always meet together after that. We felt that Rev Johnson Dethan was not really interested in meeting with us, since he was aware two weeks prior to this evening that we would only be in Kupang for that one evening and that we would fly out again at 6am the next day. As a result of this we did not meet with Rev Johnson Dethan or their deputies.

Kalimantan Barat

We arrived at Kalimantan at around 12 noon on Tuesday, August 26th, and were greeted at the airport by Rev Max. The trip from the airport to the conference took five hours. When you first leave the airport the city is very clean and you think the churches on this island are better off financially than the churches in Sumba. How wrong we were! The further we travelled from the city centre the poorer the villages became. Although the churches are a little better off than the churches in Sumba there is still a lot of poverty among the church people of the GGRI. Historically the Dutch always did mission work where the gospel had not yet been brought, which meant remote places.

We arrived safely in Benkayang around 6pm and received a warm welcome from all those at the conference. Over the next 5 days we made many new friends and really felt one in faith with the delegates from Papua, Kalimantan and the NTT.

The conference had already started the day before we arrived. The moderamen were selected and the agenda had been decided. Although this is only a conference it is run and arranged just like a synod. The conference had just closed for the afternoon and dinner was being prepared.

After dinner the conference opened again and we were given the opportunity to introduce ourselves and all the other delegates introduced themselves. We were then requested to pass on the greetings from the Australian churches. Since we only just arrived and were not aware that we would be given opportunity to address the conference I just passed on Christian greetings to the conference and asked if we could be given opportunity to address the conference on another evening to give ourselves some time to prepare.

The moderamen of the 9th conference of the GGRI churches consisted of:

Chairman: Rev Yosias Ndiken (from Papua).

Vice chairman Rev Yan Piamalinya (from Sumba).

Secretary 1. Rev Ferdi Tipa Kaya (from Sumba).

Secretary 2. Ev Klemen Ay.S.Th (from Kalimantan).

We report as accurate as possible keeping in mind that there was a lot of outside noise from rain and wind, and the people seem to talk so soft it was difficult to hear everything. It was good Rev van Delden came along because four ears are better than two and between us we could follow most of the discussion.

Tuesday evening:

Topic: STTRI (Theological School Indonesia)

Although the topic was Theological training the discussions was more about support received or not received. There seemed to be a lot of confusion from the different churches in Indonesia who they should address for support.

The delegates from Papua also expressed their disappointment in the way they feel let down by the Dutch churches. The Theological school has been closed down because they no longer receive support and they would dearly love to see their lower level College open again. Rev Groen (minister employed by Litindo and supported by the Dutch churches to translate books into Indonesian) explained the history of contacts between Holland and Indonesia.

The Dutch churches began their mission work in Indonesia on three different locations, NNT, Kal-Bar and Papua. From the being the mission work in Kal-Bar was undertaken by one classis called Friesland Zending. FZD. It was this classis that has continued to support Kal-Bar with all the mission activities including the building of the College. This is becoming more difficult as the churches in this classis have all become much smaller in size. Recently the Dutch churches have grouped a lot of their work into different deputies. BBK (Betrekkigen Buitenlandse Kerken =Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad) and DVN (the Verre Naaste = The Distant Nieghbour). As a result it was hoped that contact would continue via BBK and any financial support would be arranged via DVN.

BBK is busy with translation work. It is not a servant of DVN. It does not work under DVN. It does not receive instructions from DVN. Nor visa versa.

The building of the College in Kal-Bar was funded by the FZD. This did not come via DVN. At the moment DVN has no plan's of any building projects or projects to help farmers.

In the discussion we also learned that when invitation are sent to the Indonesian churches and no offer to support financially to attend these synods the Indonesian churches feel these are empty invitations as they can't afford to pay for travel expenses themselves. Rev Groen explained that the invitations are genuine, but they can't pay for delegates each time. On many occasions other sister churches who can afford to travel themselves also don't attend but send a letter of greetings, the Indonesian churches can do the same if they can't attend.

Conference receives as information:

BBK will inform Kal-Bar and Papua how they work. (The churches in NTT are familiar with this already). BBK has church contact, but is not a body for financial help.

The Dutch synod only made a decision about church relations with Kal-Bar, they made no decision about Papua. Rev Groen did not know why. Papua always remembers the Dutch churches. How could Holland forget Papua? Holland did wrong!

Closing at 9-30pm. Reading Ephesians 6

Wednesday 27-08-08:

Devotions by Rev Groen.

Topic: How to go forward with Theological training for all three bonds of churches within Indonesia.

Rev Pila reminded the meeting that according to the Church Order Article 18 the church should if possible arrange theological training "from the church by the church for the church."

As docents they put a proposal forward to discuss the possibility to have one Theological College for all three bonds of churches. In their proposal they said that they should first discuss the principles, and if they agree to one College then they could speak of where the College should be located.

The delegates from Papua were very much in favour of this proposal because at present they had no College and desperately wanted to have a College again.

The Delegates from Kal-Bar seemed to be interested in this proposal as long as the College would be established in Kal-Bar. (They just completed a new building and thought it would be a waste not to use it)

Rev Groen mentioned not to get stuck on where. First they had to decide to work together and then decide where. He also mentioned not to worry too much about the new building which was just completed because this could always be used for office bearer training or normal school.

Another option that was considered was to have a Theological College in each area up to level D3 (Diploma 3) and all use the same curriculum. Then those who want to receive their S1 level (Bachelors) could complete the last two years in one location.

Another option was to choose a more central location, perhaps Bali so that no one bond is favoured. After much discussion it was felt that

this was not a good option since it would be much more difficult to supervise the College, and no churches would benefit from having the College in their midst.

After spending one and half days discussing this topic it was decided to choose Sumba as the best location. A new committee was formed from two members from each bond. This committee is try and implement this decision. This committee would meet together in Bali during the month of October to start organizing this combined College.

Rev Groen also made the following remarks: He mentioned that he is not speaking on behalf of BBK or DVN or Litindo but as a friend in Christ. He mentioned that he was very happy to listen to the discussions. The decision has to be made by the GGRI churches themselves. He mentioned that at the moment DVN, BBK, or Litindo had no money set aside for this, but this should not stop the GGRI to continue to work with their plans. They should make a good budget and trust that the Lord will provide. The GGRI should not worry too much about status or money but trust that God will open the way which is good for the churches. He also reminded Kal-Bar not to think their new building was a waste for it could still be used for other activities. Pray and work and look to God for support.

As deputies we reminded them that they should come with a well written agenda outlining what they plan to achieve at this meeting with a budget so that we could present this to our deputies and the Dutch churches could also give this request consideration.

Closing by Rev Doko.

Thursday 28-08-08:

Devotions by Australian delegates (in Indonesian).

Topic: Should we continue to have conferences every 4 years or should we become one bond of churches and have national synods instead of these conferences?

A lot of consideration was given to become one bond of churches, especially as you look at the nature of these conferences. Over the years the conference has become almost like a synod. They make recommendations to each bond but almost in the way of a decision. At the time when these conferences were first organized back in 1976 Papua did not even have classis meetings.

Most of the day was spent talking how to go forward to organize this conference to become a synod. Rev Groen reminded the conference that this meeting was still only a conference. They could not make a decision to have the next conference as a synod, but could only come

with a recommendation to each bond of churches suggesting that they come to an agreement regarding this topic at each one of their next synods.

GGRI Kal-Bar would have their next synod in 2009, GGRI NTT would have their next synod in 2010, and GGRI Papua would have their next synod in 2010.

It was decided that this conference would make a recommendation to each bond to decide to become one bond and to hold their first National synod in 2012. At this synod they could then discuss division into classis and regional synods.

Consideration was given to cost: if there is a National synod every 4 year there would be no extra expenses compared to a conference.

Topic: Church order:

A lot of the Indonesian language in the church order book is bad Indonesian, Letindo has already agree to fix up the translation of this book when the Indonesian churches are ready for this. Letindo will not go through the book and make recommended changes, which need to be done by the churches themselves.

The revised church order book should suit all 3 bonds of churches not just GGRI NTT, so it was generally agree to continue to look at the church order book and make the final copy to be approved by the National synod. (This is not a decision but consideration)

Topic Church Logo:

Much time was discussed about church logo. This seems to be an important subject to them. Rev van Delden tried his best with his artistic talent to draw some pictures but he ended up embarrassing himself and was encouraged to keep his full time ministry work.

Topic Setia College:

Rev Boesema had recommended that the students be sent again to SETIA as a new College was being opened. (I think this was to be in Kupang). He informed them that SETIA is Reformed in it's teaching and that the Lectures who were charismatic no longer teach there. At the moment Rev Mak is teaching the other lecturers Reformed Theology so that the teaching over time will become more Reformed. SETIA wants their docents taught in Holland.

Discussion on this topic was postponed till tomorrow.

The Australian delegates were then given opportunity to pass on the greetings from Australia.

As Rev Groen was leaving this evening he passed on his greetings and hoped that his input would be of benefit to the church gathering work in Indonesia, and he apologized for any wrong words he may have spoken.

Closing 11pm.

Friday 29-08-08:

Opening by Kal-Bar .

Topic Setia:

Today the delegates seemed braver to express their true feelings regarding Setia.

From Kal-Bar: Rev Groen or the Dutch churches may think SETIA wants to be reformed, but in truth they don't want to be reformed. They only want to be what people want them to be. If the people from the charismatic side come to visit the College then SETIA puts on a charismatic shirt, but if the Reformed people come to visit, then SETIA put on the reformed shirt. (These comments made by a minister who studied in SETIA).

Papua: We need to guard the pulpit from false teaching. The previous day we made a decision to have one Theological College for all the churches by the church. So now we need to follow through with this thinking and no longer send student to SETIA. Before this conference we could never come to this decision to have one College, but now we should all put in a big effort to make this work.

NTT: We already have a College and we are working on being registered before the first students have completed their studies so they will be able to graduate with an S1 degree. So we don't need to send any more students to SETIA.

Together they could all agree no longer to use the SETIA College but to send all students who want S1 training to go to Sumba. (They were careful how to word this decision because they did not want to upset Holland).

Topic: Speaking in tongues:

Papua wanted to discuss this topic as they are experiencing many churches near them who are very charismatic and claim you need to be able to speak in tongues.

Rev Pila Njuka, Rev Yan Primalinya and one from Kal-Bar spoke very clearly how this was a special gift at the time of the New Testament church and people actually heard the gospel in their own language. It was not a lot of unintelligible babble, but was clearly

understood. In Acts: Paul did not want to speak in tongues if it did not build up the church. Also passages such as 1 Corinthians 13: 8—were also mentioned. It is better to speak one word that is understood than 1,000 words in a tongue which can't be understood. The ministers were encouraged to address this concern in Papua via the preaching.

Topic: Raising of the hands and giving the blessing.

Some discussion was held on this topic and the special office of minister.

Some more time was spent on the church order. (It was raining again and difficult to follow the discussions.

Closing of conference Friday evening late.

General comment.

It was good to see the harmony that exists between the three bonds of churches and how they showed great care for each other. We made many new friends and it was a real blessing to see God's care for His church in this country.

Report submitted by both delegates.

Appendix 3: Record of the meeting in Tarus, February 5, 2007-02-06 between the deputies of the GGRC and Arthur van Delden (AvD), deputy of the FRCA

AvD received the following mandate:

- 1) to extend greetings from the Australian Churches
- 2) to explain the decisions of Synod Kelmscott 2006
- 3) to find out if Rev Bunda's health has improved enough for him to travel to Australia;
- 4) to discuss the relationship between the FRCA and the GGRC
- 5) to discuss the relationship between the GGRC and the GGRI and whether serious attempts are made to be united together as churches
- 6) to discuss the involvement of the GGRC in the theological training in Sumba (taking into account the reason why Rev Yonson Dethan and Rev Edwer Dethan were sent to Hamilton and the willingness to be involved in that training
- 7) to visit Rev Yonson Dethan and Rev Edwar Dethan to familiarise himself with the local situation and to discuss their view on the relationship GGRC-GGRI-FRCA.

After opening in prayer, Yonson Dethan (YD) introduced the deputies of the GGRC. AvD followed by informing the deputies GGRC about

the changes in the deputyship of the FRCA. The previous chairman, Rev DeBoer, has been transferred to another deputyship, and Rev van der Jagt has been appointed as the new chairman. As a replacement for Rev DeBoer, Rev van Delden has been appointed as a new deputy, and has the position of secretary.

Greetings from the Australian churches were extended.

Mandate #2 – Explaining the decisions of FRCA Synod Kelmscott 2006

The decisions of Synod FRCA 2006 were presented and translated. Opportunity was given to the GGRC to ask questions about the decisions of the FRCA Synod. Much of the discussion centred around the first decision of Synod, namely, to continue contact with the GGRC.

The first question raised concerned the report of the FRCA deputies to Synod 2006. Why was this report not first sent to the deputies of the GGRC? It is felt that the report contains outdated or incorrect information which could have been corrected before being sent to Synod and before being disseminated to churches abroad (such as Canada or the Netherlands). A similar problem of misinformation occurred prior to a previous Synod of the FRCA, and this matter was discussed with deputy Brian Bosveld who assured the GGRC that this would not happen again. Although deputies GGRC have not received or read the report, they feel that incorrect or outdated information may have been sent to our most recent Synod. They believe it would be prudent to send any report concerning the GGRC to the deputies GGRC to confirm the correctness of the information.

In response, AvD asked how the GGRC deputies have come to the conclusion that there are errors in the report of the FRCA deputies if they have not read the report. It seems that Rev Souman from the CanRC Smithville has received information from the Canadian Deputies about the report of the FRCA deputies to Synod, and Rev Souman has asked for confirmation from the GGRC deputies. The GGRC feel that the information they have received via-via is incorrect. AvD will ensure that the GGRC still receive a report of the FRCA deputies regarding their churches. He will also convey the request of the GGRC to receive a copy of the FRCA's deputies report prior to sending to FRCA synod for confirmation. It will be up to the deputies FRCA to decide whether it would be prudent to comply with this request, for it is not always done, nor does Synod FRCA require deputies to do so.

The question was asked why the FRCA does not enter into sister relations with the GGRC. AvD explains that the FRCA have a principle of entering sister relations with only one federation of churches in a given locality. This is based on our confession that there is one holy catholic church. If there are two true churches in a given locality, these churches are encouraged to give visible and practical expression to the unity which exists between them by working for unity, in accordance with the prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17, that all believers may be one, even as the Father and Christ Jesus are one. When these churches federate together, the FRCA will have sister relations with all the churches in that locality.

A related question is whether the FRCA hesitate to establish sister relations because of perceived internal problems in the GGRC? The deputies of the GGRC wish to clarify that there are no internal problems in the GGRC. While this may have been the case in the past, it is not true now, since Rev Fangidae and his one congregation (GGRM) no longer belong to the GGRC. This is evident from the fact that Rev Fangidae has not appealed any matter to the broader assemblies of the GGRC, nor does he acknowledge the validity of the GGRC Synod in Bolok (2002). All this indicates that issue with Rev Fangidae is no longer internal problem in the GGRC. Although the GGRC are contesting claims of Rev Fangidae in the courts of Indonesia, this is an external problem. In answer to this question, AvD reiterates that the reason for not establishing sister relations is for the reason stated above.

Another related question is whether the FRCA will recommend the GGRC to other churches around the world? In response, AvD says that the FRCA are not accustomed to making recommendations to churches regarding other churches. We openly share with others information about our sister churches and churches with whom we have contact, but generally leave it to those churches to analyse this information and draw their own conclusions.

Behind this question is another, namely, whether the FRCA recommended to the CanRC deputies not to establish sister relations with the GGRC? AvD responded that during the last FRCA Synod 2006, the Australian deputies met with the representatives of the CanRC deputies, and explained the reason why we have not established sister relations with the GGRC. Deputies FRCA did not disparage the GGRC in any way or bring any objection against the GGRC, but stated (as above) that we believe the doctrine of the one holy catholic church teaches us to establish relations with only one federation of churches in one locality. The FRCA deputies also

expressed the hope that the Canadian churches share that same Scriptural principle as Australia on this matter, and establish relations with only one church in one locality.

Mandate #3 - Find out if Rev Bunda's health has improved enough for him to travel to Australia;

The GGRC express their disappointment that although the GGRC recommended that Yawan Bunda come to Australia in 2002, nothing has transpired. AvD explains one reason for the delay, namely, that the FRCA deputies were informed that Rev Bunda was having medical problems which would make coming to Australia inadvisable, since the program of study in Australia is quite vigorous and requires good health. GGRC deputies responded that they had requested Australia to assist in purchasing medication for Rev Bunda, but John Bosveld misunderstood this request as if Rev Bunda should come to Australia for treatment. Since Australia refused, the same request was brought to the Canadian churches, who understood it and purchased the necessary medication. As a result of this medication, Rev Bunda is able to function fully in his capacity as minister, and there are no reasons why Rev Bunda cannot go to Australia to study English and acquaint himself with the Australian church life. AvD will bring this information to the FRCA deputies who will start the procedures for Rev Bunda's coming, providing that Rev Bunda receives the necessary medical clearance required for a visa to Australia.

Mandate #4 - Discuss the relationship between the FRCA and the GGRC

The GGRC feel that after the GGRC Synod of 2004 the communication with the FRCA has been almost non-existent, with the result that the GGRC feel that the FRCA are displeased with the GGRC. The GGRC also feel that the FRCA favour the GGRI and give more time and attention to these churches than the GGRC. Some concrete examples are given:

The last delegate (Rev van der Jagt) only spent 2 hours in discussion with the GGRC deputies. AvD has no information about this. Also, the GGRC deputies point to AvD's current visit. He spends 6 weeks in Sumba, and only 5 days in Kupang. And on Sunday, he attends two services in the GGRI and none in the GGRC. In response, AvD mentions that he is currently on sabbatical (or long service leave), and the time spent in Sumba is not primarily as a deputy of the FRCA. He will do a few days work as deputy meeting with the deputies of the GGRI in Sumba, just as he is currently doing a few days work as deputy meeting with the deputies of the GGRC. Furthermore, AvD is also the chairman of the Rockingham Mission Committee.

Rockingham supports 3 (soon 4) evangelists in Sumba, and most of time in Sumba is spent on the mission posts with the evangelists. Regarding attending worship services in the GGRI, AvD feels he ought to worship in the sister churches of the FRCA, where he is able to preach and join the Lord's Supper, which he would not feel free to do in non-sister churches.

The GGRC point out another example of favouritism of the GGRI. In Sabu the GGRC and GGRI work closely together in mission. One of the churches in FRCA (Tasmania) support mission work in Sabu. But the money is sent only to the churches of the GGRI, leaving the GGRC feeling left out, causing some tension between these churches. AvD responds that this is an arrangement between a local congregation of the FRCA, and not a matter of the deputies. But in general it can be said that the FRCA only participate in mission work with sister churches. AvD reminds the GGRC that there is a difference in the relationship between the relations with the FRCA/GGRI and the FRCA/GGRC. The GGRI are sister churches of the FRCA, which brings greater privileges and responsibilities between the FRCA/GGRI. The FRCA long and pray for the day when the GGRI and GGRC unite. Then the FRCA will enjoy the same relationship with all the churches in Indonesia-NTT.

Another point raised in regard to the relations between the GGRC and FRCA is that at times it seems that the FRCA deputies give their own personal opinion, but give the impression that this is the position of the deputies or the FRCA. Greater clarity would be appreciated as to what is personal opinion and what is the official position of the FRCA deputies.

The GGRC state their appreciation for the frank and open discussion that this meeting has afforded, and hope that the contact between the churches will improve.

Mandate #5 - Discuss the relationship between the GGRC and the GGRI and whether serious attempts are made to be united together as churches

The GGRC feel that over the last few years, the GGRI have distanced themselves from the GGRC. The GGRI have made some serious mistakes. Some examples were given below.

Years ago, when the GGRI sought government registration, the GGRC (then the GGMM which was itself registered with the government) recommended the GGRI and so helped them obtain registration. Now because of splits which have occurred in GGMM/GGRC, the GGRC no longer has government

registration. When the GGRC asked the GGRI to recommend them to the government and so help them obtain registration, the GGRI first gave this recommendation, but then later withdrew it. This was very offensive to the GGRC, and is a wrong that must be corrected.³

Furthermore, at a conference of the GGRI (Kalimantan Barat, NTT and Papua) in 2004, a proposal was put forward to establish a pre-requisite for joining the conference, namely, that churches must be registered with the government. Rev Dethan and others of the GGRC were present, and stated that this would effectually exclude them from participation in these conferences, in which they have often participated. This proposal was nevertheless adopted. In this way also the GGRI separate themselves further from the GGRC.⁴

The GGRC also wish to clarify a rumour, namely, that they were upset at this conference, refusing to participate and leaving early. They state that they participated in this conference, and that they left early only because their synod was about to convene, and they had to prepare themselves for the synod.⁵

Another example of the GGRI separating themselves from the GGRC regards the dissolution of YPTR, and the establishment of YASTRI which totally excludes all involvement of the GGRC. This is discussed further below.

Regarding the question about possible unity between the GGRC/GGRI, the GGRC feel that the GGRI will have to acknowledge that they were wrong in withdrawing their recommendation of the GGRC for government recognition. Also the GGRI have to reverse some decisions that distance the GGRC (such as the pre-requisite for participation in the conference, and the dissolution of the YPTR).

The GGRC also stated that there is difference in history that makes unity difficult. The GGRC has a longer history than the GGRI. The

³ To clarify this, it should be noted that it was Rev Fangidae of the GGRM who recommended the GGRI for government registration. Furthermore, the GGRI withdrew their recommendation at this time because there is a dispute before the courts between the GGRM and the GGRC. A continued recommendation of the GGRC would make it appear that the GGRI support the GGRC in its legal claim in opposition to the GGRM. The GGRI do not wish to give any appearance of favoritism until the matter is settled in the courts.

⁴ It seems that some ministers in the GGRI disagree on the appropriateness of this decision. Rev Mada Biha feels that registration should be included as a pre-requisite for membership in the conference, since it is a government requirement that churches be registered. Rev Pila Njuka feels that government registration, while important, is not the most important criterion for membership, and it would be a pity to exclude the GGRC.

⁵ FRCA deputies were present at the synod and can decide themselves regarding the veracity of this statement.

GGRC were established in 1950, whereas the GGRI were established two years later, in 1952. The GGRC would be open to the GGRI joining the GGRC, or perhaps the establishment of a new federation of churches. But they seem reluctant to join the GGRI. ⁶

An obstacle to unity between these two federations is also the unfamiliarity between the members of these federations. While the GGRI and GGRC have had contact for some time, and even established sister relations, the average member in the GGRC do not know the GGRI, and vice versa. Before unity could occur, the members of the GGRC need to become acquainted with the GGRI and vice versa. This could happen if there was a fund established by the Netherlands and Australia which would pay for minister's travel between Sumba, Sabu, Rote and West Timor.

Mandate #6 - The involvement of the GGRC in the theological training in Sumba

As mentioned above, the GGRC feel that the GGRI have excluded them from the theological training in Sumba when they dissolved YPTR, and established YASTRI which totally excludes the involvement of the GGRC. The GGRC was not given any information about the establishment of this new board for theological training, and not received any invitation to participate in the board or as a lecturer.

The GGRC also expressed their disappointment with the deputies from the Netherlands or Australia, because although they were present at the GGRI Synod that decided to dissolve YPTR and to establish YASTRI, they did not advise against this. The GGRC admit that were not present at this Synod, and only assume that the deputies from the Netherlands and Australia did not advise against it. AvD is not able to confirm or deny what the Netherlands and Australians said or did not say, but warned against making assumptions. Furthermore, there may be reasons unknown to AvD why the GGRI have decided to act as they have. ⁷ So while this point is noted, AvD gives no response.

⁶ It has been pointed out to me by Rev J. Bouesema that in its early history the Musyfir churches (as they were called in then) lacked a reformed character. During the 1980's, Rev Klammer came into contact with Rev Fangidae. The fruit of this contact was that the Musyfir churches underwent a reformation. Thus the GGRC, as a reformed church, is of more recent origins than the GGRI.

⁷ In the course of further discussions with the GGRI, it would seem that the GGRI felt that YPTR, as a joint venture between the two federations, was not making sufficient progress in the matter of theological training. They felt that there was an urgent need for evangelists and ministers in the GGRI, and so formed a new board which would be able to open the existing facilities in WaiMarung far sooner than YPTR.

The GGRC still hopes that the GGRI will acknowledge that they were wrong to dissolve the YPTR, that they will reverse this decision, and will again work together with the GGRC in the matter of theological training.

AvD asked whether there the GGRC is currently involved in any theological training of its own, the GGRC deputies respond that they have established the IRTS (Indonesian Reformed Theological Seminars). These seminars are held four times per year for 3 full days. The churches are invited to these seminars, and elders, evangelists and (prospective) ministers attend.

At the end of the meeting, arrangements are made to fulfil the last aspect of the mandate, namely, to visit Yonson and Edwer Dethan on Wednesday, February 7, to become better acquainted with the local situation in the GGRC.

Visits with Yonson and Edwer Dethan February 7, 2007

Yonson Dethan showed me (AvD) this school, which is a large complex. I didn't count exactly how many classrooms, but I would estimate that there is a classroom for each of the 12 years of schooling, plus a large room where the students learn lifeskills such as sewing for the girls, and welding, woodwork and engine repairs for the boys. According to Yonson, there are currently over 400 students in the school, which scores very high in government ratings. The headmaster is from the GGRC, but most of the teachers are from other churches. They are all qualified according to state standards, and are tested by the "board" regarding their doctrine and faith. Most of the students are from other churches, including some from the "church" of Rome.

After viewing the school, we had lunch. After lunch Yonson disappeared, leaving me to converse with the parents of Marilyn who were visiting from Canada. It was a nice opportunity to catch up on church life in Ontario, but was hardly the purpose of the visit. When leaving, Marilyn explained that Yonson is still ill. Marilyn said he is suffering from hepatitis as well as kidney stones.

Later in the afternoon, I visited with Edwer Dethan. Edwer has established a congregation in Tarus, and built a beautiful church building.

It would seem that Edwer has become more of a coordinator of mission work than a missionary himself. The church which he has established is made up of about 30% unbelievers who have been converted. The other 70% is made up of professing Christians from

liberal churches. Edwer has established four mission posts besides his own congregation. Evangelists taught by Edwer are serving in these posts. The supporting church of Smithville is determined to proceed with the establishment of a theological college which will offer the equivalent to our Bachelor's degree in Theology. It's expected that Edwer, Yonson and another minister from another island who has a master's degree will be teaching there, together with other qualified personnel. When asked whether there could be any cooperation with the GGRI, the answer was given that the GGRI could train evangelists in WaiMarung, since that college is of a lower level than the school which they plan to establish. The GGRI can then send their students to the college of the GGRC.

From the discussions, it would seem that there is little hope of a merger of the GGRC with the GGRI, unless the a whole new federation was established with a new name. And there seems to be no earnest desire on the part of the GGRC to undertake concrete steps towards a merger with the GGRI.

Appendix 4: The Eleventh Synod of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI-NTT), July 2007 in Kupang, West Timor.

The Synod was convened in Kupang and was opened with a worship service led by Rev. Madah Biha, in which Evangelist Windi Kurung, proclaimed the Word of God.

After the worship service, Rev. Madah Biha spoke on behalf of the convening church, followed by a representative of the governor of NTT Province who addressed and opened the Synod.

Present at the Synod were delegates from Australia, the Netherlands, the GGRC, from the four classis of the GGRI-NTT. Rev. Edwer Dethan, a missionary of Smithville Church in Canada, was also present. There were no delegates or letters from GGRI in Kalimantan Barat or from the GGRI in Papua (although they were also invited).

The following officers were elected to serve Synod for its duration:

Chairman:	Rev. Madah Biha
Vice chairman:	Rev. Pila Njuka, M.Div
First clerk:	Rev. Yan Pariamalinya
Second clerk:	Rev. Ferdi Tipa Kaya

The Synod was held from June 28 - July 5, 2007 and dealt with 45 items. Some noteworthy decisions are as follows:

1. The 3 classes in Sumba became 4 classes. This is a historical and very important decision. At this Synod, Classis Pantai (which consisted of 7 established churches) mingled with the churches in the mountains and made up 4 classis of GGRI on Sumba Island which is a very positive development.
2. Despite the strong language in the Report of the Deputies for Churches Abroad to withdraw from ICRC, the Synod decided to maintain the membership in the ICRC and to request the ICRC to pay attention to the need of the churches in Asia and Africa.
3. The Canadian Reformed Churches postponed entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with GGRI-NTT. One reason was that GGRI and GGRC should be one. The Synod decided to mandate the Deputies for Churches Abroad to continue to strive for ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, and to inform them by letter about the relationship between GGRI and GGRC, and the fact that the GGRI opens its door for the GGRC. The same letter will also be sent to the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville and to Rev. Edwer Dethan to inform them that there have been established churches in NTT Province so that they may not form another Reformed federation in the same province. Moreover, Synod decided to inform the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville that there is a Reformed Theological College in Sumba. The Synod also requested both our sister churches in Australia and the Netherlands to give more information to Canada about GGRI and its relationship with the GGRC.
4. For the sake of keeping youth in the church, the Synod decided to recommend forming a youth organization for the whole GGRI-NTT.
5. The Synod, concerned about the split between GGRM and GGRC, appointed deputies who should meet with the brothers from GGRM and GGRC, and talk about the possibility of unification between GGRI and GGRC/M
6. The Synod decided to convene classis once each year and synod every 3 years.
7. The Synod reappointed most of the Deputies for Churches Abroad, Internal Deputies and YASTRI, though some persons were replaced.
8. The next synod is scheduled for 2010 in Lumbu Winu, Sumba.

9. There are still many other items which can be read in the Acts of the Synod later on.

The Synod was closed on Thursday evening, July 5, 2007 with speakers as follows:

A representative from each classis;

- Rev. Madah Biha who spoke as the chairman of the Synod and as the minister of the convening church and who also led in closing meditation.
- Mr. J. Bosveld;
- Rev. Boersema;
- Rev. Yonson Dethan.

John Bosveld

Appendix 5: Report of meeting held in Kalu on Thursday 15th of Feb 2007.

Present at this meeting was the chairman of the deputies Rev P Njuka, Rev Y Paraimalinya as member of the deputies, Br David Putiandung as chairman of Yastri, Rev Boersema on behalf of the Dutch sister churches, Rev van Delden and Br B Bosveld as delegates from the Australian sister churches.

The chairman of the deputies Rev P Njuka opened the meeting by reading from Ephesians 4: 1-16 and leads in prayer.

There was no agenda, so an agenda was made as follows.

1. Discussion on the letter received from DVN signed by Ibu deVries.
 2. Working relationship between the GGRI and the GGRC
 3. Education level of teachers, and are there any plans for higher level teachers.
- a. Proposed purchase of land in Waiangapu at the cost of approximately Rp 90,000,000 Australian \$13,000.00

DVN responded that at this time the Dutch churches thought it would be better to wait for a few more years prior to buying land and proceeding with plans to build a new Theological Collage. The reasons given for this are: 1. The committee Yastri has shown to be overloaded with their work because even the renovation of the old collage seems to be too difficult for them to organize and complete. 2. Yastri in their overall plan have not given enough foresight into where the students will come from for the collage in future years. The GGRI

is only a small bond of churches and the relationship with the GGRC seems to be growing further apart rather than closer, so once the next 15 to 20 student graduate and become ministers, there will only be a few student per year coming through the collage to fill the vacancies of the retiring ministers. There are no plans or foresight into some of the ministers studying for their Bachelors degree in order for the Theological collage to be able to offer the higher level of education.

All these items were discussed at length. We as Australian deputies mentioned that we wanted to work together with the Dutch sister churches in supporting our Indonesian sister churches in establishing their own Theological training centre, so that there would be reformed ministers for the future churches in Indonesia. Some of the concerns Holland has are also our concerns, but rather than delay or cancel the plans for a Theological Collage we should help and give them some more direction in order to achieve these goals. We mentioned that perhaps we need to write to DVN and inform them that we would still like to support the GGRI in these plans but not in opposition to DVN but together with them and therefore ask them to reconsider this matter.

Rev Boersema mentioned that DVN are not fully aware of the reasons why the renovations are taking so long, one of the reasons is the great difficulty in buying timber which has held up the whole process, he will encourage DVN to reconsider their decision, but he wants to wait a few month prior to doing this so that Yastri in the mean time can complete this work and then it will be easier to encourage DVN to reconsider this point. Rev Boersema thought this would be a good approach, he also mentioned that the DVN were not apposed to these plans but only had some reservations to them. With a bit of encouragement and some improvement from the GGRI with regards to long term plans and completing the renovations DVN may yet support these plans.

b. Some of the budget items such as a motorbike are not necessary and is very costly on maintenance; although a motorbike would be handy the budget is already too high so items that are not necessary need to be deleted from the budget.

Laptop computers are also a high budget item, perhaps desktops would be a better option.

Another concern or complaint is when budgets are made allowing for 30 people to attend a meeting and only 10 people attend, there should be an account given of the left over funds received from the donators. The Chairman of Yastri acknowledges this and will complete a report.

Support from the local churches was also discussed as up to now only 1 church has made a contribution for the Collage. Yastri has a plan to visit all the churches starting in the month of April to encourage them to support their Collage; they are recommending that each church contributes Rp 2,000,000 per communicant member or 5% of the total church budget per year.

We again spoke about the need for the Indonesian churches to work within reasonable budgets and if there are extra items that they themselves feel are needed they should try and get this support from the local churches.

One more request in the letter of DVN is that all reporting of accounts are done in the same format as Yayasan for easy reading and management. Yastri will work together with Indyo so do this.

c. Yastri as an organization. Often the chairman does all the work and the other members do very little, this is due to the fact that the other members all have jobs to do and the chairman is a retired man.

We suggested that a meeting roster is made booking dates and times when the other members are not working, in this way perhaps the committee can then work together. At present this is not being done and most meetings are scheduled with not much notice and often at times when the other members are working.

d. Student entry criteria. We spoke about the need to have certain student entry criteria, it is reported that at present students come with recommendation from their consistory, but certain levels of achievement as yet has not been worked on. As the collage receives proper registration, along with this will also come entry level requirements.

e. Work load and job description of the teachers. The first year is not well organized due to some subjects needing to be taught prior to the subjects Rev Pakering teaches, for this reason Rev Pakering has no classes to teach until 2007. At present he is helping out with extra preaching duties and evangelist teaching programs. The board will try and make a better schedule next term.

f. Teacher qualification. What plans are in place to increase the Qualification of teachers for the collage. If the 2 Rev Johnsons were to teach then there would be enough high level teachers, but at present this does not look promising, this problem will again be discussed at the next synod. Rev Boersema mentioned that perhaps Rev Pakering should be sponsored to go to Australia for proper English lessons especially if you consider his plans to marry a girl from Australia. This

would be a great benefit for the collage as there are many more good English books to prepare teaching lessons than Indonesian books; he mentioned that in his opinion the Dutch churches would support this on the same bases as the other request.

g. Discussion on level of financial commitment from the Dutch churches and the Australian church in the 3 party relationships. As deputies we explained that at the conference we notified the deputies that up till now no requests for support were received, but from the side of the Australian churches we see the need for a Theological training centre and therefore put an amount of \$10,000.00 on the budget which has been supported by the churches. At that time with the exchange rate this was Rp 60,000,000. On today's exchange rate that is Aprox Rp 70,000,000. This amount was not specified to be for running costs only or for capital expenses, it was just an allocation to support Theological training. The Dutch churches at that time allocated Rp 90,000,000 this was for running expenses only. We discussed if all expenses would be split in similar percentages. We informed them that we are a small bond of churches which see a great need in Indonesia, and are willing to give our support. We must however remember that the Dutch churches are a large bond of churches and can probably give more assistance than we can.

h. DVN also will raise their level of support for the running expenses to allow for inflation and they asked if the Australian churches would do the same. We informed them that our commitment was made in Australian dollars, with the exchange rate at today's rate the GGRI receive approx 12% more than at the time the 3 party agreements was signed. We again reminded this meeting that our level of support was only a budget item our deputies decided to collect, as up till that time no request were received from the GGRI. If the level of support received is insufficient then a new request needs to be made so as this can then be presented to the churches.

Closing: Rev Boersema leads in prayer and the chairmen closes the meeting.

Report by Brian Bosveld

Report of Deputies: Relations Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

1. Mandate

Synod West Kelmscott 2006 decided 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.

Other decisions made by Synod West Kelmscott 2006 regarding the RCNZ:

- 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.
- 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).

(Acts Article 102)

2. Activities

2.1

Synod appointed two deputies Rev J Poppe and Br J.L. van Burgel with Br A. Plug as alternate. Before any work was done on the mandate, Rev Poppe accepted a call to Canada and Br A Plug took his place as deputy.

2.2

Deputies received an invitation to attend the Synod of the RCNZ held in Hastings 6-11 September 2008. Due to prior commitments, Br van Burgel could not attend and deputies requested Rev J. Kroeze from Legana to take his place. The delegates' report of the visit to the synod is included in Appendix 1

2.3

Deputies have written to the InterChurch Relations Committee of the RCNZ informing them of the date of the next Synod and inviting them to send delegates with privileges as decided by Synod.

3. Acts of RCNZ Synod, Hastings September 2008

Impressions and information regarding the delegates visit to this Synod is included in the Appendix. The following decisions are of note:

3.1 Delegates

Fraternal delegates from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), Orthodox Presbyterian Church, USA (OPC), United Reformed Churches of north America (URCNA), Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA), Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA), Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Lib.) (RCN) and Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) were present as well as your "observer" delegates from the Free reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). A delegate from the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand was also present.

3.2 Theological Training

Synod decided:

That the deputies be instructed to conduct a review of the requirements of the RCNZ for theological education for the future (with the authority to co-opt others to assist in this review) and report back to the next synod with recommendations. This review is to cover:

- a. The content and type of the theological education (i.e. practical/equipping, or academic/theological, or what combination of both and how that combination should be weighted)*
- b. The delivery of this education (e.g. through the RTC, MARS, or to be based more in NZ)*

(Acts Art 21 point 6)

3.3 Response by Rev Flinn to FRCA Delegate Address

(Rev Flinn) expressed thankfulness and joy for the many things we have in common as churches and for the various areas in missions in which we work together. He also expressed a measure of sadness that the impediment for full sister-church relations (the RCNZ sister-church relationship with the CRCA) continues to be the reason that a full sisterchurch relationship cannot be entered into at this time.

(Acts Art 43)

3.4 Relations with other churches

Synod continued sister church relations with:

Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (CGKN)

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA)

Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). See also section 3.5

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Lib.) (RCN)

Regarding the GKSA synod also decided:

To continue to monitor discussions within the GKSA and synodical decisions on the subject of women in office.

(Acts art 74)

Synod entered in to sister relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches after the CanRC indicated their

acceptance of the invitation of sister church relations. Synod decision was expressed as follows:

1. *To express our appreciation to the CanRC for their acceptance of our invitation to enter a sister church relationship with them.*
2. *To continue to work closely with the CanRC in connection with the mission work in PNG.*
3. *To send a delegate to the next synod of the CanRC.*

(Acts art 85)

Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)

Several overtures from the RC at Hastings were defeated:

Overture 5:

That Synod urge the CRCA to rescind their decision to ordain women as deacon

Overture 6:

1. *That Synod express its grave concern that one of the delegates called the CRCA Synod 2006 to reflect on the sufferings of Christ through the use of images of Christ clipped from the movie "The Passion of the Christ" and that no action was taken by the CRCA Synod 2006 as a body to express its disapproval.*
2. *That Synod urge the CRCA to re-affirm their commitment to the 2nd Commandment and its implication for worship stated in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35, which forbids making any images (even of creatures) "if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them" because God does not want his people instructed "by idols that cannot even talk".*
3. *That Synod urge the CRCA to ensure that all office-bearers uphold Scripture and Confession in the prohibition of images used for purposes of worship and to affirm that "different views on this issue" are not to be allowed on a confessional matter.*
4. *That Synod urge Presbyteries and Synodical examiners to ensure that CRCA ministers who seek to enter the ministry in the RCNZ can affirm without hesitation that Scripture and Confession prohibit using images for the purpose of worship.*

Overture 4:

That the Reformed Churches of New Zealand suspend the sister-church relationship with the CRCA.

In the end Synod decided as follows:

That Synod convey to the CRCA through the Interchurch Relations Committee that our sisterchurch relationship continues under strain due their approval of the practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon.

(Acts Art 79, 80)

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Synod decided:

1. To acknowledge with sadness that we have been unable to make progress towards a sister-church relationship with the FRCA.
2. To inform the FRCA that we cannot accept that our sister-church relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to the FRCA accepting our offer.
3. To continue our offer of sister-church relations with the FRCA.
4. To convey these decisions to the FRCA by correspondence.
5. To send a delegate to the next synod of the FRCA

Synod also decided:

That the IRC on behalf of synod extend an invitation to the FRCA to attend the ICRC conference in 2009 as observers.

(Acts Art 96 and 98)

Overseas Mission Board

Most of the financial support for missions from the Overseas Mission Board (OMB) is devoted to work in PNG which is done in cooperation with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The OMB advised that Rev A Douma had been called to missionary work in PNG on behalf of the RCNZ. Rev Douma addressed Synod as follows:

Rev. A Douma then addressed the meeting. He gave greetings from the CRC of Tivoli, Queensland, which has given much support to the Doumas in their preparation for their work in PNG. He introduced his wife Odette and his 3

children and told us about their spiritual journey up to this time. This journey has come to fruition through his call from RC Hastings to serve as missionary in Reformed Ministries in PNG. He gave a brief description of his anticipated work which ranges from teaching at the Reformed Churches Bible College to church planting. After Rev. Douma's installation in December the Doumas will go on leave and hope to arrive in the Port Moresby area PNG in Feb. 2009 and after introductory training begin their work there in May 2009.
(Acts Art 91)

4. Conclusions

During the intersynodical period, very little has changed regarding the situation within the CRCA or the RCNZ which would impact on our decision that "the matter of a triangular relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment" towards sister church relations. The relations of the RCNZ with the CRCA remains "under strain" due to the CRCA position on "women in office". It is still apparent that the CRCA and RCNZ are still closely tied due to historical reasons. However on important matters such as:

- i) **mission work:** where the RCNZ is working cooperatively with our sister churches,
- ii) **theological training:** where the RCNZ still is supporting the College at Geelong but is actively pursuing other options for theological training and,
- iii) **ecumenical relations:** where the RCNZ has formalised sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches and remains strongly committed to the ICRC.

It can be seen the two federations (CRCA and RCNZ) are increasingly on different paths.

The RCNZ do not accept our concerns regarding triangular relations (within Australia) are sufficient to prevent sister church relations and continue to offer this relationship to us.

Deputies do not have anything to add to the previous reports from deputies which led Synod to make the decision regarding the above impediment. Therefore the position between our Federation and the RCNZ remains static. Consequently deputies see no reason to change the position of the FRCA regarding the

RCNZ. Current deputies endorse again what deputies reported to the 2006 Synod:

From all this it is evident that the RCNZ conducts itself faithfully in exercising its sister-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.

5. Recommendations:

Deputies propose that Synod decide:

1. To note that no further progress has been made in the understanding between the FRCA and RCNZ on the matter of the importance of the triangular relationship which prevents the FRCA from entering into a sister relationship with the RCNZ
2. To affirm that Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ, shown by the past acknowledgement of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches, has consequences in 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.
3. 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.

J.L. van Burgel

A Plug

Appendix 1: Report of the visit to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Synod Hastings September 2008

Due to the appointed deputies, Rev. J Poppe and br. L van Burgel not being able to go to the RCNZ, the alternate, br. A. Plug and Rev. J. Kroeze attended the RCNZ 2008 Synod in Hastings. Your deputies were warmly welcomed by members of the congregation of that place.

Synod started on Saturday 6 September with the election of the moderamen. On Sunday we attended the worship services in the RCNZ Hastings. The morning service was led by Rev. W. Wielenga of the Canadian/American Reformed Churches who have entered into sister church relations with the RCNZ. The afternoon service was a prayer service for synod led by Rev. B. Hoyt. The writer was impressed with the reverence of the service. All things were done to the honour and glory of our God and Lord.

On Monday the business of Synod began. The process is quite different to our own. Every church is represented by two delegates and all the matters presented have been discussed by their sessions. The reports and their recommendations and the overtures and their grounds are presented, debated and voted on. The whole process was quite streamlined and the business was completed by Thursday evening. It was quite intriguing to see how reformed and presbyterian polity interrelated. Several times I noticed that the two were in tension, but reformed polity was maintained.

As is usual for assemblies such as this one, delegates from overseas were given opportunity to address the Synod. These included representatives from our sister churches in Holland and Canada, some churches with whom the RCNZ are in ecclesiastical fellowship, and a number of other Reformed and Presbyterian churches from around the world. Br. Plug addressed the synod on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. He extended greetings, explained the decisions made by our Synod in relation to the RCNZ, and highlighted those areas where we, as faithful Reformed churches in close proximity, can work together for the promotion of God's church and kingdom.

Some topics were debated quite intensely. One of them was what means of contraception are allowed when a woman has been raped. A committee had been formed at the previous synod and reported its findings that the indicated contraceptives can, but do not necessarily,

act as abortifacients. It was maintained that since life begins at fertilisation using a contraceptive that aborted that life broke the sixth commandment.

The other topic that generated some heat was the relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA. The difficulty in that relationship is that the CRCA have settled the matter of women being ordained as deaconesses at synodical level. They determined that deaconesses do not exercise authority and are not part of the consistory. This does not satisfy the RCNZ as they feel that ordination itself does confer authority. However, unless the decision can be appealed on new grounds, it can't be placed on the CRCA's synod's table again. Consequently the RCNZ faced the question, where to from here? The vote was close, but they decided to continue to maintain the relationship under strain. However, there was an air of confusion about how to proceed. There is a strong desire to continue the relationship, but to continually maintain that relationship under strain raises questions about its viability. Through it all it was very clear to us that the RCNZ is pursuing its relationship with the CRCA with integrity and in a thoroughly Biblical way.

With respect to the FRCA the decision was to continue to offer a sister church relationship. We, deputies, met with their deputies and discussed the ways we could progress in our relation. We were clearly informed that their desire was to continue their relations with the CRCA and that if breaking that relationship is a criterion for our relationship it will not eventuate in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the RCNZ deputies assured us that they understood some of the practical reasons why we would have difficulties with their relationship with the CRCA, and indicated that they would be willing to work with us to ensure that situations of conflict did not arise.

One of the suggestions made by our last synod as well as by them was that we co-operate as far as is practical on the mission field and in any other ways that we might find and in this way allow the relation to grow. This is already taking place to some extent in the Bible College in Port Moresby, but this needs to be developed. Given that we recognise them as true churches of the Lord it would seem obligatory on us to seek to advance our relationship in whatever way we can. A suggestion they made was that we send observers to the ICRC for much of their cooperation with other churches is done

through these channels. If we cannot be sister churches, we can then at least still help each other.

With respect to internal matters, the RCNZ is facing an acute shortage of ministers. They have 19 congregations and 3 mission posts, but they lack 8 ministers and one missionary. This was addressed in a prayer session at synod where the Lord was asked for His grace in this matter. The movement of ministers between the RCNZ and the CRCA seems to be towards the CRCA at present. There seems to be no movement in the easterly direction. The RCNZ is getting ministers from North America and there were two ministers at the synod who had come from the URCNA. At present they seem to favour getting their ministers from the Mid American Reformed Seminary (URCNA) and from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary although the Canadian Reformed Theological College was mentioned. This would seem to auger well for the reformed character of the RCNZ since the people of the URCNA have gone through many of the same struggles the CRCA is having and have chosen the reformed path. As far as I am able to ascertain Greenville is also committed to the Reformed faith.

In summary your delegates have returned with a positive impression of the life of the RCNZ. There is a determination to be reformed and to test everything against Scripture and confessions. We cannot but commend them for that and for their love of the Lord. My observations (although they are limited) all point in one direction, that we ought to move towards each other. They lead me to believe that we have one Father and are one in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Spirit. This unity makes us sisters, and so we are obligated to live up to that fact in deed.

JGR Kroeze

Appendix 2: Address to Synod RCNZ 2008

By Aart Plug, delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Mr Chairman, esteemed delegates and guests, brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a special pleasure to be standing before you today. Not just because I'm feeling a great deal better than I was a few days ago – and I want to thank you for your prayers and concern in this regard – but also and especially for the fact that we, as brothers and sisters (I mention sisters also, because this is a gathering of churches, and we too represent all of our members) may meet, express the unity of faith that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, and work from that unity.

In 2006, our Synod decided to *“authorize two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest”*. And we are very pleased and thankful for your invitation that we could do just that. You have made us feel exceptionally welcome, we are able to have many heart-to-heart conversations with you, and the sense of unity in faith and brotherhood in Christ is stronger than ever. At least, that's the way we experience it.

So that's what we'd like to do to begin with. It's our great joy, and pleasure, to convey heartfelt greetings from brothers and sisters on the other side of the Tasman. We thank the Lord for the bond of faith and faithfulness that exists between us, and we pray that the time we spend as guests among you may strengthen and deepen that bond.

In 2006, together with Rev Joe Poppe, I had the privilege and pleasure of visiting a number of your congregations: attending worship services, speaking at congregational meetings, meeting consistories and ordinary church folk, asking and answering questions. It was a marvellous opportunity to get to know you; for me, also, it adds an extra dimension to our conversations here at your Synod. What struck us then, and still strikes us today, is your strong desire to live faithfully as Reformed Christians in the world, and for the world. Faithful to Scripture, faithful to the Reformed Confessions, and faithful to the tasks the Lord has given to you in this country. And we can learn a great deal from that.

At the same time, there is that sticking point. We see a heartfelt and mutual recognition as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus

Christ; we acknowledge that we have a great deal to learn from each other, and can mean a great deal to each other; you would think that the obvious and natural next step would be to enter into a full sister relationship. You have invited us to do that, and yet we have not seen our way clear to accepting that invitation.

And here again I'd like to go back to the decision made by our last synod, and I quote:

"...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."

Brothers, this is a difficult matter for us. On the one hand, we acknowledge that you have a deep and lasting relationship with the CRCA. You have obligations within that relationship, obligations that you cannot simply walk away from, and we honour and respect that. We also know that you have displayed the utmost integrity in carrying that relationship forward, sending a clear Biblical and confessional message, and doing what you can to encourage your sister to return to the path of faithfulness. The relevant items on the agenda of this Synod are testimony to that. We don't want you to stop doing that. On the contrary – and again, in line with the decision of our Synod: we encourage you to continue to use every opportunity available to you to admonish the CRCA, wherever and in whatever way you believe is necessary.

On the other hand, we find ourselves in a situation where we have a bond of churches living on our doorstep. Over the years, we have made a number of attempts to build closer relations with them, none of which have been successful, and the prospect of coming to a fraternal bond seems more remote now than it has been for a long time.

For us, the consensus position is that *in this circumstance*, a triangular relationship (The RCNZ maintaining sister relations with the CRCA and the FRCA, but the FRCA and the CRCA not having a mutual bond) would not be something we that can live with. Is this a satisfactory situation? Anything but. Are we happy about it? Of course not. We recognize the sadness and disappointment on your part that we seem to be unable to make progress at that level, and we have understanding for the fact that you are not convinced that we have sufficient reason for the stand we have taken. But please

accept from us that at this point we cannot, in good conscience, see our way clear to doing anything else.

So, where does that leave us? Again, I'd like to refer to the decision our Synod has made. There are things we can and should be doing together which do not require a formal sister relationship, and our Synod has explicitly acknowledged that, and urged our churches to take advantage of opportunities placed before us in this regard. We think of cooperative ventures in mission work – and in this connection we are deeply appreciative of and encouraged by brother Van Garderen's remark last night "the most meaningful exercise of ecumenical relations is in the field of mission." As an example of such cooperation I'd like to point to the shared responsibility we already have for the Reformed Bible College in PNG. It hasn't been explicitly mentioned in your reports, but we have provided a significant financial contribution to the establishment of the College; we have representation on its Board of Governors; and members of our mission team serve regularly as lecturers at the college.

I also think of opportunities we have to work together in education, and perhaps, in the longer term, in theological training. Most of our congregations already have simplified procedures to receive your members, and we strongly encourage our members, if they should wish to move to New Zealand, to join yours. In the past few years, we have been able to welcome a number of your teachers to work at our schools, and they are making a welcome and high-quality contribution. And I understand that in this regard the traffic has not been entirely one-way, either.

We do see positives, brothers, and we ask you to see them as well. We pray that the Lord will use the good things that are happening for the spread of His gospel, the promotion of His Kingdom, and the glory of His name. Please work with us, with faithfulness and integrity, and leave further progress in the hands of our faithful God. He is greater than any of us, and He is able to make ways where we cannot.

At this point, our closest links are with the Canadian/American Reformed Churches and with the GKN, largely due to our historical associations. Since at this point we are unable to sustain our own training for the ministry, we support the Theological College of our Canadian sister churches in Hamilton, Ontario. Most of our student ministers receive their training there, and we in turn draw our own

stock of serving ministers from its graduates. In this connection, I cannot help but think about the discussion you had yesterday about your own provision for training for the ministry. Would it be out of order for us to recommend the Hamilton Theological College as a place to train your young men to be ministers and missionaries?

Our churches are increasingly active in supporting the ministry of the gospel throughout the world. We support a missionary team in Lae, PNG, and as I already mentioned, provide support for the Reformed Bible College in Port Moresby, PNG. One of our congregations supports a missionary in mainland China, others are supporting evangelists on the island of Sumba in Indonesia. With the support of local consistories, members of our churches are busy in outreach within our own home communities, through radio broadcasts, drop-in centres, an information stall, a Christian bookshop, and lately a local food bank.

An increasing number of brothers and sisters have involved themselves in a range of activities of Christian service in the world. We think of projects undertaken by some of our young people on the islands of Sumba and Timor, in Indonesia, to provide development aid at a local level. We also think of the work done by the Free Reformed World Relief Fund. It works quietly and effectively, gathering funds for disaster relief, and distributing it through reputable Christian agencies to provide help where it is most needed.

Within our own community of churches, there have been a number of noteworthy milestones. Earlier this year, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Reformed education in Australia. We have been enormously blessed and enriched by well-developed and well-resourced schools where covenant children are instructed within a covenant community. We have enjoyed the blessing of generous government support, with minimal intervention, and we see the gracious hand of our God in that. Just recently, we had a highly successful conference of teachers from all of the John Calvin Schools in Australia. We had the privilege of thinking together about what it means to provide schooling for our children from thoroughly Reformed foundations. And I might take this opportunity to extend our invitation to colleagues from across the Tasman to come and be our guests at the next John Calvin Schools' Teachers Conference, to be held, the Lord willing, in 2010.

Within our community, the Lord has given us to provide an aged-care facility, as well as a group home for brothers and sisters with a range of disabilities. These organizations are well-supported by our members, and provide tangible evidence of our care for each other within the household of faith.

I think I'll bring this talk to a close. Brothers and sisters, we confess *that the Son of man from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life.* To know that gives enormous comfort and assurance. To experience that is a blessing for which it is difficult to find the right words. Thank you so much for your invitation and your hospitality. May our Lord richly bless you as a community of faith, and may we all together be strengthened as we serve Him faithfully, waiting for the return of our Saviour on the clouds of heaven.

Thank you.

Deputies for Training for the Ministry

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1. Mandate

Article 17 of Acts of the 2006 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (West Kelmscott, 10 – 20 July 2006) records Deputies' mandate to:

1. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
2. correspond with "Hamilton", "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
3. collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
4. continue with our own theological library and to start obtaining basic materials;
5. continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry, including the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT);
6. 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;
7. 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;
8. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from one of the theological seminaries of our sister churches once every three years;
9. to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible
10. consider the practical implications of including the Australian Churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and report to the Australian Churches.

Deputies met 7 times to discuss matters concerning its mandate, besides corresponding in between meetings.

2. Composition

- 2.1 Synod 2006 appointed Reverend E Rupke as convener of Deputies and Reverend J Poppe and the Brothers M Plug, R Heerema and H Faas as the remaining Deputies.
- 2.2 Reverend Poppe accepted a call to one of our sister churches in Canada and accordingly, since approximately July 2007, Deputies were organised as follows:
 - Convener: Reverend E Rupke
 - Secretary: Brother H Faas
 - Treasurer (Theological Students): Brother M Plug
 - Treasurer (Theological Library Fund): Brother M Plug
 - Treasurer (Theological College): Brother R Heerema

3. Financial support Hamilton Theological College

- 3.1 Deputies collected A\$291,279.98 and forwarded A\$284,000 to Hamilton during the period February 2006 to November 2008.
- 3.2 During the period, the churches were levied at a rate of A\$50 per communicant member (in accordance with decision 2 of Article 17 of the Acts of the 2006 Synod).
- 3.3 Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to Hamilton are contained in Appendix 1.

4. Contact with Hamilton, South Africa, Kampen and Korea

- 4.1 Deputies conveyed messages of congratulations and fraternal greetings on the occasions of Hamilton's Convocation and Kampen's Schooldag 2006, 2007 and 2008.
- 4.2 Deputies conveyed greeting to and informed Hamilton, South Africa, Kampen and Korea of our appointment and as outlined in heading 2 above.
- 4.3 Contact with Kampen remained low key, being limited to the above greetings and contact regarding a guest lecturer (see heading 10 below). It may be of benefit to the churches for Deputies to increase the level of contact with Kampen. Kampen has a rich heritage and has

much to share. Most of the faculty have a reasonable command of the English language. Kampen may offer English language courses in the future.

4.4 Contact with South Africa was initially limited to obtaining:

- a. the official name of the relevant organisation being the Theological Training Institute for the FRCSA
- b. the names of the deputies curators being Rev Pieter Nel, Rev Eugene Viljoen and Rev Jerry Mhlanga;
- c. the names of the regional co-ordinators being Rev Hannes Breytenbach and Rev Pieter Boon.

4.5 However, substantial further information about their “Minister’s Training Structure” has been received from South Africa in September 2008 and February 2009.

4.6 Contact with Korea was limited to sending greetings and obtaining:

- a. the official name of the relevant organisation being Korea Theological Seminary;
- b. its address being SamYongDong 40-1, Chonan, 330-150, Korea;
- c. the name of the president being Dr & Rev Yookwang Hyon;
- d. the e-mail address of Dr & Rev Yookwang Hyon being hyonyookwang@hotmail.com and the e-mail address of Professor Haemoo Yoo being profyoo@gmail.com;
- e. the website www.kts.ac.kr which is in Korean language.

4.7 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.

4.8 Deputies received Hamilton’s Handbooks, course calendars, financial reports and budgets.

4.9 In addition, Deputies also received the following:

- a. Agendas and supporting material (including some reports) and minutes for meetings of Hamilton’s the Board of Governors.
- b. Agendas and minutes for meetings of Hamilton’s Finance and Property Committee.

- c. Agendas and minutes for meetings of Hamilton's Academic Committee.
 - d. Other notices from Hamilton which are also circulated amongst the Canadian churches.
- 4.10 Deputies wrote to Dr & Mrs Gootjes and the Board of Governors of Hamilton concerning Dr Gootjes' illness.
- 4.11 Brother M Plug visited Hamilton for the occasion of the 39th Anniversary Meeting and 34th Convocation of the College in Hamilton and a meeting of the Board of Governors of Hamilton in September 2008.
- 4.12 Br Plug 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 2.
- 4.13 Deputies also corresponded Hamilton's Board of Governors concerning:
- a. the Australian contribution to Hamilton's funding;
 - b. delivery of programs by distance education / IT (please see heading 7 below); and
 - c. guest lecturer availability (please see heading 10 below).

5. Funds for theological library and theological training

- 5.1 Deputies continued to collect from the churches for our own theological library and theological training.
- 5.2 Deputies collected A\$57,664.82 from the churches as funds for a theological library and theological training during the period February 2006 to November 2008.
- 5.3 Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and held in this fund are contained in Appendix 3.

6. Theological library – further progress

- 6.1 Deputies started in July 2006 with a small collection of study books which were donated towards an Australian theological library. These were and are at present stored at the building of the Support Office of the John Calvin Schools.

- 6.2 A donation of books from the library of the now late Rev G Van Rongen later in 2006 added substantially to that small collection. More books were donated since the last Synod, to the extent that the current facilities can no longer hold the number of books and other materials (like magazines and sermons).
- 6.3 It must be said that most of the donated books are written in Dutch (approx. 80%). It remains to be seen if the collected material will be of much use to students who can not read or write Dutch.
- 6.4 The deputies have not yet begun to obtain and purchase basic materials. It seems a bit premature to start buying material. In the opinion of the deputies a theological university can not be established in the near future, and basic material gets outdated rather quickly. If deputies purchased dictionaries or grammars, they may be outdated before a university is started up. As for theological magazines and such, they will most likely be available in digital format in the future, at much lower prices. In addition, we do not know what the future holds in terms of (computer) technology. We may be able, for instance, to access Bible commentaries online.

7. Investigation – theological training

- 7.1 Deputies wrote to Hamilton's Board of Governors by letter dated 9 November 2007:
 - a. noting that the riches of Hamilton's programs could easily be shared amongst the churches; and
 - b. requesting that Hamilton's Board of Governors consider offering Hamilton's programs by distance education / IT.
- 7.2 Hamilton's Board of Governors responded by letter dated 28 January 2008:
 - a. appointing Reverend AJ Pol and Reverend Schouten to correspond further with Deputies;
 - b. noting that Hamilton's Board of Governors continued to have reservations about how realistic distance learning really is for the kind of education that takes place at Hamilton; and
 - c. setting out various questions.

- 7.3 Deputies sought and obtained the input of Br Bert Veenendaal and Br Mark Wagenaar as well as a current Australian student from Hamilton. This input (both technical and other and of course the time involved in providing the input) was very much appreciated by Deputies.
- 7.4 Deputies wrote to Hamilton's Board of Governors by letter dated 23 June 2008, seeking to demonstrate that distance learning can be appropriate for use in theological training, including an outline of various example models of learning by distance education / IT as they may apply to Hamilton's courses.
- 7.5 Hamilton's Board of Governors responded by letter dated 9 September 2008, stating that Hamilton's Board of Governors "does not see the way open at this time to further pursue the matter of online education at the College".
- 7.6 Hamilton's Board of Governors outlined the following factors leading to their decision:
 - a. The College has many other pressing concerns at this time which have a higher priority.
 - b. The College does not have the manpower or the resources necessary for this kind of work.
 - c. While moving can be an obstacle to foreign students, this is true also for students who come from Western Canada, some of whom need to move 4000 kms in order to enter the College. In many educational settings, students must move a considerable distance.
 - d. While face to face interaction is not absolutely necessary for learning, the Board believes that much would be lost without this kind of dynamic interaction. The face to face model of interactive learning is particularly important in the training of future pastors.
 - e. It is unrealistic to expect Professors to travel to Australia or Students to travel to Canada for shorter periods or for students to travel from Australia to Canada.
 - f. It is unrealistic to expect that Professors would develop a condensed course for such visits when the students are also supposed to be tapped into the regular lectures.

- g. The College program of instruction is delivered in a cyclical format. Only the first year courses are offered every year. The other three years of the program are given in a rotation. This means that it would be impossible to implement distance learning for only a part of the 2nd, 3rd or 4th years. Covering these parts of the curriculum would have to be all or nothing.
- h. In regard to the first year courses, offering only a part of the program by distance education would not be helpful for foreign students. To be truly helpful, we would have to offer all the courses in an online format which is something we are not prepared to do.

7.7 Deputies resolved not to pursue this aspect further.

7.8 At this point, deputies considered another option with regards to setting up an Australian Theological University.

7.9 According to the report of deputies DTM to Synod 2003, “establishing an own seminary is out of reach for both the present and the foreseeable future.”

7.10 We must also conclude that distance learning / IT is not an option considering the reluctance of Hamilton to cooperate in such a project.

7.11 However, deputies considered that if the churches still wish to establish a theological university in the future, perhaps we should create the demand for one by increasing the number of students. Instead of establishing a university hoping that students will come, we should start at the other end and create a demand which will in time lead to a university. At present there are not enough students to justify having our own university. Perhaps the churches can increase the number of students by offering preparatory studies and courses which may attract (young) men and encourage them to study for the ministry.

7.12 To be able to offer these studies we need to broaden our target group and also the course material offered. In this manner we can, as a first beginning, create a basis year of theological studies, which will be accessible not

only to future theology students, but also to others who wish to study theology or aspects of theology.

7.13 We suggest to broaden the target group to (at least) the following:

- a. Those who want to become a minister or missionary, but don't want to leave Australia now, or those who are not yet certain if they want to become a minister/missionary.
- b. Current ministers in Australia. Many ministers would like a period of time to do a refresher course or post-academic course.
- c. Office bearers or future office bearers. Many of our churches organise a course for brothers in the congregation to prepare them for a call to the office of elder or deacon. Think of the so-called Kloosterman tapes. An academy could offer a course such as this. We could also offer courses in pastoral care, in church order studies and other relevant subjects for office bearers.
- d. Members of local churches in general. Some churches organise post-catechism courses to continue the studies of young people after they have professed the faith. Such a course could be centralized in an academy. Local churches could even request an academy to develop material for catechism.
- e. Young people who finished year 12 and have not yet decided what to do or to study, could study basic theology for a year. This will give them a good Christian basis for any future endeavour.
- f. Student teachers. This needs to be coordinated with the School association. They too may benefit from some of the (theological) material offered.

7.14 A basis year could grow out to a full Theological University in time. It would form a foundation on which a University can be built through the years.

7.15 Deputies realise that many blanks need to be filled in. However, if the plan to establish a theological university at this time is abandoned altogether, it will probably not be considered again for a very long time, when the number of students is (possibly) larger.

- 7.16 The above concept may help to increase those numbers quicker and at the same time it will be edifying to the church federation as a whole as it offers courses that aide and encourage brothers and sisters to study the Word of God and Reformed theology in a number of different contexts.
- 7.17 Deputies considered if it was possible to work with other organisations in our churches.
- 7.18 We are aware that at present our churches have a Reformed Study Centre. However, the Study Centre is a self-appointed committee which mainly organises lecture series by capable speakers.
- 7.19 On the other hand, the School Associations of Albany and Armadale have been investigating the possibility of establishing a College of Reformed Education (CORE)
- 7.20 From br L. VanBurgel we asked and received the following information:

The Free Reformed School Associations of Albany and Armadale have investigated the possibility of establishing a Centre of Reformed Education (CORE). It was thought this centre could operate separately from the school associations, take over the teacher training functions currently the responsibility of the John Calvin Schools Support Office (JCSSO) and expand into a fulltime teacher training course. Already the JCSSO provides tertiary level training in a number of units on behalf of Notre Dame University and the students receive accreditation for completing these units towards the completion of their B Ed course. However JCSSO does not receive any payments from either the students or the University for conducting these units.

For CORE to be successful and the range of units expanded into a full undergraduate teacher training course, CORE would need accreditation from a tertiary institution prepared to allow it to work under its umbrella. The College of Christian Higher Education Inc (CCHE) was investigated as a possible institution. CCHE has received accreditation for a number of post graduate courses in education but no undergraduate course although it has longer term intentions to obtain such

accreditation for an undergraduate education course. It has two colleges who act as its agents (NICE and Southland College). Fruitful discussions were held with representatives of CCHE and NICE.

Accreditation would not only give a teacher training course run by CORE official standing, but also allow fees to be charged which in turn can be deferred by the student under the FEE-HELP scheme (formerly HECS) as is the case with other tertiary studies. This would give a substantial financial income as the potential number of students needed to study for teacher training is quite significant.

Until such a possibility (accreditation) is available the committee studying the possibility of CORE have made little progress and its activities are moribund at present.

- 7.21 The idea expounded by deputies regarding working towards a Theological University would receive a significant boost through cooperation with a possible College of Reformed Education (CORE) as described above. For that reason, deputies suggest this option be monitored and if progress can be made with CORE, seek to work together with the school associations to mutually achieve our respective goals.
- 7.22 Deputies need to further investigate the nature of this possible cooperation. A teachers' college cannot simply be combined with a ministers' college. However, resources and teachers can possibly be shared. In addition, any facilities may be shared as well.
- 7.23 Furthermore, any cooperation with CORE would be temporary. It is the intention that the basis year will develop into a full and accredited Theological University over time. As we grow and develop towards that goal the cooperation with CORE will be reviewed and both institutions will in due time go their separate ways.
- 7.24 Deputies recommend that Synod decides to mandate Deputies to investigate the feasibility of offering a basis year of theology to the churches in Australia, for the

purpose of establishing a Theological University in the future, as outlined above.

Grounds:

- a. A basis year may encourage brothers to begin the theological training for the ministry in Hamilton;
- b. A basis year gives future or potential students in Hamilton a head start;
- c. Even if this basis year does not result in an increase of students, it will still provide valuable education to members of the FRCA.

8. Publication and promotion

- 8.1 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 special items as they arose.
- 8.2 Rev Rupke wrote an article regarding training for the ministry in the Una Sancta.
- 8.3 Deputies arranged for an advertisement in the Una Sancta:
 - a. Congratulating candidate Cornelis Kleyn on satisfying the requirements of a master of divinity at Hamilton; and
 - b. encouraging young brothers to consider whether they are called to preach the Gospel and minister to the Churches.
- 8.4 Deputies have arranged for publication in the Una Sancta of information recently received about South Africa’s theological training.

9. Financial aid to students

- 9.1 Deputies continued to support Brother Cornelis Kleyn (Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura), Brother Arend Witten (Free Reformed Church of Albany) and Br Sean Wagenaar (Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs). Br C Kleyn has since completed his study and is serving in the ministry in the Canadian Reformed Church of Kerwood.

- 9.2 Deputies have arranged for the collection of funds for all three students.
- 9.3 As well as arranging for the financial support, Deputies maintain contact with the students being financially supported to provide encouragement and determine their progress.
- 9.4 Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to students during Deputies' current term are contained in Appendix 4.

10. Guest lecturer

- 10.1 Despite many attempts, Deputies were not able to secure a guest lecturer from either Hamilton or Kampen.
- 10.2 The Board of Governors of Hamilton has agreed to Deputies request for a guest lecturer for 2010, noting that "we do not yet know which professor will be coming to you but one of the faculty members will be ready to visit your churches".

11. Involvement with Hamilton's Board of Governors

- 11.1 Deputies continued to monitor the agendas and minutes of meetings of Hamilton's Board of Governors.
- 11.2 The combined visit to attend the meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2007 and the 2007 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Church as proposed by Synod 2006 did not occur. The reason for this is that the dates did not (and as Deputies understand matters will probably never) co-incide.
- 11.3 Deputies resolved that Br M Plug attend the September 2008 meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors.
- 11.4 Br M Plug attended the meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors held on 4 September 2008, being made welcome and invited to full participation.
- 11.5 Matters discussed at this meeting pertaining to the Australian Churches were as follows:
 - a. In the discussion of the Budget for 2008, the Chairman expressed gratitude for the substantial

- contribution to their budget from the Australian Churches.
- b. Distance education / education via IT (see material under heading 7 above).
- c. Guest lecturer (see material under heading 10 above).

12. Pastoral Training Program

- 12.1 Br C Kleyn completed his Pastoral Training Program under the supervision of the consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Rockingham. This occurred in July 2007. The FRC Rockingham requested assistance in payment for Br Kleyn. As this was the first time such a request was tabled, deputies decided assistance was possible in line with Decision 2, Article 17, Acts of Synod 2007. The amount given was \$6000; this figure being determined by the then practice in Canadian Reformed Churches. In addition to this, deputies paid Br Kleyn's airfare as part of his budgeted living expenses.
- 12.2 Deputies have received the guidelines for compensation and support of students in the Pastoral Training Program. These guidelines are limited to students completing their PTP in Canada.
- 12.3 Deputies consider the opportunities for students as well as congregations in Australia to be part of this program are worthy of support from the Australian churches.
- 12.4 Deputies recommend that the payment to students involved in the PTP be covered by the Australian Churches under similar conditions set by the Canadian churches:
 - a. Compensation to be the same as the Canadian rates and conditions (at present \$750 Can per week to a max of 10 weeks; churches may increase this allowance at their own cost).
 - b. A travel allowance be provided to cover the full cost of for student travel to and from Australia
 - c. The churches will be assessed on a needs basis to cover associated costs for the PTP separate to Needy Students and Hamilton Theological College Funds.

12.5 Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada) are contained in Appendix 5.

12.6 Adapted guidelines to reflect the Australian context are contained in Appendix 6.

13. Recommendations

Deputies recommend that Synod decides to:

13.1 Request the churches to contribute A\$50 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2009.

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

13.3 Set aside \$3,500 from general Synod funds for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2009, being the 40th Anniversary of the Hamilton College.

13.4 Adopt the Australian adaptation of the guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program prepared by Deputies.

13.5 Discharge Deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

- a. continue to collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
- b. continue to correspond with "Hamilton", "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
- c. continue to collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
- d. continue with our own theological library;
- e. continue to 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. continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from one of the theological seminaries of our sister churches once every three years;
- h. continue to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
- i. monitor the practical implications of including the Australian Churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and collect and disburse funds for this purpose in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program;
- j. investigate the feasibility of offering a basis year of theology to the churches in Australia, for the purpose of establishing a Theological University in the future.

14. Greetings

Deputies send fraternal greetings to Synod and wish the brethren God's blessing on the work to be done.

Rev E Rupke
Convener

Br H Faas
Secretary

Br R Heerema
Treasurer – Hamilton Theological College Fund

Br M Plug
Treasurer – Theological Library Fund / Needy Students Fund

Appendix 1: Financial Statements: Hamilton Theological College Fund

Deputies Training for the Ministry

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Hamilton Theological College Fund

Statement of Receipts and payments February 2006 to November 2008

Opening Balance \$18,824.27

Receipts	2005 O/S	2006	2007	2008 total		Payments
Albany		9360	13000	13100	35460	
Armadale		10760	11650	11750	34160	
Baldivis					0	
Bunbury		2160	3100	3550	8810	2008 Hamilton 79 0000
Byford		6760	9450	9900	26110	Bank fees 72
Darling Downs		3680	4550	4900	13130	
Kelmscott		6240	8000	8800	23040	2007 Hamilton 100 000
Launceston		4200	5250	6150	15600	Bank fees 142
Legana	2360	2640	3650	3600	12250	PTP/Rockingham 6000
Mt Nasura	7760	7520	9049.98	8750	33079.98	2008 Hamilton 105 000
Rockingham		7880	5850	14400	28130	Bank fees 87.58
Southern River		7320	12800	13100	33220	
West Albany		9440	9400	9450	28290	
Interest		1623.67	1670.69	1808.29	5102.65	total 290301.58
Credit from passbook					6	
					296388.63	
			Opening balance	18824.27		
			Total Income	315212.9		
			Expenditure	290301.58		
			Balance	24911.32		

Appendix 2: Address of Br M Plug to the 39th Anniversary Meeting and 34th Convocation of the College at Hamilton held on 4 September 2008

Board of Governors, Senate, Students, Brothers and Sisters

I bring you greetings from the Australian Churches and thank you for the opportunity to join you this evening. In addressing you briefly, I want to focus on the phrase – join you this evening.

To join gives expression to the unity we have. We are tied together; indeed bound together. We have a common aim and speak a common language, not English with different accents, but the language of the household of faith. As Australian Churches, we are extremely thankful for the work of the College which manifests the unity we have, in the preparation and training of pastors, who we readily call and install on our pulpits. It is with continued confidence that we send our young men here. And it is with the same confidence that we continue to support this work both financially and prayerfully.

Which brings me to this evening....

Take a step back and what do you see? A Convocation? A graduation ceremony? Yes! And we sincerely congratulate the brothers. May the Lord bless you as you go from here and be of service in His Kingdom. And brs den Hollander & Harsevort, do not take ill of me for noting br. Kleyn, who is filled with who knows how many pints of Australian blood.

But if this is all you see, take a few more steps backward. And keep walking backwards until you have the whole picture – a great and beautiful work of the Lord in His faithful care for His church. We see much reason to express joy and thankfulness. The Lord provides faithful teaching staff and faculty; He gives genuine love for the work. He grants the necessary recourses. As Australian Churches, we note these things and thank Him for them.

We also recognise the various trials and difficulties He places on your path. I refer not to the hiccups but to the mountain of sorrows experienced in the ill health firstly of Dr. deJonge and more recently Dr. Gootjes. But in our grief (and confusion), we are drawn to the throne of grace – the only possible address for comfort, peace and direction.

Again we are taught we live by grace, and we are continually dependent on Him for all things. Be assured that you may count on our continual prayers and support also in these matters. And then together we will be joined in that rich doxology confession as recorded in Romans 11:33-36

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His Judgements and His past beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been His Councillor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay Him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be all glory forever.

May the Lord bless you all!

Thank you

Appendix 3: Financial Statements: Theological Library Fund

Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry

*Australian Theological Library Fund
Statements of Receipts and Payments
March 2006 - November 2008*

Opening Balance	\$9,043.92
Receipts	
Albany	\$7,320.45
Armadale	\$5,463.30
Baldivis	\$537.50
Bunbury	\$1,238.00
Byford	\$7,303.17
Darling Downs	\$3,524.65
Kelmscott	\$5,137.15
Launceston	\$3,900.00
Legana	\$2,324.95
Mt Nasura	\$0.00
Rockingham	\$5,610.00
West Albany	\$15,305.65
Southern River	\$0.00
Total Collected	\$57,664.82
Interest	\$3,095.56
Closing Balance	\$69,804.30

Appendix 4: Financial Statements: Needy Students Fund**Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry**

*Needy Students Fund
Statements of Receipts and Payments
March 2006 - November 2008*

Opening Balance	5031.43
Receipts	
Armadaale	17580.84
Baldwivis	1950
Bunbury	3823.44
Byford	12146.34
Kelmscott	10502.16
Launceston	2691.5
Legana	7879.5
Mt Nasura	12265.68
Rockingham	12233
West Albany	12143.88
W Kelmscott/S River	22937.38
Interest	257.03
Total	116410.8
Payments	
Support to student	103653.6
Bank charges	160
Total	103813.6
Balance	17628.59

Appendix 5: Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada)

1. Compensation for students in the Pastoral Training Program

- a. The mandate of the Committee is “To determine a reasonable compensation for internship, and to develop guidelines for such compensation” (Acts of General Synod Smithers 2007, Art. 78:4.11.1.2). The Committee considered that the Pastoral Training Program is an *educational* program that endeavours to equip students more fully for their future task among God’s people. The Committee obtained information from past participants in the Program, both students and churches where students were placed during their internship, from students who hope to be enrolled in the PTP, and examined co-op programs in graduate studies at Canadian universities. The Committee considered that the PTP is not unlike co-op programs at Canadian universities that aim to provide practical training and expertise to students. The students that enrol in the PTP are in a Master of Divinity Program of Studies. The Pastoral Training Program is mandatory for all students aspiring to the ministry of the Word among the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the document entitled “Guidelines for the pastoral Proficiency Program” (Art. 78:4.10). The Federal Government established rates of pay to students in a Master’s program during 2007 to range from \$16.07 to \$20.22 per hour when employed in a co-op program at Federal departments, laboratories and agencies. The highest amount was only to be paid to students who are re-employed or to students who have relevant previous work experience. The website is: www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/hrpubs/compensation/tces1_e.asp. New rates of pay are published annually. After considering these matters, the Committee decided to pay \$20.00 per hour or \$750.00 per week for students employed during the summer of 2008. Since the requirements of PTP program are considered to be fulfilled during a minimum of 10 weeks of training, the Committee decided to pay the employer, the Church where the student is placed by mutual agreement between the PTP Coordinator and the mentor, a total

amount of \$7,500.00 for the 10 weeks of training. The Committee will pay each of the Churches employing a student the above stated amount in a manner ensuring that the student can be paid on time.

- b. To encourage participation of the Churches in Western Canada in the Pastoral Training Program, the Committee decided to provide an additional amount of funding to students travelling outside of Ontario; \$500.00 for travel to Manitoba; \$750.00 for travel to Alberta, and \$1000.00 for travel to British Columbia. This amount would also be sent to the local hosting church.
- c. The Committee decided not to pay for additional travel costs, mileage, the student being married and having a family to look after, housing expenses, tuition fees or other considerations. The Committee considered that it has as mandate to fund an educational program. The Committee is not a Committee for Needy Students. Also, employers that hire students enrolled in a cooperative program of studies at Canadian universities pay students for the period of the training program, but not for travel expenses, family needs, housing expenses or other expenses. However, a local hosting church could, at its discretion, add to the approved amount based on the individual student's circumstances.

The Committee decided to fund only the 10 week Pastoral Training Program period. Students should be able to complete the requirements of the mandatory 10-week Pastoral Training Program during that period of time. The Church employing the student may, at its discretion, enter into an agreement with the student to employ him for a period longer than 10 weeks but would then itself face payment of the additional costs.

2. Assessment

- a. The Committee will consider at its October meeting the number of students to be employed by the Churches in the ensuing year and send a letter to the Churches regarding the annual assessment for the PTP requesting the churches to pay the assessment before March 31 of the following year.

3. Foreign Students

- a. The student should apply early for a work permit, i.e. before January 1 of the year in which he will be enrolled in the Pastoral Training Program.
- b. The granting of a work permit may be expedited when the student writes in his application to Citizenship and Immigration Canada that he is enrolled in a Master of Divinity Program of Studies at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario, that the Theological College is a Province of Ontario recognized degree-granting institution, that the program is mandatory to complete the requirements for the M.Div. degree, and that he is required to complete the Pastoral Training Program immediately following the 3rd year of studies of the 4-year M.Div. program.
- c. Foreign students may wish to ask for help in applying for a work permit from Mr. Rodney Vermeulen who has been successful in obtaining a permit.

4. Employment and taxes

- a. The Committee will advise churches regarding employment of students and payroll deductions for taxes, unemployment insurance, etc.

Appendix 6: Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada) – Adapted by Deputies Training for Ministry for the Australian Context

1. Compensation for students in the Pastoral Training Program

- a. Deputies Training for the Ministry will liaise with the Canadian Committee (appointed to oversee payment of students in Canada in the PTP) to determine the rate of pay for students undertaking the PTP.
This Committee decided to pay \$20.00 per hour or \$750.00 per week for students employed during the summer of 2008. Since the requirements of PTP program are considered to be fulfilled during a minimum of 10 weeks of training, the Committee decided to pay the employer, the Church where the student is placed by mutual agreement between the PTP Coordinator and the mentor, a total amount of \$7,500.00 for the 10 weeks of training. The Committee will pay each of the Churches employing a student the above stated amount in a manner ensuring that the student can be paid on time.
- b. To encourage participation of the Churches in Australia in the Pastoral Training Program, the travel expenses to and from Australia will be paid by the Australian Churches. This amount would also be sent to the local hosting church.
- c. Deputies Training for the Ministry will not pay for additional travel costs, mileage, the student being married and having a family to look after, housing expenses, tuition fees or other considerations. The Canadian Committee considered that it has as mandate to fund an educational program. The Committee is not a Committee for Needy Students. Also, employers that hire students enrolled in a cooperative program of studies at Canadian universities pay students for the period of the training program, but not for travel expenses, family needs, housing expenses or other expenses. However, a local hosting church could, at its discretion, add to the approved amount based on the individual student's circumstances.
- d. Deputies Training for the Ministry will fund only the 10 week Pastoral Training Program period. Students should be able to complete the requirements of the mandatory 10-week Pastoral Training Program during that period of time. The Church employing the student may, at its discretion, enter into an agreement with the student to employ him for a period

longer than 10 weeks but would then itself face payment of the additional costs.

2. Assessment

- a. Deputies Training for the Ministry will consider at its October meeting the number of students to be employed by the Churches in the ensuing year and send a letter to the Churches regarding the annual assessment for the PTP requesting the churches to pay the assessment before March 31 of the following year.

3. Foreign Students

- a. It remains the responsibility of the student to apply for the necessary work permit where applicable.

4. Employment and taxes

- a. Churches employing students will be responsible to determine the issues regarding employment of students and payroll deductions for taxes, unemployment insurance, etc.

Report of Deputies for an Australian Book of Praise

1. Mandate

Synod West Kelmscott 2006 made the following decision (Art. 98):

1. to discharge deputies;
2. to acknowledge the Church's 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:

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

2. General comments

- 2.1. It was at Synod 2000 that it was first decided to appoint Deputies for looking into the possibility to publish our own, Australian Book of Praise (=ABP). Since that time Deputies for the Australian Book of Praise have twice reported to Synod, first in 2003 and then in 2006. The latter Synod decided "to acknowledge the Churches' desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise" (Art. 98).

The Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003 state that the desirability to produce an ABP was not yet established but the Acts of Synod 2006 acknowledge “the Churches’ desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise” (Art. 98).

Since that obstacle has now been overcome and since Deputies in their report to Synod 2003 and Synod 2006 have shown that publishing an ABP is possible and viable, there is little else standing in the way of proceeding.

2.2 Responses from the churches to a questionnaire sent out by deputies in 2005 include a variety of suggestions regarding the content of an ABP. None of these suggestions have been presented to Synod, however, which is the proper assembly for making decisions on the contents of the ABP. For deputies to propose a variety of changes at this stage would only invite debate and hamper publication. Deputies are of the opinion that changes to the Book of Praise should be proposed by the churches via the ecclesiastical assemblies in accordance with proper church political procedure. Therefore with respect to changes to the contents of the ABP a minimalist approach is recommended.

2.3. The proposal of FRC Mt Nasura adopted by Synod 2000 included the suggestion that an ABP include Bible references in the prose section from the NKJV (Acts Synod 2000, Article 54). Synod 2003 clarified that the NKJV was not “endorsed” but “recommended” for use in the churches and that the NIV had also been “recognised” for use “in churches which prefer that translation” (Acts Synod 2003, Article 26). Synod 2006 acknowledged the churches’ desire to publish an ABP, but did not give any direction as to whether such an ABP should include NKJV Bible references, and if so, whether pronouns for God in the prose section should also be adjusted to You/Your/Yours to reflect the NKJV. Deputies thought it best not to propose changes to the text of the prose section without clear direction from the churches. In other words, deputies judge that the matter of which Bible translation to use in the ABP is one of the above-mentioned changes that should be proposed by the churches through the ecclesiastical assemblies.

3. Standing Committee

Deputies considered the longer term needs in relation to the ABP. The past 3 Synods appointed 3 Deputies to investigate various matters.

Deputies favour an approach whereby:

- a. A Standing Committee for the ABP (=SCABP) is appointed consisting of three members and an alternate. They are the ones Synod mandates to do specific tasks and they are directly accountable to Synod 2012 DV.
- b. SCABP is the registered copyright holder for the publication.
- c. SCABP enlist the aid and assistance of professionals or gifted people in the areas that require SCABP's attention. Such areas can be financial, printing/publishing, legal expertise and more. In the future this may also include musicians and linguists if and when changes are decided upon by Australian Synods that impact on these areas.

4. Copyright considerations

- 4.1. A private person hold copyright to 45 songs, used in the current CanBP. 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.

In a letter 6/10/08 the conditions for use of the copyrighted songs have been updated. We would be required to pay up front an amount of C\$4500 to the Canadian Synod treasury Church to help cover costs their SCBP is incurring in doing their work over the years.

- 4.2. Copyright should be held by a body which has the right to edit the ABP and which can correspond with those who request permission to use/photocopy contents of the ABP. Hence it makes sense to appoint a Standing Committee to fulfil that function.
- 4.3. The Interkerkelijke Stichting for het kerklied, acknowledged in the Canadian Book of Praise, has confirmed that using the musical annotations with the Psalms is no problem at all.

5. Financial considerations

5.1. Viability

It was reported to Synod 2003, that the completed unit cost for an Australian Book of Praise was estimated at \$13.95, compared to the retail price at the time of \$26.50. While costs may have moved incrementally, there has been no material changes that have been unearthed during the committees tenure that in any way question the viability of the project. In fact with the higher Australian Dollar, there may even be print savings. If all input prices would double, the project would still break even and the probability of all costs doubling is considered very remote. In summary there is a significant financial safety margin embedded in this initiative.

5.2. Copyright fees

While the nominal sum may be significant, e.g. \$10,000, it is a fixed cost, meaning its impact reduces as the volume of ABP are printed and sold. In any event it doesn't jeopardise the financial viability of the project, it just needs to be managed along the journey. It's prudent too that the copyright holders are not engaged with more than necessary, like asking for a revised copyright price between every Synod, as the price has a mysterious habit of rising every time one enquires.

6. Monitor Developments in the Canadian Book of Praise

6.1. The discussions the Canadian SCBP are having with the Psalter-Hymnal Committee of the URCNA are done with the aim of trying to publish a common songbook. Details of interest to our Australian churches are:

- a. Synod 2007 of the CanRC has mandated the SCBP to update the language of the Psalm section of the BoP in the hope that these may be included in the Psalm section of the common songbook. These are being published on the web (www.bookofpraise.ca/) and are available in a binder from Premier Printing.
- b. Synod 2007 of the CanRC has indicated a strong preference for including all 150 Genevan Psalms, but the URCNA have not committed themselves to this.
- c. Synods of the CanRC and the URCNA have agreed upon a common set of principles and guidelines for selecting songs for the common songbook.
- d. The Joint Songbook Committee is in the process of selecting hymns for the common songbook, but has not yet begun work on the Psalm section.

- e. Synods of the CanRC and the URCNA have appointed committees to collaborate on the prose section of the songbook (confessions, forms, and prayers) to come with a unified text.
- f. Synod 2007 of the CanRC has mandated the SCBP to endeavour to finish the songbook before federative unity is realized and to commit as much as possible to the exclusive use of this songbook after federative unity has been achieved. The 2007 Synod of the URCNA however, altered their songbook committee's mandate to work first on an exclusively URCNA Psalter Hymnal, which means effectively that the common songbook has been put on hold.

6.2. Current work being done to the CanBP:

- a. Synod 2004 of the CanRC approved the publication of an overleaf edition of the Book of Praise (with music annotation on every left hand page if a Psalm continues over the page), but Synod 2007 has placed it on hold.
- b. Synod 2007 has adopted an updated prose section of the BoP with NIV references. In September 2008, the SCBP gave Premier the order to publish an interim BoP with the current Psalms and hymns but an NIV-updated prose section.
- c. The CanRC are exploring a modest expansion of the hymn section of the BoP. Twenty-eight new hymns have been published in an augment and made available for testing in the churches. The SCBP has been mandated to receive feedback from the churches and make a final recommendation to Synod 2010.
- d. Synod 2007 of the CanRC has adopted a variety of minor editorial changes to the prose section of the BoP (Acts of Synod Smithers 2007, Article 172).

7. Recommendations

How to proceed

In order to make progress toward a decision to publish our own ABP, as is desired by the churches in the bond (stated by Synod 2006), your Deputies urge the following approach:

1. The 2006 version of the Canadian Book of Praise is taken as the common basis to start our Australian Book of Praise with the understanding that;

2. changes agreed upon and approved by our previous Synods (form ordination for office bearers, Australian CO, removal of the word Christian from the Apostles Creed (also in Lord's Days 7 and 21), replacement of the Canadian Church Order with the Australian one) are incorporated by deputies into the 2006 Canadian version
3. Synod 2009 adopt a new title for the ABP as per the stipulations of the SCBP (see Acts of Synod 2003, page 166), e.g. "Worship Book of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia" ("Worship Book" for short), or mandate deputies to select a title, perhaps soliciting feedback from the churches.
4. a suitable preface be drafted by deputies in addition to the current preface, which should be retained because of its valuable background information. The new additional preface will explain the need for an Australian edition and include a statement that the SCBP of the CanRC has permitted the FRCA to use their material, as stipulated by the SCBP (see Acts of Synod 2003, page 166), as well as acknowledging the copyright permission of W. Helder.
5. adjustments are made to the table of contents where necessary
6. the introduction to the church order found on page 655 of the 2006 BoP serve as introduction to the Australian church order, with the revision of the words "Canadian Reformed Churches" to "Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Also the words "Canadian Reformed Churches" in the introduction to the Belgic Confession on page 441 of the 2006 BoP be changed to "Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
7. the note at the bottom of page 435 of the 2006 BoP be adjusted to refer to the ABP.
8. printing of our Australian BoP is approved at 2009 Synod without the need to come back to the next Synod first. (In the event that Synod does not adopt this recommendation, deputies request Synod to clarify whether or not the churches are permitted to use the interim edition of the BoP with NIV prose section in case we run out of the current edition.)
9. If any of the churches wishes to propose changes to the text of subsequent print runs of the Australian BoP, the normal church-orderly way has to be followed, i.e. by way of proposals of Consistories to Classis and if approved, to Synod for consideration and ratification.
10. Synod discharges current deputies and appoints a Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise

11. SCABP is to keep informed of the developments in Canada concerning the BoP
12. Synod mandates the SCABP to implement points 1-7+11 above.

Grounds:

- a. None of the churches has brought any complaints against the 2006 version of the Canadian Book of Praise and it can therefore be assumed to have common approval in our bond of churches.
- b. Previous changes have been accepted already and need no further discussion.
- c. The calculations proved to Synod Rockingham 2003, and included in this report, clearly show the financial benefits of printing the ABP.
- d. The church orderly way helps greatly in refining proposals and working toward unanimity on changes. It also saves Synods much time and proposed changes have already been considered by the churches and consistories well ahead of Synods that eventually deal with possible changes.
- e. An appropriate committee structure and size will provide greater flexibility and continuity of the work at hand.

This report humbly submitted by deputies:

Rev J Smith
E Swarts
W Amoraal

Appendix 1: Relevant Correspondence

From: George van Popta <gvanpopta@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, 1 Oct 2008 00:30:52 -0400

To: Jannes Smith <johndarlene@westnet.com.au>

Subject: Re: Book of Praise etc

John,

Our 2002 permission, with its terms and conditions, still stands. I had forgotten that we had granted that although I remember we had discussion with Br. Pot about it.

It may sound strange, but the ownership of Hy 1A is not entirely clear to us (we are not sure whether old Mr. De Groot still owns it [and he is demented and in a nursing home] or his power of attorney, or the BoP committee). Please let us clarify that. We will search the archives and/or take up contact with Menno De Groot Jr. We'll get back to you. But as far as the BoP committee is concerned, you have green lights from us.

Regards,

George

--

Rev. George van Popta
22 Sandhead Terrace
Ottawa, Ontario K2J 1L4
613-843-9056 (study)
www.vanpopta.ca <<http://www.vanpopta.ca>>

84 San Antonio Drive
Hamilton, ON
L9C 5N2 Canada

October 6, 2008

Deputies Australian *Book of Praise*
c/o Rev. Dr. J. Smith
44 Target Road
Yakamia, WA 6330
Australia

Dear brothers,

Thank you for your letter informing me of your proposal to publish an Australian version of the *Book of Praise*, using as your starting point the 1984 edition of the *Book of Praise* as it was reprinted in 2006.

If you are indeed determined to retain the old versifications, I would like to update and revise the stipulations I formulated over six years ago, as follows:

1. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia would have permission to use my copyrighted material in the proposed Australian edition as well as in any future reprints thereof, provided that a payment in the amount of C\$4500 is made to the church that was appointed by the most recent synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches to administer the general fund of the churches (currently the Church of Carman East, Manitoba). This amount is then to be earmarked as a contribution towards expenses incurred over the years by the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
2. In keeping with standard practice, I would retain the copyright of the forty-five metrical psalms and hymns in question (see earlier

correspondence). Consequently the Free Reformed Churches of Australia would not have the right to make any changes in the text unilaterally.

3. Prior to publication I would like to receive confirmation that the above-mentioned amount has been paid.
4. In due time I would appreciate your sending me one courtesy copy of the proposed publication.

In the hope that you will find the proposed arrangement satisfactory, I shall look forward to hearing from you again.

With brotherly greetings,
William Helder

From: J.G. Bom [j.g.bom@casema.nl]
Sent: Saturday, 11 October 2008 11:27 PM
To: Willem Amoraal
Cc: Klaas Holwerda; D van den Bosch
Subject: Re: verzoek

Geachte heer Amoraal,

Naar aanleiding van uw e-mail heb ik ons archief geraadpleegd, maar helaas geen vastlegging gevonden van met "Canada" gemaakte afspraken.

Als ik uw verzoek echter goed begrijp, dan spitst zich dat toe tot de melodieën van de 150 psalmen. Deze melodieën zijn zo oud (16e eeuw) dat er van copyright geen sprake meer is en behoeven wij voor overname geen toestemming te geven.

Voor de goede orde merk ik wel op, dat fotokopieren niet is toegestaan, aangezien het beeldrecht bij de uitgeverij berust; de muzieknotatie dient derhalve opnieuw te worden gezet, dan wel gekalligrafeerd.

Met vriendelijke groet,

J.G. Bom
Interkerkelijke Stichting voor het Kerklied.

----- Forwarded Message

From: George van Popta <gvanpopta@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, 21 Nov 2008 09:53:28 -0500
To: Jannes Smith <johndarlene@westnet.com.au>
Subject: Re: Una Sancta article

Dear John,

As for Credo (melody to Hymn 1A), just this week the children of Mr. M.M. de

Groot (in nursing home with dementia) have signed it over to the committee. So we clearly hold the copyright. This will smooth things out for you in that you will only need to deal with us and with Bill Helder. I have not yet seen it, but the family gave the original manuscript of Joop Schouten, composer of Credo, to our archivist, Chris Bosch. I'm very happy about this as it is an historical document.

I should let you know, in case you don't already know, that the 1984 version of the BoP is out of print. On Tuesday we gave the order to publish the 2008 version: the Psalms and Hymns will be of the 1984 version but the non-musical parts will be in accordance with the mandate of GS 2007, i.e., NIV-ized. Premier hopes it will be available before Christmas.

George

Report of Deputies re: Marriage Act 1961

1. Mandate

Synod West Kelmscott 2006 made the following decision with respect to Nominating Authorities (Article 23):

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.

2. Background

On 22 September 1999, the Governor-General first declared the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as a “recognised denomination”, such declaration having been made under section 26 of the *Marriage Act 1961 (Cth)*. This declaration has since been repeated, most recently under the *Marriage (Recognised Denominations) Proclamation 2007* made on 4 October 2007.

The declaration of the FRCA as a “recognised denomination” entitles all ministers of religion within the bond of the FRCA, by virtue of that fact, to become registered as marriage celebrants (see section 29 of the *Marriage Act 1961*).

The Act requires that the “recognised denomination” nominate ministers of religion within that denomination for registration. To that end, deputies are required to be appointed by each Synod with the authority to nominate new ministers within the bond for registration.

The *Marriage Act* is administered by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department – Civil Justice Division. From time to time this Department issues Information Memoranda which deputies then circulate to the various ministers within the bond.

Helpful information as to the administration of the Act and related links can be found at www.ag.gov.au and taking the link to “Marriage celebrants program”.

It should finally be noted that, whilst the declaration of a “recognised denomination” is made by the relevant Commonwealth department (Attorney-General's Department), the registration of the individual minister is performed by the relevant

State Department (Dept. of Justice in Tasmania and Dept. of the Attorney General in WA).

3. Execution of Mandate

Deputies have been able to execute their mandate over the past 3 years.

In summary, the following has been carried out:

- Incoming ministers have been nominated by deputies to the relevant State Registrar, and these ministers have become registered as marriage celebrants (Revs Vermeulen and Retief).
- The relevant State Registrars have been advised of departing ministers from the bond of the FRCA (Rev Poppe).
- Information disseminated by the Commonwealth A-G has been forwarded to all ministers within the FRCA.

Some years ago, various changes were made to the *Marriage Act 1961* (these changes commenced on 1 September 2003). As a result, the requirements for marriage registration and celebration became somewhat more stringent. The Government's aim had been to "raise the professional standards in celebrancy services". Since then, prospective applicants have been required to undergo an interview process and demonstrate competency prior to being allowed registration.

Deputies remain of the view that it is administratively convenient that, for the purposes of marriage celebrancy within the FRCA, the FRCA remain a "recognised denomination". We recommend that 2 deputies be appointed for the task of nominating ministers and circulating information.

4. Recommendation

Deputies recommend that Synod Legana 2009 resolve:

1. To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

Respectfully submitted

Warnar Spyker
Tim Houweling

Report of Deputies for Church Order

1. Mandate

Synod 2006, in its Article 25, mandated deputies:

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

1. 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.
2. To have the Synodical Treasurer pay the initial cost of publication.
3. To authorise the selling of these books, at a normal cost, to the churches and to its members.

2. Execution of Mandate

Deputies concluded that in this technological age the best format for publishing the updated versions was to place them in pdf format on the official web pages of the FRCA. This has now been done, allowing the Church Order articles and relevant standing decisions by synods to be readily accessible for anyone with a computer. Moreover, it allows subsequent versions to be easily updated.

Deputies decided against publishing hard copies. Common sense dictated, and a survey of a number of potential users found, that church members likely to make use of the document would not buy a copy because:

- a. the information is now easily and quickly available on the website;
- b. website access is free;
- c. a hard copy would become outdated after each new synod.

However, should there be Church members wanting a hard copy of the current document, they can either:

- a. download and print it themselves if they have a computer and printer and place it in a binder;
- b. ask someone with this technology to do so;
- c. ask their consistory to make it available to them.

Deputies appreciate the help given by Rev R Eikelboom in identifying relevant decisions made by Synod 2006 and relating them to the CO articles.

J Numan (convener)
W vanderVen

Deputies Article 66 Church Order (Days of Prayer)

FREE REFORMED CHURCH LAUNCESTON

P O Box 705, Launceston 7250
Tasmania, Australia

15 February 2009

Synod Legana 2009 of the
Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Re: Article 66 Church Order

Esteemed brothers

Synod 2006 appointed the Free Reformed Church of Launceston (Acts, Article 121) as Deputies for Article 66 Church Order (Days of Prayer).

In fulfilment of this mandate we can report that the Church of Launceston received a letter from the church at West Albany, proposing that we proclaim a Day of Prayer for the drought which is presently being experienced by most states of Australia. At that time the Launceston consistory considered that such a proclamation would be premature.

On the other hand, a national Day of Prayer was proclaimed for Sunday, 15th February, 2009, in view of the Victorian bushfire disaster, February 2009.

With brotherly greetings

R Eikelboom (chairman) D Velkamp (secretary)