

DEPUTIES REPORTS

(as mandated by Synod Legana 2009)

to the

2012 Synod

Of the

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

To be held at

Armadale, Western Australia

July 2012

Table of Contents

1. General Secretary's Report	5
2. Deputies for Sister Church Relations	7
2.1 Proposal to Amend Synod Rules	11
2.2 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)	12
2.3 Reformed Churches in Netherlands restored (RCNr)	89
2.4 Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)	108
2.5 Presbyterian Church of Korea - Kosin	126
2.6 Free Reformed Churches of South Africa	153
3. Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches – Indonesia	167
4. Deputies: Relations Reformed Churches of New Zealand	179
5. Deputies: Relations Reformed Churches of Brazil	189
6. Deputies for an Australian Book of Praise	191
7. Deputies re: Marriage Act 1961	240
8. Report On Archives And Library Of Synod	242
9. Report On Deputies for Indexing Synod Decisions	247
10. Deputies for Training for the Ministry	248
11. Deputies Article 66 Church Order (Days of Prayer)	269
12. Deputies Auditing books art 17, 18 the Church of Mt Nasura	270

The Free Reformed Church of Armadale
Convening Church
Synod 2012.

General Secretary's Report

1. Mandate.

Synod West Kelmscott 2009 gave the following mandate to the General Secretary Deputy and Assistant General Secretary 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
- 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

There was no correspondence received which fell outside of the responsibility of the appointed deputies.

All deputies reports received (apart from that of the treasurer) have been collated and printed in a bound volume. 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.

3. 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.

Synod 2009 appointed Br D Veltkamp as Website Assistant but no specific mandate for this position was provided. It was understood that br Veltkamp would assist in a review of the current FRCA web site with a view to making necessary improvements.

There has been a number of communications between the current webmaster, br M Pot and the website assistant Br D Velkamp. The current website is maintained by the webmaster in Western Australia and transferring this responsibility to Launceston presents significant challenges and also extra costs.

The website continues to be a central portal for a significant number of churches and church organisations and new material is added as required. Investigations will continue into possible improvements.

Previous General Deputy reports have noted that Synods have not given any guidelines or rules regarding the use of the website. 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.

4. Recommendations

1. Synod Armadale discharges current deputies and reappoints new deputies with a renewed mandate:
 - a. take care of the central post office box;
 - b. distribute the mail;
 - c. be responsible for the website of the FRCA
 - 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.

J.L. van Burgel

J den Boer

General Secretary Deputies

List of Deputies reports not received for publication:

Deputies inspecting Archives and Library - the Church of Byford
Deputies re Art 48 and 76 of the CO

Report of Deputies Relation Churches Abroad

To Synod Armadale 2012

Esteemed Brothers

With thankfulness the deputies may report that it was able to carry out its tasks with regard to the various churches. With thankfulness we may note that the Lord granted necessary health, time and financial ability to carry out our mandate

Since Synod 2009 deputies for relations with sister-churches met thirteen times. These meetings were held in a very brotherly and orderly way. Visits were made to various sister-churches including the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin), the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (liberated), the Reformed Church of the Netherlands (restored) and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa. Reports were made of these visit and attached to this Report.

Upon their request delegates of the OPC met with deputies on the 13th September 2011. The meeting included giving them information about our bond of churches and receiving information from them. The meeting also gave some attention to our common concern about the RCN.

During the course of time since previous Synod deputies received a declaration from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in October of 2009 that Rev. Dr. L.J. Joose of Groningen-West, would be available to preach among the churches. While deputies are aware that other visiting ministers from sister-churches have visited in the bond of churches no further declarations were received.

Several declarations were issued during the course; namely to Rev. E. Rupke who visited Canada in September of 2009, to Rev. W. Huizinga who visit Canada in September of 2011 and to Rev. PKA de Boer who also visited Canada in January of 2012.

Deputies carried out its task according to the adopted rules for sister-church relations and the mandate given with respect to the various churches. The Reports and proposals with regard to the various churches follow.

Abbreviations

CanRC Canadian Reformed Churches

FRCA Free Reformed Churches of Australia

FRCSA Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

GGRC Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin

GGRI Gereja Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia

NGK Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken

OPC Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA)

PCK Presbyterian Churches in Korea (Kosin)

RCB Reformed Churches in Brazil

RCN Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

RCNr Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored)

RCNZ Reformed Churches of New Zealand

URCNA United Reformed Churches of North America

Table of Contents

Report of Deputies Relation Churches Abroad To Synod Armadale 2012	7
Proposal to amend synod rules	11
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)	12
DECISION AND MANDATE	12
DEPUTIES' REPORT	15
Developments since 2009 - Synod Harderwijk 2011	18
Continuing unity discussions with the NGK	21
Role of female in the church	22
Matters concerning the Theological University in Kampen	23
Participation in the National Synod	24
Infant baptism and blessing	28
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
Decision:	29
Grounds:	30
Appendix 1 : Correspondence between Deputies and BBK	31
Appendix 2: Address to Synod Harderwijk 2011	49
Appendix 3: Report of visit to Holland (26/3/11 - 1/4/11)	54
Appendix 4 - Minutes of meeting between Deputies and BBK	67
Appendix 5 – Synopsis of the most relevant decisions of Synod Harderwijk 2011	71
Appendix 6 – Interim report of the CanRC subcommittee regarding the RCN	76
Appendix 7 – Statement of Synod Harderwijk 2011: "Appointment dr. Paas"	86
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands restored (RCNr)	89
I. Mandate to deputies from Synod Legana 2009	89
II. Correspondence:	89
III. Meetings:	90
IV. Developments in the RCNr	93
Conclusion	93

Report - Deputies for Sister Church Relations

V. Recommendations of Deputies to Synod Armadale 2012:	93
<i>Appendix 1 - Letter sent to RCNr 18 March 2010</i>	94
<i>Appendix 2 - Letter from BBK GS Emmen to FRCA Deputies</i>	96
<i>Appendix 3 - Minutes of Meeting of Deputies RCNr and br Vanderven Deputy FRCA.</i>	101
<i>Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)</i>	108
<i>DECISION AND MANDATE</i>	108
<i>DEPUTIES' REPORT</i>	109
<i>Specific Mandate</i>	110
<i>Conclusion:</i>	115
<i>Recommendation:</i>	115
<i>Appendix 1: Address to Synod Burlington 2010</i>	116
<i>Report on Visit to Synod Burlington 2010 as published in Una Sancta</i>	123
<i>Presbyterian Church of Korea – Kosin</i>	126
<i>Deputies Report:</i>	126
<i>Conclusion</i>	127
<i>Recommendations for Synod:</i>	128
<i>Attachment # 1</i>	129
<i>Attachment # 2 Report of visit to the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea</i>	136
<i>Attachment # 3</i>	143
<i>Attachment # 4</i>	146
<i>Attachment # 5</i>	147
<i>Appendix 6</i>	152
<i>Free Reformed Churches of South Africa</i>	153
<i>Decision of Synod Legana 2009, Article 45</i>	153
<i>Activities of Deputies</i>	153
<i>Recommendations to Synod Armadale 2012</i>	154
<i>Appendix A: Address to Synod Pretoria 2011</i>	156
<i>Appendix B: Report on Synod Pretoria 2011</i>	158
<i>Appendix C: Letter to Australian churches requesting support</i>	163
<i>Appendix D: Financial summary of support for South Africa</i>	166

Proposal to amend synod rules

Given the fact that our sister churches in the Netherlands have raised the issue of female delegates to Synod it is wise to clarify our Rules for Synod.

Recommendations:

1. To add a new Rule 6.5 to read as follows:
In the event that visitors delegated by other churches are female, they will not be accorded the full privileges outlined in Rules 6.1 and 6.2. She may be accorded the privilege of Adviser as per Rule 5.2 for the purpose of passing on greetings and information.
2. To request Synod Armadale 2012 to mandate a committee to revise the Rules for Synod to clarify the roles and terms used for “delegates”, “visitors”, “advisers”, etc. and to update these Rules where necessary.

Grounds:

1. As synod is an ecclesiastical assembly of ordained office bearers, all delegates to synod must have the biblical qualifications of an office bearer.
2. The current Rules for Synod use terms that are ambiguous, unclear, poorly defined or outdated. For example;
 - a. the term “delegates” is ambiguously used for both those delegated to our synods (Rule 2) and visitors delegated by other churches to attend our synod (Rule 6) even though they may potentially not be accepted as delegates at our synod,
 - b. there are substantial differences between “advisers” (Rule 5) and “advisory members” (Rule 6),
 - c. Classes have been established (see Rule 2),
 - d. Do “delegates” from other churches also need to meet the criteria of “delegates” in Rule 2 (ie. past or current officebearer?), etc.

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)

Decision And Mandate

Synod Legana 2009 (Art. 71) decided the following with respect to the RCN:

Decision:

1. To take a comprehensive approach with regards to this Synod's decision about the sister church relationship with the RCN, instead of dealing separately and in detail with every agenda item relating to this sister church relationship.
2. Continue the sister church relations with the RCN under the adopted rules.
3. Express our thankfulness to the RCN regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.
4. Exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern 'spirit of the age' (Ground 3). As specific examples, we mention the following:
 - a. Our ongoing concerns about the position of our Dutch sister Churches on connecting the fourth commandment to the Lord's Day as a day of rest, as we confess in Q/A 103 of the HC
 - b. Our concerns that the public comments of Dr. Harinck have not been retracted, even though he remains a professor in Kampen.
 - c. Our ongoing concerns regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel (refer art. 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott).
5. Express and discuss our concerns regarding trends towards unfaithfulness to Scripture, Confessions and Church Order mentioned in Grounds 3-5.
6. To discharge deputies and thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to use the adopted *Rules for Sister Church Relations* to discuss with the RCN deputies BBK:
 - a. Matters raised in Decisions 4, 5 and 7,
 - b. The concerns expressed in the Report of Rev M Nap of which Synod has pronounced to agree with the desire of further hermeneutic study,
 - c. The way deputies *Male/Female in the church* formulate and discuss within the RCN the framework in which men and women serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks,
 - d. Our ongoing concerns regarding the RCN decisions on

Divorce and Remarriage (refer Art 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006),

- e. The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns,
 - f. 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,
 - g. The need for the RCN to uphold the plain meaning of Scripture regarding Genesis 1-11,
 - h. The concern regarding the signs of independentism as mentioned in Ground 4.
- 7. To share with the RCN the observation that their current direction is placing tension on our sister church relationship
 - 8. Call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers in view of the continuing tensions within the RCN and between the RCN and the FRCA.
 - 9. To beseech the Lord by his grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions between the RCN and RCN^r
 - 10. Send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN and provide a synopsis of synod decisions for the benefit of our Australian churches.

Grounds:

- 1. Most of the submissions express concern about the same synod decisions taken by the RCN.
- 2. Many of the decisions mentioned in ground 1 have come to a conclusion within the RCN. It is therefore difficult to discuss them again in detail with the deputies of our sister churches
- 3. A comprehensive approach is further justified by the fact that most of these decisions appear to have a common denominator, namely a particular way of interpreting Scripture. This way of interpretation takes its starting point in man, rather than in God's Word, and it may be the result of the influence of a post-modern 'spirit of the age' in the church.
- 4. Deputies in their report (Report p. 53) identify a "concern that decisions made by synod are not always upheld by the local churches. There is a measure of independentism growing within those churches."
- 5. Even though the various submissions mention a number of specific points of concern, the major concerns are the changes in interpretation of the Bible mentioned in ground 3, and the signs of

independentism mentioned in ground 4.

6. Though the RCN give much evidence of continued faithfulness to the Word of God, Confessions and the Church Order, there are also serious concerns.
7. Our deputies have been able to correspond with the Dutch deputies in a good and brotherly way and have been given opportunity to participate in synod's discussions in an advisory capacity. This is in the spirit of the rules for sister church relations, to which both our bonds of churches have committed themselves.
8. Synod West Kelmscott 2006 (Art 94.I) and Synod Legana 2009 (Art 41.IV) show that our concerns concerning the Fourth Commandment and Sunday rest have not been completely allayed. General Synod of Zwolle Zuid 2008 dealt with several requests for revision and clarification concerning this matter. This included the request that synod would clearly affirm the Scriptural obligation to rest from nonessential work on Sundays. These appeals were denied by the RCN synod.
9. Although our deputies discussed the concerns regarding the public statements of Dr Harinck with deputies BBK and in their address to Synod Zwolle-Zuid, the responses from Synod Zwolle Zuid and Deputies BBK were not satisfactory(see pp. 60, 115 of Deputies Report to Synod Legana 2009; see Synod Zwolle Zuid 16-5-2008 Besluit 3, <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=358&subitem=7566&page=>).
10. Synod West Kelmscott 2006 identified our concerns *regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel as going beyond the common consent of the Church Order and leading to the danger of interdenominational (against Article 28 Belgic Confession) administration of sacraments* (Art 94.IV Acts Synod West Kelmscott 2006).
11. Deputies need to engage with specific points of concern in the broader context of the major concerns as expressed in Ground 5.
12. 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.
13. The FRCA need to encourage the RCN to discuss the issues (and struggles) of concern between them and the RCN in humility and love.

DEPUTIES' REPORT

Introduction

The mandate given to deputies by Synod Legana was executed firstly by way of correspondence (see [Appendix 1](#) for a full copy of all correspondence sent and received by deputies).

Next, two deputies attended the Buitenland Week of Synod Harderwijk in March/April 2011. The official address presented by Deputies to Synod forms [Appendix 2](#). For a full report of the visit, see [Appendix 3](#). During this week, deputies had a face-to-face meeting with the BBK (the RCN deputies for foreign church relations), a record of which is found at [Appendix 4](#). As will be noted from these various appendices, the concerns raised by Synod Legana were discussed in various forums including on the floor of Synod, during the meeting with the BBK, and during our visit to the Theological University in Kampen (TUK).

Synod Harderwijk made the majority of its decisions during April - June 2011. We provide a synopsis of the most relevant decisions at [Appendix 5](#).

During the Buitenland Week, deputies also met with delegates of our Canadian sister churches, who shared with us that their Synod Burlington 2010 had expressed grave concern with respect to the developments within the RCN. The CanRC delegates had prepared a paper which they submitted to Synod Harderwijk which dealt with the following 3 main issues of concern:

1. the view of Scripture in Kampen;
2. work of deputies male/female in the church;
3. unity discussions between the RCN and the NGK.

A summary of this paper was published in *Clarion* (Vol.60, No.16; pp.387-392) and, with permission, we reproduce it at [Appendix 6](#). Whilst noting that it is an interim paper, and was prepared prior to the decisions of Synod Harderwijk, we consider that it provides a useful background summary to the issues concerned.

Finally, at [Appendix 7](#) we include in full the press release of Synod Harderwijk in relation to the appointment of Dr Paas at the TUK.

Mandate to discuss

The primary mandate given to deputies by Synod Legana (Art 71, Decision 6) was to discuss with the RCN deputies BBK a range of matters and concerns. As may be gleaned from the appendices, Deputies achieved limited success in discharging this mandate.

The correspondence under Appendix 1 indicates that there has been little substantive interaction with the BBK regarding the concerns raised by Synod Legana. In an initial letter from the BBK dated 23/3/10, strenuous objection was taken to Synod Legana's concern regarding the RCN's approach to hermeneutics, and in particular the conclusion that within the RCN a new way of interpreting Scripture is functioning that takes its starting point in man.

By letter dated 3/7/10, Deputies sought to provide a detailed response, referring to and expanding upon the matters of concern listed within the decision of Synod Legana, and seeking to demonstrate how in each area of concern, the root cause was an approach that does not take its starting point in the Word of God. In a letter of response, deputies BBK considered that we had only addressed particular outcomes but had failed to clearly and succinctly show how these indeed reflected a man-centred hermeneutic.

Deputies had expressed a desire to meet with the BBK face-to-face, in order to discuss the matters of concern raised by Synod Legana. We suggested that such meeting could be held in conjunction with our mutual sister churches who had expressed similar concerns.

By letter dated 14/12/10, deputies BBK indicated that they would not agree to a joint meeting of sister churches, as "there is a risk of forming a shadow synod in which deputies BBK (more or less) officially discuss the concerns on behalf of [the RCN]." Further, deputies indicated that it was beyond their authority and competence as deputies to discuss with us the concerns that we had raised. The BBK indicated that such a discussion goes beyond the rules for sister-relations, and requested that we address these to their General Synod directly.

As minuted at Appendix 4, Deputies did meet with the BBK on 29/3/11. During this meeting Deputies were given the opportunity to substantiate the concern regarding the "new hermeneutic". There was, however, no substantive interaction from the BBK in relation to the issues that were raised.

Accordingly, no progress was made in resolving the specific areas of concern nominated by Synod Legana, which included matters concerning the 4th commandment, the public comments of Dr Harinck, the administration of both sacraments for military personnel, the work of deputies Male/Female in the church, decisions regarding divorce and remarriage, the continuing proliferation and content of new hymns, unity discussions with the NGK, the interpretation of Genesis 1-11 and the signs

of independentism.

Synod Harderwijk agreed with the position adopted by the BBK. Indeed, it made a number of decisions in direct response to the matters raised by us and by Synod Legana. The full text of the decision is contained within Appendix 5. In summary, Synod Harderwijk decided:

1. to instruct the BBK to continue in discussion with the FRCA in line with past correspondence, in order to promote a truthful image of our churches, on the grounds that the RCN do not recognize themselves in the image described in the Acts of Synod Legana 2009, and further on the grounds that it is detrimental to the sister-church relationship, and the appeal that the FRCA and the RCN want to make to each other based on that relationship, if the starting point is a distorted image;
2. to rule that deputies correctly refused to hold an official meeting with various sister-churches, on the ground that a sister-church has objections against a Synod decision regarding doctrine, church government, discipline or liturgy, then it must direct these straight to the General Synod.

As such, Synod Harderwijk has expressly rejected the concerns expressed by Synod Legana. None of the concerns expressed by Synod Legana have been resolved. In this regard, and in light of further discussion below, Deputies are unable to see evidence of any tangible effect that Synod Legana's exhortation and Deputies' discussions have had upon the RCN.

Impasse for further Deputy discussions?

Before proceeding to discuss further developments in the RCN since 2009, we wish to mention one further issue. FRCA synods have consistently given Deputies the mandate to "discuss with the BBK ..." Yet the BBK's approach, as sanctioned by Synod Harderwijk, suggests that such a mandate cannot in practice be discharged.

The following two difficulties arise:

1. Upon what basis can such discussions proceed, given Synod Harderwijk's conclusion that the RCN do not recognise themselves in the image described by Synod Legana, indeed that the FRCA's concerns present a distorted image that is detrimental to the sister-relationship?
2. What can be the substantive content of such discussions, given Synod Harderwijk's conclusion that if a sister-church has concerns

against Synod decisions regarding doctrine, church government and liturgy, these must be directed straight to the General Synod?

Given that the approach adopted by the BBK since 2009 has been expressly ratified by Synod Harderwijk, deputies fear that a further mandate to discuss will achieve little substantive result.

Developments since 2009 - Synod Harderwijk 2011

Having discussed the matters of concern raised by Synod Legana, we now turn to further developments in the RCN since 2009, particularly the decisions of Synod Harderwijk. Our analysis of these issues will form the basis for our final recommendations.

Synod Harderwijk - interim synod?

Synod Harderwijk met during the period January - June 2011. When it was provisionally closed¹, the chairman Rev. P Niemeijer, in an interview with the Nederlands Dagblad published on 25 June 2011, characterized it as an interim synod. He said that in essence most of the work done by this synod was to approve the reports of the various deputyships and renew their mandate. One example he mentioned is the matter of women in the church. This study had been commenced in 2005 by Synod Amersfoort, continued in 2008, and was now continued again. No conclusions were taken and Synod Harderwijk has now tasked deputies to come with final recommendations to the next synod.

Another example Rev Niemeijer gave is the subject of ongoing unity discussions with the NGK. The mandate given in 2008 by Synod Zwolle-Zuid to continue the exploratory contacts was simply renewed. Other subjects, e.g. a study to see whether living together or in a de-facto relationship may be compared with what Scripture says about marriage, also required more time for further study.

As to the actual decisions that were taken, Rev Niemeijer highlighted the Synod Harderwijk's approval for participation in the National Synod, and the approval of the governance of the Theological University in Kampen (TUK), especially with respect to the appointment of Dr. S. Paas a missionary lecturer at the TUK.

Whilst in some respects Synod Harderwijk has simply renewed mandates, Deputies do not consider that it can properly be described as an "interim synod". Many decisions are of significance. Further, the renewal and expansion of various study mandates give an indication about the direction

¹ Synod will reconvene mid-2012 to deal with the report concerning the revision of the Church Order – "A new work-order"

being taken by the RCN.

New approach to hermeneutics

Synod Legana exhorted the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern “spirit of the age”.

The Synod chairman, Rev. P. Niemeyer, in the above-mentioned interview with the Nederlands Dagblad published on 25 June 2011, referred the challenges the church faces in being a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ in this day and age. He stated that we can't simply repeat the answers of the past, that a church needs to be dynamic in giving answers that are in rapport with the time in which we live.

As Deputies we consider that whilst this may be true, the real point is: how is this done? Whilst the times may change, the command to remain obedient to Scripture does not change. By way of example, society may change its view on marriage. However, why does this require the church to reconsider its view, asking for a study whether a de-facto relationship can be compared with what Scripture says about marriage? One wonders: what is the motivating force for a study into this subject? It can only be a desire for new and different answers than those which Scripture clearly gives, and as such takes its starting point in man.

By further example, we refer to Appendix 9 of the report of RCN Deputies for Church Unity presented to Synod Harderwijk, such appendix titled “Agreement on hermeneutical principles.” It was jointly prepared and agreed to by the RCN and NGK deputies. This report and appendix were “accepted with thankfulness” by Synod Harderwijk.

Appendix 9 speaks about man's responsibility in interpreting Scripture in the following way: *“Renewed by the death and resurrection of Christ, God's children may live according to the Spirit and learn to distinguish between the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit, without having specific biblical precepts for all situations and areas of life. Thus, together God's children seek to understand God's will for their lives, using the gifts they have received and listening to God's Word and each other, walking in close fellowship with the living God.”*

This approach leads to a way of interpreting Scripture which the FRCA delegates previously warned about at Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008. In our address to the 2008 RCN synod, we mentioned the following, *“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 (e.g. with respect to marriage and divorce) contrary to what Scripture clearly teaches.” We agree that we need the enlightening of the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture and to apply the norms of Scripture in this day and age. Yet we are to do this in humble submission to God’s Word. We cannot honour the Spirit more than honouring Him by submitting ourselves to the Word inspired by the Spirit Himself. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we have to continue reading God’s Word carefully.

Appendix 9 goes on to say: *“In God’s intention with man there is no place for a Bible telling him sentence by sentence how to live. The Bible does not do that: in many respects biblical rules and regulations have a fragmentary and open character. This conclusion is relevant for the way we handle biblical precepts and apply them to our lives. ‘Biblical’ is not equivalent to ‘ruling out personal knowledge, feelings and experience’, and ‘to be applied one-on-one as much as possible’. ‘Biblical’ is about living with, and in obedience to, God’s Word, from the fullness of God’s revelation, in union with Jesus Christ and lead by his Spirit, using all the abilities and possibilities given to us by the LORD our God. In that context, the creative freedom of man connects with respect for God’s deeds in Christ. This connection can lead to different choices in differing contexts.”* (emphasis added)

The last sentence of this quote refers to the subject of contextualization. This subject was discussed at length during our conference at the TUK on 30/3/11 (see report under Appendix 3). Many of the speeches touched on this subject. The context of what was said, as briefly reported under Appendix 3, added to our concerns on this subject. We saw a tendency where the context we live in today receives greater dominance than what Scripture teaches.

We see this same tendency also in another quote from Appendix 9, *“Culture can act as a filter that obscures our vision of God’s purposes and will, but it can also act as a pair of glasses that improves our vision. Personal, communal and cultural circumstances can lock but also unlock the Scriptures. They can interfere with our interpretation of the Bible (e.g. the current views on marriage and sexuality and more generally the egocentricity of our culture), but they can also shed new light on Scripture and open our eyes for what we had not seen before (e.g. the changed views on slavery, race relations and the environment).”*

The full text of Appendix 9 to the report of the RCN deputies for church unity may be found at gkv.nl/english-info.

Deputies consider that Synod Harderwijk's acceptance of Appendix 9 substantiates Synod Legana's concern regarding the functioning of a new hermeneutic within the RCN. Deputies remain of the view that this new way of interpreting Scripture has its impact on many of the decision taken by the RCN, indeed is the underlying current or as Synod Legana formulated it, *'a common denominator.'*

Continuing unity discussions with the NGK

Background to the RCN's ongoing contact with the NGK may be found in Appendix 6, being the interim report of the CanRC.

Of particular note is that in 2004 the NGK opened all offices with the church, being the offices of deacon, elder and minister, to women. Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 had specifically mandated the RCN deputies for church unity to discuss this matter with the NGK and report upon the outcome of such discussions. Yet, between 2008 and 2011, the RCN deputies failed to address this issue at all.

Rather, the RCN deputies for church unity discussed with the NGK the matter of hermeneutical principles (as reported on above). Further, they discussed subjects such as the doctrine of baptism, the Holy Spirit, the church and the Lord's Supper. These are addressed under appendix 8 of the RCN deputies report, which states: *"At the end of our talks on the doctrines above we conclude with gratitude that there is great unanimity in both federations and they do not differ in dealing with confessional subscription."* We consider such conclusion remarkable when, in the same appendix, it is noted that the NGK allow office bearers who are against infant baptism. Further, the RCN deputies do not demonstrate how the NGK have changed in any way with respect to their view on confessional subscription. Hence, the conclusion that there is "great unanimity" lacks ground.

Of further concern is that the RCN deputies report: *"at the local level a great deal is happening; many initiatives have been developed and this is cause for great rejoicing."* Indeed, at the local level there is such a degree of contact and cooperation that various RCN congregations have been fused with NGK congregations.

Synod Harderwijk mandated the RCN deputies to continue unity discussions with the NGK, including addressing the issue of women in office. It noted that the NGK's decision to open all offices to women remains an obstacle. Just how this will function in practice, however, is unclear to us, given that the RCN has mandated its own deputies M/F to study the question of whether women are allowed in all offices.

Deputies consider that Synod Harderwijk's decision regarding ongoing unity discussions with the NGK is of grave concern. The decision to engage in ongoing discussion must be seen against the previous background, being that since 2004 the NGK has allowed women in all offices, and has given no indication of revisiting this decision. The NGK has ordained women to all offices, including that of minister. The NGK allows practising homosexuals to participate in the sacraments. The NGK is studying the question of whether practising homosexuals may fill the offices of deacon and elder. RCN congregations have amalgamated with NGK congregations at the local level.

Against that background, Deputies consider that Synod Harderwijk has failed to make a faithful decision with respect to continuing contact with the NGK. Allowing for unity at the local level is nothing less than allowing unity on a basis other than God's Word. As such, this unity is a false ecumenism and contrary to Art 27-29 of the Belgic Confession.

Role of female in the church

Some background history to how this issue has developed may again be found in the CanRC report at Appendix 6.

In short, since 2005 the RCN has been studying the role of women in the church. Over time, various reports have been prepared and surveys performed. Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 had mandated deputies to study the matter by way of theological research, reflection in the churches and preparing practical decision for the short term.

The RCN deputies reported that could not complete their mandate. A theological study had been performed by the female theologian Dr Myriam Klinker, but we were informed that it came to no conclusions regarding whether Scripture does or does not allow women in office.

Synod Harderwijk renewed the mandate of deputies to further study the matter, yet with a significant addition: deputies are now to specifically study whether it is permissible, on the basis of Scripture, to appoint sisters to the office of deacon, elder or minister.

This mandate is indeed remarkable, as it is based upon the implicit assumption that Scripture is not clear on this point. In this regard, we consider that Synod Harderwijk's decision to mandate the study of this question itself undermines the sufficiency and authority of Scripture.

Deputies also query the motivation for seeking to mandate this study. Can it be anything other than pressure from our present egalitarian culture? Rather than repeat the clear testimony of Scripture on this point, Synod

Harderwijk has left it an open question. We had urged Synod not to take this step. In our speech to Synod Harderwijk we said:

Brothers, from this sample of reports, it is apparent that the issue of “women in office” is firmly on your agenda. It is a question that needs a clear and definite resolution from you. For, until now, it appears that the question has been left open for discussion. Yet, the church is not a forum for discussion. The church is called to be “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). We sympathise with you, for making a decision faithful to this truth is likely to have repercussions. It is noted by your deputies report that it appears as if the question of women in office “is beginning to function as a shibboleth”. Ministers within your bond and teaching staff within your Theological University (TU) have publicly advocated the opening of all offices to women. A clear decision may therefore have repercussions, both within your bond of churches and your relationship with others.

Yet, we humbly encourage you to make this difficult decision without delay. We humbly encourage you to be the pillar and ground of the truth. We humbly encourage you to affirm, based on 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, that only male communicant members can be called to the special offices of minister, elder, and deacon.

In mandating a study into the question of women in office, deputies consider that the RCN has failed to maintain a clear testimony of the truth, being the Lord's clear teaching on the offices and on the role of women as given in His Word. Rather, it has allowed the churches to become a forum for discussion where truth and lie bear equal weight, side by side. As such, it has failed to govern itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it (Art 29 Belgic Confession).

Matters concerning the Theological University in Kampen

The CanRC report under Appendix 6 again gives a succinct summary and analysis of the issues regarding the TUK. Some background may also be found in the report of Deputies to Synod Legana 2009, particularly as it concerns Prof G Harinck.

A significant issue on the agenda of Synod Harderwijk was the appointment of Dr S Paas as a lecturer at the TUK. Serious objections to his appointment had been made to the governing board of the TUK, given Dr Paas' identification with a “religion-historical approach”. The governing board of the TUK had dismissed such objections.

Synod Harderwijk expressly approved this decision of the TUK. Whilst the matter was dealt with by synod in closed session, Synod Harderwijk later published a press release where Dr Paas' appointment as lecturer was upheld. An English version of this press release is available at www.gkv.nl/styleit/10944/, which we have reproduced as Appendix 7. In short, Synod Harderwijk concluded that Dr Paas was correct in adopting this religion-historical approach in his dissertation as the purpose of his writing was to dispute the scripture-critical theories of others. In doing so, he adopted the approach "for the sake of the argument" as it were, without taking on this point of view personally.

In our view, this approach has serious flaws. Firstly, it allows one to identify entirely with a critical view of Holy Scripture, provided it is solely for the "purpose of the argument" and not one's personal view. This is most confusing, particularly when such a stance is taken within a theological school of the churches whose purpose is the training of future ministers of the Word. When does the hearer know whether the lecturer is personally agreeing with his own position? And further, of what real benefit is it to the churches when a lecturer identifies with a non-Scriptural approach, in order to argue with non-believers?

Synod Harderwijk did not address any matter concerning Prof Harinck and Dr van Bekkum. Both remain teaching staff within the TUK, as does Dr Paas. Again, deputies conclude that the RCN has failed to respond clearly and Scripturally to the dangers arising from within the TUK that are not in accord with Scripture. In failing to address these issues, the RCN has failed to govern itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it (Art 29 BC).

Participation in the National Synod

On 10 and 11 December 2010, representatives from the RCN participated in what was termed a "National Synod". The meeting was convened in the "Grote Kerk" in the city of Dordrecht, the precise location where the well-known Synod of Dort was convened in 1618-19.

The initiative for arranging this meeting came from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). All "protestant" churches within the Netherlands were invited to send representatives. The main organiser, Rev G de Fijter of the PCN, stated that the object of the Synod was to present a 2-fold message to the entire Dutch nation:

1. that the participants, whilst being Christians within different churches, believe the same gospel and wish to listen to and assist each other;

2. that together as Christians they wish to have a positive influence upon society.

Present at the Synod were a wide variety of churches, some 52 in total. By way of background, we mention just a few. The PCN was formed some years ago by way of a merger of the Dutch Reformed (State) Church (from which the RCN separated in the Secession of 1834 by reason of its theological liberalism) with the Synodical churches (from which the RCN liberated in 1944 by reason of synodical binding to false doctrine). Also invited were representatives of the Remonstrantse Broederschap (Remonstrant Fraternity - being churches who hold to the false doctrine exposed in the Canons of Dort) and the United Pentecostal and Evangelical churches.

The stated purpose of the National Synod was to bring together Christians from many different churches, in order to discuss not what divides them but rather what they have in common. Such unity is expressed within the foundational statement of the National Synod, called the “Credotekst” or “Credo Statement”. After dealing with a confession regarding God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the statement concludes as follows:

The joy of the gospel binds us together, we belong together and are given together in the one body of Christ, his church. It hurts us that the unity in Christ among us is so broken, almost invisible. We cannot rest, because the good Shepherd has one flock. In our country there is a growing community of those coming from the global Christianity, eager to express their faith. Together, we want to be church in the Netherlands and encourage each other in faith, hope and love. We pray that this will be a testimony to all with whom we are in conversation, also those who profess a different religion. So we are en route to the day that Jesus Christ will come back. God will destroy all evil, give us peace and justice: a new heaven and a new earth.

The National Synod concluded with the following declaration:

“From the firm conviction that what unites us is greater than what divides us, we have during these days in Dort transcended the church walls to discuss our mutual faith.”

‘Vanuit de vaste overtuiging dat wat ons verbindt meer is dan wat ons scheidt, gingen wij deze dagen in Dordrecht het onderlinge geloofsgesprek aan over de kerkmuren heen.’

Following the National Synod, various statements were made by participants expressing thankfulness for the unity that could be found between representatives from such a wide variety of churches. Profs B Kamphuis and A de Bruijne of the TUK spoke in this way. Rev H Messelink, chairman of the Deputies for Church Unity, stated in the March 2011 issue of *Lux Mundi* that the National Synod was “heart warming”. He pointed out that it was not a synod as such as it was not an “official church gathering”, but rather it was a “Protestant Forum”. He noted that a number of theses were discussed at the National Synod:

1. The characteristic of a Christian is not truth, but love.
2. Church division is no longer of any concern to the youth.

In relation to the second thesis, Rev Messelink stated: “*This brought on many reactions, like a fine one from Dr I.A. Kole: church schisms are the cause of much grief; but Jerusalem has twelve arches: we do not all have to enter through the same door. Let the Spirit go His own way, and accept the differences with which the Spirit works.*”

Rev Messelink concluded his *Lux Mundi* report with the following words:

Let us give meaning to the National Synod on a local level: hold faith discussions with all those with whom we know ourselves to be connected in Christ. If we subsequently – despite our differences – discover what connects us in Christ, we can no longer delay holding high the rescuing message of God’s salvation and mercy to all our fellow countrymen. (Lux Mundi 30/1, March 2011, available at www.bbk.gkv.nl)

The expressed intention is to convene the National Synod every 3 years. Further background information regarding the National Synod can be found at www.nationalesynode.nl.

The National Synod was arranged on relatively short notice. When the previous RCN Synod Zwolle-Zuid convened in 2008, the matter had not yet been proposed. Accordingly, the decision of the RCN to attend and participate was taken by the Deputies for Church Unity. These deputies reported upon their participation to Synod Harderwijk 2011. A number of RCN churches also presented submissions to Synod Harderwijk, appealing against the decision to participate.

Synod Harderwijk decision

Synod Harderwijk approved of the decision of Deputies to participate in the National Synod. It dismissed the appeals brought against it. Specifically, it

mandated deputies to continue participation in future National Synods. The full text of the decision is under Appendix 5.

This decision signals a significant shift in both the RCN's method and basis for church unity.

As to method, previously, unity with other churches was pursued via official channels, being by discussions directly with the Synod or officially appointed deputies of other church federations. Following investigation, another church could be recognised as being true, and participation between the respective church federations encouraged. Yet by approving participation in the National Synod, the RCN is expressing unity in Christ and participating with other churches without any such investigation or official contact.

As to foundation, participation by the RCN is an expression of unity with other churches that is not based upon Scripture or Confession. The Credo Statement purports to express the unity of the participating churches by way of "faith in the Triune God", yet it fails to give any confessional substance to that unity. By way of example, unity cannot be based simply upon say the Apostles Creed. As the late Prof. K. Schilder once wrote, the articles of the Apostles Creed are only the headings of the chapters of what we believe. To these, the Confessions form the content. Further, the Credo Statement is pluriform in speaking of "one church" in the Netherlands that is divided amongst many church federations.

In its decision, Synod Harderwijk stated that whilst participating in the National Synod, the RCN are to respect their own identity and responsibility. This must be done, however, in a National Synod where the fact of participation is regarded as an expression of unity. Further, the entire focus of the National Synod is to discuss not that which divides, but that which the participants have in common.

Conclusion

The decision by Synod Harderwijk to participate in the National Synod is a matter of grave concern. Unity is expressed with other churches which do not confess the truth of God's Word as summarised in the confessions. This is a departure from the reformed principle, as it has always been confessed and maintained, that church unity must be based upon the full truth of God's Word. Departure from this principle constitutes a false ecumenism.

Deputies consider that the decision of the RCN to approve and to continue participation in the National Synod is contrary to the doctrine of the church

as taught in Scripture and confessed in Articles 27 – 29 of the Belgic Confession.

Infant baptism and blessing

Whilst this issue did not surface at Synod Harderwijk, deputies wish to report upon a decision of the Classis of Amsterdam/Leiden on 07-10-2010.

The question that arose for decision was how to deal with parents who refuse to have their infant children baptised but rather wish them to be “blessed”. Classis decided that, in this circumstances, the churches may allow for the children to be blessed within the worship service. With respect to this blessing, Classis speaks about a beautiful and symbolic welcome in the church, with the hope for more in that the parents will yet request their child to be baptised. Whilst maintaining the Scriptural requirement for infant baptism, Classis expressed that this decision allows the churches to give each other freedom and trust on this point.

The full text of the decision may be found at gkv.nl/styleit/628/.

Deputies are alarmed by this decision. How can a blessing be given for those who refuse to have their children baptized? Scripture does not speak of a blessing aside from the sacrament of baptism, and certainly not for those who refuse the sacrament instituted by our Lord.

Whilst not a decision of the RCN General Synod, this decision is nonetheless functioning within the churches. In our view, it is a matter of serious concern since it touches upon the doctrine of, and pure administration of, the sacraments.

Conclusions And Recommendations

By means of this report, deputies have sought to demonstrate how the concerns identified by Synod Legana 2009 have been addressed. Deputies have also sought to trace further developments within the RCN since 2009. No doubt more could be said, yet the matters raised give sufficient evidence for the recommendations of this report.

As noted above, Deputies cannot see any evidence of Synod Legana's decision having had any appreciable impact within the RCN. Indeed, Synod Harderwijk expressly stated that the RCN does not recognise itself in the image described within the Acts of Synod Legana. Further, in tracing developments since 2009, deputies can only conclude that within the RCN there is a deviation from Scripture.

Deputies respectfully suggest that the RCN's lack of response to Synod

Legana's exhortation, coupled with further developments since 2009, ought now to have a tangible impact upon our sister relationship with the RCN. Accordingly, deputies propose that this relationship be placed under strain.

Deputies see the imposition of strain as having a 2-fold purpose. Firstly, it allows the FRCA to yet make an urgent appeal to its sister, the RCN, to return to the Scriptural way. Secondly, it allows the FRCA to distance itself from, and protect itself against, the concerning developments within the RCN. Scripture warns in many places of the deception of false doctrine, and deputies consider that the imposition of strain is warranted in order to preserve our own Reformed heritage.

Deputies propose to Synod Armadale 2012 the following:

Decision:

1. To urgently exhort and pray for the RCN, in a loving and caring way, to return to a faithful approach to hermeneutics and commitment to the Reformed faith.
2. To place our continuing sister relationship with the RCN under strain.
3. To urge the churches within the FRCA to exercise due care in accepting attestations from members of the RCN, issuing attestations to members leaving for the RCN, and opening their pulpits to ministers from within the RCN, noting the matters raised within this Deputies' report.
4. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing struggle for the truth within these churches.
5. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. inform the RCN of the changed nature of the sister relationship;
 - b. express to the RCN, and if possible discuss with deputies BBK, our ongoing concerns, paying particular attention to the following:
 - i. the approach to hermeneutics;
 - ii. relations with the NGK;
 - iii. participation in the National Synod;
 - iv. the matter of women in office.
 - c. send two (2) delegates to the next synod of the RCN in 2014;
 - d. report to the next synod, providing a synopsis of RCN synod decisions for the benefit of the churches.

Grounds:

1. The RCN is in a state of flux. While there are significant elements within the churches striving to remain faithful, there is also clear evidence that the RCN fail to heed exhortations and to reject all errors contrary to the pure Word of God. The underlying concern remains its approach to hermeneutics. This is particularly evident in:
 - a. study into whether women may be ordained to all offices;
 - b. continuing relationship with the NGK;
 - c. participation the National Synod;
 - d. governance of the TUK.
2. The seriousness of these concerns requires an urgent exhortation, yet should also be reflected in a tangible way in the way that we continue our sister relations with the RCN.
3. By placing the sister-relationship under strain, the FRCA are able to make an urgent appeal to the RCN to return to the Scriptural way, yet at the same time distance itself from, and protect itself against, the concerning developments within the RCN.
4. Because of the grave concerns we have for our sister in The Netherlands, the churches should bring this matter regularly in prayer before the LORD.
5. Deputies should inform the RCN of our ongoing concerns and, if possible, continue to discuss these with the deputies BBK.
6. To deal with the concerns we have in the most effective way, it is important to also be represented at the next synod of the RCN.

Appendix 1 : Correspondence between Deputies and BBK

To the Free Reformed Church of Australia
p/o mr. Wayne Pleiter, Corresp. Secretary
Dep. Contact Sister Churches
PO Box 139, Armadale, Western Australia, 6992

Zwolle, March 23, 2010

Dear brothers in the Lord

At the most recent general meeting of our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, we discussed the report of our delegates to your Synod, Jan Bronsema and Klaas Wezeman.

We would like to voice our appreciation for your reception of these brothers, and are thankful for the opportunities you gave them to represent us. We are also thankful for the decision of your churches to continue the sister church relations with the RCN under the adopted rules. And you may rest assured that your churches' exhortation towards us: to be faithful in our approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern 'spirit of the age', will be taken to heart.

There are, however, three concerns we would like to lay before you. With the express request that you let us know how you intend to deal with these: whether in clarification toward us as deputies on behalf of your churches, or in recommendations to your next Synod on our behalf. In our view, these three concerns impact significantly upon our mutual relationship, and/or on our relationship with other sister churches.

In the first place, we would like clarification on your position with respect to our churches' use of women deputies. As you know, our churches have had women deputies in various capacities, also as representative to foreign churches, for many years. At your express request, in the interest of preventing unnecessary tension at your Synod, we replaced one of our deputies, a woman, with a male counterpart. You had made clear to us that there were some among you who considered female deputyship principally unacceptable, and that although this was not necessarily the considered opinion of your churches, it would be expedient to avoid a discussion of this issue at such a late date. We believed it was our responsibility at that stage to accede to your request. However, we believe it is now your responsibility to hold the discussion which is necessary, not burdened by the pressure of an upcoming Synod. If it is a matter of scriptural principle, our churches need to repent. If it is not a matter of scriptural principle, you need to say so.

In the second place, we would like to discuss with you ground 3 of your churches' decision regarding the RCN. This ground speaks of a particular way of interpreting Scripture which appears to be the common denominator

in decisions of our churches, namely one which “takes its starting point in man, rather than in God’s Word, and which may be the result of the influence of a post-modern ‘spirit of the age’”. We may be misunderstanding the point here, but this is how we interpret it: this particular way of interpreting Scripture is a matter of fact in our churches, and (consequently) it appears to be the common denominator, etc.

Brothers, if this is indeed what your churches are saying, we have a major problem. This would mean that you have taken on board a judgement which we would strenuously object to. On the one hand it is a damning condemnation: for any church which takes its starting point in man, rather than in God’s Word, has ceased to be church. On the other hand it is a statement so vague, so unspecific, and so unsupported that it is impossible to act on. We are convinced that your churches will not have intentionally joined in condemning our churches rashly and unheard. But this statement, as we understand it, and as it appears to be understood among our sister churches worldwide, does little to defend and promote your ecclesiastical neighbour’s honour and reputation.

In the third place, we would like clarification of decision 7: ‘to share with the RCN the observation that the current direction is placing tension on our sister church relationship.’ Is the point of this observation that the FRCA sees unrest and suspicion of the RCN within its own ranks, and is concerned that this may hinder the ecclesiastical relationship? Or that the FRCA, as churches, are finding it difficult to maintain an effective ecclesiastical relationship with the RCN? And if so, what are then the concrete effects or consequences of this tension? And, depending on what the answers to these questions are: to what extent is it the responsibility of the RCN to resolve this tension, and to what extent is it the responsibility of the FRCA themselves?

Brothers, we realise that these questions may not be easy for you to answer. However, it is in the interest of our churches on both sides, and we believe to the glory of our God, that our words and intentions be fully transparent.

As our report to the General Synod needs to be submitted by January 8, 2011 we would like to request your timely attention to the matters raised in this letter. We would hope to be able to report that our concerns have been adequately addressed and resolved.

We wish you a great deal of wisdom in discussing these matters, and look forward to your response.

On behalf of the deputies,

Yours in Christ,

Rev. dr. M.H. Oosterhuis, general secretary BBK

To the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
c/o Rev dr MH Oosterhuis
Deputaten BBK
P.O. Box 499
8000 AL Zwolle
THE NETHERLANDS
3 July 2010

Dear Brothers in the Lord

It is by now more than a year ago that we, as Free Reformed Churches of Australia, had our last Synod. We are thankful that two delegates of your deputyship, brs. J. Bronsema and K. Wezeman were present. Synod Legana 2009 dealt extensively with the close relationship that we as churches have. It is a relationship which we treasure, even though over the past years we have on a number of occasions expressed our concerns about the direction which you, our sister churches, are taking. Some of these concerns have previously been documented in decisions of our past Synods, and in the Deputy reports submitted to these Synods. We refer in particular to the detailed report of our deputies to Synod West Kelmscott 2006. We also refer to the concerns that were voiced in a very strong way by our deputies who attended at your Synod Zwolle-Zuid in May 2008, participating at Synod discussions during 'Buitenland Week'. Finally, these concerns were again expressed in the Deputy report to, and the decisions of, Synod Legana with respect to our mutual relationship.

Before highlighting some of these concerns, we would first like to quote some words from your delegate, br. J. Bronsema, in his address to Synod Legana. Br. Bronsema said that we need each other in looking for Scriptural direction how to be a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ in today's secular society. In this context, he said the following, *"In performing this calling we are given to each other in teaching and conducting the so called 'old path'."* The words 'old path' are a quotation from Jeremiah 6:16, which reads, *"Thus says the LORD, 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is and walk in it. Then you will find rest for your souls.'"* Brothers, as Rev. A. Veldman mentioned it in his responsive address, it is our sincere desire to walk together with you on these old paths, to find that true rest of which the prophet Jeremiah speaks.² We trust that in this spirit you will accept what follows in this letter, a letter written out of sincere love for a sister about whom we have deep concern.

² The addresses may be found in Appendices 1h and 1i to the Acts of Synod Legana 2009, which have been sent to you.

The decisions of Synod Legana specify two main areas of concern, namely a new approach to hermeneutics and the influence of postmodernism (Art 71.XI, Decision 4). Within this letter, we wish to first address these two main concerns.

A new approach to hermeneutics:

The decision of Synod Legana makes reference to, amongst others, a report submitted by the late Rev. M. Nap to your Synod Zwolle-Zuid, titled 'Onrustig is mijn hart' (Art 71.XI, Decision 6(b)). In his covering letter to Synod Zwolle-Zuid, Rev. Nap writes about *"Onrust over het actuele gezag van de Heilige Schrift zoals die voor ons ligt en over het gebruik van het Woord van God."* Brothers, from our Synod decision it is clear that we share this same 'onrust'. Ground 3 of the decision refers to a tendency of interpreting Scripture that takes its starting point in man, rather than in God's Word. In your letter dated 23 March 2010 you address this ground, writing: *"This is how we interpret it: this particular way of interpreting Scripture is a matter of fact in our churches, and (consequently) it appears to be the common denominator, etc."*

With sadness we must say, brothers, that we indeed see more and more evidence within your churches of this new hermeneutic approach to Scripture. Stating this should not come as a surprise to you, especially when we think back to the discussions that took place during 'Buitenland Week' in May 2008. The vast majority of the foreign delegates so strongly warned your Synod specifically in relation to this issue, that we wonder whether we need to cover this ground again. Nevertheless, since you indicate that Ground 3 may be vague and unsupported, we will provide some specific examples. Some examples have been mentioned before and some are new.

- a. We hear more and more voices that question whether Genesis 1 is literal history. They argue that the Scriptural account of the days of creation is a literary device that puts into words a great mystery. This is in sharp contrast with what we read in Exodus 20:11, that the LORD created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. The new hermeneutic approach argues as follows: this week rhythm became the framework within which, at some later time, Genesis 1 was written. We consider this to be an example of the Word of God being interpreted in a way that takes its starting point in man.
- b. We refer to the Deputy report regarding Marriage and Divorce submitted to your Synod Amersfoort 2005. Although this report was not accepted as an authorized report by your Synod, it nevertheless referred to a way of interpreting Scripture that we have heard amongst

other ministers within your churches, namely that the Holy Spirit gives the church guidance in applying the norm of Scripture. Rev. A. Veldman in his address to Synod Zwolle-Zuid referred to this, saying, *“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.”* It is here that we have our concerns, that despite your strong opposition against divorce, there are guidelines for divorce that do not take their starting point in God’s Word.

- c. We observe the new approach to hermeneutics in how some of your churches deal with the issue of homosexuality, saying that the living together of homosexual members cannot be definitely rejected. We are thankful that Synod Zwolle-Zuid rejected this viewpoint. At the same time, we regret that Synod did not wish to decide that, in such cases, discipline must be applied. This leaves an opening for a different approach than what God’s Word teaches about this issue.
- d. A further example of the new hermeneutic approach came to the fore in discussions regarding contact with the NGK, particularly in relation to their allowance for female office bearers. This fact ought to be an impediment to further contact. Yet Synod’s decision to continue contact with the NGK allows for a different way of interpreting Scripture with respect to the matter of female office bearers.
- e. We refer to the way in which Synod dealt with the interview of Dr. Harinck. Although Dr Harinck gave some further explanation of what he meant with respect to the interview, he was not required to, and has not, retracted any of his statements.
- f. The appointment of Dr. S. Paas to the staff of the Theological University, as well as approval of the recent dissertation of Dr. K. VanBekkum, are also evidence of allowing room for a new approach of interpreting Scripture which does not take its starting point in the Word of God. These rather follow today’s general theological discourse, as pointed out in the recent articles published by Prof. J. Douma on his webpage.

As mentioned previously, we are not unique in raising the matter of this new approach to hermeneutics. We refer again to the strong voice of the many foreign delegates who attended your Synod Zwolle-Zuid, urging your churches to heed the call extended to them. However, with deep regret we have not as yet seen much evidence of heeding this call. We do note with thankfulness that Synod Zwolle-Zuid did not accept the majority Deputy report regarding contact with the NGK, and that the matter of “Man/Vrouw

in de Kerk” required further research. Yet our concerns remain with respect to the matters mentioned above.

Many of the specific issues raised above are not new for your bond of churches. You have faced these matters of hermeneutics previously, yet at that time you dealt with them in a different way. We think of the strong language of some of your previous Synods concerning the teachings of Prof. Oosterhof in the CGK, and the strong criticism raised against his teaching (e.g. by the late Rev. J. Francke in his book, “Morgen der Mensheid”). We do not observe that your more recent Synods speak that same consistent language.

Brothers, we can come to no other conclusion than that this is indeed a new way of interpreting Scripture, which at times looks more at the human aspect of Scripture rather than at the divine character of the infallible Word of God.

The influence of Postmodernism:

By way of Decision 4, our churches *“Exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern ‘spirit of the age.’”* This takes us to the second major concern. We see the influence of post-modernism being reflected in the way that local churches within your bond increasingly grow apart, creating a measure of independentism. An example which clarifies this is the contact with the NGK, both at synod and local level.

Regarding the matter of confessional binding within the NGK, the decision of Synod Zwolle-Zuid speaks of trust that with continuing discussion you will find each other on this point. The question of confessional binding was one of the main grounds for the split in 1967. From our vantage point as sister churches, we do not see that the NGK has changed its view since 1967. Our concerns on this point therefore remain. Further, how can your Synod express trust, when in the meantime the NGK has opened all offices for women? In this, we see an acceptance of each other in the context of the today’s spirit of post-modernism.

We see further evidence in the fact of unity being pursued on the local level, even with congregations of the NGK which allow women in office. We realize that as federation, we can only judge our mutual relationship and your direction by what your Synods decide. Yet, Synod Zwolle-Zuid allowed for a measure of freedom at the local level. As a result, the local churches grow increasingly apart, causing disunity within the bond. We therefore cannot ignore what happens at the local level, noting that some local congregations have amalgamated with the NGK, whilst at Synod level

the discussions regarding unity are not yet concluded. Brothers, this spirit of independentism concerns us deeply.

Another example of the influence of the post-modern 'spirit of the age' is found in the opinions aired by ministers within your bond, at times even in the daily newspaper. We ask whether these are being addressed by local consistories or classes? We refer specifically to the comments made by Rev. J. Zomer in the ND shortly after Synod Zwolle-Zuid, expressing the view that there is nothing wrong with women in office. We also note that Deputies for revision of the Church Order have included an optional article allowing for women deacons, presupposing that this is a Scriptural option rather than awaiting your Synod's decision regarding the position of women in the church.

We could mention more, such as what we would call innovative worship services, whereby at times even drama productions take centre stage in the worship services. We could refer also to the increasing use of 'opwekkings liederen'. You as Deputies may say that you do not carry the responsibility to address these matters. Yet, it appears that these differences of opinion and practice are not addressed. We consider that these all give evidence of the influence of a post-modern spirit of the age, where all can live together with each having his or her own opinion. Finally, we see it also reflected in the statements of the 'Raad van Toezicht' of the TU regarding the interview of Dr. Harinck and the appointment of Dr. Paas.

Other points mentioned in Synod Legana's decision

Having dealt with the two underlying points of concern, we will briefly touch on the other points mentioned in the decision of Synod Legana. Some have been addressed in the examples above. In addition, we refer to:

The matter of the 4th Commandment:

Some appeals to your Synod Zwolle Zuid requested Synod to state unequivocally that there is a Scriptural command to rest on the Sunday (apart from works of mercy). Such clarification would have promoted rest within the churches on this matter. Why did Synod refuse to clarify this point? That Scripture teaches that we are to rest on the Sabbath day, being the Sunday in the NT era, has been defended by the church through the ages. This defence should not weaken, especially not in today's secular society. Synod Zwolle-Zuid rejected an appeal to the order of creation, being that the LORD's rest on the seventh day leads to a command rest on the Sabbath. In this context, we refer to what we wrote previously regarding the way of interpreting Genesis 1.

The matter of the 7th Commandment:

We are thankful that Synod Amersfoort 2005 stated very strongly that divorce and re-marriage thereafter is un-Scriptural, and therefore is not permitted. Yet, the reference to 'the style of the Kingdom' allows room for non-Scriptural grounds for divorce e.g. weakness in faith, powerlessness to practice or persevere in that which is good, interpreting the Word of God differently in good faith, as well as others. This shows that, whilst on the one hand Synod spoke strongly, on the other hand the teaching of Scripture as found in Matthew 5 and 19 and in 1 Cor. 7 was not upheld.

Underlying this issue is what is understood by the term "the style of the kingdom". This terminology is based upon what Dr. DeBruijne wrote in "Woord op Schrift", where he formulates it as follows, *"Het kadar van een gemeente-ethiek is vereist om tot goede beslissingen te komen over wat wel en niet past bij de boodschap van de Bijbel."*³ Thus the ground for taking decisions becomes the ethics of the congregation guided by the Holy Spirit (for example, with respect to grounds for divorce), rather than simply listening to what the LORD teaches us in His Word.

Interdenominational administration of sacraments:

Our Synod West Kelmscott 2006 indentified concerns with respect to the matter of administering sacraments for military personnel as follows, *"as going beyond the common consent of the Church Order and leading to the danger of interdenominational administration of sacraments."*

Synod Zwolle-Zuid has extended this to the local churches, allowing consistories to admit to the Lord's Supper those who do not belong to a sister church. We realize that the ultimate authority with respect to attendance at the Lord's Supper lies with the local consistory. Yet, the fact that your Synod did not wish to make any definite rules regarding this point allows for each local church to do things in its own way. This gives rise to the danger of interdenominational administration of sacraments and a spirit of independentism.

The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns:

Our Synod's previously expressed concerns with respect to this matter have not been alleviated by the decisions of your Synod Zwolle-Zuid. We note that new songs no longer have to be tested by the churches, but only by deputies, leaving it simply in the hands of one small body.

Moreover, Synod Zwolle Zuid also took the decision to take part in the project of the interdenominational 'Stichting voor het Kerklied'. Working on this together with other church federations with which you have no ecclesiastical contact can easily open the door to the inclusion of non-Scriptural hymns of remonstrant precepts and general atonement, often at the cost of singing less Psalms.

We come now to two final matters raised by you in your letter dated 23 March 2010.

Representation by a female delegate:

You requested clarification and discussion with respect to our difficulties in having a female deputy representing you at our Synod. We welcome the opportunity to clarify this matter in more in detail. Our view is as follows. Delegates of sister churches are given the privilege of fully participating in the discussions and giving advice. Synod is a governing body made up by brothers ordained in the office of elder. Hence, since women are not permitted to serve in the office of elder, they have no place at Synod table either. Synod work is office bearers' work. We realize deputies are not always office bearers in active service, yet *mutatis mutandis* it leaves no room for female representatives of foreign sister churches to be fully participating in Synod discussions and giving advice.

Tension:

You also seek clarification with respect to our Synod decision that *"the current direction is placing tension on our sister church relationship."* Brothers, we express some surprise concerning the questions you ask regarding this matter, particularly in light of what transpired at Synod Zwolle-Zuid. The vast majority of the foreign delegates gave a clear warning, expressing that the direction of various decision to be made by your Synod, especially with respect to contact with the NGK, could have serious consequences. Our delegate, br. A. Breen, addressed our concerns with respect to the report 'Kerkelijke Eenheid'. His concluding words at Synod Zwolle-Zuid were, *"Your decision to a mandate to continue discussions at unity with the NGK, who have actually opened the governing offices to the sisters of the congregation, which is in conflict with Scripture, will surely have consequences for the relation with the FRCA."*

Our present letter makes clear that the matter of unity with the NGK is not the only cause of concern. We observe a variety of matters which, to our mind, have as common denominator a new way of interpreting Scripture, and exhibit the influence of the postmodern spirit of the age. You will understand in all this, brothers, that the LORD asks us not just to speak the right words, but that there may come a time when deeds are required. May

the LORD, in His grace, prevent that this will happen and that our ways will not part.

Meeting:

There are limitations in discussing all these matters by letter. We would welcome the opportunity to meet, where we may have the opportunity to discuss these matters with you face-to-face, whether personally or by electronic means. We note that your delegates expressed a similar desire when meeting with us at the conclusion of Synod Legana.

Further, we are aware that the FRCA are not the only churches expressing the concerns outlined in this letter. We understand that, at their recent Synod, the Canadian Reformed Churches also expressed the desire to meet and discuss. We suggest that perhaps a joint meeting could be arranged by you.

In conclusion:

Brothers, this has become a long letter. Yet we hope that you are willing to accept that this letter was written out of deep love for your churches. For a long time we have travelled together in a spirit of unity, a unity which we sincerely treasure. With respect to the many matters raised in this letter, we should be firmly united as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, standing up for the truth of Scripture. Yet, we feel that in these matters we are growing increasingly apart.

Brothers, this hurts us deeply, since we love you as a sister. Therefore, we fervently plead that you take this as a sincere and serious appeal. We remember your churches regularly in prayer before the throne of our Heavenly Father. We love these churches, and it is precisely because of this deep love that we have written this letter. We pray that the King of the Church, who is mighty in power, may open eyes and soften hearts, so that true unity may continue to exist and concerns may be taken away.

With sincere Christian greetings,

On behalf of deputies

Rev. A. Veldman, convenor

Br. W. Pleiter, secretary

To the Free Reformed Church of Australia
p/o mr. Wayne Pleiter, Corresp. Secretary
Dep. Contact Sister Churches
PO Box 139
Armadale,
Western Australia, 6992

Zwolle, October 4th, 2010

Dear brothers in the Lord

Thank you for your response to the three concerns we raised with you. Because your letter - dated 3 July 2010 - arrived during our summer break, it has taken some time for us to respond. We recognise the spirit of love and brotherly concern in which you have tried to answer our questions, and before discussing your letter we prayed sincerely for the wisdom to deal properly with what you, on behalf of our sister churches the FRCA, had to say, also such things as we perhaps would rather not hear. We hope that our letter will reflect our Lord's answer to that prayer, and that our comments and questions will help you help us.

Having initiated this particular round of discussion, we will follow the order of our concerns as we raised them in our letter.

1. 1 *Women deputies*: from your short response we conclude that it is now not just the opinion of some individuals in your churches, but the decided position of the FRCA that it is inappropriate for churches to be represented by women deputies. You have apparently held the discussion which was necessary, not burdened by the pressure of an upcoming Synod, and have come to this conclusion. As this concerns a long-standing practice within our churches, we find it surprising that it has never been addressed before; however, we will take your position into account in the future. It is not clear from your response whether you consider this a matter of scriptural principle; may we assume that for you it is a 'non-essential point of ecclesiastical practice' (art. 46 CO)?
2. *Art71.XI decision4, Ground 3*: your response confirms our understanding of this statement. The FRCA judge that a particular way of interpreting scripture is a matter of fact in our churches: *one which takes its starting point in man rather than in the word of God*. Brothers, it goes without saying that this is a cardinal issue, which deserves thorough consideration.
3. As deputies it is our responsibility and commitment to make sure

the FRCA's judgment is adequately heard and dealt with by our churches. Our comments are intended to achieve that aim. But as a prior remark, we would like to emphasize that in our view it is not helpful, and certainly not in the spirit of Reformed church polity, to include as evidence of man-centred hermeneutic and post-modernist influence, individual, incidental, local issues or personal statements, without reference to their context, and without adequate knowledge of the way they are being dealt with. In addressing each other as sister churches we need to be careful always to do so on the basis of that which by common consent is the public position of those churches, as evidenced by the decisions of their broader assemblies.

- a. In your response all kinds of issues are named, some old, some new, regardless of the actual background and process by which our churches have come to them, and all are presented as evidence of a single common denominator: *man-centred hermeneutic*.
 - b. We do not exclude the possibility that there is a real danger in this regard; however, for the churches to adequately address it, you need to demonstrate clearly and succinctly how each particular issue indeed reflects this man-centred hermeneutic. If you do that, you will be truly helping us.
 - c. It seems to us that you are addressing particular *outcomes* which you are concerned about, and are assuming that therefore the *starting point* is what you say. You are not doing justice to the possibility (which we are convinced is the case) that also a hermeneutic which fully honours the divine character of the infallible word of God may come to new or unfamiliar conclusions. Within the Reformed churches we have always said that – within the boundaries of our confessions – there is room for that.
 - d. In a similar way, the associated allegation of post-modernist influence is argued from particular *outcomes*, without a fair analysis of the process by which the churches have come to these. Again: we are not denying that there might well be a spirit of independentism in the air, but you are not helping us sufficiently by the blanket assumption that *this* spirit is behind our choices.
4. 4 Art 71.XI decision 7: your response is one of surprise and a reiteration of the observation, with a nod in the direction of a particular decision with regard to the NGK; however, our question

was one of clarification regarding the tension itself: its nature, its possible consequences, and the division of responsibilities in dealing with it. It would be helpful if you would try to answer with this question in mind.

You will have noted that in this letter we have not responded to individual examples you raise, whether old or new. Our hope is that we can first lay the groundwork for a truly fruitful exchange. As a response to the concerns we have raised, we feel that your letter is not yet adequate. We do recognise it as an expression of concerned love from your side. And we are more than willing to go the extra mile to ensure that your concerns are properly heard and dealt with. That can only be to our benefit, and, even more importantly, to the honour of the Lord of the church. However, in order to have that take place effectively, we need you to move to a new level of interaction. We have tried, in this letter, to indicate what we mean with that.

It goes without saying that we will do our utmost to facilitate a true meeting of sister-churches at our upcoming Synod. Not in the least because we are not without our own concerns regarding the challenges facing our churches; and in our struggle to remain reformed we are in need of sympathetic encouragement rather than only criticism. Where it seems helpful to you, that could include face-to-face discussions prior to the synod week designated for the reception of foreign delegates. Our preference at this time is for a meeting with your delegates only, in order to concentrate on your letter and this our response.

With Christian greetings,
On behalf of deputies BBK
Rev. dr. M.H. Oosterhuis, general secretary BBK

To the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
c/o Rev dr MH Oosterhuis
Deputaten BBK
P.O. Box 499 8000 AL Zwolle
THE NETHERLANDS

10 November 2010

Dear Brothers in the Lord.

We thank you for your letter dated 4 October 2010. The letter shows a need for further discussion and we love to do so. At the same time, we like to remind you of what we wrote in our letter dated July 3, 2010. On page 6 of this letter we wrote, *"There are limitations in discussing all these matters by letter. We would welcome the opportunity to meet, where we have opportunity to discuss these matters with you face-to face, whether personally or by electronic means."* In that same paragraph, we also noted that a similar desire was expressed in a meeting with your delegates after Synod Legana in June 2009.

For the record, some of our deputies present at that synod met on the evening after the closing session with the Brs. Bronsema and Wezeman. We spoke about our concerns as expressed by Synod Legana and also about how to deal with these concerns in further discussions. During this meeting, the suggestion was made, whether your deputies could perhaps arrange a conference of delegates of sister churches to deal in particular with the matter of hermeneutics. This desire was expressed in view of the fact that the majority of the delegates of the sister churches at Synod Zwolle Zuid had expressed concern about a new approach to hermeneutics. In addition to the speeches of the delegates of the FRCA, we refer in particular to the speeches of the delegates of the OPC, FRCSA, and CanRC.

We remember in particular the strong language used by the delegate of the OPC at Synod Zwolle Zuid. We have now noted, with sadness, that the latest general assembly of the OPC decided not to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with you. In the decision, it reads that this request was declined in view of concerns regarding a full commitment to a Reformed understanding of the sufficiency, interpretation and authority of Scripture. Also the Acts of the latest synod of the Canadian sister churches speak about *"a grave concern about a change in how biblical hermeneutics are functioning within the RCN."*

We mention this to show that we are not the only ones who have expressed and still do express concern about a new approach concerning interpreting Scripture. Hence, we really regret that the suggestion made after Synod

Legana 2009 was not taken further.

In your letter dated 4 October 2010 you write, *“Our preference at this time is for a meeting with your delegates only, in order to concentrate on your letter and our response.”* In view of what has been written above, we cannot see any specific need to meet with the delegates of the FRCA separately. Although the wording of our concerns might slightly differ from the wording in which other churches have expressed their concern, in essence we all have the same concerns, namely a new way in interpreting Scriptures. In your letter you state that we *“are not doing justice to the possibility (which we are convinced is the case) that also a hermeneutic, which fully honours the divine character of the infallible word of God may come to new or unfamiliar conclusions.”* Brothers, you know full well that this is not the issue we are debating, when reference is made to statements of Prof Harinck, the interpretation of Gen. 1, and the issue of homosexuality. We wonder whether you have really taken note of our concerns. We feel you are diffusing the issue when you write, *“It’s not helpful, and certainly not in the Spirit of Reformed church polity, to include as evidence of man-centered hermeneutic and post-modernist influence, individual, incidental, local issues or personal statements, without reference to their context, and without adequate knowledge of the way they are being deal with.”*

In our letter of July 3, 2010 we refer to

1. A document tabled at your synod, the report submitted by the late Rev. M. Nap. We are wondering what the TU has done with this document. It’s two years later and we have heard nothing. This document also spoke about “unrest with respect to the authority of Scripture.
2. We have questioned the response of the “Raad van Toezicht” of the TU with respect to the interview of Dr. Harinck and the appointment of Dr. Paas, and also why the dissertation of K. van Bakkum was not challenged. In this context, we referred also to the writings of Prof. J. Douma, who has given a clear analysis of these matters.
3. We have referred to the term “style of the kingdom” based on what Prof. DeBruijne has written in “Woord op Schrift”. This terminology has become a determining factor in how you deal with matters as marriage and divorce as well as homosexuality. Yet it takes its starting point in “gemeente-ethiek”.
4. We have queried you on the change in response and the language used in comparison with how synods in the past dealt with similar issues. In our letter we make reference to one of your earlier synods, when it refuted the teachings of Prof. Oosterhof. Why a new approach? Do those synod

decisions no longer stand?

Brothers, these are not just individual, incidental, local issues, or personal statements. Looking at all these issues together one cannot escape the thought that change is in the air. We have endeavoured to analyse this change by way of our correspondence and by personal addresses to your synods. We have tried to walk with you in challenging some of your reports to synods in the past, e.g. to Synod Amersfoort Centrum 2005. Yet at present there is cause for greater concern than we had in the past. We have tried to bring this across in our last letter to you.

We note that in your letter you again seek clarification regarding the word 'tension'. We wonder why, especially in light of all that was said by the vast majority of the foreign delegates at Synod Zwolle Zuid. They all mentioned that in case you would move on in your contacts with the NGK, where they accept women in all offices and do not require confessional binding, this would have serious repercussions for our mutual relationship. This was mentioned not only by the delegates of the FRCA, but equally strong by the delegates of the FRCSA and CanRC. This tension inevitably follows unless we are able to unreservedly affirm that both our respective churches do stand together in full obedience to and accord with Scripture.

In order to work towards maintaining this both with the FRCA and your other sister churches, we plead with you to set in motion the process of convening of a meeting with delegates of the FRCA, FRCSA, CanRC. This meeting could be held in the week prior to the Buitenland week. Perhaps some points of discussions could be formulated beforehand together with some responses. We have taken the initiative of proposing this matter to the deputies of our Canadian sister churches and they whole-heartedly support such a meeting. Our Canadian sister considers that it could only be of greater mutual benefit if this meeting also included delegates also from the OPC and the RCUS.

Brothers, we realize that we have responded to your letter in a more general way. After our lengthy and detailed letter of July 3, 2010, we saw no need to go in detail once more; rather we would prefer a face-to-face discussion as mentioned above. We hope that you will indeed set things into motion to facilitate such a meeting. As preferred date we would suggest the latter half of the week prior to the Buitenland week, either the Thursday or the Friday of that week.

We look forward to a speedy response from your side, also in view of travel arrangements to be made.

With brotherly greetings,

Rev. A. Veldman (convener)

Br. W. Pleiter, secretary.

To Deputies Contact Sister Churches of the FRCA,
rev. A. Veldman, convenor, aveldman@bigpond.net.au
br. Wayne Pleiter, corresp. clerk, waynepleiter@bigpond.com

Zwolle December 14th 2010,

Dear brothers,

Deputies BBK have taken note of your most recent letter. Your request is for a meeting with us, together with delegates of the FRCA, FRCSA, and CanRC (and perhaps delegates from the OPC and the RCUS), in the week prior to the 'Buitenlandweek', in order to discuss matters in our churches which concern you.

Despite our appreciation for your interest in the life and well-being of our churches, as also evidenced by this request, we feel unable to acquiesce. There are several reasons for this.

Most of the issues you raise concern incidents which have occurred within our churches, or developments which you have observed among us. Clearly, such items of concern may be discussed during your visits to our churches and our visits to you, or may be addressed in correspondence. And deputies may then offer an individual response.

However, if such matters are made agenda items at a meeting of deputies with delegates of a number of sister churches, there is the risk of forming a shadow synod in which deputies BBK (more or less) officially discuss your concerns on behalf of our churches. This would go beyond our authority and competence as deputies, and would in our view disturb the conduct of the sister church relationship.

In addition, we feel that such a discussion goes beyond the rules which have been agreed upon for conducting a sister church relationship. As sister churches we are accountable to each other in such matters of doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, as are the responsibility of churches together in major assembly. Also, when confessionally substantial alterations or additions to church standards, church order or liturgical forms are under consideration (as placed on the agenda of our major assembly), we have committed to call such intent to the particular notice of sister churches. And, finally, there may be decisions of the major assembly which concern doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. Obviously, all such items may be addressed; however, we judge that the matters you have raised with us in our correspondence to date are not of this nature.

Our request to you is, taking into account the above-mentioned, in such

cases to address the General Synod of our churches directly. It may be clear that your objections should then be documented from lawfully tabled proposals for change, or from decisions of the major assembly, and that you substantiate objections from God's Word and the confessions. If you do so, your concerns will have been properly submitted to Synod, and you may be assured of proper consideration and response.

We do wish to point out, in conclusion, that as a result of concerns which have been voiced by churches abroad, we have organised a conference on biblical hermeneutics for all foreign delegates during the 'Buitenlandweek'. In this venue we hope to speak with each other about hermeneutical developments, and to edify each other in rightly handling the word of our God.

Yours in Christ,

On behalf of Deputies BBK,

dr. M.H. Oosterhuis, general secretary BBK

Appendix 2: Address to Synod Harderwijk 2011

Esteemed Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, your little sister from down under, I pass on warm brotherly greetings, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the church, in whose service we may work together. It's this working together in the service of Christ that brings us to this synod.

Over the past years, we have exchanged a number of letters with your Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad. Yet nothing can replace face-to-face meetings. That's why we want to express our sincere appreciation for allowing us to participate at synod floor, both by way of this address in the discussions of a number of reports. Participating in this way, we try to give substance to what we express in our rules for sister church relations, namely that these relations shall be used to mutually assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.

For a moment, I would like to highlight the word 'mutual', since over the years in various addresses it has been raised that we are better at addressing concerns in your church life than we are at sharing the challenges we face in our own church life. I had the opportunity to touch on this very issue in my response to your deputies at our Synod Legana 2009. We acknowledge that we face many of the same challenges as you do. And we appreciate that you as churches you take up these challenges. You recognise that the gospel of Christ is a gospel for the world, that all may bow the knee before our Lord Jesus Christ. In this respect, we may surely learn from you.

We too see members leaving the church, falling for the idol of egoism and materialism. We too are fighting the attraction of the evangelical movement. I feel the pain in my heart, when I think of young members who live out there in the world, who need the pastoral care so much. I wish that I could have more time for the pastoral care for the flock, at times wondering whether working through the paperwork of synod is even justified. I know this is a false dilemma, yet at times it can eat you away, thinking of those sheep in need and whose number is increasing.

It is a false dilemma, since in today's global village there is also an increasing need to help one another as sister churches in Christ. True, we in Australia do not live in your society and climate. The matters that we face are not identical. Yet we are given to each other in the bond of faith, to be a hand and a foot to each other in fighting for the truth of Scripture and the honour of Him in whose service we stand. And that is our fervent prayer and aim at this synod. That we may speak our words with the motivation of love for your churches.

We have taken the opportunity to read various of your deputy reports to this Synod. It is excellent that these are easily available on your webpage. We are also grateful that English translations of some of the reports are available. Many within our churches, and even within our own deputyship, are not fluent in the Dutch language. Your kindness in providing English translations assists us greatly in coming across the matters on your agenda.

Concerning our mutual relationship, our Synod Legana in 2009 expressed both thankfulness and concern. Thankfulness that we may continue our sister relationship. Thankfulness too regarding the openness and frankness in which our respective deputies could be engaged in concerns and discussions. We have endeavoured to continue those discussions. You will have seen the mutual correspondence attached to the Report of your Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad.

I mentioned that our Synod Legana in 2009 also expressed concern. In doing so, Synod took a comprehensive approach, seeking to identify the underlying or root cause of various matters that have been raised in recent years. Synod highlighted two issues, being the approach to hermeneutics and the influence of a post-modern spirit of the age.

In this evening's address, we would like to focus on the first issue. We do so, since in your Deputies' proposed Decision 10 it is suggested that the FRCA present a distorted image of your churches, one that is not truthful.

The point of contention is whether a particular way of interpreting Scripture, a way of interpretation that takes its starting point in man rather than in God's Word, is functioning within your churches. Our concern is that it is. We have sought to give detailed evidence of this in two letters to your Deputies dated 23 March 2010 and 10 November 2011. The last letter must have been too late to be incorporated in the report of deputies. We also addressed this matter when we were present at your last Synod Zwolle Zuid in 2008. On that occasion, we spoke on the ethics concerning marriage and divorce. I said: "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."

Brothers, we cannot escape the impression that this wrong way of thinking also dominates other discussions current in your churches. We find it reflected in the report of your Committee for Church Unity. Appendix 9 records the agreement of your deputies of hermeneutical principles. Many we can agree with. Yet we have concern, especially about the section that deals with the "Appeal to creation" and "Man's responsibility". We realize when it comes to ethical reflection on God's Word, there are – according

to de definition of Prof. K. Schilder – “*de ‘constante rationes, de wisselende economien, en de actuele concrete bepaaldheid van de wil van de mensen aan God’s geopenbaarde wil.*” [this needs an English translation]

Yet, the point is that even then we should start with God’s Word. Well, to say the least, brothers, applying this we have concern with respect to what we read in this report re the guidance of the Spirit. Of course, the Spirit has to enlighten us. Yet the way this report speaks about it leaves opening for a freedom against God’s Word, e.g. when it speaks about the loving way we should react to evil, and also that “*the new life is not lived anymore under the rule of the law as our guardian.*” In itself this is true. But then the report continues, “*it’s a life in freedom and creativity.*” True, later on you try to protect this statement somewhat by saying, “*We want to make a clear distinction between Christian maturity and freedom on the one hand, and on the other hand, individualism, the delusions of our time and the passions and lusts of the old self.*” However, when defining this Christian maturity, you come back to what in the report re marriage and divorce to Synod Amersfoort 2005 was called ‘gemeente ethiek’. I think in particular of the last characteristic you mention that we should speak about the tested experience of children of God.

Brothers, it’s here we have our concerns, also when it comes to issues as homo-sexuality and other ethical issues. We fear, in general there is too much accommodation to the culture we live in. We have this same concern with respect to some publications, which were written, and statements that were made by some of the staff working at the Theological University. We refer to statements made by Prof. Harinck and publications by Prof. Paas and Dr. VanBekkum. In the report of deputies dealing with the oversight of the TU, it is stated that the profile of Reformed theology needs to be in report with the time. It is stated, we are facing new and challenging questions, which require courage and creativity in answering them. We do not deny this, yet we cannot escape the idea that in this process there is too much accommodation to what is current today. Is this a distorted view? We leave this up to this synod to judge.

We would have loved to sit around the table with your deputies, to meet face-to-face and discuss these matters prior to this synod. In our letter dated November 10, 2010, we reminded your deputies of our plea, made immediately after our Synod Legana, to organize a conference of delegates of sister churches to in particular the issue of hermeneutics. We realised that we were not alone in raising concern. Both within and

outside of your churches we hear voices. We were looking for ways to help each other, yet it fell by the way side. Even when we asked for a face-to-face meeting with deputies of our mutual sisters, Canada, South Africa and Korea, it was not granted.

And so we seek to convey our concerns before you at this synod. We exhort you with love and care to be faithful to the Word of our holy God. We are not here long, but our plea is that our exhortation does not go unheard.

In looking through your agenda, we see that there are weighty matters before you. One of these is the issue of women in office. It is a recurring theme in your deputy reports, especially the reports translated into English.

- The report of the Committee for Diaconal Ministries (GDD) sketched a profile of the office of deacon by means of some foundational lines. It is stated plainly that “if the office of deacon is purged of governing tasks, there is no biblical objection to ordain women as deacons”. Further, it is stated that “research is needed into how female deacons or deaconesses function outside the RCN. This could give us insight into how the gifts of women can best come into fruition in an ecclesiastical office.”
- The Draft Work Order suggests as a primary proposal that “the office of deacon is also open to sisters”, with an alternative that the churches admit only brothers to the office.
- The report of the Committee for Church Unity (DKE) records the mandate given by Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 to discuss with the Netherlands Reformed Churches “the issue of women in office and the fact of opening the offices to sisters by the RCN”.
- The report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK) mentions that one of your sister churches in South Africa, the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA), decided in 2009 that women may remain in the office of deacon.
- The report of the Committee on Man/Woman in the Church (M/V) mentions that “deputies have noticed that the M/W issue is regarded as controversial, especially with respect to the questions around ‘women in office’.” They recommend as a further instruction for study the question: “Is it permissible to admit women to the office of minister, elder or deacon?”

Brothers, from this sample of reports, it is apparent that the issue of “women in office” is firmly on your agenda. It is a question that needs a clear and definite resolution from you. For, until now, it appears that the question has been left open for discussion. Yet, the church is not a forum for discussion. The church is called to be “the pillar and ground of the truth”

(1 Tim 3:15). We sympathise with you, for making a decision faithful to this truth is likely to have repercussions. It is noted by your deputies report that it appears as if the question of women in office “is beginning to function as a shibboleth”. Ministers within your bond and teaching staff within your Theological University (TU) have publicly advocated the opening of all offices to women. A clear decision may therefore have repercussions, both within your bond of churches and your relationship with others.

Yet, we humbly encourage you to make this difficult decision without delay. We humbly encourage you to be the pillar and ground of the truth. We humbly encourage you to affirm, based on 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, that only male communicant members can be called to the special offices of minister, elder, and deacon.

There is a last matter we wish to address. We are two sister churches in a mutual bond of love and faith. Yet, our Synod Legana wished to share with you the observation that your current direction is placing tension on that relationship. Tension that necessarily follows when we are heading in different directions. It is a tension that causes sadness. Brothers, our exhortation is made by your little sister from down under. It is made with deep love and care for your churches. You are dear to us. Together with you, we want to fight for the truth and the honour of Him in whose service we stand. May the God of all grace help us as federations together to stand firm in fighting this battle.

Brothers, we commend you to the Lord, praying that he may supply you with wisdom and boldness as you decide the matters before you. Let us hold on to each other, on the basis on the infallible Word of God, summarized also in the wonderful confessions that we have mutually adopted.

We wish you God’s blessing with the prayer of the apostle Paul, recorded in Ephesians 3. This prayer, *“May God grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and the length and the depth and the height – to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

Brothers, in alles Gode bevolen!

Thank you.

Deputies of the FRCA

Rev A Veldman

Br W Spyker

Appendix 3: Report of visit to Holland (26/3/11 - 1/4/11)

Saturday, 26 March 2011

On the afternoon of 26 March 2011, deputies met with representatives of the GKN (Voorlopig Kerkverband) from approx. 2:30 - 5:00pm at the manse of Rev E Hoogendoorn in Kampen. Representing the GKN were Revs E Hoogendoorn and R van der Wolf, and brs J Odding and E Vogel. From the FRCA were Rev A Veldman and br W Spyker. We provide an outline of the meeting below.

Rev Hoogendoorn opened the meeting with the reading of John 10:1-18 and prayer. He spoke a brief meditation on these words, highlighting how the sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd. We may do our work in the secure knowledge that Christ call His church in His Word and Spirit.

The following questions, previously prepared by the FRCA, formed the agenda of the meeting. Some questions were related and grouped together for the purposes of responses/discussion. A summary of the GKN responses are in italics.

1. When and for what reasons was the GKN formed?
2. Has it ever met in Synod? What are some of the significant developments in the GKN since its formation?
3. What is the present approx size of the GKN (ie. congregations, ministers, members)?
4. Since its formation, has there been a movement towards the GKN from members who have left the GKNv?

The GKN presently has around 700 members, spread among 4 congregations. Under the governance of these congregations, there are an additional 5 preaching points. There are 2 ministers within the bond, being Rev Hoogendoorn and Rev van der Wolf. At present, there are 3 theological students, one of whom has almost completed his studies.

It has not met in Synod. In November 2009 it formed as a "Voorlopig Kerkverband", which may be translated as "Provisional Church Federation". Meetings thus far are joint meetings of the various consistories (elders + deacons) within the bond. These meetings presently continue at a regularity of 4 times per year. The "Voorloopig Kerkverband" is founded upon God's Word as summarised in the 3 Forms of Unity. It seeks to follow the Church

Order as much as is possible in the present circumstances.

The background of the GKN is diverse, with each congregation having its own history.

The congregation in Kampen (Ichtus) found itself outside of the federation of the GKv (RCN) following the decisions of Synod Zwolle Zuid 2008. The congregations at Zwijndrecht and Hardenberg (Matrix) were previously within the bond of the DGK (RCNr) but left following struggles within these churches. In 2009, Rev van der Wolf, who was previously a minister in the GKv (RCN) congregation of Urk, accepted a call to the congregation in Hardenberg (Matrix).

As to more recent congregations and preaching points, several of these have left the GKv (RCN), being the groups in Assen, Veenendaal, Goes, Nijkerk and Dalfsen. In 2010 the group in Zwolle joined the GKN after leaving the DGK (RCNr).

As may be seen, the history of the various congregations and groups shows that the GKN has formed following struggles both within the GKv (RCN) and also within the DGK (RCNr).

5. What is the present situation with respect to contact with the RCNr? Why have you not joined the RCNr?
6. We encourage you to discuss the issues and struggles of concern with the RCN (GKv) in humility and love. Have you had any discussions with the RCN (GKv) since the formation of your federation? If so, what has been the outcome of these discussions?

The GKN has not had any official discussions with the DGK (RCNr). Many members within the GKN have left the DGK (RCNr) because of what they perceive as a radicalism, both in their approach to the GKv (RCN) and also with respect to their internal church government.

From 2003, the DGK (RCNr) has viewed the GKv (RCN) as a false church. This has been emphasised repeatedly by the DGK (RCNr). The GKN members did not view the GKv (RCN) in this way in 2003, and consider that this decision of the DGK (RCNr) was made too early. Even now, the GKN does not view the GKv (RCN) bond as a false church but rather as churches that are in a process of change and decline that still need to be called to repentance. Whilst the GKN and the DGK (RCNr) have many similar concerns regarding developments within the GKv (RCN), their approach is different.

During 2010, the DGK (RCNr) requested to have contact with the

GKN congregation in Kampen (Ichtus). The response from Kampen was that any contact must be with the GKN bond as a whole, not on an individual level. The DGK (RCNr) will not agree to have contact with the GKN bond as it contains congregations that it considers to be schismatic (being Zwijndrecht and Hardenberg (Matrix) which were previously within the bond of the DGK (RCNr)).

At present there is no real desire within the GKN for unity with the DGK (RCNr). Over time, this gap only appears to be becoming wider. This reality is illustrated by the group that, in 2010, left the DGK (RCNr) congregation in Zwolle to join the GKN. This group included office bearers who had been suspended from office within the DGK (RCNr). It was also illustrated by the group from Dalfsen that has recently requested to join the GKN, this group having specifically decided against joining the DGK (RCNr).

7. Do you seek any relations with foreign churches, including the FRCA?

No, at present no formal relations are being sought. Discussions have been held, or are planned, with both the FRCSA and also the CanRC. The GKN recognises that the FRCA have a sister-church relationship with the GKv (RCN), and within that relationship have a calling to speak clearly the words of the Good Shepherd.

8. What efforts are presently being made by the GKN to promote the unity of those who have left the GKNv, or more generally to promote the unity of the Lord's people in the Netherlands?
9. Does the GKN accept that the Lord may work liberation from a bond of churches:
- at different times;
 - in different ways; and
 - for different reasons?
10. Is there anything that we can do as FRCA to promote the unity of the Lord's people in the Netherlands?

At this point, we as FRCA shared our observation that, with sadness, there appears to be so much disunity amongst the Lord's people in the Netherlands. As FRCA we encouraged the GKN to seek to promote this unity wherever possible.

The GKN accepts that the Lord may work reformation and liberation at different times and in different ways within the one bond of churches. Developments on a local level within the GKv (RCN) differ widely. Individual members and congregations therefore faces different issues and may decide at different times that they cannot continue within the GKv (RCN). The GKN have a desire to seek unity with all who stand on the foundation of God's Word, the confessions and the Church Order.

The GKN requested that we as deputies present an honest picture of them to the FRCA. The GKN have not taken up communication as they are small, and their manpower and efforts are small. They notice this in all aspects of their church life. Yet they continue on in faith and in the confidence that God will preserve His church.

Rev Veldman closed the meeting with prayer.

Monday, 28 March 2011

On the afternoon of 28 March 2011, the "Foreigners Week" commenced. We stayed in the Parkhotel Bosch & Lommer in Hierden, a small town some 5km from Harderwijk. We were superbly hosted by the RCN and its deputies for foreign relations (BBK).

Some 33 foreign delegates were present from sister churches of the RCN in Austria, Australia, Brazil, Myanmar (Burma), Canada, Congo, Croatia, England, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Kenya, Latvia, Nigeria, Scotland, South Africa, South Korea and the USA. These included the following delegates from sister churches of the FRCA: Rev J de Gelder and br G Noordeman from the CanRC, br K Roose from the FRCSA, and Prof Haemoo Yoo from the PCK. Some 15 BBK deputies also stayed at the Parkhotel for the week.

On the afternoon of 28 March 2011 we met informally with the delegates from the CanRC and FRCSA. This gave opportunity to discuss the various matters on the agenda for the coming week, and further to share our mutual concerns and consider how we might best approach the RCN with these in a brotherly and communal way.

Throughout the evening, opportunity was given and taken for informal discussions with our fellow foreign delegates and with BBK deputies. These opportunities continued throughout the following days. Mealtimes, coffee breaks and evenings presented time for interaction in addition to the more "formal" meetings listed below.

Tuesday, 29 March 2011

This day was spent at the Parkhotel. It was designated as an information

day, to enlighten the foreign delegates of some of the main agenda items of for Synod Harderwijk, including some items that would feature during the open sessions of Synod on the Thursday and Friday. It was attended by all foreign delegates, the BBK deputies and also by most RCN Synod delegates. In total, we estimate that there were some 80 people present.

The morning session was opened by br K Wezeman, chairman of BBK. He emphasised that the purpose of the day was for information and not discussion. There would be opportunity for questions, but any debate or discussion would have to occur when the matters were tabled at Synod later in the week.

A devotion on Exodus 3:1-15 was then presented by sr E Urban, a deputy within BBK. In the course of this devotion, sr Urban said as follows:

“Recognising God’s Voice in our world asks for a listening attitude. God speaks, but not always where we expect him to speak, or the way wherein we expect Him to speak. God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. He spoke to Job out of a storm. The Lord spoke to Elijah, not out of a wind or earthquake or fire, but out of a gentle whisper. God is who He is, He is the same, but He relates to people, living in different times, in different contexts. Trying to see the relevance of God’s Word in our context can produce a certain tension: tradition is rich and useful, but modern times also ask for new ways of speaking, new ways of interpreting.”

We include this paragraph as it encapsulates an issue that was raised on more than one occasion throughout the week: how do we interpret God’s Word in today’s context? This highlighted the central issue on the question of hermeneutics that we (and other churches) had previously identified to the RCN.

Br K Mollema, one of the moderamen of Synod Harderwijk, then gave a brief overview of some of the main agenda items for Synod. He mentioned the following: revision of the Church Order, Male/Female in the church, Theological University in Kampen (TUK) and contact with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC). Rev M Oosterhuis highlighted various items in the report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK). Deputies BBK had recommended to Synod to establish one further sister relationship, being with a reformed church in Austria/Switzerland. It was also noted with sadness that the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches (OPC) had not accepted the RCN’s offer of a sister-church relationship. A consideration of the most recent OPC General Assembly was that it was unable to affirm, without reservation, that the RCN are fully reformed. He

noted that similar concerns had been expressed by the FRCA and the CanRC. In response, the BBK had recommended that they continue to communicate in order to promote a truthful image of the RCN, as they do not recognise themselves in the image presented by the FRCA.

Rev H Messelink introduced the report of the Committee for Church Unity, particularly the sections on discussion with the NRC. He quoted from the report as follows: *“It is our desire to work towards unity between both church federations. At the local level a great deal is happening. Many initiatives have been developed and this is cause for great rejoicing.”* He noted that discussions with the NRC had resulted in the preparation of two papers titled “Paper on the doctrine of baptism, the Holy Spirit, the church and the Lord’s Supper” and “Agreement on hermeneutical principles”. Rev Messelink advised that deputies had not yet addressed the specific mandate of Synod Zwolle Zuid 2008, being to discuss with the NRC “the issue of women in office and the fact of opening the offices to sisters by the NRC.” He advised that deputies had asked this mandate to be repeated by Synod Harderwijk.

Rev R Heida introduced the report of the Committee on Man/Woman in the church. Synod Zwolle Zuid had requested consideration on 3 tracks, being that of academic study, consideration within the churches and preparations to practical decisions in the short term. As to the first of these, a study had been performed by sr M Klinker of the TUK. This study did not come to any firm conclusions on the question of women in office. Some discussion evenings had been held within the churches. Deputies have recommended to Synod that they be given a mandate to study, amongst others, the following question: “Is it permissible to admit women to the office of minister, elder or deacon?”

In the evening, deputies met together with the BBK. Agreed minutes of this meeting are attached as **Appendix 4**.

Wednesday, 30 March 2011

This day was spent at the Theological University in Kampen (TUK). In response to various foreign churches having raised concerns on the question of hermeneutics and how this is functioning within the RCN, deputies BBK arranged a conference at the TUK titled “Holy Scripture and the Agenda of Theology”. The conference proceeded from 10:00am to 4:30pm, and was followed by a meal on a touring motor boat on the IJssel River.

The day was opened by Dr E de Boer. He mentioned that the essential question being faced is: how do we translate/interpret the Word of God in

the circumstances in which we live?

This was then followed by a number of different introductions on specific topics. Set out below are the speakers, their topics and a brief summary of some of their key points. Following each speech there was opportunity for questions and discussion.

1. Prof B Kamphuis introduced “Thinking about hermeneutics in Kampen: from Douma to Haak.” He discussed the question of contextualisation. What does the authority of the Bible mean in our context? There is a tension between the authority of the Bible vs the ever changing context. God speaks to us in the facts of history and culture. We must analyse the culture in which the apostle Paul spoke, and ask: what do those words mean in our culture?
2. Dr E de Boer introduced “The fourth commandment of the Decalogue and Sunday observance in ethics.” He explained how this matter came to be dealt with by various Synods. The Sunday as a day of rest is both based on a command of the Lord but also our context. It was a decision of the early church to celebrate the Sunday as the day of rest.
3. Prof A de Bruijne introduced “The Kingdom style in personal ethics, eg. in marriage, divorce, remarriage and gemeente ethiek.” There has been a change in the way we now do ethics. The old way was to collect Bible texts and then apply these. This was considered to be a rationalist and individualist way. What has now been developed is a framework known as the “style of the kingdom” and a spiritual way of answering new questions known as “congregational ethics”.
4. Dr CJ Haak introduced “Contextual reading of the Bible.” He mentioned how understanding of the Biblical message was different in western and non-western cultures. He mentioned how we required contextual reading of the Bible, both on the mission field and at home in the local church.
5. Dr K van Bakkum introduced “Joshua, historicity and archaeology.” The purpose of his recent dissertation was to implode the allegation of some that Israel’s conquest of Canaan did not occur. He did this using archaeological/scientific study. It was noted that he is now employed with the TUK for 1 day/week.
6. Prof G Kwakkel introduced “Creation in Genesis: general and special revelation.” Genesis 1 reveals to us that God is the creator, but it does not reveal how He did it. It does not reveal to us any scientific facts.

Thursday, 31 March 2011

Open sessions of Synod Harderwijk were attended on both 31 March and 1 April 2011. Synod sat from 9am - 12 noon, 1:30 - 5pm and 7:30-9:30pm.

Opening was by the Synod chairman, Rev P Niemeijer. He presented a meditation on Romans 1:1-15. All foreign delegates rose in expression of agreement with the Scriptures and the confessions of the church.

BBK report

Synod then proceeded to 2 rounds of discussion, followed by a decision round, on the topic of the BBK report (Report of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad). This had already been considered by a synod committee (Commissie Utrecht) which had largely adopted the recommendations within the BBK report.

During the first round of discussion, Rev Veldman spoke. In summary, he addressed the following:

- He expressed thanks to the BBK for our face-to-face meeting some days previously.
- He then expressed some concern in the way in which the FRCA had been presented in the report of Commissie Utrecht. It was incorrectly represented that the FRCA was opposed to female deputies per se. This matter had, sadly, even been reported in the Dutch press (Nederlands Dagblad) by way of an article by TUK Prof G Harinck. Our point was rather that we took issue with having a female delegate at our Synod. As deputies we will suggest that the next FRCA synod clarify this point.
- Do the FRCA present a distorted image of the RCN, as is suggested in the BBK recommendations? We consider that our image is accurate. Reference was made to matters raised in the speech at Zwolle Zuid, and also to the DKE report (Appendix 9) on the present agenda. Our start and end point should be God's Word. The guidance of the Holy Spirit may not take on its own life separate from the Word.
- He then clarified the meaning of "tension". Some in the RCN think that at present our sister-church relation has already been placed under tension/stress. This is incorrect. Yet, we observe tension because of the things that divide us.
- Finally, what is the authority and responsibility of BBK? We would

have loved to have a conference with all foreign churches. We look forward to this Synod clarifying the BBK's role here.

Various Dutch and foreign delegates spoke during this and the second round. Matters addressed included whether a female deputy may be delegated to Synod and present in an advisory capacity, are there ways in which communication between the respective deputyships can be improved, will a joint meeting of sister-churches be seen as these churches "acting in concert" over against the RCN, and who should address the hermeneutical questions on behalf of the RCN - is it the TUK, the BBK or the Synod?

Following various amendments, Synod made its decisions in relation to the BBK report. Some summary points are:

1. Sister-church relations were established with the Presbyterian Church in Austria/Switzerland and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia-Papua, taking the total number of sister churches of the RCN to 32.
2. In addition, the RCN maintains corresponding contact with a further 25 churches and organisations.
3. To end the offer of a sister-church relationship to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). This offer has been made repeatedly by RCN synods. The 77th General Assembly of the OPC found itself unable to affirm, without reservation, that the RCN was fully reformed. In light of this, the RCN considered that it was not correct to continue the offer of sister-church relationship.
4. Deputies BBK were mandated to investigate the question of whether the present structure of sister-church relationships was sustainable, or whether it was possible to maintain ecumenical contacts by way of "international church networks."

The following decisions relevant specifically to the FRCA were as follows (English translation partly from BBK report and partly by deputies; Dutch version below):

Decision 2:

- a. to take note (with approval) of the letters sent by deputies to the FRCA, in response to the statements about our churches in the Acts of Synod Legana 2009, and to instruct deputies to continue in discussion with the FRCA in line with this correspondence, in order to promote a truthful image of our churches.
- b. to approve deputies' decision, in this instance, to consent to the urgent request

of deputies FRCA that no female deputy be delegated to their Synod.

Grounds:

1. the RCN do not recognize themselves in the image described in the Acts of Synod Legana 2009;
2. it is detrimental to the sister-church relationship, and the appeal that the FRCA and the RCN want to make to each other based on that relationship, if the starting point is a distorted image;
3. deputies consented to the request of the deputies FRCA firstly in order not to cause embarrassment to the sister, secondly to avoid unnecessary tensions at the FRCA Synod, and thirdly to allow the FRCA room to come to a position regarding whether a female may be delegate by deputies BBK.

Decision 3:

to rule that deputies correctly refused to hold an official meeting with various sister-churches, namely the CanRC, RCUS, FRCA and FRCSA, for the purpose of giving an response on behalf of the churches to the concerns that these churches had raised.

Ground:

if a sister-church has objections against a Synod decision regarding doctrine, church government, discipline or liturgy, then it must direct these straight to the General Synod.

Original Dutch version of these 2 decisions:

Besluit 2:

- a. met instemming kennis te nemen van de briefwisseling die deputaten met de FRCA (Australië) hebben gevoerd naar aanleiding van de uitspraken die in de Acta van hun synode te Legana 2009 over onze kerken worden gedaan en deputaten op te dragen in de lijn van deze correspondentie met de FRCA in gesprek te blijven om te werken aan een zuivere beeldvorming van onze kerken;
- b. goed te keuren dat deputaten in eerste instantie bewilligd hebben in het dringende verzoek van de deputaten buitenland van de FRCA om geen vrouwelijke deputaat af te vaardigen naar hun synode.

Gronden:

1. de gereformeerde kerken in Nederland herkennen zich niet in het beeld dat van hen in de Acta van de synode van Legana 2009 wordt gegeven;
2. het is schadelijk voor de zusterkerkrelatie en het appel dat de FRCA en de GKv in het kader van die relatie op elkaar willen doen, wanneer daarbij wordt uitgegaan van een vertekend beeld;
3. deputaten gingen in op het verzoek van deputaten van de FRCA om ten eerste

de zuster niet in verlegenheid te brengen, ten tweede onnodige spanningen op de synode van de FRCA te voorkomen en ten derde haar de ruimte te geven tot een standpunt te komen ten aanzien van aanvaarding van een vrouw als afgevaardigde van deputaten BBK.

Besluit 3:

uit te spreken dat deputaten terecht hebben geweigerd om in een officiële vergadering met enkele zusterkerken, namelijk de CanRC, de RCUS, de FRCA en de FRCSA, namens de kerken een oordeel te geven over bezwaren die door deze kerken waren genoemd.

Grond:

als een zusterkerk bezwaar heeft tegen een synodebesluit over leer, kerkregering, tucht en liturgie dan moet zij zich rechtstreeks richten tot onze generale synode.

Speeches

During the course of Thu and Fri, most of the RCN's sister churches had the opportunity to deliver a speech. They passed on fraternal greetings, statistics regarding their federation and, in some cases, also expressed concern and encouragement with respect to issues being faced by the RCN and how these were being dealt with by the RCN. As to statistics, it was noted that some of the RCN's sister churches are particularly large federations, with the IPB (Presbyterian Church of Brazil) and the NKST (The Church of Christ in Nigeria) each numbering around 1 million members. As to concerns and encouragement, these were expressed in particular by the FRCA, CanRC, PCK, RCUS, FRCSA, URCNA, EPCI (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland) and the RPCI (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland).

In the speech of the URCNA delegate (Rev R Sikkema), he mentioned that at their most recent Synod, the URCNA did not accept the RCN's offer to enter into a sister-church relationship. He mentioned that the URCNA will not proceed to sister-church relations until the issue of women in office is resolved within the RCN.

On the Thu afternoon, Rev Veldman was given the opportunity to present his speech. A time limit of 10 min was imposed by the chairman. Accordingly, a slightly abbreviated version was given. The full version was distributed to all Synod delegates, and the deleted portions were presented during the course of rounds of discussion on the Synod floor.

Rev J Plug gave a response on behalf of deputies BBK. He thanked the FRCA for the matters we had raised by letter and in our recent meeting with

the BBK. He also thanked the FRCA for the brotherly discussion that could be held. He indicated that these matters gave both of us a responsibility: to deal substantively with the matters that we had raised, both in raising concerns in a detailed way, and in listening to each other and being willing to learn from one another.

Friday, 1 April 2011

This was another day of open sessions of Synod. Rounds of discussion were held in relation to two topics, both arising from the report of the Committee for Church Unity, and dealing with unity talks between the RCN (GKv) and the Netherlands Reformed Churches.

The topics discussed were:

- Appendix 8 - Paper on the doctrine of baptism, the Holy Spirit, the church and the Lord's Supper
- Appendix 9 - Agreement on hermeneutical principles

During the various rounds of discussion, both the RCN and foreign delegates were given the opportunity to speak. Rev Veldman spoke in relation to Appendix 8. In summary, he raised 3 points. Firstly, he expressed concern that deputies had not at all addressed their mandate to discuss with the NRC the issue of women in office. This issue is critical to the FRCA, as had been mentioned at Synod 2008. Secondly, under the heading "changed outlook on the church" there is a sentence "It is partly a changed outlook on the church today that leads to a more generous admissions policy with respect to the Lord's Table. The responsibility for taking part lies less with the consistory than with the believer." Whilst it is clear from Scripture that each believer must examine themselves, it is nonetheless the responsibility of consistory to fence the table. This matter is understated in the report. Finally, the conclusion of Appendix 8 is that there is "great unanimity in both federations and that they do not differ in dealing with confessional subscription". As FRCA, we do not see this agreement. The issue of confessional binding remains a central issue and we do not see this as having been resolved in that the stance of the NRC has not changed on this point.

Following the rounds of discussion, deputies for Church Unity (Revs Messelink and Wesseling) were granted an opportunity to respond and answer various questions that has been posed by delegates. They mentioned that presently almost 40% of local churches in the RCN (GKv)/NRC federations are having local discussions or working together. On the question of admission to the Lord's Supper, they mentioned that Synod Amersfoort 2005 had opened the Lord's Supper to guests, and Zwolle Zuid

2008 confirmed that this only required a subscription to the Apostles Creed. Deputies recognise a tension between what is regulated by General Synod and what can be left to the local churches. They acknowledged that the NRC had changed less than the RCN since their split in 1967. They accept that it will be difficult for the NRC to turn back the clock on their decision some years ago to open all offices in the church to women.

At the close of Friday, Rev P Niemeijer addressed the foreign delegates, thanking them for their attendance and input, and for the fellowship enjoyed. He closed the session with prayer.

Respectfully submitted
A Veldman
W Spyker
14 May 2011

Appendix 4 - Minutes of meeting between Deputies and BBK

Meeting held on Tuesday, 29 March 2011 between deputies FRCA and BBK-RCN

Location:	Hotel Bosch en Lommer
Time:	8:30 - 10:30pm
Present FRCA:	Rev A Veldman, br W Spyker
Present BBK:	br K Wezeman (chair), Rev J Plug, Rev M Oosterhuis, br T Karelse, sr H Nederveen, br J Bronsema, sr K van der Linden, Rev P Meijer

Br K Wezeman opened the meeting and, by agreement, the following points were listed as forming the agenda:

1. Female deputy at Synod
2. Identification of the new hermeneutics
3. How do we mutually speak about each other
4. Meaning of "tension" in decision 7 of Synod Legana Acts Art 71.XI
5. Content of deputy discussions

A summary of the issues, discussions and outcomes were as follows:

1. Female Deputy at Synod

This matter had previously been the subject of discussion in our mutual correspondence (see letters from BBK dated 23/3/10, FRCA dated 3/7/10, and BBK dated 4/10/10).

FRCA noted that the report of Commissie Utrecht (a subcommittee of Synod Harderwijk dealing with the BBK reports) mentioned that "*In de brief van 3 juli 2010 zetten de FRCA uiteen waarom zij van mening zijn dat een vrouw geen deputaat kan zijn*". FRCA explained that the concern was not the fact of a female deputy, but rather the delegation of such a deputy to a Synod of the FRCA. BBK will pass on this clarification to Commissie Utrecht.

The basis of the concern was then discussed. FRCA noted that, by participating fully in Synod discussions, a female deputy could be taken to have assumed a "teaching role" within the churches. In discussion it was noted that the concern may in fact be "governing" rather than teaching. BBK advised that an essential point is that foreign delegates only give advice but do not actually make decisions at a foreign Synod.

FRCA noted that it was ultimately a matter for their Synod to decide

whether it will extend the privilege of full speaking rights to a female foreign deputy. In order to gain clarity on this matter, FRCA will request their next Synod to specify in the Rules of Synod whether a female deputy would be granted privileges. BBK encouraged the FRCA to make clear whether any such rule was based on:

1. preference, whereby foreign sister churches could then be expected to honour the request out of respect for the FRCA's stance; or
2. Biblical principle, whereby foreign sister churches would also be expected to abide by this principle.

BBK suggested that, time permitting, a draft of the proposal to clarify the Rules of Synod be forwarded to BBK for comment and interaction prior to being submitted to Synod.

2. New hermeneutics

Synod Legana decided at Art 71.XI Ground 3 that *“most of these decisions appear to have a common denominator, namely a particular way of interpreting Scripture. This way of interpretation takes its starting point in man, rather than in God’s Word ...”*

In subsequent correspondence, the FRCA had sought to clarify this ground by way of evidence and examples (see letters from FRCA dated 3/7/10 and 10/11/10). BBK raised the concern that these did not provide sufficient support for the allegation that a “new hermeneutic” was in fact operating within the RCN, and that Synod Legana had therefore presented a distorted image of the RCN.

In response, FRCA referred to the presentations heard earlier in the day, especially comments that referred to interpreting God’s Word in our context and culture, and of having to consider the “cultural gap” from when Scripture was written. FRCA referred to the non-historical interpretation of Genesis 1. FRCA also referred to the dissertation of Dr. S Paas, who was appointed as lecturer at the Theological University in Kampen (TUK), the dissertation of Dr K van Bekkum which was accepted by the TUK and a private publication of Prof G Harinck, who is professor at the TUK.

Some discussion was held on the question whether all publications within the TUK were under the governance of the RCN Synod, or whether this was limited to teaching and instruction of students, but did not extend to dissertations which fell within the realm of “scientific research”. BBK clarified that the RCN, through its Synod, was indeed responsible for all aspects of the TU. BBK further clarified that the FRCA could forward any concerns to the BBK who would interact as appropriate and then pass

these on to the next RCN Synod.

BBK suggested that it would be most helpful if any concerns were expressed in a detailed way with substantiation, rather than just being expressed as a conclusion. BBK further noted that the conference on hermeneutics arranged at the TUK on the following day (30/3/11) was a further answer, on behalf of the RCN, to the hermeneutical concerns that had been raised by the FRCA.

3. How do we speak about each other

It was emphasised by the BBK that we must be careful to be honest and truthful in speaking about our respective church federations both in the decisions as recorded in Synod Acts, and also in discussions with third parties.

FRCA advised that we did at times discuss matters regarding the RCN with other church federations who shared similar concerns. This ought not to be seen as an attempt to gain strength in numbers, but rather to in love mutually exhort and assist the RCN.

We agreed upon the need to be careful to observe the 9th commandment in all our discussions, reports and decisions, and thereby to promote the honour and reputation of our respective church federations.

4. Meaning of “tension”

This matter had also previously been the subject of discussion by way of correspondence (see letters from BBK dated 23/3/10, FRCA dated 3/7/10, BBK dated 4/10/10 and FRCA dated 10/11/10). The BBK sought further clarification of the decision and its consequences.

FRCA advised that, by way of this decision, Synod Legana sought to make an observation of an existing tension between our respective federations, rather than to impose a tension upon that relationship.

It was agreed that speculation as to where this tension may lead was not helpful. The FRCA's exhortation to the RCN was made in love and in the genuine hope that this tension may be resolved on the basis of God's Word.

5. Deputy discussions

We noted with thankfulness that this meeting had clarified a number of misunderstandings that had arisen in our mutual correspondence. Whilst as deputies we cannot answer all questions that may be posed, we were

able to clarify matters. Further, as deputies we are a channel for conveying any concerns of sister-churches to our respective General Synod.

We agreed that face-to-face meetings were of great benefit in ensuring that we properly understood the decisions of our respective Synods and that we are factually accurate in our reports. By way of meeting we are truly able to mutually assist, encourage and exhort each other within the sister church relationship. Mutual thankfulness was expressed for the brotherly atmosphere in which we could meet and discuss.

Both the BBK and FRCA expressed a willingness to again meet face-to-face, with the possibility that such meeting be arranged at a mutually convenient time between Synods rather than during the course of a Synod.

Br J Plug led in closing prayer.

Appendix 5 – Synopsis of the most relevant decisions of Synod Harderwijk 2011

Decisions concerning Relations with Churches Abroad:

Some summary points are:

1. Sister-church relations were established with the Presbyterian Church in Austria/Switzerland and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia-Papua, taking the total number of sister churches of the RCN to 32.
2. In addition, the RCN maintains corresponding contact with a further 25 churches and organisations.
3. To end the offer of a sister-church relationship to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). This offer has been made repeatedly by RCN synods. The 77th General Assembly of the OPC found itself unable to affirm, without reservation, that the RCN was fully reformed. In light of this, the RCN considered that it was not correct to continue the offer of sister-church relationship.
4. Deputies BBK were mandated to investigate the question of whether the present structure of sister-church relationships was sustainable, or whether it was possible to maintain ecumenical contacts by way of “international church networks.”

The following decisions relevant specifically to the FRCA were as follows (English translation partly from BBK report and partly by deputies):

Decision 2:

- a. to take note (with approval) of the letters sent by deputies to the FRCA, in response to the statements about our churches in the Acts of Synod Legana 2009, and to instruct deputies to continue in discussion with the FRCA in line with this correspondence, in order to promote a truthful image of our churches.
- a. to approve deputies’ decision, in this instance, to consent to the urgent request of deputies FRCA that no female deputy be delegated to their Synod.

Grounds:

1. the RCN do not recognize themselves in the image described in the Acts of Synod Legana 2009;
2. it is detrimental to the sister-church relationship, and the appeal that the FRCA and the RCN want to make to each other based on that relationship, if the starting point is a distorted image;
3. deputies consented to the request of the deputies FRCA firstly in order not to

Report - Deputies for Sister Church Relations

cause embarrassment to the sister, secondly to avoid unnecessary tensions at the FRCA Synod, and thirdly to allow the FRCA room to come to a position regarding whether a female may be delegate by deputies BBK.

Decision 3:

to rule that deputies correctly refused to hold an official meeting with various sister-churches, namely the CanRC, RCUS, FRCA and FRCSA, for the purpose of giving an response on behalf of the churches to the concerns that these churches had raised.

Ground:

if a sister-church has objections against a Synod decision regarding doctrine, church government, discipline or liturgy, then it must direct these straight to the General Synod.

Decisions with respect to the report of Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

Re: National Synod

Synod decided to approve the participation of the deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity in the National Synod/Protestant Forum in Dordrecht 2010. Synod did not uphold the appeals of two churches lodged against this participation.

Synod also decided:

1. To follow the developments concerning the National Synod/ Protestant Forum and to participate in with a delegation, whilst maintaining the own identity and responsibility of the Reformed Churches
2. To have the Catholic Reformed Confession of faith according Scripture as input

Amongst other some of the grounds for this decision were:

- a. The task given to deputies (to stay in touch with ecclesiastical developments) allowed them to participate in this synod, even though they had not received an exact mandate by the previous synod
- b. The publication which were distributed by the organising committee of the National Synod gave no reason to expect that at this Synod unity would be sought, which was not based on Scripture
- c. The Credo presented by the organisation of this Synod was not meant as replacement of the Reformed Confessions. It was a spontaneous testimony of faith, phrased in today's language, that united those who subscribed to it. It has to be considered as 'a- text-that-will-grow' and therefore has to be judged on its own merit
- d. At this synod the ecclesiastical divide was not ignored or blurred. The intention was to meet each other, to see what united the delegates, and to give a worthwhile and necessary signal to a de-christianized society
- e. Participation in this synod falls within the perimeters of a new approach recommended by the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity - instead of to speak with others when you almost agree on everything, to seek contact in a frank and unconcerned way with other Protestant Churches without having as a direct aim to come to ecclesiastical unity and where possible a true testimony of the truth

can be given

In this same context Synod also decided where possible in connection with the Christian Reformed Churches and the Dutch Reformed Churches to investigate possibilities for association with the Dutch Council of Churches

Grounds for this decision were:

- a. A change in the regulations of the Council of Churches and well as a changed position of the Council of Churches makes closer relations less prohibiting than it was in the past
- b. At the local level there is already a great deal of participation in inter-church discussions
- c. Possible association with the Council of Churches fits within a policy where at times direct church unity is not pursued, but instead the only aim is ecclesiastical contact

Re: Contact with the Dutch Reformed Churches (NGK)

Synod decided:

1. To accept with thankfulness the report of the discussions with the Dutch Reformed Churches, as well as of the two appendices attached to this report(a paper on the doctrine of baptism, the Holy Spirit, the church and the Lord's Supper & an agreement on hermeneutical principles)

Ground:

Both documents give testimony that the agreement reached with respect to a binding to the confession concerning the subject discussed form fertile ground for a continuing discussion re dealing with concrete and continuing deviation of the confession as well as with respect to the issue of women in office

2. To mandate deputies for Church Unity to continue the discussions with the Committee for Contact with the GKN. The main point of these discussion should be the matter of women in office and the way in which the local churches apply the binding the confessions.

Grounds:

1. The documents with respect to confessional binding and the way in which Scripture should be interpreted give sufficient reason and trust to continue the discussions with the NGK, with the prayerful expectation that in the near future the discussions can focus on church unity.
2. For both federations of churches confessional binding is an important

matter. In these discussions as churches we should mutually be allowed to ask each other questions regarding this matter and the way in which deviation from the confession is dealt with.

3. At present there is still the obstacle of the NGK decision to open the offices for sisters in the congregation, yet there has been progress in the discussion with respect to the question behind this, namely how to deal with the Holy Scriptures and the way in which to interpret the Scriptures. All this gives sufficient trust to continue the discussion about this obstacle

Appeals to discontinue discussion with the Dutch Reformed Churches were not upheld

Decisions with respect to the report M/F in the church

Since the report was an interim report (deputies had not finished their task) Synod decided to reappoint deputies with the mandate to come with answers to the following questions:

1. Is it allowed on the basis of Scripture, next to brothers also to appoint sisters from the congregation in the office of deacon? What consequence does the answer to this question have with respect to the task and responsibility of the deacons?
2. Is it allowed on the basis of Scripture, next to brothers also to appoint sisters from the congregation in the office of elder and minister?

In answering these questions deputies should

- a. start from a Biblical justifiable vision with respect to the ministry of men and women in the congregation of Christ, using the study material already available
- b. take into account the results of considerations and decisions of consistories
- c. pay due attention to the decisions made by churches we have contact with both national and international

Ground:

The considerations given thus far require finalization in accordance with the mandate given by Synod Amersfoort–Centrum 2005 as well as a clear decision serving church life in the local congregations.

Appendix 6 – Interim report of the CanRC subcommittee regarding the RCN

(published in *Clarion*, Vol.60, No.16, 20 July 2011)

As you may already know from the Acts of Synod Burlington 2010, that synod dealt with a number of concerns brought forward by the Committee for Relations Churches Abroad (CRCA) as well as a number of churches regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt in the Netherlands, hereafter referred to as the RCN). Synod appointed Rev. J. DeGelder, brother G. J. Nordeman, Rev. J. Moesker (convenor), and Dr. C. Van Dam, to this subcommittee. Synod Burlington 2010 gave this committee the mandate (Article 86):

4.4.1 To express our grave concerns that:

4.4.1.1 Synod Zwolle of the RCN did not demand that Dr. Harinck, a professor associated with the Theological University in Kampen, retract his controversial remarks;

4.4.1.2 The Theological University did not exercise greater care in the case of the appointment of Dr. Paas as lecturer; and to urge the RCN to deal with these matters as yet.

4.4.2 To express and discuss our grave concerns about a change in how biblical hermeneutics are functioning in the RCN.

4.4.3 To pay special attention to the upcoming report on the role of women in the church.

This subcommittee has conducted a fair bit of research and correspondence in fulfilling the mandate. As you may also know, a synod of the RCN is underway, Synod Harderwijk 2011. This synod meets at appointed times throughout the year in order to complete its work. And at the end of March and beginning of April two members of this committee, Rev. J. DeGelder and br. G.J. Nordeman, visited Synod Harderwijk 2011 during what is called “Buitenlandweek” (foreign delegates week, from March 28 to April 2, 2011). Foreign delegates from churches in fellowship or in the process of coming to fellowship with the RCN are invited to Synod over the period of one week in order to see how synod is working and to deliver an address to synod on behalf of their churches. There was also opportunity to attend a conference on hermeneutics and our delegates were able to meet with a section of the RNC Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK). We submit for publication a summary of our letter to the BBK which was discussed at Synod Harderwijk, and a summary of the experiences of Rev. DeGelder and br. G. Nordeman at the foreign delegates meeting.

In our subcommittee meetings since our appointment by Synod Burlington 2010, we decided to concentrate on three matters which were part of the mandate Synod Burlington 2010 gave this Subcommittee:

1. The view of Scripture at the Theological University in Kampen
2. The work of the deputies Man/Vrouw in de Kerk
3. Unity discussions taking place between the RCN and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC)

In a letter addressed to the RCN deputies in March 2011 before the foreign delegates week, we offered our concerns in an interim report. We did this in a spirit of brotherly concern. After all, Rule 1 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship states: "The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy and be watchful for deviations." So it was in keeping with this rule and to promote serious dialogue that we offered the interim report to the BBK. The contents represented our thoughts at the time. We will have to wait to see what Synod Harderwijk decides about these matters before we draw up our report for the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Carman West in 2013.

1. The View of Scripture in Kampen

We expressed that as deputies we are very worried that the RCN are deviating from the historically accepted Reformed approach to the interpretation of the Word of God. There is evidence of a venturing into a more Scripture-critical direction, in particular at the Theological University in Kampen (TUK) where men are trained to become ministers of the Word of God. We see evidence of this in three matters.

- A. The TUK has retained Dr. S. Paas as lecturer ("universitair docent") in spite of concerns noted with his dissertation, *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (Oudtestamentische Studien 47, Leiden, Brill 2003). Over against current critical positions, Dr. Pass' main thesis in this dissertation is that a belief in creation was found in 8th century prophets. However, in the process of bringing this thesis to the fore, Dr. Paas identifies himself with a "religion-historical approach." This is an approach which sees Israel's religion in Old Testament times as being developed over time also through many influences from surrounding nations such as Egypt and the Canaanite nations. In his doctoral dissertation, for instance, Dr. Paas asserts that Israel's creation belief has a Canaanite background and was possibly influenced by Egyptian notions. Also in this dissertation, Dr. Paas considers

creation to be a myth, along with much of Genesis 1-11. Others, among whom ministers in the RCN as well as a former professor at the TUK, have raised objections to his appointment as lecturer at the TUK on account of his critical views. Those objections, however, have been brushed aside. One argument to retain his services is, for instance, that his teaching at the TU does not involve the matters contained in his thesis, and that his instruction on evangelism and church planting is solid. We as committee believe that the TUK, by upholding this appointment in spite of serious objections and tolerating such a critical view of Holy Scripture in one of its lecturers, has forfeited its ability to call anyone to account concerning higher critical views of Scripture in the future.

- B. In 2008 the TUK approved a dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum (From Conquest to Coexistence) in which he utilizes questionable methodology. In his dissertation, Dr. van Bekkum considers history writing in the Old Testament as a kind of representational art. In other words, the account of what happened as recorded in the Old Testament needs to be interpreted not as simply a factual description, but as a description which is also influenced by the community's expectations and beliefs. One consequence of this methodology is, for instance, that the account of the sun standing still in Joshua 10:12-14 is interpreted metaphorically rather than factually. When Dr. van Bekkum applies his method of interpretation to this passage, he posits that the sun and moon did not actually stand still but the expression should be understood as metaphorical idiom utilized to celebrate a single great victory of Israel over enemies. We as deputies are deeply concerned that, in spite of Dr. van Bekkum's affirmation of Article 5 Belgic Confession, the obvious meaning of the text as traditionally and historically understood is no longer being maintained, presumably because it does not seem believable in our day and age.
- C. Synod Zwolle 2008 seemed to avoid or ignore a number of serious concerns which were brought forward and which involve the interpretation of Holy Scripture. Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne has expressed that there are inaccuracies in the Bible and that the Bible makes use of myth. In spite of the fact that these are views that have considerable impact on how Scripture is handled and interpreted, objections to Dr. de Bruijne's views were not dealt with on the grounds they were submitted too late for Synod. As well, Dr. J. Douma has written in favour of the framework hypothesis for the creation week, a view which essentially denies the historical account of creation in Genesis 1 and which leaves room for the theory

of evolution. Objections to Dr. Douma's views were also turned down on the grounds that these objections came too long after the publication of Dr. Douma's book on Genesis. Finally, Dr. G. Harinck, in an interview published in a newspaper, made controversial statements concerning subjects such as Christ's substitutionary atonement, homosexuality, the Romish mass, and women in church office. Although his comments brought a flurry of protests from many, Synod did not deal with those protests on technical grounds and because of explanations Dr. Harinck gave of his views. To our knowledge, however, there has never been a retraction or apology concerning the controversial statements Dr. Harinck made in the public press. Nevertheless he has been retained as associate at the TU.

We as deputies are alarmed about the way the Word of God is being re-interpreted in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. We have seen this kind of new hermeneutic applied in other churches, which has resulted in a rapid watering down of the Biblical testimony of those churches. The lack of real action in the above matters does not inspire confidence in the TUK's training for the ministry of the Word and gives the impression that the RCN tolerates views that are not in accordance with the Bible's own testimony and the Reformed Confessions.

2. The Work of the Deputies Man/Vrouw in de Kerk (Men/Women in the Church).

The second matter we addressed is the work of the Deputies Men/Women in the Church. These deputies have busied themselves since Synod 2005 with the role of women in the churches, with a focus on the issue of whether women may be appointed to office in the church and which office or offices. The deputies presented Synod Zwolle 2008 with the results of an extensive survey among church members and ministers which indicated that there is quite a variety of opinions about the role of women in the churches.

In response to this, Synod Zwolle 2008 gave the deputies M/V the mandate to prepare practical answers to the following questions:

- a. Within which limitations may men and women be active in diaconal activities? What are the consequences thereof for the office of deacon as it functions at present? What does the response to these questions mean for the present practice of the office of deacon?
- b. What role may women have in the worship service (liturgy, prayer, Scripture reading)?
- c. Within which limitations may men and women be active in pastoral

activities? What does this mean for the practice of the office of minister and elder?

- d. Is it possible in a practical sense to tackle the issue of allowing women to serve in the office of deacon independently of the issue of allowing women to serve in the office of elder and minister?

Deputies were instructed to follow a three-track approach to fulfill their mandate:

- Theological/Sociological research
- Reflection in the churches
- Preparation of practical, short term decisions

The deputies were unable to complete the third track of their work and will report to the next synod on the practical issues surrounding the role of women in the church. The first track was taken on by the TUK. One of the projects was a hermeneutical undertaking by drs. Myriam Klinker, published in the TUK series of reflections. This booklet has been printed but we have not had opportunity to fully consider this work at this time.

For the second track, the deputies composed a manual to be used for reflection on the role of women in the church at the local level. After reviewing this manual, we are unsettled by the whole mandate of the deputies M/V. What follows is a short summary and assessment of this manual produced by the deputies for our sister churches in the Netherlands.

The manual reviews the Report M/V in de Kerk to Synod 2008. This report raised questions about Biblical directives for the position of women in the church. There is assurance that the Bible has the authority in this matter. However, the question of various possible interpretations of Bible passages relevant to the role of women in the church is brought to the fore. It is also noted that the roles of men and women have not been explicitly established in the confessions of the RCN.

The main lines of argumentation were laid out in the report to Synod 2008.

- A. Some view the role of men as leaders and protectors and women as followers and helpers as a creation ordinance. Sanctified in Christ, men and women balance each other in their separate roles again.
- B. Others don't see a creation ordinance but see men and women created in equal roles with difference only as a result of the fall. We have been redeemed from that by Christ and so men and women are now equal in marriage and in church.

Two other possible lines of argumentation, both claiming to be faithful to Scripture, were also put forward. The difference here is in taking into account the cultural context at the time of the Bible writers and our present-day culture.

- C. Even though the Spirit made use of the Bible writers along with their cultural background, He is able to make His intentions clear in spite of that cultural background. Though we need to carefully take into account the different situation, the application for today isn't much affected.
- D. God's message for today is hidden under a cultural layer which we need to look through in order to understand it. The prescriptions are so intertwined with the concrete situation in which they were given that they cannot be applied to today and may even be in conflict with what God intended.

As deputies, we have concerns about the possible Scripture interpretations presented to Synod 2008 and put forward in the "Manual M/V." The reasoning in argument B above clearly asserts that the whole idea of male headship has been abolished after Christ. Genesis 3:16b, "Your desire will be for your husband, and He will rule over you," is then regarded as a curse on the relationship of men and women which was rendered void by Christ having borne the curse for us. This results in the principle of Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Accepting this line of reasoning would mean that all the offices in the church should be opened to women.

Synod Zwolle's acceptance of this interpretation as a possibly acceptable interpretation, we believe, is a serious deviation from the historical interpretation of the relevant passages. There is no doubt that men and women were created equal in worth and dignity. Both were made in God's image. Both were given the task to replenish the earth and subdue it. Both came from one flesh and became one flesh. However, there is also no doubt that man was created before woman and this has lasting impact on their roles. This is seen in 1 Timothy 2:12-13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." In addition, woman was given a specific role in Genesis 2:18 & 20 as "helper." Man was also the federal head as shown in the fact that he was given the command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16 & 17) and it is in his disobedience specifically that all mankind sinned as evidenced by Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned." As well, we do not see that Galatians 3:28 supports an egalitarian position as far as roles of men and women is concerned. Paul was not doing away with gender-specific roles.

The point the apostle was referring to was spiritual status before God through faith, not the removal of different roles. We therefore do not see how the reasoning in B could be entertained as a possible interpretation of Scripture from a Reformed perspective. The principle which we find clearly revealed throughout the New Testament is that of male headship in relation to women in marriage as well as church (1 Cor.11:3, Eph.5:23, 1 Timothy 2:8-15).

It is true that the RCN have not actually adopted B above as their final approach to the role of women. However, by giving the deputies considering the roles of women in the church the “go-ahead” to research this as a possible approach, Synod Zwolle 2008 has opened a door which cannot easily be shut again. They have cast doubt on the validity of the historical view of male headship, and have suggested that the possibility exists that B is a valid interpretation. It will be difficult now to go back to the A only position which the Reformed churches have historically held.

In reasoning D above, the matter of hermeneutics clearly comes to the fore. Sadly, historical Reformed hermeneutics is questioned in this approach. The cultural context is brought into the picture as possibly determining what such a passage says about the role of women. This means that also here a door has been opened for the possibility of a “new hermeneutic” which gives more weight to the human element in the text of the Bible. In spite of numerous assurances that the Bible is still authoritative and trustworthy in the manual, these assurances certainly sound hollow if one considers how the human element can now be given so much weight in relevant passages about the role of women, such as 1 Corinthians 11& 14 and 1 Timothy 2 & 3. These passages can be reinterpreted to teach the opposite of what they have historically been shown to teach in Reformed commentaries for hundreds of years. We regret that this new hermeneutic has even been posited as a possible direction for the churches in the RCN. Again, a door opened which will not easily be closed again.

As deputies we empathize with the RCN as they wrestle with the pressures of an ever-more secular, humanistic society on the churches in Europe, especially also with regard to the place and role of the woman. Seeking better ways to serve and praise God is positive. However, the manual produced by the deputies places big question marks behind the approach to the role of the woman in the Reformed churches throughout history and the Biblical interpretation which supported that approach. This questioning has, we would say, signified at least a toleration of new hermeneutics in the RCN.

3. Unity Discussions Between the RCN and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC)

The Netherlands Reformed Churches came into existence in the late sixties of the 20th century, as churches that had split off from the RCN. Matters of doctrine and church government played a decisive role in this split. Since 1993 there has been growing contact between the NRC and the RCN. This happens on the level of the local churches, as well as through committees of Synod.

In the area of church government the NRC has always shown a strong independentism. Their church order states that a refusal to accept it cannot be a reason to expel a local church from the federation. The pre-ambule of this document only requests local churches to respect the decisions of major assemblies as much as possible. In the area of doctrine the NRC practice significant tolerance when it comes to deviations from the Reformed confessions. The church order does have an article about signing the Three Forms of Unity by office bearers, but those who refuse only have to give account to their consistory. In practice there is freedom to criticize the confessions in articles and books.

General Synod Ommen 1993 was the first synod to instruct the Deputaten Kerkelijke Eenheid (Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity or DKE) to explore if there are possibilities to make contact with the NRC. Subsequent synods in 1996 and 1999 saw the matters of doctrine and church polity mentioned above as obstacles to moving ahead towards unity talks. However, the tone of the RCN concerning the NRC changed at Synod 2002. That synod stated that discussions had led to a better mutual understanding regarding the role and the place of subscribing to the confession to prevent and refute deviations from Scripture and the Reformed doctrine. Not all questions were answered in a satisfactory manner, but synod instructed DKE to continue the discussions on those matters.

The subsequent synod in 2005 expressed appreciation for the progress made in the discussions with the NRC committee about the ecclesiastical way of dealing with deviations from the reformed confession. But that synod also expressed its disappointment with the decision of the NRC to open the offices of elder and minister for women, and called it a serious barrier for further contacts. The DKE were instructed to continue the discussion about the issue of the place and role of God's Word and the confession as basis for the church community. This discussion also had to include the decision of the NRC with regard to women in office.

The next synod, Synod Zwolle Synod 2008 decided that though discussions had been warm, an interim statement of the deputies on both

sides regarding binding to the confessions did not remove all questions concerning this matter. Synod also expressed sadness that discussions about the decision to admit women to the offices of elder and minister in the NRC had not resulted in the removal of the issues raised by Synod 2005. Synod 2008 gave the specific mandate to DKE to discuss with the NRC committee the three topics that keep coming back: (1) the differences in binding to the confession; (2) the differences in dealing with ongoing deviations from the confession; (3) the matter of women in office within the NRC.

The DKE report to Synod Harderwijk 2011 is kind of surprising and confusing. It indicates that the Deputies had discussions with the NRC committee on 3 topics: the doctrine of Baptism, the Holy Spirit and Church & Lord's Supper. They also had general discussions on the hermeneutical principles that are important when we want to apply biblical commands in our time. DKE concluded with thankfulness that on all these topics there is much harmony between the RCN and the NRC (at least between the two committees). They see this as a strong basis to continue with confidence the discussions about the confession and about women in office.

We have questions about this report and note:

- i. The discussions of the deputies focused on topics Synod Zwolle 2008 had not asked for.
- ii. The report does not speak about the issues Synod had mandated DKE to address and seek clarification about.
- iii. The conclusion that there is so much harmony in the way in which the RCN and the NRC bind to the confessions is not supported by the facts in the NRC. Office bearers who don't sign a subscription form and reject infant-baptism are accepted.
- iv. There also appears to be harmony between the committees of the RCN and the NRC when it comes to criticism of the confessions.

We note that the DKE of the RCN are evidently becoming warmer in their discussions and reports after 2002, even though the Synods of 2005 and 2008 are less excited and more reluctant than deputies to move forward in the discussions with the NRC. But the discussions do continue, and it will be quite important to see if the direction of the past years to closer contact continues. This raises the question: is the NRC changing? Or are the RCN changing?

To respond to the first question, it certainly doesn't appear that the NRC are moving at all. If there is any indication of change in the NRC, it is in a more modern, liberal direction. Evidence for this is the adoption of the report women elders and ministers which opened all offices for women in the

NRC. And it is still acceptable in the NRC that not all the office bearers sign the subscription form, and that some office bearers reject infant baptism. On paper they may regret this, but in practice the policy of doing nothing to protect the Reformed doctrine and confession is consistent and has not changed.

What about the RCN then? The fact that the RCN and the NRC are growing closer, that there is growing mutual agreement, harmony and understanding in many areas can only be because our sister churches are changing. They are moving towards the NRC because they have become more open for new hermeneutics and they have become more tolerant when it comes to doctrinal freedom. The concern is then that through these intensifying contacts the RCN will be more and more influenced by the situation and developments in the NRC. In theory it can also work the other way around, of course, but there is not much evidence that this is happening. For instance, we can expect that the ongoing discussion in the RCN about the role of women in the church will be influenced by the report and decisions in the NRC concerning women elders and ministers.

There is another aspect. A number of times the DKE mention with thankfulness in their report the growing local contacts between RCN and NRC congregations. The decisions of Synods also refer to these local developments. We have the distinct impression that the excitement about what is happening locally overrides the reluctance and caution expressed by the Synods of the RCN. There seems to be a great diversity in local ecumenical contacts which are moving forward, regardless of the hesitations on the level of the federation. For a growing number of people the questions that Synods want to see addressed are simply irrelevant today.

Confronted with the report of the DKE to Synod 2011 and with the ongoing local developments, we wonder whether Synod Harderwijk 2011 will be able to give direction to a process that seems to have taken on a life of its own. And we are left with the crucial question: how will the unity talks and the local unity developments affect the reformed and confessional identity of our sister churches?

Our concerns were expressed by Rev. deGelder and elder G. Nordeman at Synod, when fraternal delegates were given opportunity to participate in discussions and also in the official address to Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. J. deGelder
Elder G.J. Nordeman
Rev. J. Moesker
Dr. C. Van Dam

Appendix 7 – Statement of Synod Harderwijk 2011: “Appointment dr. Paas”

The appointment of dr. Paas at the Theological University Kampen

The synod has given full release to the supervisory board of the Theological University in Kampen. An explicit element thereof was the approval of dr. S. Paas' appointment by the supervisory board and the board of governance. Following the short-form press release that has been published earlier, the synod's presidium wishes to give additional explanation towards the churches and hopes to do so in the following statement.

The synode had a non-public meeting about the acting of the supervisory board with respect to the appointment of dr. Paas at the Theological University in 2008. Not because this appoint as such was put on the synod's agenda by the churches, but as a result of questions from the synod itself and as an element of giving release to the supervisory board. With a vast majority the synod took the following two decisions:

Decision 1

To accept the supervisory and management board's justification for the appointment of dr. Paas and - based thereupon - to see no impediment for giving release to the council for their supervision.

Decision 2

To request the supervisory board to pay permanent attention to communication with churches and church members about the work at the university and about resulting publications.

These decisions have been taken on the bases of a non-public justifying report by the supervisory board to the synod. The synod has judged that the board –by doing so – has accounted for dr. Paas' appointment in an adequate manner and shares the conclusions in the report.

The supervisory and the management board, as well as the board of governance, had chosen to test the received criticism on main issues and not to wait upon an eventual treatment of objections by the general synod. This could have been deducted from a press release of March 31, 2009 and from a few subsequent publications from the TU, albeit a more explicit communication probably would have been preferable.

A decisive consideration has been that the TU has an obligation to monitor that all education and research by TU staff is in conformity with the Holy Scripture and the reformed confession.

As regards the issues that raised the majority of questions, the supervisory

board has given the following explanation and arguments:

1. The dissertation of dr. Paas is a theological-historic thesis and not a pure theological argumentation. On theological-historic grounds he refutes accepted scripture-critical science about the age of biblical images of the creation. At request of the supervisory and management board the Kampen specialist in the Old Testament prof dr. G. Kwakkel has responded to questions that can be raised in respect of the issue. He concludes that dr. Paas has written his dissertation within the framework of the theological discipline of the so called religion history, without positioning himself with a religious point of view. Such positioning he has done, however, in other publications in which he clearly demonstrates that he is willing to be taught by the biblical texts themselves (cf. De Reformatie of April 4 and 11, 2009).
2. Dr. Paas has stated that he feels himself described well in the articles of prof. Kwakkel. Paas' choice for a pure religion-historic approach may well be discussed. However, given this approach and his explicit justification, the accusation that he would sympathize with scripture-critical theories makes no sense. He deserves a compliment for showing the courage to prove in a scientifically responsible manner that the belief in God as Creator is of much older date than is generally assumed in a scripture-critical climate.
3. Denial of the context in which Paas wrote his dissertation and likewise of the limitation of his research question (the prophets and not the Tora), had their effect in the objections that have been made against the historicity of the description of the exodus and the entry of Israel in the book Exodus. Based upon texts and excavations that have a wide recognition of being ancient, he concludes that the exodus is quite imaginable as a historical fact. In doing so he pleads for taking the exodus more serious than is usually the case in science. In the English version of his thesis he has expressed this more explicitly, by stating that he limits himself to archeology and what is likely on the base of that.

Dr. Paas has not historically analyzed the contents of the biblical texts regarding the exodus and hence not raised any doubt regarding them. On the contrary, his contribution was intended to advocate the historical reliability of the Old Testament. With respect to the accusation that he would doubt the historicity of the exodus, dr. Paas concludes in an internal document: "The contrary is true. My dissertation was a plea for the historical probability of the exodus, based upon relatively undisputed sources."

With respect to the speaking of God, a similar issue is going on. The hypothesis that 'Jahweh' probably is a deduction from the Canaanite king

El' was criticized to be in flagrant contradiction with what God Himself discloses in his scriptures. According to dr. Paas this hypotheses has no bearing on God, but on human believe in God. To quote from him: "the question of the source of the language and concepts with which Israel would name its God must be distinguished from the question after the truthfulness and the functioning thereof. Every nation must eventually work with the language instruments it has at its disposal and of course this instrument has its own history. We use the word God, which is deducted from the German G/Wod (Wodan) in our ancestor's language. This does not imply, however, that when we speak of God we would actually refer to Wodan. We simply use the language (that originally was a 'pagan' language') in a new context with a new meaning. We may also use a theological formula: It pleases the Lord to reveal himself in human language. What alternative would be available? Human language is always a language in use, complete with annex images and associations. In ancient Israel this was the case as well." In his dissertation dr. Paas adjusted to the scientific jargon in use with the audience he wrote for. Had he been aware that his book would be analyzed ten years later, for the purpose of an appointment at the TU, he would have chosen different wording, that would not have caused misunderstanding, dr. Paas states in his justification..

The conclusion in respect of the substantial objections is that in his theological-historical study dr. Paas has discussed and in part disputed scripture-critical theories in a manner that is acceptable for non-religious scientists. He did so within the framework of religion history without taking a religious point of view himself.

The general conclusion is: The TU has received a valuable teacher in dr. Paas, who has deep respect for the Scripture as the word of God and who acknowledges to be tied to the reformed confession. By fighting the advocates of scripture-critical theories with their own weapons he in fact supports bible-faithful science

Dr. Paas' appointment as a university teacher is rightful, also when reconsidering it. However, it would have been preferable that the risk of misunderstanding dr. Paas' dissertation by the churches had been recognized earlier and followed by timely and substantial communication by the TU.

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands restored (RCNr)

I. Mandate to deputies from Synod Legana 2009

Article 75 - Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored)

V. Final Text of the Decision

1. Not to accept the RCNr request to acknowledge them as sister churches.
2. To acknowledge the RCNr desire to remain reformed.
3. To beseech the Lord by His grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions between the RCN and RCNr.
4. To thank the deputies for their work and mandate new deputies to:
 - a. Remain informed about developments in the RCNr,
 - b. Continue contact and encourage the RCNr to discuss the issues and struggles of concern with the RCN in humility and love.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2009 has already decided to continue the FRCA's sister church relationship with the RCN.
2. Synod 2009 maintains the position of Synod 2006: "not being able to recognise them (at that time [Synod 2006 Acts 92.III.3]) as the continuing RCN means that we cannot enter sister relations with them" (Synod 2006 Acts 92.III.4).
3. Synod 2009 maintains the position of Synod 2006: "We hear in the voice of the brothers of the RCNr a strong desire to remain reformed" (Synod 2006 Acts 92.III.5.a).
4. It is a serious matter to separate and may never be 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. The encouragements to discuss the issues and struggles need to continue because it is very difficult for the FRCA to determine whether all efforts to maintain the unity have been exhausted.

II. Correspondence:

In addition to a number of emails two items of official correspondence occurred.

1. On 18 March 2010 deputies wrote to their Synod Emmen extending greetings, advising that we wish to stay informed of developments, asking to "seriously consider to yet address the GK(v)", asking for

more information as to why members are leaving the churches, and stating that we as churches pray for their churches. (Refer Appendix 1)

2. On 15 February 2011 deputies received a belated copy of Synod Emmen's response to our letter of 18 March 2010. Synod had written this letter on 29 August 2010 but it this was never sent. In this letter Synod Emmen expresses great disappointment that synod Legana continues to uphold the sister-church relationship with the RCN. They advise that this is the reason that they could do nothing more than retract (at least for the moment) their request for sister church-relations. They write that concerning contacts with the RCN, they have made several attempts via letters to several synods of the RCN calling for repentance. They thus ask what more could have been done and respond by asking us to specify with Scriptural arguments to give a judgement on the contents and profundity of their letters.

As for the reason people are leaving the RCN, this is attributed to independentism and a self-wilfulness in serving the Lord which is sin against the 2nd commandment. This was the case in Zwijndrecht and Bergentheim/Bruchterveld while the Ichtus congregation with Rev Hoogendoorn joined with them in a different bond of churches without a dialogue of listening to both sides of the arguments. (Refer Appendix 2)

3. A copy of Acts Synod Emmen 2009-2010 was received.

III. Meetings:

1. A meeting was held with synod delegates Rev de Boer, Rev Veldman and B. Veenendaal and with the deputies of the RCN; Brothers P Drijfhout and J Houweling on 24th June 2009 during Synod Legana.
2. Due to the inability to schedule a mutually convenient time no meeting was possible when deputies Veldman and Spyker visited the RCN in April 2011.
3. Deputy W. Vanderven while in Holland, met with the deputies of the RCN on May 10, 2011. A mutually agreed set of minutes is included in Appendix 3.

IV. Developments in the RCN

1. The deputies for contact with churches abroad have established an English language periodical called Reformed Continua to provide information about matters with the RCN. This is available at www.reformedcontinua.nl. What follows is a very brief overview of key articles.

- a. Vol 7 Oct 2011 – Explanation of why schisms occurred in the

church when in some local congregations several church members tried to introduce false teachings especially with regard to issues of church government. About 500 members have left leaving a membership of appr. 1100. (Minutes meeting May 10.)

- b. Vol. 6 May 2011 – A number of articles that retort some allegations of negative and distorted views of the RCN.
 - c. Vol 5 Jan 2011 – Introduction of the liberated church of Abbotsford (Canada) with whom the RCN established a sister-church relation. The article explains why they were convinced that they had to separate from the Canadian Reformed Churches. This volume also contains the English translation of the letter sent by Synod Emmen to the RCN.
 - d. Vol 4 June 2010 – A reflection on the decisions made by Synod Emmen; an article concerning the question: why do some people withdraw from our church?; A discussion on the schism in church of Zwolle; A shortened version of the Acts of Synod Zwolle 2007; an article about the calling and the act of liberation of a minister from the RCN but who did not join the RCN; and a 4th part to an overview of the objections and decisions of the Canadian Reformed Synods.
- 2. As of May 2011 there were 8 churches and 3 wards with approximately 1100 members.
 - 3. Synod Emmen met over 14 sittings from Nov 14 2009 to 16 October 2010. Its decisions with respect the FRCA are recorded in the Acts of Synod Emmen on 02/13/2010 Article 69

“Instruction of Synod to the deputies with regard to the FRCA;

- a. express toward the FRCA not only her deep disappointment at the decisions towards the RCN and RCN , but also her great concern about the serious lack of Scriptural discernment within the FRCA itself; call the FRCA to turn back from its misjudgements, to stand up for the privilege and honor of the Lord of the Church and reject anything that goes contrary to God’s Word.
- b. They will make use of an English version of the letter sent by the General Synod of Emmen to the RCN. (*This letter can be found in Reformed Continua Vol 5*)
- c. only make new attempts to eventually come to a sister relationship with the FRCA when the FRCA breaks its ties with the RCN.
- d. to monitor any potential developments in the FRCA.”

4. The report of BBK deputies to Synod Hasselt 2011 proposes to continue with the same mandate.
5. Synod Emmen's decision with respect to the Canadian Reformed Churches was similar to that made about the FRCA with the inclusion of the condition that deputies are only to try to establish a sister relationship with the CANRC when the accusation that the RCN(h) caused a schism in the church is retracted.
6. Synod Emmen on 12-06-2010 decided to enter sister church relations with respect to the Liberated Reformed Church in Abbotsford (a small group of people who separated from the Canadian Reformed Church.)

(Taken from Reformed Continua Vol 4 June 2010) "Saturday, June 12, 2010 was a historic day for our churches. In their meeting on this day the Synod dealt with a request from the Canadian Liberated Church at Abbotsford, to accept them as a sister church.

Much work had already been done prior to this day. On February 13, 2010 the Synod had also dealt with this issue. At that time the deputies had received the mandate to gain more information about this newly liberated church in Abbotsford. They also received the advice to visit them. Two deputies from the Committee for Churches Abroad visited this congregation for 12 days in April, 2010. They visited all the members of the congregation personally. This visit, all the other meetings with the consistory and the congregation, as well as the additional information gave a clear picture as to their foundation and the church life of this liberated church. Upon these grounds the deputies could present positive advice to the Synod of Emmen.

On June 12, 2010 this issue was extensively discussed at the Synod. After a thorough discussion, also concerning the legitimacy of this liberation, the Synod decided to accept the Liberated church at Abbotsford as a sister church!! The making of this decision was received with great thankfulness, and was noted as a historic moment in the work of the Lord for His holy catholic Christian Church!"

7. RCN^r began their 4th Synod on November 26 2011 in Hasselt. Reports from this synod were not available at the time of writing of this report.

Conclusion

While refraining from making a judgement concerning the manner and time in which members left the RCN to form the RCN^r; there is understanding for the reasons this happened. (Refer to Synod decisions concerning the RCN)

There are also other ministers and groups that have left the RCN but have not joined the RCNr. While it is understandable that there is confusion within the church during periods of trouble we can appreciate that time is needed to sort things out. Nevertheless, the Lord's call for churches to be united on the basis of His Word as maintained in the confessions must be honoured and sought out.

It is understandable that the RCNr has made it clear that further meaningful contact will only be possible once the FRCA break their sister church relationship with the RCN. The RCNr should also understand from its side that room and time is necessary for calling to repentance. By its decision the RCNr fails to recognise that in times of ecclesiastical turmoil not all come to the same insight at the same time.

V. Recommendations of Deputies to Synod Armadale 2012:

Decision:

1. To beseech the Lord by His grace and blessings to grant true ecclesiastical unity based on His Word and as maintained in the confessions among the various Reformed churches and groups in the Netherlands.
2. To acknowledge that the RCNr's relationship with the Liberated Church of Abbotsford may be an impediment to a future sister church relationship.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. To keep contact with the RCNr and other groups that have left or are leaving the RCN.
 - b. To work in close contact with the CanRC deputies regarding these developments.

Grounds:

1. There have been other groups, ministers and churches that have left the RCN but have not joined the RCNr.
2. The RCNr has made it clear that further meaningful contact will only be possible once the FRCA break their sister church relationship with the RCN.
3. Synod 2012 maintains the position of Synods 2006 & 2009: "We hear in the voice of the brothers of the RCNr a strong desire to remain reformed" (Synod 2006 Acts 92.III.5.a).
4. The RCNr in their evaluation of the legitimacy of the Abbotsford group's separation from the CANRC, by inference appear to have judged the Canadian Reformed Churches as no longer being true according to God's Word as maintained in the confessions.

Appendix 1 - Letter sent to RCNr 18 March 2010



Deputies of the
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Relations with Sister Churches
FRCA 2009 – 2012

Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken Herstelt of Emmen

c/o Gereformeerde Kerk te Emmen

Scriba L.G.Spoelman
't Rak 47, 7761
Emmen, the Netherlands

scriba@dgkemma.nl

18 March 2010

Esteemed Brothers:

First of all, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, we like to extend our greetings to your Synod. We pray that the Lord will bless the work you do and grant that the decisions you make are to the honour of His Name.

We trust that by now you have been informed through your deputies of our latest Synod Legana 2009 decision (Article 75 of the Acts) for us to remain informed about developments in your churches while keeping contact with you. We do so on the grounds of hearing in the voice of the brothers of the RCNr a strong desire to remain reformed. As you well know, our churches have not come to any conclusion on whether a liberation was warranted or not. However, this same Synod Legana also decided to exhort the GK(v) to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics especially in view of the teachings concerning the fourth commandment, the comments of Dr. Harinck and the administration of both sacraments for military personnel. Our deputies are mandated to speak with GK(v) deputies about further recent developments in these sister churches. Furthermore this Synod directed the Australian Churches to frequently remember the GK(v) in prayer in view of the continuing tensions that arise between them and us due to these serious matters.

It is in the context of us exhorting the GK(v) and addressing these sister Churches concerning more recent matters that our Synod decided that we as deputies are to continue contact and encourage you to discuss the issues and struggles of concern with the GK(v). We do so on the grounds that it is a serious matter to separate which may never be done hastily nor without exhausting every effort to maintain the unity of the faith. This ground does not suggest that you have failed to do so, but is meant to remind you of this Scriptural principle. We know very well how you feel that you have exhausted the appeal route to the GK(v) Synods. But, we still wonder, is there nothing more that can be done? In fact, one of our Synods decided "To beseech the Lord by His grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions between the RCN and RCNr. Please seriously consider to yet address the GK(v).

As per our Synod's decision we encourage you to speak with the GK(v) in humility and love. In humility so that neither you nor we come across as being arrogant for we know very well how we too are saved only through the blood of Christ. And in love because, like the Lord teaches in His Word, we are determined to love all our brothers and sisters...

Brothers, when speaking about the unity of faith we are also aware of how you have shown the desire to maintain and find this unity by publicly and persistently calling all those who hold to God's Word as maintained in the confessions to be joined with you. And yet, it does not seem to be happening. Instead, we also hear of some leaving you. We wonder why? It is also in this context that we, as Australian Churches, like to remain informed about what is happening among you.

Brothers, we continue to pray for you especially now in your deliberations and decisions at Synod. We continue to pray for our sister churches in the Netherlands. We pray for all the Lord's children that they may be united together in the flock of Christ.

With brotherly greetings

On behalf of deputies

W. Vanderven
PKA de Boer

Appendix 2 - Letter from BBK GS Emmen to FRCA Deputies



*Generale Synode van
De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
(Emmen 2009-2010)*

*Postadres:
Zalkerdijk 48
8042 PP Zwolle
c.baan@alumnus.utwente.nl*

To:

The Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad
of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
c/o br. W. Pleyter
W. Australia

August, 29, 2010

Dear brothers,

It is with great disappointment that we must acknowledge the fact that your synod at Legana continues to uphold the sister-church-relationship with the Reformed Churches (lib.) (=RCN) in the Netherlands and that our request for a sister-church relationship has been rejected for the second time.

Even though you clearly pronounce that you have concerns about the course the RCN are following, you hold onto your standpoint that the RCN give much evidence of faithfulness to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order. *(Though the RCN give much evidence of continued faithfulness to the Word of God, Confessions and the Church Order, there are also serious concerns, Acts Legana art. 71 XI Final text adopted Decision, grounds nr. 6).*

We wonder whether there are sufficient grounds for this proposition. In our opinion, going by the mentioned Art. 71 from the Acts Legana, it shows the opposite. In it you mention a number of cases that were part of the grounds and the motivation for the Liberation of 2003 (the Sunday, marriage and divorce, increase in the number of hymns, administration of sacraments in the military forces, the development towards ecclesiastical unity with the Netherlands Reformed Church (NGK), the use and application of the Church Order (tendencies towards independency in local churches).

This is why we could do nothing more than retract (at least for the moment) our request for sister-church-relations.

Your letter of 18th March 2010 was discussed at our synod at Emmen, on 12th June 2010.

Firstly, you mention two matters that are part of your instructions, namely:

- you wish to be kept informed about the developments in our churches, for you

have heard that we reveal a strong wish to remain reformed.

- you have the assignment to admonish the RCN to remain faithful to the Word of God.

On the grounds of these two matters, you, as deputies, have been given the task to maintain contact with us and with that, to encourage us to continue to discuss those matters, that were the cause for the Reformation in 2003, with the RCN. You state that a separation is a serious matter and that this must never be done too hastily, without doing the utmost to search for unity of the church. With this you do not want to say that we have possibly failed, but you again wish to remind us of the Scriptural principle of this. It's true, you are aware of the difficulties and struggles that our brothers and sisters have had over the past years. Yet you wonder if everything was done to preserve the unity on the grounds of the truth. Next to that, you mention the struggle and difficulties in our churches. Our call to seek and to find true unity on the grounds of God's Word seems to have a negative effect rather than a positive one: instead of growth, there is decline. You wish to receive more information about this.

In this letter we wish to go into the matters that you bring forward in your letter. In spite of our deep disappointment, we are thankful that you wish to maintain contact with us on the basis of faithfulness to God's Word. Christ calls us to seek unity with all those who wish to hold fast to the truth of God's Word. At the same time there is also the duty to separate, when one lets go of the truth of God's Word. This of course, only after following serious warnings and calls in accordance with the ecclesiastical path (Belgic Confession, art. 28 & 29). You must therefore see the Liberation of 2003 as a necessary step that was taken only after following a long road of appeals.

Concerning contacts of The Reformed Churches (restored) with the RCN (lib.)

We, as synod, would like to point out a number of matters to you.

- a. Already at our first synod (Mariënborg 2005/2006), we sent an answer (15-4-2006) to the call from the RCN to re-unite. In this response we explained that we also, in the name of God, are called to restore the brotherly unity when there is a return to God's Word. We also indicated that their call did not leave us unaffected. Unfortunately, we had to acknowledge that the inviting words from the RCN had no meaning because they did not come with any sign of repentance. We again mentioned that a dialogue to come to unity is only possible if there is a will to return from unscriptural decisions (see Acts Mariënborg 2005/2006 supplement E, translation in *Do not take words away from this book of prophecy*, Sept. 2006).
- b. The RCN-synod of Zwolle-Zuid (2008) responded to this (Supplement 1). This was a disappointing answer in which there was

no sign of substantive approachment.

- c. On 12th June 2010 our synod at Emmen sent a detailed letter to the RCN (see supplement 2).

Can you give us any indication that we could have done more? We would appreciate it if, after reading the mentioned correspondence, you specify this with Scriptural arguments and we also ask you to give a motivated judgment on the contents and profundity of our letters and the answers from the RCN.

People leaving The Reformed Churches (restored)

The reason for people leaving The Reformed Churches is independentism. It is a self-wilfulness in serving the Lord. This is a sin against the 2nd Commandment.

We wish to draw your attention to various synod decisions (Supplement 3, Art. 40-44 Acts GS Mariëberg; Supplement 4, Art. 82-94 Acts GS Zwolle).

Concerning the question of Zwijndrecht we would like to point out the following:

1. There was discord in the congregation of Zwijndrecht even before a consistory could be constituted. However, the congregation of Zwijndrecht would not accept that the classis wanted to deal with this in accordance with Art. 40 of the Church Order (Art. 38 in the Dutch Church Order). An appeal by Zwijndrecht against the classis was rejected by Synod Mariëberg 2005. Zwijndrecht would not accept this and it led to the independent continuation of this congregation.
2. A number of appeals from the consistory at that time of Bergentheim/ Bruchterveld and environs, concerning the question Zwijndrecht, was dealt with at Synod Zwolle 2007. These were discussed with utmost care to avoid any partiality. Yet the synod had to reject these appeals. This consistory did not accept this either, and that led to a schism in the congregation of Bergentheim.

An appeal from Synod Zwolle 2007 to the congregation of Zwijndrecht was left unanswered.

Therefore Synod Emmen 2009 again sent an urgent call to this congregation to accept the classis decisions in question and to return from their erroneous way:

“We look forward to it that you, for the sake of Christ, will re-unite with us on the one and true foundation: the Word of God, such as we confess in the Three Forms of Unity” (Supplement 5).

In supplement 6 you will find Zwijndrecht's answer to this. GS Emmen responded with a letter dated 23rd June 2010 (Supplement 7):

“It is with disappointment and sadness that we had to conclude that

you do not take any notice of the call in our letter of 9th April to as yet accept the classis decision by way of the appeal by GS Zwolle. By your attitude in this, we have come to the conclusion that we do not stand on the same foundation.”

Meanwhile both the congregation of Zwijndrecht and the church of Bergentheim/Hardenberg have joined together in a different bond of churches

The Ichtus congregation and Rev. Hoogendoorn

The deputies ACOBB (deputaten Adresvoering/Contacten Overheid/Binnenlandse Betrekkingen (Deputies Contact Government/National Relations)) have been in dialogue with Rev. Hoogendoorn. After that our Synod Emmen made an attempt to come into contact with the Ichtus congregation. The correspondence concerned has been added for your information. (Supplement 8-12). Our rapprochements appeared fruitless. They had already chosen for a church relationship with Zwijndrecht and Hardenberg, without a dialogue of listening to both sides of the arguments.

Finally

Brothers, The Reformed Church (restored) have felt that they have dealt in faithfulness to Christ, the Head of the Church, where it sought others. We did not want to seek our own honour, but to continually be obedient to Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity and the recognized Church Order.

Brothers, we hope you will study this letter with its Supplements on its contents and we await your response.

On behalf of the GS Emmen

Admiraal, preses

C. Baan, 2^e scriba

12 Supplements

1. Answer RCN-synod Zwolle-Zuid (2008).
2. Answer GS Emmen (2009) 12th June 2010 to letter GS Zwolle-Zuid (RCN).
3. Art. 40-44 Acts GS Mariënborg.
4. Art. 82-94 Acts GS Zwolle.
5. Letter GS Emmen 2009 to Zwijndrecht.
6. Answer to this from the congregation of Zwijndrecht.
7. Response GS Emmen dated 23rd June 2010

Contact Deputies ACOBB with Rev. E. Hoogendoorn and the Ichtus congregation. (Supplements 8 – 12).

8. 09-01-2010 – letter deputies ACOBB to Rev. Hoogendoorn.
9. 09-01-2010 – letter deputies ACOBB to the Ichtus congregation
10. 01-04-2010 – letter Committee for Church Unity to the Ichtus congregation.
11. Answer from Ichtus congregation at Kampen.
12. Letter GS Emmen to the Ichtus congregation at Kampen.

Appendix 3 - Minutes of Meeting of Deputies RCN and br Vanderven Deputy FRCA.

Held at the Cultural Centre "The Land Teeuw" in Hasselt on May 20th, 2011 at 13:30 – 15:30.

Opening by the Chairman

Reading: Romans 8:1-17, Singing: Psalm 25:1, Prayer by the Chairman

Welcome: A warm welcome to br. Vanderven. Since it was not possible a few months ago, to have a meeting with Rev. A. Veldman and br. WG Spyker, it is wonderful that br. Vanderven during a business trip has an opportunity to talk together about the churches in the Netherlands (DGK) and Australia (FRCA). BBK-all deputies are present: ie the brs. Houweling, van der Net, Drijfhout, and Dr. Van Gorp.

The Chairman br. Houweling, briefly explains why a meeting with deputies is now possible, but it was not possible when Rev. Veldman and br. Spyker were in the Netherlands. Under normal circumstances, the deputies BBK would meet with two deputies from a foreign church. The deputies regret that it was not possible at the time to speak to both deputies.

Now that the deputies will speak with one FRCA delegate, the Chairman suggests to proceed in the same way as was done with Mr. Boon of the VGKSA. Br. Drijfhout will take minutes that will be sent to all deputies for comment, so that all agree with the final report.

Agenda established.

Suggested questions to the BBK and questions from the BBK to br. Vanderven.

1. General impression DGK in 2010 (br.Drijfhout):

Foreign Churches:

Canada: Except for sending the Acts (Smithers 2007) to the DGK, there has been no communication in recent years. This situation has changed since September 2010. The new deputies appointed by the Synod of Burlington have made contact.

Earlier this year the DGK began a sister relationship with the Church of Abbotsford in Canada.

Australia: Two synods (West Kelmscott and Legana) have examined the request for a sister relationship with the DGK. This was rejected both times. GS 2010, Emmen, therefore retracted the request for a sister relationship for the time being. If the FRCA breaks their relationship with the GKv then a new request will be considered.

S. Africa: For years there have been attempts to make contact with the deputies, but there was no response from the VGK until deputy Br Boon

made contact this year. However, the acts of the synod (2004) were received when our first request for a sister relationship was rejected.

Indonesia: Two deputies from Churches on Sumba who were visiting the GKv were also instructed to contact the deputies of DGK to discuss matters. That happened last year.

The Presbyterian church has been contacted, but nothing materialised. Furthermore, no church responded to our request for contact. Where there has been contact with the churches (early or late) they all were very concerned about the direction of the GKv.

Domestic:

There are several groups of concerned in the GKv. Some discuss concerns on websites (example: EEN IN WAARHEID, which people are not members of our church). There are also several groups that have left the GKv.

Internally, within the DGK sad things have happened. After the Municipality of Zwijndrecht did not conform to the decisions of Synod Mariënberg several discontented groups broke away from the DGK. Also the congregation of the Rev. Hoogendoorn has not (yet) joined the DGK. Urgent discussions are being held with the minister and his congregation. As for the 'dolerende' church at Dalfsen it is gratifying to report that we have come closer together.

It is encouraging that the churches of the DGK could come together again in a synod (Emmen 2010) in which many things could be handled in harmony. Also a 'church day' could be held where many brothers and sisters could come together to praise the Lord and listen to presentations. There is good progress in preaching. Although many sermons are read from earlier years it is gratifying that the word of the Lord is still powerfully proclaimed. The two ministers, Rev. Dr. Van Gorp and Rev. S. De Marie minister the Word and the sacraments in all churches.

There are three theological students, of whom one is nearly finished.

2. General impression FRCA in 2010 (Br. Vanderven)

The last synod was held in Legana (Tasmania) in 2009. The next synod that the FRCA deputies are to report to will be held in 2012 DV. The Australian churches are working with the Canadian Churches (CANRC) and the churches in South Africa (VGKSA) with regard to the situation in the Netherlands. There is a new church instituted in Busselton as well as a recent house congregation in Cairns, about 5000 km from Perth. It was decided to expand the number of classes to three. At present there is a shortage of pastors. There are 5 vacant churches. There are better contacts with the Canadian churches than with the churches in the Netherlands (GKv). This is due to the use of English in Australia and

Canada and due to increasing family ties.

The churches grow primarily through the internal growth of children. God does provide His care and protection over the churches and for that we are grateful. We live in Australia in a secular country. Mission work occurs in the nearby country of Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea but also locally. Many people in Australia do not know God.

3. What is the purpose of the discussion today with you as deputies FRCA, while the synod of Legana sister decided not to enter into relationship with us. (Br.Vandervan).

The mandate of the deputies is to remain in touch with the DGK and other groups that want to remain reformed. The deputies also have the task to bring unity between DGK and GKv.

4. What are the main developments in the DGK since Synod Legana June 2009. (Br.vd Net).

The deviation is increasingly visible. At TU in Kampen and the TU Apeldoorn, Barth is more and more accepted. Inside the church pluralism is increasingly apparent. The compromises made to keep the churches and church members together means that more decisions are unclear or even that no decisions are made by several meetings. More and more things are left to the local churches.

Regarding the training of its students (3) the last Synod decided to take over the Masters degree themselves.. Also at the TU in Apeldoorn, there is a noticeable influence of Barth (see article in ND by Prof. Den Hartog). These students follow or followed the Bachelor degree at the Theological University in Apeldoorn. A student starts in autumn with an internship (part of the Master degree) that consists of giving catechism and 'preaching' in the church. The guidance is aimed at the formation of a Reformed grounding for the students. This guidance occurs with the oldest student once a week and the other two students once a month. Ds. De Marie has developed a training plan for the entire study (Master's degree).

5. What is the approximate size of the DGK (churches, pastors, members) (br.Houweling).

There are eight churches and three wards (wijkgemeenten).

Two ministers (the Rev. De Marie and Dr. Van Gorp (emeritus)) minister the Word and the sacraments. There are also many elders and church members who read sermons. There are currently three students who are training for the ministry. The number of church members is about 1100.

6. The letters to the deputies GKv that you have sent as deputies show

a completely different tone than before. Have your objections become more intense and do you expect a break with the GKv? (Br.Vandervén)

The tone is perhaps sharper in our letters to the GKv. Whether this will lead to a break is hard for me to answer. The younger generation knows little about the situation in the Netherlands. Their contacts with the Netherlands are minimal. There is more contact with the Canadian and South African churches. Most younger people do not read and speak Dutch, and thus are also not aware of the situation in the Netherlands. Thus the situation in the GKv is not an urgent issue for many church members.

7. One aspect of Australia's mandate is to encourage the DGK to discuss the differences and problems with the GKv in humility and love. Have there been talks and what is the outcome? (Ds.van Gurp).

There have been no discussions with the GKv. The correspondence clearly shows that the GKv do not want to deal with the content of our questions (see correspondence that was sent to you.) It is clear that the course of the GKv should lead to the conclusion that the GKv can not be seen as Churches of Christ. Art. 29 of the BC indicates that a true church rejects everything that is contrary to the pure Word.

The tolerance of errors is increased over the years. Truth and lies both have a legitimate place in the GKv.

When you talk about "in humility and love, does this mean that the DGK is not humble and loving? Sticking to the truth is seen as arrogant and without love. But in the letters of the apostle John, love is qualified as keeping and knowing God's commandments. Your use of the terms, humility and love shows that you do not see the differences between the GKv and DGK as applying to the truth as the Scripture speaks of it.

8. Does the FRCA expect, given your concerns have increased significantly, a return of GKv to the pure Word of God so we can be with them again? (See our letter to the GKv, which you have received a copy) (Vandervén).

Br. Vandervén does not want to speculate about this. There is currently a sister relationship with GKv.

9. The DGK Synod of Emmen decided to delay the question of a sister relationship with the FRCA. What impact will this have on our relationship? (Ds.van Gurp).

As there is no sister relationship, there is no bond. Because of the decision of the FRCA to refuse to accept us as sister churches, there is no sister relationship anymore. Also, the possibility of a joint celebration of Holy Supper is not possible. These are very large and sad consequences. Let us pray to the Lord for an outcome so that a bond

can be formed.

10. Is the influence of the GKv noticeable in your federation? (Vanderven)

Whether the influence of the GKv noticeable is an open ended question because influences from the secular culture in Australia impact our churches as it does in Holland. These are not caused by problems in the GKv per se. There are worldly influences which FRCA also has to deal with. With globalization, the secularization increases. And that has more of an influence than the GKv. The reference to 1967 and independentism do not really apply for Australia and Canada since the schism in 1967 did not occur in either of the countries or churches. With regard to ministers there is more contact with the CANRC than the GKv.

11. Your Synod Emmen 2010 established a sister relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford. What are the consequences for your relationship with the CANRC? Do you consider them now as a false church? (Br.Drijfhout)

The CANRC church has called us schismatic. For that reason there is no sister relationship to CANRC. Given the development in the CANRC and the origin of the Liberated Church in Abbotsford and its recognition by DGK, there is the question whether a relationship is possible between the DGK and the CANRC. This depends on the relations with the OPC (open Lord Supper table) and URC (covenant consideration) are important. Br. Vanderven notes that their sister relationship with Abbotsford causes difficulty for the Australian churches.

12. How do you assess the relations of the many sister CANRC with the associated partnerships (Vanderven).

As with the GKv, our churches do not assess in depth the relationships that these sister churches have with other churches. Our relationship is with the GKv and the CANRC.

13. Was your research by the deputies about the Liberated Church of Abbotsford made during the synod? And was this report sent to your churches for comment? (Br.vd Net)

After our first report on the Church of Abbotsford, the synod decided that the deputies establish a list of questions with which the observations of the Synod were reflected, and to send this to the church in Abbotsford. The deputies also were commissioned to travel to Abbotsford to obtain oral responses to these questions and to see and experience the church life.

14. Are there any churches in the FRCA who refuse GKv preachers? (Vanderven). This question raised in response to the comment by the chairman of the synod at Legana, that his consistory would not allow all

GKv church pastors in their pulpit GKv.

No synodical decisions made with respect to this. It is left for the individual consistories to judge.

15. Is there any movement since June 2009 of members leaving the GKv and the DGK? (Br.Drijfhout).

No. The negative press makes people cautious. The question is whether many troubled church members are happy with the negative press, because they see this then as a reason not to leave. Many concerned older people remain in the GKv for the sake of their children or parents.

16. What is the current situation regarding the contacts with the provisional denomination? (Ds v. Gurp)

The provisional federation consists of groups who have unlawfully separated from the DGK. They have not followed the ecclesiastical way. We call these groups to repent and to follow the church orderly path to raise their objections. There was contact with the church of Kampen (Rev. Hoogendoorn) but that is with the formation of the provisional federation come to nothing (you received the letters on this subject. See also the articles about it in De Bazuin). The provisional federation sees the Church order as rules and accuses DGK that not the Word but the Church Order decides. Also, the provisional federation has till now not sought out contact with the DGK. They accuse (that the DGK is radical and has a limited view of the church) without substantiating their grounds.

17. What is the DGK currently doing to promote the unity of those who have left the GKv? (vd Net)

At national level, the Synod has appointed a Commission for domestic churches, who is to hold meetings with eg Dalfsen and seek contacts with others like Kampen Ichtus etc. Also at a church level there are contacts or have been contacts. Assen and Emmen eg

18. Does the DGK require that members who join must state that the liberation of 2003 was the work of the Lord? (Ds.v.Gurp)

This assertion is not correct although it is possible that church members have claimed this. This too is written in our letters and mentioned during the discussions with the liberating Reformed Church in Dalfsen.

19. Does the DGK declare that the Lord can work liberation a. at different times b. in different ways c. for various reasons (br.Houweling)

This has been discussed extensively in our correspondence with the church van Dalfsen (dolerend) extensively discussed. We agree with this.

20. Is there anything we can do as FRCA to encourage people in the Netherlands in the unity of God's church? (Br.Drijfhout)

Yes, 1. Stay up to date with developments in the GKv. 2. Pray that the Lord will preserve his church in the Netherlands and will give unity among those who want to stick to the Scriptures, the three forms of Unity and the Church Order and 3. That the FRCA continues to witness from Scripture what God's will is and where he gathers his church in truth.

Conclusion

Because of the time, the chairman leaves the remaining questions.

It was decided that Br. Drijfhout will compile the minutes and send it to br. Vanderven.

The Chairman thanked br. Vanderven for his visit and the possibility of this meeting. Clearly, he indicated that the churches need each other. And he hopes that in the future this may indeed be possible. He also wishes br. Vanderven a safe journey to Australia.

Dr. Van Gurp ends with thanksgiving, after which the Chairman closes the meeting.

Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

DECISION AND MANDATE

Synod Legana 2009 (Art. 40) decided the following with respect to the CanRC:

Decision:

1. Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. Mandate Deputies to:
 - a. Monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
 - b. Stay informed on developments concerning the pending merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including the proposed revisions to the Church Order;
 - c. Seek clarification about and discuss the changing manner in which they deal with significant differences with other church federations in their unity discussions;
 - d. In the unity discussion between the CanRC and the URCNA, encourage the CanRC to maintain the principle that the churches maintain a theological college on the basis that we use their college for our Australian churches
 - e. Encourage the CanRC to continue supporting the FRCA as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ
 - f. Invite the CanRC to combine a visit to Australia with their planned visit to New Zealand in September
 - g. Send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod 2010 pending finances.

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.

- d. Rules for sister relations state that “in cases of substantial changes or additions to the confessions, Church Order, or liturgical forms” our preference is that “as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.”
- e. The changing manner in dealing with significant differences in inter-church relations is substantial and worthy of discussion (e.g. Confessional Membership, Fencing of the Lords Supper etc.)
- f. Our churches maintain the principle that a church federation ought to take responsibility for maintaining a theological college (Article 17 Church Order). 51
- g. The CanRC have had experience with a situation where a third party relationship with the Christian Reformed Church was an impediment (c.f. Acts CanRC Synod Lincoln 1992, Art. 72, Rec.C.5c, page 55, and Acts CanRC Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art. 106, Rec. D. 2., page 75).
- h. The CanRC deputies have requested a meeting with our deputies to discuss matters of common interest including third party relationships with GGRC/GGRI.

DEPUTIES' REPORT

Introduction

The primary work of the Deputies was completed during the presence of our deputies at Synod Burlington 2010. Being in attendance for over a week of Synod's duration, allowed for extensive interaction and discussion with the delegates to Synod Burlington 2010. During this time our deputies were given the opportunity to participate during the plenary sessions as well as among the various Synod committees. The matters of interest and concern of Synod Legana were clearly addressed during the FRCA's address to Synod Burlington and could be elaborated upon during formal and informal discussions with the delegates.

The benefit of being personally present at the CanRC General Synod was clearly demonstrable not only in terms of mutual fellowship, but also in our direct input in the considerations and decision-making of Synod Burlington. This can be seen in the decision regarding the FRCA:

“That Synod [Burlington 2010] decide:

- 4.1 To maintain the existing relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the FRCA under the adopted rules.

4.2 To thank the FRCA for its continued and increased support for the Theological College in Hamilton.

4.3 To mandate the CRCA as follows:

4.3.1 To maintain close contact with the various deputyships of the FRCA to discuss matters of mutual interest, e.g. mission work in Indonesia, *Book of Praise*, third-party relationships, issues of common interest with regard to sister churches, etc.

4.3.2 To keep the FRCA informed on developments regarding our relationship with the URCNA and in particular developments regarding theological education.

4.3.3 To continue supporting the FRCA as much as possible in its discussions with the RCNZ.

4.3.4 To send a delegate to the next synod of the FRCA in 2012.”⁴

During our time at Synod Burlington deputies had the opportunity to meet and discuss with sister-churches we have in common with the CanRC (i.e. RCN, PCK, FRCSA) that provided valuable insight into various matters. Deputies could address our relationship with the brothers of the RCN, receive insights from the PCK regarding the IRK, and receive updates regarding mission developments in South Africa.

Deputies could also become acquainted and informally introduced to the sister-churches of the CanRC with whom we have no formal relations (i.e. URCNA, OPC, RCUS and IRK). Learning about these various federations provided insight into the sister-churches that the CanRC is involved with, and the manner in which they function. It was clear from our discussions that these sister-church relationships in North America are alive and well, as demonstrated in local church activities, work done in joint committees as well as in the active involvement in each others ecclesiastical meetings and assemblies.

Specific Mandate

As it relates to the specific mandate of the deputies, the deputies can report on the following:

1. URCNA Potential Merger

b) Stay informed on developments concerning the pending merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including the proposed revisions to the Church Order;

Synod Legana, responding to the churches, mandated the deputies to stay informed of the potential merger of the URCNA. Through the discussions of our deputies with the delegates and by means of our address, Synod

Burlington could responded to our desire to be more informed of these developments by mandating their deputies “to be more diligent in maintaining Rule 3 of EF dealing with relations with third parties”⁵

Synod Burlington also decided to continue its sister-church relationship with the URCNA, and declared that the CanRC are still committed to the goal of federative unity with the URCNA. Synod Burlington drafted a letter to declare its continued interest in the merger and questioned the URCNA to see if this was still their intent.⁶ Opportunity was also provided to delegates of the URCNA to be present at Synod Burlington to participate in a question and answer period in order to clarify matters surrounding the potential federative merger.⁷

Several weeks after the Synod Burlington, the URCNA held their Synod in London, Ontario, in which the federative merger was addressed. Essentially the joint committees were mandated to continue working with the CanRC committee counterparts, however the merger itself has not progressed further.⁸ More information can be found on the URCNA website www.urnca.org

As to the status of proposed new Church Order, Synod Burlington decided to provisionally adopt the PJCO (Proposed Joint church Order) and to mandate the committee to finalise the items that were yet unfinished. The final edition of the PJCO was to be prepared for Synod 2013 and sent to all the churches.⁹ From the URCNA perspective, their Synod London 2010 essentially agreed to this same position with regards to the PJCO.¹⁰

The Church Order Sub Committee recently published their report to Synod Carman 2013 on the CanRC website.¹¹ This website also provides the ability to download the final edition of the PJCO. The reason for the early publication of the Committee’s Report and Final PJCO is because the URNCA is scheduled to have their next General Synod earlier in 2012 instead of 2013 and the main report will serve both federations.¹²

The mandate from Synod Legana was for the deputies to stay informed of the developments regarding the pending merger of the CanRC and the URCNA. This merger has not occurred and appears to be less likely,

5 Acts of Synod Burlington 2010, Article 63 Rec 4.5

6 Article 63 Rec 4.3

7 Article 66

8 URCNA Acts of Synod London 2010, Article 47, Rec 4 & 5

9 Acts of Synod Burlington 2010 Article 151 Rec 4.4

10 URCNA Acts of Synod London 2012, Article 41 Rec 3.

11 <http://canrc.org/?committee=9>

12 Report of the Church Order Sub Committee to Synod Carman 2013, Page 5,

however, the work in their joint committees continues.

Deputies consider that it is also important that the FRCA remain informed on other developments in regards to the CanRC Creeds, Confessions and Forms. Synod Burlington also provided a mandate for a complete review and comparison of the Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers of the CanRC and the URCNA with a view to a unified text for the future united federation.¹³

2. Unity Discussions

- c) Seek clarification about and discuss the changing manner in which they deal with significant differences with other church federations in their unity discussions;

Deputies were given opportunity to discuss this matter with the Officers of Synod Burlington 2010 regarding the manner in which differences are dealt with during unity discussions with other church federations. Obviously delegates cannot speak on behalf of past Synods, however they provided a brief background to the situation, particularly as it related to their relationship with the OPC. Essentially the question was; can you recognise a church federation as true and faithful and continue to be 'apart' while discussing significant differences (in fencing of the Lord Supper and 'Confessional' membership). With the OPC this had be the case since 1977, however Synod Neerlandia 2001 made a significant shift in the approach by becoming a sister church with the OPC and stated that these differences can be discussed in the context of Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) under Rule 1. Synod Neerlandia 2001 accepted the (joint) committees principle agreement of the Lord's Supper and Confessional membership and stated that all further discussions could continue within the sister church relationship.

A similar approach was taken when entering a sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches of Quebec (ERQ). However Synod Burlington emphasised that 'the differences should not be simply forgotten. Working toward a more unified position on matters of mutual concern remains one of the goals of EF.' Synod Burlington also noted that 'although the practices in the ERQ and the CanRC are not identical, the position mirrors what the CanRC have agreed to in discussions with the OPC, and that in this respect there is an agreement on the same principles.' Further, Synod Neerlandia also noted that the 'relationship of EF is working well and is bearing positive results. There has been a good exchange of views and a willingness to hear each other.'¹⁴

13 Article 88, Rec 4.1 and 4.3.1.

14 Article 74, Con. 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

While not judging this approach, deputies are of the opinion that the above provides sufficient explanation of Synod's mandate in this matter. Deputies note that Synod Burlington emphasised that these differences should not be forgotten and thus we should monitor the outcome of this changed approach.

3. Theological Seminary

d) In the unity discussion between the CanRC and the URCNA, encourage the CanRC to maintain the principle that the churches maintain a theological college on the basis that we use their college for our Australian churches

In regards to the Theological Seminary, the deputies could address this mandate at Synod Burlington, both at the committee level and in our address to Synod. Appreciation was expressed by the delegates, but also by the Principal of the Theological Seminary, when the following words were spoken;

"There is another important principle as it relates to the College that we wish to give you encouragement and support. "Our churches maintain the principle that a church federation ought to take responsibility for maintaining a theological college (Article 17 Church Order)." (Art 40. IV. Grounds f). In your unity discussions with the URCNA we would urge you to hold fast this principle – it is not only a principle that is valued in your federation, but one we hold dear. (c.f. Art 40. IV. 2.d)"¹⁵

The concern of Synod Legana did not go unnoticed in the Canadian Reformed Churches with at least two churches noting the FRCA concerns and calling of Synod Burlington to ensure that the 'proposed model would not negatively influence '[the CanRC's] current relationship with the Australian Free Reformed Churches."¹⁶ In the end, the proposed model was not accepted by Synod Burlington, and the deputies were mandated the following:

"To reappoint a theological education committee to reexamine and discuss with our brothers in the URCNA the possibilities of operating at least one theological seminary by and for the churches, to ensure that such a seminary is accountable to and properly governed by the churches."¹⁷

It is clear to the deputies that the CanRC greatly value the Theological Seminary and are committed to holding onto the 'biblical, historical and

15 Full text found in Appendix 1

16 Article 71, Obs. 2.8.1 and 2.8.2

17 Article 71, Rec. 4.3.

practical reasons for operating one institution for the training for the ministry' and as a result, are willing to promote this 'model' theological training to the URCNA.¹⁸

4. RCNZ

e) Encourage the CanRC to continue supporting the FRCA as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ

In our speech to Synod Burlington and in our discussions with the delegates this aspect of the mandate could be adequately addressed. The CanRC recognised the need of the FRCA to receive encouragement and support in our discussions with the RCNZ and this was reflected in their decisions regarding the RCNZ:

"It is true that the relation between the RCNZ and the CRCAustralia remains a matter of concern as long as the latter churches maintain the practice of ordaining women as deacons. Even though the CRCAustralia does not consider deacons to be part of the session, the Bible does speak of deacons as men in passages such as 1 Tim.3:8-12. For these reasons, it is important that the CRCA would continue to encourage the RCNZ to break off relations with the CRCAustralia if that federation is unwilling to end the practice of ordaining women as deacons."

"To continue to monitor the relation between the RCNZ and the CRCAustralia and encourage the RCNZ to seriously reevaluate its relationship with the CRCAustralia in light of its continuing practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon."

"To encourage the RCNZ to keep seeking ways to grow closer towards the FRCA."¹⁹

While it is clear from the above, that the CanRC are willing to be of support to the FRCA, however more information should be provided to them as to why the FRCA see the CRCAustralia has such an impediment to our relationship with the RCNZ.

Conclusion:

We continue to enjoy a close relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Aside from the rich Reformed heritage, we both share much in common; a common language, Book of Praise, Church Order and Theological Seminary. In many ways it is critical that we continue to foster a strong relationship with the CanRC and keep in touch with the potential

18 Article 71 Rec 4.4

19 Article 154 Considerations 3.2 and Recommendation 4.2 and 4.3. Also see Con.

changes that are occurring as a result of their church relationships. Not only can we keep each-other accountable in that process, we may also learn from their church unity experiences – and support each other as we address matters of mutual concern.

Deputies recommend the following to Synod Armadale 2012:

Recommendation:

1. To continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed.
 - b. Stay informed on the developments concerning the potential merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including changes to the Church Order, Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers Forms.
 - c. Encourage the CanRC to support the FRCA as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ.
 - d. Stay informed of the sister-church developments in North America (URCNA, OPC, RCUS and ERQ) and
 - e. Send two (2) delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled in Carman West during 2013, pending finances.

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, including their sister church relations in North America.
- c. Rules for sister relations state that “in cases of substantial changes or additions to the confessions, Church Order, or liturgical forms” our preference is that “as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.”
- d. We value the continuing support of the CanRC in regards to our discussions with the RCNZ.
- e. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and personal contact at the synodical level reinforces our contact with them.

Appendix 1: Address to Synod Burlington 2010

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ; on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, we express our heartfelt greetings. Indeed what a privilege it is to be in your midst, to spend quality time amongst the brotherhood, and now to personally convey to you the warm and sincere wishes of your brothers and sisters down under.

Brothers, we sincerely thank you for the invitation to attend this, the broadest assembly of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. All over the globe, Canadians are well known for generously opening their arms, their homes and their hearts to visitors from abroad. And from our experience thus far, we too, can confirm that we are enjoying your warm hospitality and fellowship.

It is precisely this fellowship – this unity that we share and express as Reformed churches, who openly and boldly profess the riches of the gospel – it is this fellowship that we wish to emphasize in our attendance here at Synod Burlington. Unfortunately we were not at Synod Smithers, however this time we have come with the two of us. Our last Synod Legana recognised the importance of being present at this Synod, when it aptly stated: “[that] we value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and personal contact at the synodical level reinforces our contact with them.” (Art.40 ground 2a.) Brothers, we do not wish to take our sister church relationship with you for granted. As our only English-speaking sister-church we need to spend time together – first to ensure that nothing is lost in translation, and secondly to ensure that we continue to build the bond that unites us.

Indeed we have great ties and bonds to the brotherhood in Canada;

- At our last Synod in Legana, six of the eight ministers graduated from the Hamilton Theological College and ministered in Canadian churches, and 6 of the eight elders had direct Canadian ties!
- Only 11 of the 15 ministers in our federation were students of the Theological School in Hamilton.
- Collectively as delegates we have spent 27 years in Canada. (Br. Vanderven spent 15 years in Ontario while br. Pleiter was in BC for 12 years) And we’re talkin’ a couple of young blokes here!
- Personally for my fellow delegate, br Vanderven, in his home congregation of Baldvis, more than 30% of the families in that congregation come from Canada!
- Personally, it is nice to rekindle the fond memories of working with many of you brothers during the years we spent in Canada – and now I may address you, from the other side of the pond.

Over the years, we have benefited from teachers who were trained at the Covenant Teachers College, (thank-you br. Horsman) and of course, there has been a deluge of 'international marriages' between the Canadians and Australians over the years – and not that we are complaining... as we both have a Canadian wife. Yes, it has mostly been a good thing, except of course all the arguments about pronunciation (of course having Canadian teachers hasn't helped, as they were teaching our children the Canadian accent). Is it wrath or wroth, I-say-ah or I-sigh-arh, To-may-toe or Tom-mar-taa and the list goes on.

Perhaps it is safer to move away from these language differences and give you an update of what is going on in the Free Reformed Churches in Australia from a statistical perspective. Since our last visit to Synod Chatham 2004, the Lord has blessed our bond of churches with a growth in membership of over 13% (which is double your growth) for a total of 4131 members (which is a quarter of your size). Much of this is due to ongoing immigration from Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. With an increase in membership comes the increase in the number of congregations. We have 14 congregations of which two have been recently instituted (being Baldivis and Mundijong in the metro region) with a third expected in the near future in Busselton, some two hours south of Perth. A recent development is a home congregation in the north east of Australia situated in Cairns, Queensland (under the care of the FRC at Armadale). All the churches support mission work, be it in Port Moresby, Sumba or China. Even in this work, good co-operation between our churches continues under the blessing of the Lord.

Last year our churches held its General Synod in Legana Tasmania. As deputies, we have received an expanded mandate as it relates to Canada, as well as provided an expanded presence here, with two delegates. This Synod felt the need to re-focus our attention on the strong ties we have with the brotherhood in Canada. Brothers, in the brief time we have spent here, we can appreciate the immense value of personal contact with you.

To share strong personal bonds, is one thing – a beautiful thing, yet our bond finds its depth and meaning in our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers, we are united and bonded together in that rich faith, that is so wonderfully proclaimed in God's Word and expressed in the Reformed confessions. Our bonds are more than 'skin-deep', so to say, they go to the depths of our souls.

Brothers, when we think of the heart and soul of faithful ministry, our thoughts are directed to the need for faithful instruction and pastoral training – a need that is fulfilled at the Theological College in Hamilton.

And tonight, our thoughts are filled with great thankfulness as we celebrate God's continued provision for the college – with the appointment of two new professors – indeed a historical time!

We rejoice with you with the appointment of Dr. Jason Van Vliet and Dr. John Smith. While Dr Van Vliet is not, as yet, well known amongst our churches, we are not surprised at his appointment as he has already been able to serve the College over the past year or so. Likewise we are not surprised that your Search Committee stumbled upon Dr. Smith despite the fact we hid him in the most southern part of Western Australia (just a little north of Antarctica). Brothers, we are not disappointed at the appointment of Dr Smith to the Theological College in Hamilton. Should he accept the appointment, we can assure you that we will miss him, along with the congregation in Albany, and yes we will miss his valued contributions in our bond of churches. However, the FRCA recognises that his appointment to the College will be of great benefit to the churches, in Canada, but also in Australia – so then it is our prayer, that Dr. Smith may see his way to accept this appointment.

Theological College

Indeed the churches in Australia are thankful to God for the gift of the College and it is indeed a privilege that we are able to support this work. The importance and centrality of the Theological College in Hamilton (or should we say; Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary) to the Free Reformed Churches in Australia is demonstrated in sending our students to Hamilton, our financial support to the College and indeed our prayerful support of the work done within the college. It would be fair to say, that Synod Legana made bold decisions to increase our financial support of Hamilton. With gratitude the FRCA could increase its support to bring the FRCA closer to parity with your levels of support to the college so that this important work may continue for the benefit of all our churches. Not only do we send our students to you, we also benefit from visits from your Professors; next month we have the privilege to have in our midst Professor Van Dam who will speak on '*Elders and Church Discipline*'.

Synod Legana accepted the fact that we 'do not presently have any immediate plans to develop [our] own institution for theological training.' (Art 17 XII. Ground. 6). While the idea of an Australian Theological College remains desirable for some within our churches, Synod Legana made acknowledgement that it will not be happening in the immediate future. This dose of realism is partly due to the fact that our churches continue to benefit from God's work at the College. We do so, also in the hope that perhaps the basic year of the program can be done in Australia or that

some of the training can be done by distance learning.

Brothers our support is a heartfelt commitment to the high Reformed standards you maintain and espouse, and great appreciation for calibre of ministers it continues to produce. We would urge you to continue to be committed to these high standards, to maintain and uphold your constitution, and to consistently govern the college accordingly. Please brothers, do not let pragmatic solutions to fulfilling temporary positions undermine these standards. Synod Legana stated that 'our support of the college is based on the fact that we agree with the [College's] foundation and by-laws so that their maintenance remains highly important to us.' (Art 17. XI. Rec 1.)

There is another important principle as it relates to the College that we wish to give you encouragement and support. "Our churches maintain the principle that a church federation ought to take responsibility for maintaining a theological college (Article 17 Church Order)." (Art 40. IV. Grounds f). In your unity discussions with the URCNA we would urge you to hold fast this principle – it is not only a principle that is valued in your federation, but one we hold dear. (c.f. Art 40. IV. 2.d)

Book of Praise

Brothers it is clear that the unity discussions with the URCNA have impacted many aspects of church life, notably the developments with the Book of Praise. Again the bonds we share with you run deep, as the Book of Praise continues to help us to personally and communally express our praise, glory and honour to our triune God, in psalms, hymns and in our confessions. Over the past number of Synods in Australia, investigations have been undertaken to work toward an Australia Book of Praise. Synod Legana, however, decided not to continue this work of producing an Aussie Book of Praise unless your Book of Praise 'is substantially altered such that it is no longer suitable for use by the Australian churches.' "Of itself", Synod Legana continued, "the different Church Order is not a compelling reason to produce our own Psalm Book." (Art 24. XI. 3 b and ground 6).

Synod Legana did not just place the Australian Book of Praise on hold so to say, it also mandated the deputies to monitor developments with the Canadian Book of Praise – these developments include what you are doing with the URCNA and with the proposed addition to the Hymn section and importantly to "elicit responses from the churches regarding developments with the Canadian Book of Praise." (Art 24 XI 3c). The Book of Praise is a matter that carries much emotion – as much for us as for you and your members – and we would encourage you with much wisdom and pastoral care – so that all generations continue to sing the praise to our covenant

Lord and King!

Consultation

Along with the potential changes to the Book of Praise that arise in your unity discussions with the URCNA, Synod Legana also instructed the deputies to ‘stay informed on developments concerning the pending merger..., including the proposed revisions to the Church Order.” (Art 40. IV. 2.b.) We understand that the unity discussions with the URCNA have been ongoing for over a decade now – so many discussions and so many proposals to consider – and yet, on the whole, not much about this potential merger is known amongst the brotherhood in Australia. Synod Legana wisely reminds the deputies to consider the Rules for Sister Relations and become more informed on the work you are doing with the URCNA. These same Rules for Sister Relations also means for you that, and I quote: ‘in cases of substantial changes or additions to the confessions, Church order or liturgical forms...[that as]...much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached’. (Art 40. IV. Ground d.) Brothers, our question is, are you really living up to this commitment, as outlined in the rules for Sister Churches? We hope that Synod Burlington will maintain these rules in its decisions, and mandate your deputies to consult with your sister churches, including our churches in Australia regarding these matters.

Changes

Speaking of changes brothers, there are some other changes that we wish to speak about – and we wish to do so carefully. Synod Legana mandated the deputies ‘to seek clarification about and discuss the changing manner in which they [CanRC] deal with significant differences with other church federations in their unity discussions.’ (Art 40. IV. 2.c.) Reading through the Acts of various Synods over the past years, it is clear to us, that some confessional issues, once held and defended dearly (like Fencing of the Lord’s Table, Confessional Membership, and third party relationships – c.f Acts of Synod Lincoln 1992) are no longer obstacles to entering sister church relations. Of interest is the proposed change to include the new classification of “Associate Churches” in which you might formalize a relationship with numerous church federations – unbeknown to us, and to your own churches. Brothers, perhaps we are missing something; tell us what you have learned – help us to understand you more clearly in these matters.

RCNZ

Brothers, we appreciate your continued support in another matter – this

time as it relates to our ongoing discussions with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand. Indeed the report of the CRCA reveals that you have done a great deal to ensure that the RCNZ addresses our serious concerns – and we thank you for this. Yes, you know that we recognise them as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Art. 63 XI. 2) You know that we have had ongoing discussions with them regarding several matters that prevent us from entering into a sister-church relationship. However, the final obstacle is their sister relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. We know you understand our difficulty with this – as your churches also considered the relationship that the OPC had with the Christian Reformed Churches in NA as an impediment to becoming sister-churches. The fact that you didn't consider this an impediment to becoming sister-churches with the RCNZ is not our point – but rather because you have had this experience in the past with the OPC, we would “encourage [you] to continue supporting [us] as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ’ about this matter.” (Art 40. IV. 2.e.) It is our desire that the RCNZ ‘continue to admonish the CRC of Australia and be consequential in this relationship.’ (Art 63. XI. 5.b.) Your help and support with this will be most appreciated!

RCN

The bond that we share as churches in Canada and in Australia has its history and origins back in Holland. Although the demographics in Australia is changing with the influx of Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans, our history does begin in Holland. Together we share a ‘big’ sister there, a sister that we believe is struggling and in need of our combined support and encouragement. Our sister - the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands – continues to be dear to us, and that is why we have a heavy heart about the developments and decisions in the RCN. Synod Legana spoke of the need to ‘discuss our concerns regarding trends to unfaithfulness’ (Art 71, XI 5) It mentioned that we are to “exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern ‘spirit of the age’”(Art 71, XI 4). There are many areas of concern, concerns that we are sure you share – and indeed we do read this in the report from your CRCA committee. Brothers may we all prepare ourselves for the same struggles, we are not immune to these types of influences. Synod Legana has called upon the churches of the FRCA to ‘frequently remember the RCN in their prayers’ (Art 71, XI 8) and we are certain that the Canadian Reformed Churches do the same. May we together, united in love stand beside our sister, to admonish, exhort and encourage her in the Lord.

Indonesia

Brothers, if you dug a hole through the centre of the earth from Burlington, you would come out near the coast of WA! And though we're on opposite ends of the earth, we cross paths in the work of mission, the beautiful work of spreading the gospel! Of interest are your relations with the churches in Indonesia, the work in PNG and more recently with the work in China.

We are pleased with the reports of the CRCA deputies and to be frank, we also share their conclusions with regard to the Indonesian churches. We too agree that continued and increased mutual communication is of great benefit in supporting the brotherhood that live in a country where the vast majority of the people are Muslim! May our efforts in encouraging unity between the various churches in Timor & Sumba bear positive fruit in Christ's Church-gathering work.

Conclusion

Brothers of Synod, we have taken much of your time, and we appreciate the opportunity to address you here at Synod Burlington 2010 and to pass on the affectionate greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. At the same time, we heartily invite you to send delegates down under to our next Synod in Armadale 2012 DV. But brothers you need more than our heartfelt greetings and our encouragement. Therefore we pray that God will provide His indispensable blessings over this Synod and its deliberations, entrusting you into His Care, to be governed by His Wisdom and to do so according to His Word! May your work be blessed and may it serve as a blessing to the churches within your federation. May the work of Synod Burlington also serve the edification of your sister-churches. Brothers, enjoy your work, work hard for the unity of faith and for the praise and honour of Christ, the Head of the Church!

Brothers, we will close our address with the words of 2 Corinthians 13:

"Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:11-14.)

Thankyou

Report on Visit to Synod Burlington 2010 as published in Una Sancta

Monday Evening May 10.

It was a, cool, spring evening as many Canadian Reformed members and other visitors drove through the leafy green streets of Burlington, Ontario Canada. They were on their way to the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church for the evening prayer service prior to the opening of General Synod 2010. The powerful sound of hundred's of voices singing "God the Lord is King, throned on cherubim" reverberated through the church. Rev D. Agema led the worship service and preached on the prayer of Nehemiah as outlined in the first chapter of Nehemiah. Rev. Agema reminded us that prayer is essential in our preparation for service, also as this Synod commences to serve the churches. The message highlighted that service requires dependence on and recognition of the awesome power and love of God as seen especially in Christ His son. But prior to serving, we also require penitence, a proper recognition of our sinfulness. And then finally, as seen by Nehemiah's prayer, we may serve with confidence knowing that God will bless any work that is based on His word and promises. Eph 3:14-21.

And so the synod of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC) could embark on its lengthy agenda on Tuesday morning May 11 at 9.00 am. Twelve ministers and twelve elders met together at the front of the Ebenezer church building.

These brothers represented a federation of some 17,000 members with 50 churches mainly from Canada.

As delegates from the FRCA we were privileged to be able to attend. And we came with many questions and thoughts.

What impact would the possible CanRC merger with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) of over 23,000 people in 110 churches have on our relationship with the CanRC?

What are the changes being made to the rhyming of the psalms? Would we as FRCA still have opportunity for input? What hymns would be added to the Book of Praise? What would happen to the Theological Seminary if a merger would take place, especially since the URCNA have indicated that they want an independent seminary?

Will the CanRC establish sister relations with the GGRI in Indonesia?

How come are there seemingly changes in the way that the CanRC deal with sister church relations over the past decade? And what about the recommendation in the report to allow women voting for office bearers?

Many questions indeed!

As a meeting of the churches, the agenda of this Synod highlighted the strong involvement of the churches. The agenda was very full, with over 273 letters from the churches, 26 letters of appeal and 424 pages of official reports!

The first order of business for the Synod was to elect the 'moderamen'; a fancy word for what we call the executive.

The following ministers were elected: Rev Feenstra (vice-chairman), Rev Aasman (chairman), Rev Pol (clerk for acts), Rev D. Agema (clerk for correspondence).

As done in past CanRC synods, this synod also operated with advisory committees. The executive proposed 4 committees of 5 brothers each (plus the executive) and divided the agenda items among the committees. These committees would meet together and prepare the material for the Acts of Synod listing; Observations (summary of the contents of the reports and letters), Considerations (grounds for the decisions), and Recommendations (the decisions). Each proposal would then be printed for all delegates and each day a plenary session (open to the public) of all Synod delegates would meet to discuss and vote on the proposals prepared by the advisory committees.

If during discussion on the floor of Synod it was deemed that some items should be revised, it would be common for the committee to take back their proposal, re-word it taking into account the comments of Synod and re-present it at a subsequent plenary session. During these sessions of full Synod each proposal would be voted on and included in the acts of Synod.

As fraternal delegates we were provided the 'privilege of the floor' namely, the ability to speak if so desired. We were able to sit with the committees. We were able to use these opportunities to provide our Australian perspective on various import matters. As fraternal delegates we were also permitted to address synod in a speech delivered on Wednesday evening, in which we highlighted the following:

- The many ties and bonds our churches share, both personally and as federation of churches with the Book of Praise, and Theological College as pertinent examples.
- Our sincere desire to see the Theological College at Hamilton continue under the present constitution as a seminary of the churches and for the churches.
- The appointment of an Australian minister, Dr. J. Smith as professor of Old Testament to the college.
- Our desire to learn more about their relations with other churches such

as Reformed Church of New Zealand, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the United Reformed churches of North America.

- And in conclusion: “We appreciate the opportunity to address you here at Synod Burlington 2010 and to pass on the affectionate greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. But brothers you need more than our heartfelt greetings and our encouragement. Therefore we pray that God will provide His indispensable blessings over this Synod and its deliberations, entrusting you into His Care, to be governed by His Wisdom and to do so according to His Word! May your work be blessed and may it serve as a blessing to the churches within your federation. May the work of Synod Burlington also serve the edification of your sister-churches.”

Breakfast lunch and dinner allowed for many informal contacts which helped us gain further insights in the matters before Synod; men earnestly seeking to find the Biblical responses to some challenging matters that would be right and promote peace in the churches. The many daily devotions, evening sermons and interactions gave a wonderful testimony to God’s grace, the power of the gospel at work in the Canadian Reformed Churches. And so we can attest to Rev Feenstra’s summary in the press release: “The work was done by men who were painfully aware of their own weaknesses and shortcomings. We began and concluded each day with devotions, asking God to bless our work. Many times at Synod the brothers reminded each other that we were not there to get our own way, or to please people but in service of our King, Jesus Christ.”

On Friday afternoon we were hosted by the Theological College in Hamilton and joined the final day of the year with the students at the college. After we listened to Dr Visschers closing devotion for the year, we were able to enjoy a luncheon with members of the faculty and with the students and their families – including the Aussie students.

We were again heartened with the sincere appreciation that the college has for the support from the FRCA, and for the many ‘connections’ to the churches down under.

Upon reflection we thank God for the blessings we as churches receive from our Canadian brothers and sisters. In a subsequent article we will highlight some of the decisions made at Synod Burlington 2010.

The acts and press release of Synod Burlington Ebenezer 2010 can be found at www.canrc.org

On behalf of the Deputies for Sister Church Relations

W. Pleiter and W. Vanderven

Presbyterian Church of Korea – Kosin

Synod Legana 2009 made the following decisions concerning the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin).

Article 46 - Presbyterian Church of Korea

VII: Final Text of Adopted Decision

1. To thank deputies and discharge them.
2. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules and to publish the fruit of these relations for the churches.
3. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in continued improved lines of communications.
4. To authorise deputies to send one delegate to visit the PCK once in the next three years subject to available funds.
5. To ask the deputies to stay informed about the IRCK + RCK + IRPK and to offer any help that is possible and practical through the sister relations with the PCK.

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. The PCK have initial contacts with the IRCK and RCK about which the FRCA should remain informed.
- d. The initial contacts with the IRCK + RCK + IRPK, 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.

ADOPTED

Deputies Report:

To implement Synod 2009 decision and carry out its mandate the deputies report to Synod that;

1. A meeting was held with the deputy of the Korean Church immediately after Synod 2009. At this meeting our mandate was explained. Particular reference was made to how we might help them with regards to the recently established Independent Reformed Churches and Reformed Churches in Korea
2. A report was received from the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (RCN) regarding their contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church (Attachment # 1) and a request from the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) was honoured by sending their deputies a copy of our visit report to the Korean Church.
3. A visit was made to the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church. The report of this visit, (Attachment # 2) the greetings given (Attachment # 3) and the reply (attachment # 5) are included in this report. In (Attachment # 5) a brief history of the Kosin Church can be found. This was given to our delegate while visiting.
4. While help was offered to the Presbyterian Church Kosin with regard to the IRCK, RCK and IRPK no further help regarding these churches was requested except to express that they find it a pity and unnecessary for these Churches to have left. While the PCK is convinced that they did not leave for valid reasons, they see them as different branches of the church of Christ and in that context accept how some of their members give them some support.
5. In the context of visiting our sister churches in Korea, deputies were made aware of Korean Presbyterian Church (Kosin) in Australia, including Perth. They consist of more recent immigrants from the Kosin Church. They have formed separate Presbyteries and a General Assembly and as such are a separate bond. They maintain sister-church relations with the Church in Korea and have some contact with Presbyterian Church in Australia. Most of their Church services and relations among the churches is done in the Korean language. Many among them still have difficulty understanding and speaking English.

Conclusion

We are thankful for the contact that has been possible as described in the report of the visit made. Our contact with Korea remains limited due to the language barrier and minimal personal relationships. Thus it is difficult to fully exercise our mandate according to the adopted rules. The return of Dr. Yoo to their committee is very beneficial. The use of an English interpreter would be helpful when visiting their synod.

Recommendations for Synod:

Decision:

1. To continue sister-church relations with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin).
2. To encourage the PCK (Kosin) in their resolve to maintain the unity of the Church.
3. To make the Churches within our bond aware of the Presbyterian Church (Kosin) Australia.
4. To honour the agreement with the RCN and CanRC by sending them a copy of this report as well as our decision regarding the Korean Presbyterian Church.
5. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. To maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules.
 - b. To keep contact with Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) along with the RCN and the CanRC in the context of taking turns (once every three years) to send, upon available funds, one delegate to a General Assembly in 2013.

Grounds:

1. The Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin), as far as can be known continues to show faithfulness to the Lord and upholds its confessions.
2. The Lord clearly teaches in His Word that the Church should be one and churches should be united. While the PCK speaks about various *branches* of the true church, unscriptural schism should not be considered acceptable.
3. There is an agreement among the Australian Churches that any possible contact with other Churches should be initiated by the Churches (not deputies).
4. There is a standing agreement together with the RCN and the CanRC that we take turns visiting the PCK General Assembly on an annual basis and exchange reports.

5. Attachment # 1

The first 6 pages of this report are in English. The balance of the report is in dutch and is available from the deputies upon request.

Reisverslag Korea en Myanmar

15 – 28 sept. 2009

Kim Batteau en Ria Nederveen

Inhoud

Woord Vooraf.....	2
Summary	2
Reisinstructie	7
I. Bezoek aan de Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK).....	9
Conclusies en aanbevelingen IRCK	10
II. Gesprek met predikanten van de Independent Reformed Presbyterian Church (IRPC)	10
Conclusies en aanbevelingen IRPC	11
III. Bezoek aan de Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) (PCK-K).....	12
Conclusies en aanbevelingen PCK-Kosin	15
IV. Bezoek aan de Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapshin) (PCK-H)	15
Conclusies en aanbevelingen PCK-Hapshin	16
V. Bezoek aan de Reformed & Presbyterian Churches Fellowship Myanmar	16
Conclusies en aanbevelingen RPCFM	18
Reisjournaal	19
Bijlage 1 – Gesprek met het Fraternal Committee van de PCK (Kosin).....	22
Bijlage 2 – Words of greeting from Rev. J.M. (Kim) Batteau.....	25
Bijlage 3 – Some important decisions of the last GA of the PCK (Kosin).....	26
Bijlage 4 – Afgevaardigden naar de First General Assembly van de RPCFM	27

Woord Vooraf

Aanleiding voor de reis naar Zuid-Korea is de uitnodiging van de Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) voor de General Assembly van 21 – 25 sept. '09. Met de CanRC en de FRCA is afgesproken de GA om beurten te bezoeken en elkaar op de hoogte te houden van de ervaringen. Dit jaar is de GKv aan de beurt.

Dit is een mooie gelegenheid om ook een bezoek te brengen aan de Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK) en de Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapshin) die door de GS te Zwolle in 2008 op de lijst met kerkelijke contacten zijn geplaatst.

Prof. Haemoo Yoo functioneerde als contactpersoon voor het Fraternal Relations Committee en heeft de afspraken geregeld, niet alleen voor de PCK-Kosin, maar ook met de andere kerken.

Met rev. Heon Soo Kim (IRCK) is steeds goed contact geweest. Hij heeft met prof. Yoo enkele afspraken rondom het bezoek afgestemd.

Om te onderzoeken wat de reden is van afsplitsing en oprichting van de Reformed Churches in Korea (RCK) hebben wij via prof. Hur enkele afgevaardigden van deze kerken uitgenodigd voor een gesprek.

De Independent Reformed Presbyterian Churches hebben via rev. Heon Soo Kim een gesprek met de GKv-afgevaardigden gevraagd, omdat zij graag hun visie op de afsplitsing van de RCK wilden laten horen.

De PCK-Hapshin hebben van de scriba van de GS Zwolle bericht gekregen over het voorstel voor kerkelijk contact, maar daarop is niet gereageerd. Ook op de brieven die namens BBK sectie-4 geschreven zijn, is geen reactie ontvangen. Het was dan ook de vraag of zij wel prijs stellen op kerkelijke contacten met de GKv. Maar nadat via prof. Yoo contact gelegd was met Rev. Byung Hoon Kim, konden toch afspraken worden gemaakt voor een bezoek aan het Hapdong Seminary en de gemeente van BH Kim in Seoul.

Lange tijd bleef onzeker of ook een gesprek met het Fraternal Committee geregeld kon worden. Het was ons niet bekend dat de PCK-H in de week van ons bezoek ook hun jaarlijkse General Assembly hielden. Tot onze verrassing was er gelegenheid de GA te bezoeken en de groeten van onze kerken over te brengen.

Daarna werd een gesprek met het Fraternal Committee gehouden, een korte kennismaking en oriëntatie over het doel van het kerkelijk contact.

Ook de Reformed en Presbyterian Fellowship in Myanmar (RPCFM) is door de GS Zwolle op de lijst met kerkelijke contacten geplaatst. Een paar weken voor de reis naar Korea werd bekend dat de eerste General Assembly van de RPCFM zou worden gehouden op 26 september. Op onze vraag of men prijs stelde op onze aanwezigheid, werd positief gereageerd. Daarom zijn we vanuit Korea doorgereisd naar Yangon om de vergadering bij te wonen.

Al met al veel een boeiende reis met veel intensieve gesprekken, waarvan een samenvatting in dit verslag.

Wij mochten zien, hoe Jezus Christus zijn kerk bouwt en bewaart door middel van mensen met al hun zonden en gebreken. We voelen het als een voorrecht dat Hij ons daarbij ingeschakeld heeft. Dank en lof aan God voor de gezondheid, wijsheid en krachten die Hij ons door zijn Geest gegeven heeft.

Februari 2010,

Kim Batteau en Ria Nederveen

Summary

Introduction

The occasion for this visit was the invitation of the *Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin)* to attend their General Assembly, to be held from Sept. 21 to 25, 2009. We have an agreement with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to visit the Kosin G.A. on alternate years and to keep each other abreast of the developments. This year the Reformed Churches (Liberated) were scheduled.

This trip gave us a good opportunity to bring a visit to the *Independent Reformed Church of Korea* and the *Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapshin)*, which the General Synod of Zwolle 2008 had placed on the list of ecclesiastical contacts.

Prof. Haemoo Yoo was our contact-person with the Fraternal Relations Committee of the Kosin church, and also helped with the contacts with the Hapshin and Reformed Church of Korea.

Rev. Heon Soo Kim of the Independent Reformed Church was our primary contact-person with that church.

We wanted to have a talk with Prof. Hur of the Kosin church about the origin of the small

group of *Reformed Churches of Korea*, and through him we arranged a talk with representatives of these churches.

The small group of *Independent Reformed Presbyterian Churches* expressed the wish to talk with us, so that was also arranged with the help of Rev. Heon Soo Kim.

We expected to hear from the *Hapshin churches*, responding to our offer to have a church contact with them, but had not heard from them. Through Prof. Yoo we happily came in contact with them in Korea. A visit to their seminary and to a congregation in Seoul could be arranged. Later, in Korea, we were pleasantly surprised that a visit to their General Assembly as well as a talk with their Fraternal Relations Committee could take place, too.

The *Reformed and Presbyterian Churches Fellowship in Myanmar* is also an ecclesiastical contact since 2008. We heard a few weeks before our trip to Korea that their first General Assembly was planned for Sept. 26, 2009. We received a positive response to the question as to whether a visit from us would be appreciated, so we made plans to visit this General Assembly in Yangon, too.

Original general travel plans:

Lands and churches to visit:

In Korea: the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin); the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapshin); the Independent Reformed Church of Korea; the Reformed Churches in Korea.

In Myanmar: the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches Fellowship in Myanmar.

Delegates: Rev. Kim Batteau and Ria Nederveen

Dates: Sept. 15 to 28, 2009.

Result of trip: a report with conclusions and recommendations.

I. Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK).

Background: The General Synod (Zwolle) put the IRCK on the list of ecclesiastical contacts.

Instructions from GS: maintain the contact, in order to get to know each other better, support one another, and together praise the name of Christ.

Aims: help the IRCK to be a church with a Reformed confession and church government; stimulate contacts with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Korea.

Means: talks with ministers, evangelists, and church leaders; visit churches and attend church services; informal meetings with church members.

Conclusions:

1. The ministers of these churches appreciated being visited. The church relationship has been strengthened by our visit. Through the discussions and thinking together about their church Constitution, they were helped in further being a Reformed church of Christ. Their concerns about the liberal World Council of Churches were shared by us, and communicated to the Kosin church.
2. The independence of the IRCK is indicated by their starting a Theological Academy, which they want to develop independently. They are open to receiving help from the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in Kampen in the form of Professors coming to give lectures.
3. In preparing for our trip, the good cooperation between Heon Soo Kim and Prof. Haemoo Yoo was clear. We see that the contacts of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) with these churches in Korea has advanced their cooperation with each other.
4. The congregations in Daejeon and Anyang showed their happiness with our visit. The lecture and sermon of Kim Batteau were received well. The spiritual level of the members appears to be high.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain the contacts with the IRCK and help them to be a church with a Reformed confession and church government.
2. Stimulate church unity between the various churches of Korea, in particular with the Independent Reformed Presbyterian Church.

3. Stimulate the Theological University in Kampen to have exploratory contacts with the Theological Academy, and, hopefully, eventually an exchange of teachers and students.

II. Independent Reformed Presbyterian Church of Korea (IRPCK).

Background: Ministers of the IRPC asked to have a talk with us while we were in Korea, to tell their side of the story about the splitting off of some ministers from their congregations to join the Reformed Churches of Korea (RCK). Their were 8 of the 9 ministers of their federation present. Rev. Heon Soo Kim (IRCK) functioned as interpreter.

Conclusions:

1. This church wants to be a living, Reformed church of Christ, and therefore seeks support from the IRCK. Many members have left and ministers as well have split off. The IRPCK churches are accused by those who have left of being sectarian, but they express their desire to grow in the Reformed faith.
2. The discussion with the BBK deputies was a strong encouragement to these ministers. They are not expecting to have church contact directly with our churches.
3. The contacts with the IRCK can develop into more unity between these churches. They can help each other to be truly Reformed in doctrine.

Recommendations:

1. Stimulate the IRCK to have contact with the IRPCK and help them to grow in the understanding of Reformed doctrine, in order to achieve church unity.

III. Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

Background: The invitation to visit their General Assembly from Sept. 21-25, 2009

Instructions from GS: maintain our sister-church relation in order to learn from each other, support each other, and together praise the name of Christ; encourage the sister-churches to promote church unity with churches in the region.

Aims:

1. inquire about important church developments, missionary activities and contacts with other churches in Korea.
2. exchange information about activities in foreign countries.
3. explore our mutual dependence in our relationship. One point for attention: the Kosin church is often quite independent in its missionary work.

Special activities: 1. Our agreement with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to visit the Kosin G.A. in alternate years, and to send our reports to each other.

2. In Korea seek contact with the RCK, inquire about the split.

Means: visit the G.A.; meet the Fraternal Relations committee; have talks with ministers, evangelists and church leaders; visit churches and attend church services; meet church members informally.

Conclusions:

1. The visit to the General Assembly gave the opportunity to greet the 500 or so delegates and to tell about developments in the Reformed Churches (Liberated). The request to increase reciprocity in our relationship was communicated, with special attention to the exchange of teachers and students between the Theological University in Kampen and Korea Theological Seminary in Cheonan.
2. The talk with the Fraternal Relation Committee did not produce much. A few suggestions for reciprocity in the relationship were made, but were not followed up by concrete proposals. The visit to the Saemmul church stimulated them to visit Reformed Churches (liberated) in future visits to The Netherlands.
3. Prof. Yoo was a valuable contact-person during our visit. He has insight into the relationships within the Korean churches and gave us a lot of background information. Because he is no longer the official contact-person, it will be difficult to have a fruitful relation with the Fraternal

Relation Committee, certainly as long as the General Assembly does not make any decision about extending the period of service of the members of the committee.

4. The discussions with the representatives of the Reformed Churches of Korea have not led to any increased concern on our part about doctrinal deviations in the Kosin church.
5. The Reformed Churches of Korea (RCK) has submitted a request to the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) to begin a sister-church relationship, but not to the Reformed Churches (Liberated) and, as far as we know, not to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). We can share our experiences with the CanRC and the FRCA and await the developments.

Recommendations:

1. Keep on recommending more reciprocity in our relationship to the Kosin church and, with them, seek possibilities of a fruitful contact.
2. Stimulate the Korean representatives on future visits to The Netherlands to visit churches and share experiences with ministers and ordinary members.
3. Share our experiences with the Theological University in Kampen (and with the Theological Academy in Zwolle) and stimulate them to exchange teachers and students with the Korea Theological Seminary in Cheonan.
4. Remain alert as to developments within the Reformed Church of Korea.
5. Send the report with the short summaries in English to the CanRC and the FRCA.

IV. Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapshin).

Background: The GS Zwolle put the PCK (Hapshin) on the list of ecclesiastical contacts

Instructions from the GS: maintain the contact, in order to learn from each other, support each other, and together praise the name of Christ.

Aims: - strengthen the relationship;

Means: - an exchange with the Theological University in Kampen would be appreciated. visit the churches; have talks with ministers, evangelists, and church leaders; have informal meetings with church members; meet the Fraternal Relations committee; visit Hapdong Theological Seminary; talk with teachers; preach at a church prayer meeting and a chapel service at the Seminary.

Conclusions:

1. The visit to the G.A. gave unexpectedly the opportunity to tell about the Reformed Churches (Liberated) and to greet the Assembly. We do not yet know how the G.A. reacted to the proposal to have ecclesiastical contacts with the Reformed Churches (Liberated).
2. The talk with the Fraternal Relations committee was an initial getting to know each other. The delegates from the PCK-Hapshin are positive about the contact, but must wait and see the decision of the G.A.
3. The Hapdong seminary welcomed us warmly. They are open to have contacts with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) and would appreciate exchanges of teachers and students with the Theological University in Kampen.

Recommendations:

1. Ask the Fraternal Relations committee about the decisions of the G.A. concerning our proposal for ecclesiastical contacts.
2. If the decisions are positive, widen our contacts with the Fraternal Relations committee and exchange thoughts with each other about the way in which we can maintain mutually fruitful contacts.
3. Communicate our experiences at the Hapdong Seminary to the T.U. Kampen.

V. Reformed and Presbyterian Churches Fellowship of Myanmar (RPCFM)

Background: Since the visit of BBK delegates to Myanmar in 2005, BBK has encouraged the forming of a Fellowship of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Contacts are made through this channel. The Fellowship was established at the beginning of 2008. The first General Assembly was postponed due to the disaster situation after a typhoon.

Delegates can attend this G.A. after their visit to Korea.

Contacts DVN: Disaster assistance after the typhoon in 2008.

Instructions from GS: maintain the contact, in order to get to know each other better, support one another, and together praise the name of Christ.

Aims: maintain contact with the churches in Myanmar through the Fellowship.

Means: attend the G.A.; talk with ministers, evangelists and church leaders; visit churches and attend church services; informal meetings with church members.

Conclusions:

1. The contacts with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) led to a strong stimulation of the cooperation between churches in the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches Fellowship. Now that it is clear that help can only be given through the Fellowship, the churches are willing to work together in the areas of missions and evangelism, theological education, diaconal projects, literature and publications, and financing these projects.
2. The visit to the General Assembly has given an extra stimulus to the developments in the Fellowship. The cooperating churches have been encouraged to share their gifts with each other, to learn from each other, and to help each other in various ways. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they could grow to closer church unity and in the future could function as an independent church federation.
3. The visit of the delegates to churches has given us an opportunity to get to know the church situation in Myanmar better. Informal talks produced a good amount of useful information. The Evangelical Reformed Church in Yangon does not have problems with women leading church services.

Recommendations:

1. Develop the contacts with the Fellowship further, and help them to be true churches of Christ.
2. Stimulate the cooperation between the churches by working only through the Fellowship and support the various committees that have been formed with their tasks.
3. Ask DVN to support missionary and diaconal projects and via IRTT help the churches to develop the joint theological seminary which is being planned.

Looking back at our trip, we may say that it was certainly very stimulating, with many intensive, fruitful talks and experiences, which are summarized in this report.

We saw how the Lord Jesus Christ is building and protecting His church through people who are far from perfect. We experienced it as a great privilege to be used as instruments of His care.

We praise and thank the Lord for an enriching trip, and for the health, wisdom and strength, which He gave us through His Spirit.

February 2010

Kim Batteau and Ria Nederveen

Attachment # 2 Report of visit to the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

This is the report of a visit made as deputy to the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea. This visit was made in agreement with our Synod decision and upon their invitation to attend the General Assembly scheduled to open on September 28, 2010. Due to easier travel arrangements, the actual visit took place from September 24th through to September 30th. This arrangement also gave opportunity to witness church life by attending Sunday church services and mingling among members of one of the congregations.

Welcome and Reception:

The wonderful and generous way in which I was received and cared for in Korea remains beyond expression. Already before departing it was suggested that I first come to Busan. They would make arrangements for travel and accommodation. I had arranged to fly to the Incheon International Airport close to Seoul. They arranged for someone to pick me up from there, bring me to a local airport (Gimpi) from where they would arrange a flight to Busan. When I offered to pay for some of the cost, they would not hear of it.

The flights went as planned. The brother who picked me up from the Incheon airport proved to be an airline pilot. He knew some English. Besides the regular casual conversation mention was made of how the churches have grown in Korea. The brother expressed some reservations about other churches being instituted that led to a certain growing apart. He mentioned the Independent Reformed Church, the Reformed Church and the recent split among them. The conversation concluded when arriving at the local airport and arrangements were finalized for my flight to Busan. After a short wait and a little less than an hour flight I landed safely in Busan

The brother who drove me from the one airport to the other was a friend of Dr. Kwon. Dr. Kwon was in charge of taking care of myself as a foreign delegate. Upon arrival, he was waiting at the airport. I was dropped off at a hotel room that had been arranged for my stay. After a quick freshening up I was picked up for a dinner meeting in a local restaurant. The meeting was a combined Presbytery meeting of the local Kosin Presbytery and a Presbytery of the Japanese Presbyterian Church. As it turned out, most of the men of the Japanese Presbytery were staying in the same hotel where I was. It was difficult for me to understand any of their Korean and Japanese just like it was difficult for them to understand my English. In fact, the English of some was better than my ability to converse in their language. They managed to express their welcome and I was officially

greeted. Except speaking with Dr. Kwon communication with the others was very minimal making it difficult to understand what was really going on. I understood from Dr. Kwon that they had local relations with the Japanese Presbyterian Church, but it was only on the local level and did not extend to the entire Kosin Presbyterian Church. At the buffet dinner I could choose what I preferred and it was not too bad. The chopsticks was a bit of a challenge gave some laughs and was a good restraint to my intake.

The Church Community in Busan:

The next day, Saturday, sometime after breakfast at the hotel, Dr. Kwon picked me up and gave a tour of the city. We visited the Kosin Hospital which I understood was built and continues to be run by members of the churches. We also visited the Kosin University and Seminary. Dr. Kwon compared it to the Westminster Theological Seminary in the USA. It was closed due to recent public holidays. The buildings were impressive. Dr. Kwon informs me that around 200 foreign students attend the university. He showed some views of the city from various raised viewpoints. It was all very impressive and one became aware of a busy, relatively prosperous city and community. Although different from Australia, it appeared to be a booming city and economy. The country is highly populated and most live in apartments. There sure appears to be a very large, economically strong, middle of the range people, who are very diligently carry out their daily tasks. More than once, I heard the expression *diligence* when speaking about the general social and cultural endeavours of the Korean people.

This touring through the city was a good opportunity to speak about the churches and church life. Dr. Kwon told me that along with some other pastors he gets up at five every morning for prayer. He thought it necessary for there are so many temptations in this modern day world for the members of Christ's flock. Like everywhere, among them too, there is continual concern about world-conformity. The modern forms of communicating via internet, mobile phones, television and so forth, while they can be helpful tools, are also seen a threats for members to remain steadfast in the faith. It can be noticed everywhere that Korea is really into the electronics age as a country that is busy at the frontiers of electronic technology. When noticing several buildings that looked a bit like European castles from fairy tale books and asking about them, Dr. Kwon said that they were hotels where things are done that does not belong among those who are married. There was no need to further explain the kinds of immoral things that may be happening in these romantic looking buildings.

Mention was also made of the Independent Reformed Church and Reformed Church. Dr. Kwon said there is no official relation between them and these churches. Although there is no official relation, they do accept

each other's members at the Lord's Supper and at times also ministers and professors preach and teach among the other's churches. Dr. Kwon expressed some concern about how the churches appear to become divided in what he considers to be unnecessary ways.

The Sunday Church Service:

While touring the city on Saturday Dr. Kwon wondered what I intended to do on Sunday for he thought that I would not get anything out of a Korean Church service. Even though it is true, I could not understand a word of Korean, Desiring to see what the grass-roots church life is like, I persisted to show that I would love to attend and be among the Lord's people. Like most church buildings in Korea the building too, from the outside appear like a warehouse or factory with a church steeple. However, inside it was a real church building with pulpit, pews and organ. It was comparable to some of our larger church buildings. While members were coming into the church building, microphones, guitars and drums were being put in place and prepared on the front stage area. Before the service itself started there were some who sang along with these instruments. When the church service was about to begin a choir dressed in robes entered and sat on the pews near the front. Dr. Kwon led the service. Some announcements were first made including a welcome to myself and noting that they may be doing things a bit differently from how churches services are held in Australia.

Already before the church service started, Dr. Pyeng Seh Oh sat beside me. He knows English quite well and translated parts as the service was progressing. There was some congregational singing along with the band, piano, organ and lead singer as well as the choir singing on its own. I could not understand the words, however the songs did not appear to be of the real heavy gospel kind that can be heard in some American and Australian churches. It appeared to be relatively reverent and honourable.

The sermon was from Joshua 11. The main focus was on how in the days of Joshua, Israel neglected to heed the Lord and destroy all the inhabitants of the land which later became as snare to them. This was applied with warnings of how we can become ensnared in the many temptations of this modern day world. We are to know and trust the Lord's greater power over these continuing attacks and threats. Encouragement was given to be strong in Him.

Dr. Kwon invited me to his home for lunch. It was a very good meal and also an opportunity to meet with some of his family. They all appeared to be very friendly and every effort was made to show good hospitality.

The afternoon service was led by Dr. Kwon but now one of the Japanese

ministers preached in Japanese. As he spoke, it was translated by one of their elders into Korean. Dr. Oh was not present and no translation of the sermon was given into English. Otherwise, what could be observed in the afternoon service was not much different from the morning.

The Assembly:

Most of Monday was spent in the car with Dr. Kwon driving to Cheongju where the assembly would be held. The modern freeways, many tunnels, high apartment buildings, large warehouses and factory buildings all confirm that South Korea really is a country of diligent people. Along the way we had a pit stop for a coffee and snack. There we met about a dozen other delegates all heading for the assembly in Cheongju. Just meeting these men was already an indication that the assembly was considered a big event in Korea.

The assembly was held on the Kosin University campus at Cheongju. After arriving at the venue, Dr. Kwon first took me for dinner to a restaurant. We went Korean style except that Dr. Kwon thought it would be easier for me to sit on a chair rather than, like in a certain section of most restaurants where the guests sit on the floor. After the meal I was taken to the hotel. It took a bit of time to find it and from the outside and in the lobby it did not look all that special, however, the room that had been booked for me was the top of the range. Some unnecessary apologies were made about difficulty finding a good hotel room. There were other foreign delegates that stayed in the same hotel.

Back at the University and assembly venue, the meeting appeared to have opened. Not much time was given to be at the meeting for the foreign delegates were taken to another restaurant for dinner. Here we met their deputies for relation with foreign churches. This time it was really Korean style, including, sitting on the floor. It was a beautiful meal, I must have appeared clumsy for a number of those there seemed to be worry about how I was coping with it. Nevertheless, it was a meal good and wonderful to be there. Most of the conversation was in Korean and therefore impossible to follow. However, here and there some things were translating showing that relations with overseas churches was appreciated. It also became evident that there are many Korean Presbyterians Churches in various countries including Australia, England, Canada, and Germany. These are churches that have grown from those that have moved from Korea to various places in the world. They apparently continue to have the word proclaimed in their mother tongue while living in these foreign countries.

During the assembly, Tuesday morning, an opportunity was given for foreign delegates to extend their greetings²⁰. A number of delegates expressed appreciation for the words that were spoken. There were quite a number of delegates who took the opportunity to do so. A response was given to these greetings²¹.

While the assembly was meeting, the foreign delegates were given a grand tour of the university and seminary. It was very impressive; including lecture halls, professor offices/study rooms, library and residence. From what we were told it appears that discipline is very strict. Students could lose their credit for courses simply by being too late or missing classes. What was particularly impressive was the church museum which reflected on the mission work in Korea upon which the Lord granted that churches were instituted in that country. Here one was reminded of the terrible persecutions that took place during the Japanese. After asking some question about their history, I was supplied with a brief outline of their history and where they are at as a church today²².

On the agenda of the assembly were three main items. They were some constitutional changes which was focused on greater equality among office-bearers. Right now there are both senior and junior pastors among them. A certain distinction would still remain, but it would be entirely in the context of training; no longer with respect to differences in authority. The second major item had to do with the baptism of those who come to faith. The question was when this should take place and to what extent one can determine when a person has shown signs of regeneration. The third point had to do with admission to the celebration of the Lord's Supper; in particular, who could be permitted as guests from other denominations. These last two points were still being discussed when your delegate left the assembly to return home.

While the assembly was meeting and Dr. Kwon was busy as part of the assembly, opportunity was given to meet with Dr. Yoo. Dr. Yoo knows both English and Dutch very well. He has studied for his his PHD in the Netherlands. He presently teaches doctrine at the university. His wife also knows both languages although her Dutch is a bit better than the English.

Dr. Yoo had been in the Korea committee for relations with churches abroad in the past especially because he can communicate very well with foreigners. However, at the previous assembly he was not voted back into this position. There appeared to be some fear that there were some in this

20 See appendix one for text of greetings brought on behalf of the FRCA.

21 See appendix two for text of the response.

22 See appendix three.

deputyship may be gaining a certain predominance and therefore it was thought better to have some more turnover. However, this assembly has again appointed Dr. Yoo to this committee and in particular to help with foreign communication.

The contact with Dr. Yoo was very pleasant and open. He obviously understood well what was happening among Reformed churches abroad and the kind of things that we would be looking for among sister churches. In this context, he thought that the report of the Dutch delegates to their previous General Assembly was not entirely accurate and that some things were out of proportion. When asking about the Independent Reformed and Reformed Churches, Dr. Yoo explained that both these churches grew out of contacts with Reformed Churches overseas. There were some who thought they should become more reformed. In itself the Presbyterian Churches that historically recognise various branches of the church have no great problem with these new churches starting up. They can see some advantages to the reformed teaching and recognise the real true desire to be faithful to what the Lord teaches in His Word. The Independent Reformed Churches took up the Reformed Confessions besides the Westminster Confessions. Thus they have both. They have been receiving a lot of support and encouragement especially from emeritus ministers both locally and overseas.

The Reformed Churches started as another branch of the church for it considered that the Independent Reformed Church had remained too Presbyterian. They speak of themselves as the first (real) Reformed Church of Korea because they subscribe only to the *Three Forms and Unity* and hold to the *Church Order of Dort*. They give a lot of emphasis to the covenant and how the Lord continues His covenant bond with the believers and their children. In view of this, most members of these churches home school their children. They would be in favour of having their own schools, but so far have not had the opportunity or ability to do so. They have also learned the reformed ecclesiology and therefore are very careful with whom they permit to the Lord's Supper. They also receive significant support from Dr. Hur who at times preaches and teaches among them. They have been receiving significant encouragement other overseas ministers. These Reformed Churches have recently split because a minister among them had eaten in a restaurant on Sunday with some members. When he was questioned about it, he defended himself and alleged that those who questioned him were defending too much of the Puritan Sabbath doctrine. As a result, he was suspended from office which led to the beginning of still another church, known as the Independent Church.

The Kosin Presbyterian Church look at all this with some sadness and

dismay. Their thinking is that the Lord in His own way first sent Presbyterian missionaries to Korea. They have their history of faithful men and martyrs. Perhaps more could be learned from the reformed churches and somewhere they recognise that in some things the reformed teaching may be closer to Scripture, but those who really insist on maintaining the unity of the church do not keep it themselves. Here a certain inconsistency is seen by how both the Independent Reformed and Reformed Churches receive help from Dr. Hur who is still a member of the Kosin Churches. They also find it somewhat disappointing and upsetting that that the Reformed Churches tried to establish ties with the Canadian Reformed Churches. They see that as an attempt to get some more overseas legitimisation. They are especially saddened by the suggestion that the Reformed churches make in this context about the Presbyterian Churches in Korea are showing signs of deformation and inclination of Arminianism. This is said in a general way about all the Presbyterian Churches and while the Kosin Churches recognise the ongoing struggle to remain faithful and know that at times there are failures, they sure want to hold to God's Word and do His will. It was strongly emphasised that they are definitely not Arminian. They insist and hold fast the Scriptural teaching that the Lord has chosen His children from eternity. It is in the context of these Reformed Churches that the question concerning

About the concerns the Australian Churches have regarding the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, not all that much is known about it among them. Those who know about it are concerned. The Kosin Presbyterian Churches remain thankful for what they have received from the sister churches in the Netherlands. To the suggestion that they assist us in our discussion regarding hermeneutics, the reply was they have limited resources and the language differences would make it very difficult.

Conclusion:

With thankfulness one can only conclude, as far as can be seen, that the Kosin Korean Churches faithfully hold on to the Word of truth. They seek out the unity of the church and are troubled when that unity is not maintained. They also have their struggles and challenges, but know very well that they can only rest on the foundation of forgiveness through Christ's blood.

Attachment # 3

Greetings to the Korean Churches

Thank you for your invitation and the hospitality you have shown. We, as Australian Churches, are thankful that we may meet together in this way. It is with thankfulness to the Lord that on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, I may extend our greetings to you. For those of you who do not know us so well, let me inform you that we are a bond of churches in Australia that have roots from the Liberated Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. After the second world war quite a number of immigrants left the Netherlands for Australia, Canada and South Africa. We therefore have close ties with these churches. After immigration in the 1950's and failing to find true churches with which they were one, our fore-fathers found it necessary to institute churches. The Lord blessed the commitment to the Reformed confessions that our fathers have shown so that today there are fourteen instituted churches and three house congregations in Australia. The churches are concentrated in Western Australia. They are all in that state except for the two churches and one house congregation that are on the south eastern island of Tasmania and the another house congregation is in the north eastern part of Australia in the state of Queensland. The churches are divided into two classical regions which meet at a minimum of twice a year. A synod meets once every three years.

When the churches were first instituted the need to train our children according God's Word was understood very well. Along with building churches our fore-fathers built schools for teaching children from a young age through to high school. These are not *church schools* but schools established and supported by members of the churches for the children of members. There are six primary schools and one central high school. With thankfulness we may say that the churches have grown over the years through the families, from further immigration from the Netherlands, Canada and South Africa as well as some joining from the outside.

In the past, some local mission work within Australia has been attempted, but has not increased membership significantly. Some work is still being done in this regard by helping people off the street and participation in prison ministry. Foreign mission has greater attention. This has not been without its challenges. Work has been done for quite some time in Papua New Guinea and is still continuing there. With thankfulness we may report that this work goes well. Some of the other churches support mission work being done by our sister churches in Indonesia and then there are some churches that recently started some work in China. We are thankful that the Lord grants us the opportunity to be busy as His children to have His word proclaimed both far and near.

While informing you of these blessing, we also acknowledge that it is a struggle to remain faithful to the Lord. Satan tries to draw members away through world conformity and confusing members through false doctrines. At times members are lost to the world or turn to other denominations where we are convinced the full truth of God's word is not upheld. The pressures of worldly pleasure in the kind of prosperous world in which we live can be real challenging. Moreover, we also feel the pressures of world-wide attempts to accept ungodly life styles under slogans of freedom. While we all face increasing global attacks on the churches, we think it important to be united as churches throughout the world and speak according to God's Word in a unified way.

We are therefore thankful that even though we are from different historic and cultural backgrounds, we may united as children of the same Lord and hold to the same promises of His Word. It is so striking how the Lord speaks to the Ephesian congregation that consisted of believers from both Israelite and Gentile background that they are one in Him. Through the Apostle Paul He tells us (in chapter 4:4 – 6 of how they are *one body* even as there is *one Spirit, just as you were called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all through all and in you all*. The Lord obviously looks for unity with Him and thus also with one another.

With gratitude we may reflect on how Rev. Yoo was able to attend two of our synods. Such exchange of delegates brings home the unity we have in Christ. From Rev. Yoo's words we were made aware that even though we live far apart, we are often faced with similar attacks and challenges. Perhaps in this world of increased rapid form of communication we can assist each other while faced with various difficulties of this life.

It was good to hear Rev. Yoo express the desire for the unity which the Lord teaches it in the passage of Scripture that was just mentioned. We appreciate how he referred to Psalm 1 to suggest and encourage us to continue growing by the streams of water which is God's law as upheld through the Christ's suffering and death. We remain very thankful that the Lord continues to gather and preserve us as His people in Australia for we know very well that we can only continue as His children when we rest entirely on the foundation of His work and great mercy. We do not deserve how well the Lord continues to care for us. Daily we are thankful for the gift of forgiveness. We are also thankful that the Lord continues to gather you here in Korea as His children. We encourage you to remain faithful to Him for that is the only way true unity can be maintained.

You may have heard from the report of Rev Yoo's visit to our synod how we struggled in our relations with our Dutch-sister Churches. As mentioned, most of us in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia originate from the

Netherlands. That is where our parents or grandparents have come from. We realize that through the years these churches wanted to remain faithful to the Lord but the challenges of this post-modern world appears to have strong influence among them. It burdens and saddens us to notice that the full blessing of what the Lord teaches in His Word appears to be slipping through some cracks of these sister churches. We have addressed them about the place of the women in the church, divorce and re-marriage, the keeping of the fourth commandment, relations with other churches and the interpretation of various parts of Scripture. It was in this context that our synod decided that we are to speak to them about their hermeneutics. We really want to keep unity with these sister churches and so that we can continue to recognize them as churches of our Lord. We therefore also look to our other sister churches in Canada as well as to you to help us in this matter. If you have any advice or can give help, we would appreciate it. Our hearts desire is that they, our sister churches in the Netherlands, and we all together may continue to confess the same Lord and together live as His children.

Having said this, we must admit to also having been wondering what has been happening among you. Here and there we hear some things about the *Reformed Churches of Korea* as well as the *Independent Reformed Churches*. We do not entirely clear about the historic background of these churches nor what your relation is with them at this time. From the report of our Dutch sister church deputies we receive the impression that these churches originate from members of your churches. Is this true? We also understand from the speech of the Independent Church delegate which he had at the Canadian Reformed Synod, that they as churches, defend how the Lord teaches us the need to be united together.

Please understand well. When asking these things, it is not our intention to curiously pry into your business nor is it our intention to carefully examine everything that may be happening among you as churches. As your sister-churches, we cannot help but notice that there are also other Reformed Church among you. We would like to encourage you to seek the unity that the Lord teaches in His word as we hear from your words that you treasure.

We pray that the Lord will grant that you may remain faithful to Him in every way for that is what true church unity is all about. In his speech to our most recent synod Rev. Yoo informed us of the continuing struggle and challenge it remains to remain faithful as Reformed Churches in Korea. We pray that the Lord will continue to guide all your churches by His word and Spirit so that you may remain faithful to Him. If you have any further suggestions of how we may support one another as churches of our Lord, would love to hear about it. May the Lord bless you all. May He strengthen and guide you in the work that you do at this assembly and may your decisions be a blessing for your churches as well as for your sister churches.

Attachment # 4

An address of welcome to foreign delegates. in 60th KPC General Assembly September 28, 2010

Dear delegates from our sisterhood and friendship churches in foreign countries.

You are very warmly welcomed to 60th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

We thank you again for you are kind enough to come all the way from your country,

We also appreciate to welcome for our delegates to your last Synod and general Assembly of The Reformed Churches in Australia, Canada and Netherlands.

We have had a sisterhood relationship with your denominations,

We are true brothers and our roots are same in churches.

Our churches have had a relationship for a long time with your churches,

We value our relationship and we hope that we can understand each other's needs so our friendship can be renewed and grow stronger.

You know that although we are very different in many aspects, we are really brothers and sisters of one family, having the same heavenly Father.

Dear delegates!

We appreciate to your work for Gospel ministry and God's kingdom for all the nations.

We need fellow soldiers to resist. the various anti-Christian influences of our age together.

We wish to keep our Godly heritage, Reformed faith and His Church together and God's blessing in your ministry and in your struggles over the modern attacks.

May the Lord bless you and keep you!

Have a nice time staying in Korea.

Thank you so much.

Dr. Jung Chul Choi

Chairman of fraternal and foreign affairs committee The Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin).

Attachment # 5

The Presbyterian Church in Korea(Kosin) History

The Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin") is a branch of the true church of Jesus Christ, founded on God's Holy Word, and holds to the Reformed Faith. Since the coming of Protestant missionaries to Korea in 1884, the Korean church has had an astonishing development unparalleled in mission annals. The Presbyterian Theological Seminary was founded in 1901 in Pyongyang, and by 1912, a General Assembly was organized. For about half a century from the first entry of the Gospel, the Korean church grew steadily, But under Japan's imperialistic domination the church underwent many difficulties. In this period two kinds of problems afflicted the Korean church: First, the infiltration of theological liberalism. And second, the Japanese Shinto shrine issue. Finally, on September 10, 1938, the yet undivided Korean Presbyterian Church, at its 27th General Assembly meeting at the Pyongyang Westgate Church, broke down under this repression, and approved shrine observance. Both before and after this tragic decision, ministers, elders, deacons, and ordinary believers, who merely wished to live according to the Bible and so refused shrine worship, were arrested in large numbers. Eventually some fifty became martyrs of their faith under this terrible persecution. On August 15, 1945, Japan was defeated, Korea was liberated, and on August 17, those who had been imprisoned for their opposition to Shinto shrine observance were released. Two among them, Rev. Joo Nam-Sun and Rev. Han SangDong, founded Korea Theological Seminary a year later in Pusan on September 20, 1946, to train church leaders in order to reform the erring Korean church. This action began anew the training of church leaders in the historic Presbyterian tradition. However, the still undivided church's General Assembly would not recognize the new Korea Theological Seminary. The delegates from the Kyun gram Buptong (legal) Presbytery supporting the new Korea Theological Seminary spent three years trying in vain to normalize their relationship with the General Assembly. But the seminary continued not to be recognized and they were refused membership. Accordingly, on September 11, 1952, organizing its own General Assembly, the "Korea Pa (group)" or "Kosin" church was instituted. It is true that in December 1960, the church united with one of the mainline Presbyterian churches, the "Seungdong" group (later called "Hapdong") which is an anti-ecumenical group. But unfortunately this union did not last for very long and in September 1963, the church returned to its original form and continues until this day as the Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin"). Currently, the PCK, as a member of the universal church, continues the ongoing fight against the worship of idols and other 'gods' in Korean society. Especially the nationalistic indigenous religion, which worships Tangun (the ancient

bear-man believed to be the founder of Korea) as a national god, has become a great challenge to the Korean churches. They have erected statues of Tangun at many public parks and schools in order to get people pay homage and worship it. Kosin is the main denomination actively engaged in public demonstration and appeals to the government not to allow the placement of 'idols' in public places.

The Churches' Organization

Principles and Standards At the 26th General Assembly in 1976 the church's principles were recorded as follows: "We believe in, preach, and live by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and the original Presbyterian standards (The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Manual of Discipline and the Directory of Worship) following Reformed Theology." Our church's doctrinal standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism. With the addition of the 1903 American Presbyterian chapters on "The Holy Spirit" and "The Mission of the Church" to the 17th century Westminster Confession of Faith, our confession now numbers 35 chapters. Also, as administrative standards we have the Form of Government, the Manual of Discipline, and the Directory of Worship. These standards have been published (in Korean) in a book entitled "The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Korea."

Constituency Our denomination is now established in every area of the country, with 34 presbyteries, 1,577 churches, and a total of 230,000 baptized members. There are 2,300 ordained pastors, 430 candidates for pastor (licensed for preaching) awaiting ordination, and 4,000 elders throughout the denomination.

Denomination Headquarters The Presbyterian Church in Korea ("Kosin") national denominational headquarters facility is located in Seoul, Korea. This building houses a variety of offices including: the General Secretary, the main publishing house for the denomination which produces books and Sunday school curriculum as well as other materials, the Department of Church Education, Students for Christ (SFC) national headquarters, The Herald of Christianity (the weekly newspaper), the Corporation of the National Assembly which facilitates the registration of all member churches and their properties with the Korean government, the Department of Historical Documents as well as other general administrative offices, the Research Center for Christian Cultic groups, and the office for the campaign against Tangun movements. The facility also has 15 guest rooms, which can accommodate more than 40 visitors. The Missionary Training Institute (MTI) is located on the 5th floor in the Bruce Hunt Memorial Hall. This Hall is named in memory of Missionary Bruce Hunt with

gratefulness to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America who donated the major funds for this facility through the sale of their former property here in Korea.

Instruments

Kosin University Kosin University was started in 1954 with a 4-year pre-seminary course in Korea Theological Seminary and then it separated from the Seminary for ten years under the name of Calvin College. However, due to the difficulties in maintaining its independence, it later merged again with Seminary. In 1970 it was authorized by the Ministry of Education to become Korea Theological College. In 1981, with the opening of the medical college, the name of the college was changed from Korea Theological College to Kosin University. In 1985 the campus was moved from Songdo to Youngdo. At present, the University has 22 departments with 221 professors (including 138 at the medical school) and 4,373 students.www.kosin.ac.kr

Korea Theological Seminary Our Seminary was founded on September 20, 1946 as the primary training institute of the PCK for the formation of church workers. The seminary actually gave birth to the PCK. However, in the course of time, the seminary has undergone changes from seminary to theological college to university. These changes have been understood by the denominational churches as steps towards eventually becoming separated, so the seminary has become independent from the university in administration. In 1998 KIS moved to its present location in Chonan with the purpose of fully spreading “Kosin” churches nationwide. The faculty consists of 15 full-time professors and several adjunct professors and lecturers with 400 full time students. The M.Div. degree is authorized from the Ministry of Education along with the Th.M. degree in missiology. The seminary’s new Chonan campus is spacious and well organized. The churches financially and spiritually support the administration and maintenance of KTS and the pastoral internship of the students. Recently the seminary started English programs.www.kts.ac.kr

Kosin University Graduate School With the purpose of giving continuity and deeper content to its education program, Kosin University Graduate School, on February 15, 1978, received authorization from the Ministry of Education to establish the Graduate school in which they can offer master and doctorate degrees. In addition to the main graduate school, there are the Graduate School of Education, the Graduate School of World Missions, the Graduate School of Public Health, and the Graduate School of Human Life and Information. Concerning the doctoral degree, they offer Ph.D.’s in Theology, Medicine, Christian Education and Public Health. In the graduate school we have some international students.

Kosin University Hospital The Kosin Hospital began in 1951 as a tent hospital called the “Gospel Clinic” which cared for refugees during the Korean War. It has grown into a large hospital, which presently has over 1,110 beds. The hospital now is serving the Kyong-Sang province as well as the city of Pusan. In October 1980 after the medical department of Kosin College was established with the affiliated hospital. the rate of growth rapidly increased. There are presently 25 specialized departments and related research and test centers, a tumor research center, and a cancer treatment center. There have been many achievements through the treatment of cancer patients and various cancer prevention research programs. Furthermore, through the establishment of hydrotherapy even greater scholarly research is being accomplished. Also, there have been many successful results with kidney transplants and heart surgery. There are also three specialized clinics, which are now being opened: a diabetes, an allergy, and a hearing impairment clinic. It is our hope that through the hospital even greater efforts will be made to proclaim the Gospel as we carry out our medical research. Currently, the medical school is sending several medical doctors and nurses to the mission field as missionaries. www.kosinmed.or.kr cysr@kosinmed.or.kr

Home Missions From the 1990's The PCK has become more active in home missions by strengthening the Committee for Evangelism. Starting this year, we will have a full time general secretary for home missions and a full time staff for the Youth Groups in PCK. The PCK is involved in military evangelism, which is called the “Golden Fisheries for Evangelism,” by sending 30 chaplains to the Korean army. Also, under the general denominational umbrella, Students For Christ, Christian Endeavor, the Sunday School Association and other groups are zealously spreading the truth. The Students for Christ Movement (SFC) is a unique organization for campus evangelism, in which 100 full-time staff are serving for evangelism and discipleship. The Committee of Evangelism of Rural Areas is in charge of helping the churches in the rural areas and fishing villages, and the Committee of Evangelism is in charge of planting and helping new churches.

Foreign Missions The foreign missions of the PCK began in 1957 by sending the late Rev. Kim Young-Jin to Taiwan as a missionary. However, the churches have not been actively engaged in foreign missions until Rev. Yoo Hwan-Joon joined Rev. Kim in Taiwan in 1974. In 1979 the Mission Board stated the mission's principles and regulations by which the churches can carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and established the Mission Research Center. During the 1980's the PCK has emphasized foreign missions and expanded the mission fields by

sending 220 missionaries to 46 countries around the world. The Mission Board also set up the Missionary Training Institute (MTI) to train missionary candidates. We are much indebted to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America both in terms of mission training and mission properties. The aims of the Kosin missions are to plant self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing churches in the mission fields based on the Reformed faith and theology with the Presbyterian form of government. www.kpm.org kmissionCc4hollian.net

Church Education Church education has always been a strong part of the PCK. For years now we have been developing good curriculum and producing a variety of Sunday school materials. The Board of Church Education consists of pastors and elders with 10 full-time staff to serve the church's educational programs and the development of educational materials for the denomination. The board operates the Bible Correspondence School, Sunday school teacher training and laymen training programs. They also publish the Christian Education Journal and various other magazines. www.edpck.org edchurchachollian.net

Literature Activities From the beginning, our church has placed special emphasis on literature ministries. Beginning in 1955, "The Christian Reporter" (weekly) was for a while our denominational paper. Also, publications centering on Korea Theological Seminary appeared: "The Watchman", "The Reformed View", "Church Life," and "The Reformed Faith." Now, however, "The Herald of Christianity and Kosin Monthly" serve as the denominational [magazines. www.kspress.co.kr](http://magazines.kspress.co.kr) ksnews@kidokkyobo.com

International Relations Our denomination earnestly seeks to maintain close relationships with other churches and organizations taking a Reformed stance around the world, for the sake of more fruitful ministries worldwide. As a member of the International Conference of the Reformed Churches (ICRC), we maintain a sister or fraternal relationship with most member churches of the ICRC, including The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (in America), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), The Reformed Church in Japan, Canadian Reformed Church, and Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We want to extend sister and brother relations with other member churches of the ICRC in Asia. Most notably we exchange seminars every year with the Reformed Church in Japan. The Fraternal Relations Committee of the PCK is in charge of international relations.

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Appendix 6

Decisions of 60th General Assembly (2010) as summarized by Prof Yoo.

Some preliminary remarks:

1. The 60th General Assembly(GA)of the Korea Presbyterian Church (KPC) was convened from 27 (Mon.) to 30 (Thurs.) September 2010, at the Korea Theological Seminary (KTS), Chon-ahn.
2. 509 delegates from 38 Presbyteries were attending (254 ministers / 255 elders).
3. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia has delegated Rev. P.K.A. de Boer to the GA, who also represented the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Canadian & American Reformed Churches.

Some important decisions are:

1. To accept the new translation of Three Ecumenical Creeds and the Westminster Standards (Confession and Larger and Shorter Catechisms) into modern Korean.²³
2. Also to accept the amendment of the Discipline.
3. To accept the report on the baptism of the mentally handicapped.
4. To form a Special Commission to investigate the standpoint of Prof. N.H. Yang of the KTS Church History, who contends that the PCK 'is' separatist. He argues that Rev. S.D. Han, who was coerced into imprisonment by the Japanese imperialism and after his release in 1945 forced to form the PCK, actually intended to separate himself from the Presbyterian Church in Korea at that time.

Yang wrote also an article in which he supports the ecumenical movement, especially in the form of the World Council of Churches(WCC). This is to be investigated, too.

5. To keep the Table holy and to fence it from abuse. This decision is taken on repeated requests by the Canadian & American Reformed Churches.

²³ I am the chairman of the Committee for the translation.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Decision of Synod Legana 2009, Article 45

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches 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.
4. Synod mandates the Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches to coordinate the support for needy churches in South Africa, and give opportunity for the Australian churches to take on particular “projects” in order to involve the congregations beyond simply finances in the support for our South African sisters. This could include continuing the support for the manse in Bethal, supporting a minister in Bethal, and/or supporting further needy church projects.

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.

Activities of Deputies

1. Deputies received an invite to the synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) which was held 13-16 June 2011 in Pretoria. Br B Veenendaal was delegated to go on behalf of deputies. The address to Synod Pretoria is provided as Appendix A and the summary of synod as published in the Una Sancta is provided as Appendix B. Br Veenendaal also visited the church at Bethal and gave a presentation to them on the churches in Australia.
2. We received a letter from the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa (DNCSA) in December 2009 requesting our support for a shortfall of 184,000 Rand for supporting a temporary minister (Rev Viljoen of the church at Capetown) for the church of Bethal for the duration of 2010. We (deputies) responded positively to this request and contributed this amount (AUD 27,300) in April 2010.
3. On 17 November 2010, we received a request from DNCSA to provide assistance for the shortfall in purchasing a manse for a

minister in Bethal, and for the ongoing shortfall regarding the support of a minister. In consultation with our Australian churches (see Appendix C for the letter to the churches requesting their support and commitment) and on behalf of our churches, we responded positively to this request. We contributed 534,000 Rand (AUD 80,700 transferred in Dec 2010) for the manse (one-off) and 420,000 Rand for 2011 (AUD in two instalments) towards the shortfall of supporting the minister in Bethal (Rev Breytenbach, ordained in January 2011). The requested support for 2012 is expected to be 420,000 Rand as well. The amount of support required each year will be annually reviewed and requested by the DNCSA.

4. In March 2010, we received a letter from the church at Kelmscott indicating that the *South Africa Support Committee* previously supporting the national reformation work in South Africa was disbanded, and offering the remaining funds to be used in the support of South African churches. The amount handed over was \$136,213.43 .
5. As of November 2011, 8 out of 15 Australian churches have committed/donated towards this cause in addition to support from private individuals. The Lord has blessed us with adequate funds to cover the needs for 2011. The current financial situation is summarised in Appendix D.
6. We received a letter of thanks from the DNCSA on 11 Jan 2011 informing us that the manse has been purchased, and attaching a letter of gratitude from the Consistory of the church at Bethal.
7. We have had regular email contact with both the DNCSA and the church at Bethal. The communication is bimodal: a) liaising with the DNCSA regarding the needs and finances, and b) maintaining direct contact with the church at Bethal to remain informed and provide encouragement.
8. In August/September 2011, we had contact with a committee of the Canadian Reformed Church at Coaldale who are appointed by their synod to coordinate financial support for the churches in South Africa. We informed them of our work, and they informed us that they work with DNCSA and deputies for mission in South Africa to provide financial assistance for both needy churches and mission work.

Recommendations to Synod Armadale 2012

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To appoint an auditor for the financial records of the support provided.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new

deputies with the mandate to:

- a. coordinate responses to any requests for support received from the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa, and to involve the Australian churches as appropriate.
- b. to keep the Australian churches informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via Una Sancta.
- c. to send two delegates to their next synod and, if possible, to visit the church(es) where support is provided.

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.
- d. It is appropriate to ensure that our churches are well informed regarding the support provided to South Africa. Financial accountability of the support provided is important.

Appendix A: Address to Synod Pretoria 2011

Dear brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a privilege to be here in your midst once again (!) and extend to you the greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Yes, it is now just over a decade that we have been regularly invited and have attended your synods, and it says something of the development of the relationship, the growing bond, between our churches. I say “development” because it is an ongoing part of getting to know each other better. We think we have some South African blood in us because of a large contingent of South Africans that are members in our Australian churches, but yet we recognise there is so much about your churches, your culture, the opportunities and challenges that you face, of which we have yet to learn. We therefore appreciate the invitation to your synod and this opportunity build on the unity of faith, that rich foundation of Jesus Christ, that which we already share.

When we consider the past decade and how the Lord has led us as His churches on two continents on the west and east shores of the Indian Ocean, we can only marvel at how He has directed our relationship. You have an Australian minister and we have a South African minister. There are many church members, families and friends who travel back and forth to visit families and acquaintances. Through requests for support, we have learned something about Khotasong and the work among the AIDS victims, the Lesaedi School in the black townships of Soshongu, and the various struggles and needs among needy churches, particularly regarding the church at Bethal. We also had the privilege of hosting br Kees Roos a few years ago (in 2009) who gave us some more information on the churches in South Africa. These means of getting to know each other better are an important part of being able to encourage and assist each other as sister churches, something that we need more and more as we recognise the attacks on the church and the struggles that we face in this world.

I'd like to update you about developments in our churches since we were here 3 years ago at your last synod. Since then we have received two more siblings, namely the churches of Mundijong (instituted in December 2009) and Busselton (instituted a few months ago in March 2011). That brings the total number of churches in our bond to 15. What has also changed over the past years is the number of vacancies of ministers in our bond. I recall telling you three years ago that we only had 1 vacancy, but now we have 5 vacancies, including the fact that one of our churches (that at Southern River) also now has two ministers. Our Deputies for Training for the Ministry are putting in a greater effort to generate the awareness of the need for ministers of the Word, and encouraging especially young men to consider preparing themselves for the beautiful task of ministry. Our Deputies are also considering the possibilities of having the first year of training for the ministry provided in Australia, possibly through a combination of using local ministers and online learning.

Our churches continue to support the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

in Hamilton, Canada, and we also continue to be involved in mission fields in Lae, Papua New Guinea, Sumba, Indonesia, and in China.

At this synod of yours, you are busy with many matters that affect your bond of churches, and the relationships with other churches. Whereas our mission fields are quite distant to us, geographically and physically, your many mission fields are right on your doorstep. It is heartening to see the growth and developments there, and the fact that there is a hunger and thirst for the gospel. May the Lord bless your work there and the support that is provided, and may He especially work with the Holy Spirit in the hearts of these young believers that they may be faithful covenant children amidst a world of sin and darkness. May the Lord also provide ministers and missionaries who are able to bring the glad tidings of gospel of salvation to these people. May the Lord also bless you as bond of churches in the economic and political climate that you live in, here in South Africa. It is something that we hear of but do not really understand. Yet, the Lord can use these circumstances to hold on to His people, to strengthen and refine His church, and to cause His light to shine so that His church may be preserved.

May God bless your deliberations at synod, the decisions you come to, and your churches in actively working with the outcomes. We will continue to pray for your churches and God's work in this country. In the meantime, continue to pray for us also, that we, amidst the abundance and blessings that the Lord does provide, may remain faithful and true to Him in all we do.

With the words of Paul to the Philippians (3:14 to 4:1), let us *press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus...For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body... Therefore my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.*

B Veenendaal

On behalf of Deputies for Sister Churches, Australia

Appendix B: Report on Synod Pretoria 2011

The synod of our sister Free Reformed Churches of South Africa was held 14-17 June 2011 in the church of Pretoria. Br B Veenendaal attended as delegate of our Deputies for Sister Church relations, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. This report summarises the matters and outcomes that were dealt with at synod.

The Boat Anchor

The boat is being rocked and swept by tumultuous waters out at sea and drops its anchor in the bottom of the boat! It is visible to all but it gives no stability to the boat. How pointless! Of course the anchor sitting in the boat does it no good! Then the anchor is dropped into the sea and hits the bottom where it finds a solid hold. Even though the anchor is not visible anymore, yet it gives stability and support to the boat. *This hope [the promises of God] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...Jesus having become High Priest forever...* (Heb 6:19-20). Christ Jesus is not on earth anymore where he could be physically seen, but is now in heaven as our anchor; we don't see him, but he is our stability, our sure and steadfast hope. That promise is so sure, as signified by the fact that God confirms and swears this by His Heavenly Throne, and by sending Melchizedek as the king of righteousness and peace, the forerunner of Christ, to meet Abraham who submits himself to that king. This was the focus of the prayer service prior to the start of Synod Pretoria 2011, led by Rev E Viljoen. Christ, as our anchor, is also the foundation for the work of Synod.

Commencement of Synod

The synod was held in the church at Pretoria. Originally, the intention was that the church at Mamelodi, one of the first black churches in the federation, would organise this synod, but circumstances were such that this unable to occur. Therefore, the church of Pretoria managed the organisation of synod, and they did an excellent job of it. The moderamen chosen for Synod were Rev C Kleyn as chairman, Rev P Boon as vice-chairman and Elder T DeWit as clerk.

With the knowledge that the Dutch sister churches are sending two delegates, one male and one female, and given that they had not yet arrived, Synod discussed how to deal with a female delegate at synod. It was noted that the synod rules do not specifically address the possibility of a "female" delegate. It was agreed that there is indeed insensitivity on the part of the Dutch sister churches to send a women delegate, given that the South African Deputies for Relations with Churches specifically asked the Dutch deputies not to send a women delegate. It was agreed that only the brother delegate could have the full privileges on the synod floor, and the sister delegate can only participate on matters of their own churches. Synod also instructed deputies to reformulate the rules of synod to clarify the matter regarding the status of synod advisors where they are not office bearers or are females.

Training for the Ministry

The theological training for the sister churches in South Africa is currently organised in a Ministerial Training Structure (MTS) with a National Coordinator and two Regional Coordinators, one for Classis South and the other for Classis North. The task of Deputies Curators, appointed by the previous synod, was to identify and/or develop theological training programs and materials under this MTS umbrella, to support training for the ministry and to respond to the different needs and circumstances in the churches. The national and regional coordinators do the practical implementation of these tasks. Synod decided to mandate Deputies Curators to define the modules and content as well as work towards a uniform standard in the training program.

In the Classis North area, 10 students were supported in their training, of whom three have now graduated: Rev George Mnisi who is now a missionary of the church at Pretoria-Maranata for the mission post of Soshanguve Central, Rev Thabo Matlaela who is now a minister of the FRC of Soshanguve-North, and Sam Matlhokoane who has just passed his classis examinations and is available for call. In the Capetown region in Classis South area, two students were trained and graduated, namely, Rev Carl VanWyk who is a missionary of the church at Capetown for the mission post at Wesbank, and Rev Peter Abrahams who is a minister of the FRC of Belhar.

The Curators presented a proposal regarding RTTI to Synod. The Reformed Theological Training Institute (RTTI) is an initiative from a number of congregations in the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) (also referred to as Doppekerk) to set up an institute with a focus on training for ministers, missionaries and office bearers in Africa. It is a decentralised model with relationships with different training institutions, where students can study at different places depending on their needs and location. The model focuses on a technology-supported distance learning program which requires the active involvement of local churches and can be customised for participants. There would also be close cooperation between the students and their home congregations where they may be involved in activities to support their training. It is developed on the principle that theological training must be done by the churches and for the churches, but at a local level rather than via a federation (ie. a bottom-up approach). They have developed a strong hermeneutical stance regarding the Scriptural foundation for this vision for training. The hermeneutical principles outlined include: the inspiration and illumination of the Holy Spirit, Scripture as the Canon, Scripture as its own interpreter, a binding message for all times, historic reliability of the Bible, and Christ-centred.

Synod decides to recommend students from the older churches in the federation (ie. Afrikaans speaking) to make use of the training at the Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton after attaining a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree at a local university. For black students, they recommend to continue to use the Mukhanyo Theological College (English speaking) followed by the Plus Program. The latter is a one-year program offered by ministers of the FRCSA churches to build the reformed knowledge and character of the student. Students from the

mission churches in the Cape are recommended to pursue studies at George Whitefield Theological College (English speaking) followed by the Plus Program.

Synod also decided to officially participate in the RTTI initiative, with the objective of working towards a single and local training institution suitable for all the theological students from the FRCSA. Inherent in this decision is the desire to move towards a training institute where all students, irrespective of their backgrounds, can be trained in a common structure that takes into account the different needs and levels of the students.

Synod received an update of an initiative of Rev Jopie VanderLinden regarding an online preaching library service for ministers all over Africa. A range of free reformed literature is made available to assist in the making of sermons. Presently, Rev VanderLinden and his team of helpers responds to emails of approximately 2000 ministers each week. Note that Rev VanderLinden was released from the office of minister of the Word in the Johannesburg congregation, due to health issues, and subsequently has embarked on this initiative of providing sermon resources. He has building expansion plans at his home in Pretoria to be able to accommodate a reformed study resource center. The online sermon library can be found at <http://preachinglibrary.za.org/>.

Solemnisation of Marriage

Particularly the churches on the mission fields deal with a range of different ways of solemnising marriages that often include cultural and pagan rituals. In order for the churches to have more influence and give more guidance and structure to these solemnisations, Synod decides to leave it to the freedom of the churches to determine if marriages should be solemnised in a private ceremony or in a church service. The latter can be viewed as a celebration of a feast day, as per Article 68 of the (South African) Church Order. Consistories are encouraged to be highly involved in giving guidance to couples in organising and preparing for the solemnisation of the marriage ceremony.

Mission Work

The mission work of the FRCSA involves one mission post in the Capetown region, five posts in Soshunguve and one in Mamelodi. Note: This is in addition to the fully instituted black churches in Belhar (Capetown), Soshunguve-North (approx 30 minutes drive from Pretoria) and Mamelodi (approx 10 minutes drive from Pretoria).

One major issue is how to sustain the funding for the mission work that is, in fact, growing. Should the mission work be constrained? Of the eight (8) churches in the bond, only three are fully self-supporting. Two of these churches have 10 ministers/missionaries in their employment of which the funding for eight of them comes from Mission Deputies. Should the funding from overseas sister churches increase, given that they already provide more than 80% of the mission funding?

Synod decides to mandate deputies to host an *indaba* (Zulu word for an *important meeting*) later in 2011 with all stakeholders to address the question: *What is the long term viability and financial sustainability of all the mission work and related*

activities within the FRCSA? Of course, deciding to open up a new mission point has implications for ALL of: funding missionaries, providing theological training, supporting needy students and supporting needy churches, and the financial implications for each. An ad hoc synod will subsequently be held in February 2012 to address the outcomes of the conference and decide on policies and procedures for the way forward.

Relations with other churches

Your Australian delegate was given the opportunity to address the synod with greetings from the Australian churches. Synod expressed thankfulness for the growing relationship with our churches in Australia, and the support they receive. There is also an increasing migration of South Africans to our churches, which helps us to know each other better. **From the floor of Synod, it was asked to pass on the greetings to our Australian churches.** [Herewith, this is done!] Synod decided to continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and Canadian Reformed Churches.

They also continue to maintain contacts with Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and use the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) to remain informed of developments in other churches.

Two delegates from the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (RCNv), the Dutch sister churches, namely Rev J VanLeeuwin and sr M Blok were present for the duration of synod. Rev VanLeeuwin addressed synod and spoke about that the churches in Holland were changing, that there are differences, but the question is how to deal with differences? He pleaded for a meeting with deputies to further help understand and explain the issues and concerns.

Synod agreed to continue the sister church relationship with the RCNv according to the adopted rules. Synod instructed deputies to discuss the issues of concerns raised by deputies with Dutch deputies, namely, women in office, the proposed new church order, the relationship with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (who allow women in office and are debating if homosexuality is allowed) and guarding the reformed doctrine at the Theological University in Kampen. Rather than directly express concerns to the Synod Harderwijk, Synod considered that deputies should discuss these first with Dutch deputies to understand them better and give them opportunity to respond, since very little or no discussion has taken place thus far at the deputies level. However, Synod also mandated deputies to communicate the issues (that remain after discussion) to the Dutch Synod. Synod encouraged the churches to pray for the Dutch churches.

Contacts with other churches

The FRCSA also maintains contact with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) (also known as the Dopperkerk). Rev Kurpershoek, on behalf of these churches, addressed synod and was present as an observer for half a day. There was very little contact over the past 3 years between deputies, because of resignations and other circumstances on both sides. Synod decides to continue the

contact with the RCSA.

The previous synod encouraged the churches to have contacts with churches of the RCSA at the local level. Synod also provided guidelines to assist these churches using a common process. Over the past year, two of the FRCSA churches are in contact with three (including the “Kandelaar” church which resulted as part of the history of the FRCSA) of the local churches of the RCSA and have had a number of meetings together. The meetings were used to get to learn about each other and get to know each other better, and these have been positive to date.

Synod mandated deputies to also take up contact with the Church of England in Southern Africa (CESA) through whom there has been contact via the George Whitefield College in regards to training for the ministry. This is an English-speaking bond of churches. Further, Synod also decided to continue contacts with the Free Church of South Africa (FCSA).

Regarding the developments among those who have left the sister churches in The Netherlands, including the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (continuing) and the “verlopig” Reformed Church of the Netherlands, Synod decided to mandate deputies to remain abreast of the developments and keep the churches informed.

Responsibility and sustainability

Given all the financial needs and mission/training projects, Synod considered what the responsibility is of the churches towards sustaining all this work. Considering all the deputy reports including that of Mission, Theological Training, Support for Needy Theological Students (Art 19 Deputies) and Support for Needy Churches (Art 11 Deputies), the proposed increase in contribution per member is 30% in the first year, and 8% in the 2 years thereafter. This is a large increase that is not sustainable for the churches, considering the needy churches and large existing financial loads. The other concern is the high reliance on funding from sister churches which is approximately 70% overall. Therefore, Synod appointed a committee to draft a proposal regarding the financial sustainability in the future for mission work, needy students and needy churches. The proposal is to accept a 10% increase for the first year (2011), have a conference/indaba to brainstorm ways and means of being financially and spiritually responsible, and then make a decision at an ad hoc synod in February 2012.

Other

Synod decided to provide eleven new hymns, as recommended by the deputies, to the churches for providing comment and feedback. A web deputy was appointed to maintain the church's web site and to propose appropriate guidelines regarding the content and maintenance of such a site. Synod agreed to send a letter of greeting to the President of South Africa and his government. The next convening church for synod will be Bethal in May 2014.

B Veenendaal

On behalf of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches

Appendix C: Letter to Australian churches requesting support

The Consistory

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

3 February 2011

Dear Brothers,

We would like to update you on the situation regarding our support for South Africa, and come with a request of you. We will begin by first giving a brief outline of the background.

As you may recall, Synod Legana 2009 decided (Art 45, Decision 4):

Synod mandates the Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches to coordinate the support for needy churches in South Africa, and give opportunity for the Australian churches to take on particular “projects” in order to involve the congregations beyond simply finances in the support for our South African sisters. This could include continuing the support for the manse in Bethal, supporting a minister in Bethal, and/or supporting further needy church projects.

In our ongoing contact with the Deputies for Needy Churches of our sister churches in South Africa (DNCSA), we were informed that without external support, the church at Bethal was not able to call a minister. The church at Bethal lost their minister (previously it was Rev P Nel) in 2007 amidst some serious issues and crisis in the congregation. The result was that the congregation lost over half of its members and now sits at a membership of less than 50 persons. It was clear to them, to their classis and to the DNCSA that they were in need of urgent spiritual support, essentially a pastor. Their classis considered ways of sharing the existing ministers to help Bethal in the interim, but because of the shortage and workload of ministers, this was not possible.

It was then that a request came to Australia for support for a manse in Bethal, which would then at least enable them to have some basic resources from which to call a minister. That is where we did request the churches in our bond in Australia for support, and many churches did contribute through their collections or fund drives.

Bethal did call a minister, but, disappointingly, three ministers in a row declined the call. In 2009, the church at Bethal did request and receive assistance from a previous minister in South Africa who was now in

Holland, Rev Bijzet, who assisted Bethal for almost half a year. However, the fact that they did not yet receive their own minister meant that they did not yet need to purchase a manse, and hence the support that we had promised them was put on hold.

Then the church at Capetown offered to allow their minister, Rev E Viljoen, to assist the church at Bethal for one year. Rev Viljoen was also aware of their circumstances, having visited them a number of times to assist with preaching and teaching catechism. Rev Viljoen, together with his family apart from the oldest child, moved to Bethal in January 2010, and laboured in the congregation until December 2010. In the meantime, the church at Bethal again called a minister, the missionary Rev J Breytenbach from Capetown, and the Lord heard their prayers and he accepted. He has arrived in Bethal a few weeks ago, in early January 2011 and was only recently installed as minister on 23rd January 2011.

In the meantime, the DNCSA requested our churches for support for Bethal for the temporary minister, Rev Viljoen, during 2010. As deputies, we agreed with this request and provided them with 184,000 Rand (approx AUD 28,000) from our reserves. (Note: Our reserves were approximately \$156,000 including \$136,000 which was transferred from the now non-existent South Africa Support Committee under the responsibility of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott that supported the national reformation work in South Africa).

We received a further request from the DNCSA in November 2010 to:

1. assist in the purchase of the manse for Bethal, given that Rev Breytenbach accepted their call and was due to arrive in early January 2011; this is a once-off cost covering a shortfall of \$534,000 Rand (approx AUD80,00), and
2. provide ongoing financial assistance to support the church for the costs for the minister; this is expected to be R420,000 (currently approx AUD62,000) for 2011 and approximately the same amount annually thereafter.

In our letter to you of 4 March 2010, we also enclosed a brochure (it is also attached to this letter as a reminder) giving a picture of the financial needs for Needy Churches in South Africa. You may recall that there are currently 5 needy churches out of a total of 8 churches (3 churches resulting from local mission work) in the bond, and that this is set to increase with the increasing number of mission posts being supported (and eventually becoming instituted as churches in the bond), members emigrating out of the country, and worsening economic/political environment. Hence, we as

deputies have considered it prudent to work with the DNCSA who know the local situation, and can ensure that the members of the needy churches, and the other churches in the bond are contributing in the first place, for the needs that arise. Only when there is still a shortfall, do the DNCSA request additional support, including from Australia.

As deputies, we could agree to the first request of the DNCSA by using some of our reserves, and we transferred the requested amount in December. In the meantime, the church has purchased the manse (they were unable to obtain a bank loan) and Rev Breytenbach with his family has moved in.

Regarding the second request, we have agreed to support them for 2011, but would like to be able to respond to their needs on an ongoing basis. For 2011, once we use up our reserves, we will have a shortfall of approximately AUD 15,000. If we are to provide ongoing financial assistance, we need to build up a reserve of AUD 65,000 each year in order to provide upfront for the following year. (Hence, the target to collect throughout 2011 is \$80k, and \$65k per annum thereafter.) However, this can only be achieved if we have the support of our Australian churches.

Therefore, in order to respond to the request of our brothers and sisters in South Africa, we would like to request you for your support. Are you, as church, able to provide some commitment, either as an occasional commitment, or as an ongoing commitment (eg. regular needy collections, special collections, fund drives, etc.)? We have committed to \$15k for 2011 and are confident that the churches are able to contribute towards that. Are you able to assist in a commitment towards ongoing support for the church at Bethal. As indicated, ideally, we would like to collect \$65,000 per annum (taking into account the fluctuating value of the Rand) in the year prior to the committed year, so that we have a reserve from which to pay in advance.

May the Lord bless you in your deliberations, and grant that as churches, we may be able to share from the rich abundance we have in this country, with our brothers and sisters in the Lord in South Africa.

With Christian greetings,

Bert Veenendaal

On behalf of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches

Appendix D: Financial summary of support for South Africa

Opening balance (March 2010)	\$0.00
Received from FRC Kelmscott (re: South Africa Support Committee)	\$136,213.43
Previous donations (prior to 2010) from Australian churches (re: Bethal)	\$14,915.55
Contributions from Australian churches	\$25,776.35
Interest - account	\$0.17
Interest - term deposits	\$8,598.48
Transfer charges	-\$120.00
Transfer to South Africa	<u>-\$166,697.64</u>
Balance remaining (Nov 2011)	\$18,686.34

Transfer Details to South Africa

		Aust \$	SA Rand
Support Bethal for Rev Viljoen	9 April 2010	\$28,313.44	R184,000
Bethal Manse	24 Dec 2010	\$80,695.37	R534,000
First Installment 2011	3 May 2011	\$30,822.93	R210,000
Second Instalment 2011	26 Oct 2011	<u>\$26,865.90</u>	R210,000
Total funds transferred to S. Africa		\$166,697.64	

Report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches — Indonesia

1. Mandate

According to Article 57 of the Acts of Synod 2009, deputies were appointed and given this mandate:

A. Regarding the GGRI:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
4. To 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.

B. Regarding the GGRC

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.

2. Specific Mandate

2.1 Regarding our mandate : *"To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules"* we thankfully report that it was possible to do so. It is our strong impression that the sister relationship between the FRCAustralia with the GGRI is highly appreciated. It is a privilege that the GGRI in the NTT province is at a relatively short distance so that it was possible to be actively involved in the developments within the GGRI-NTT. Two of our local churches are actively involved in the work of mission in the NTT-province. Thanks to the fact that one of our ministers and deputies is well versed in the Indonesian language, he was able to teach at the Theological Seminary in Waingapu, Sumba. Good contact was also possible via the support of the GGRI via other organisation within our bond of churches as 'Mission Aid' and a project as 'Children of the Light.' It was possible to attend the synods of the GGRI-NTT and to meet their deputies for the Theological training.

2.2 We were also mandated *"to continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance."* Deputies have attended the meetings of what can now be called the 'regional synod' of the GGRI-NTT and it was also possible to send a delegate to the General Synod of the GGRI of the three areas in which the GGRI-churches are located. In our report to synod 2009 we mentioned that there were three separate federations of the GGRI in Indonesia (our sister churches in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), and churches in Papua and Kalimantan Barat (formerly Borneo). But now the time had come to become one federation with one national synod, three provincial synods and their numerous classis. Their national Synod was held in February of this year and could be attended by one of our deputies. This positive development does imply that as Australian churches have now a sister-church relationship with the GGRI as a whole and we have to find a way to honour this official contact with the whole

bond of the GGRI and at the same time to continue our support of the Theological Seminary in Waingapu, Sumba. Another positive development is that our Canadian sister churches at their last synod decided to enter into a sister-church relationship with the GGRI. It is essential for future developments in our relationship with the GGRI to have a meaningful relationship and discussion with the Canadian deputies.

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.”*

All the contacts we had since our last synod was focussed on the strengthening of the reformed character of the GGRI churches. While the work of local churches of the FRCA was directed towards mission, the attention of the deputies was directed at the development of and teaching at the Theological Seminary in Waingapu, Sumba. It was possible to have fruitful discussions with the board of the Seminary, its lecturers and also with the students. From a practical side it was possible to supply some study material and organise a more balanced and sufficient food supply for the students. The Dutch sister churches are still able to send some ministers as lecturers to the churches in Sumba. Since the Canadian churches entered in a sister relationship with the GGRI it is important to develop a good contact with their deputies and other organisations/churches (such as the church at Smithville (Can.), working in Kupang with Rev. Edwar Dethan).

At their national synod the GGRI made decisions regarding a new and up-dated Church Book with the Psalms, a selection of Hymns, the Confessions (similar to our Book of Praise). The production of this Church Book has received funding from an organization within the FRC Australia.

2.4 In addition to the previous mandates we were instructed *“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.”* This has been the main focus of our deputyship. We could continue to support the operating costs of the theological training (the stipend of the lecturers and other costs to run the college; also support the

Australian lecturer and some support for needy students). The board of the Theological College (YASTRI) was able to purchase suitable land to build the college at a good location close to Waingapu, Sumba. The Australian churches were able to provide the financial means to do so. At the moment YASTRI is busy (in consultation with our deputies) developing building plans. At the moment YASTRI did not receive the certificate of ownership of the block of land and it is important that this document is obtained before they start building the college. Given the fact that the lecturers are also members of the board of the seminary the Australian churches have encouraged the board and the synod of the GGRI to change the organisation of the Seminary so that there is not the possibility of a conflict of interest.

At the conference in Bengkayang in Kalimantan Barat in 2008 it was decided that all three provinces would send their young men to the Theological Seminary in Waingapu, Sumba, NTT for instruction and preparation for the ministry. Over the past 4 years, however, no students from Kalbar or Papua have been sent. Instead, young men from these provinces have been sent to either local or distant Theological Colleges of other Reformed Churches in Indonesia. One of the reasons could be the poor facilities for lectures and student accommodation. It is also to do with the fact that the Seminary in Waingapu is not fully accredited by the government. It is necessary to monitor this closely and also to investigate what the developments are in Kupang re the theological training by Rev. Edwar Dethan (Smithville (Can.) and Rev. Yonson Dethan (GGRC).

As deputies we are well aware of the poor facilities and are giving support to improve the facilities of the STTR.

At the national synod of the GGRI in February 2012 the decision of the Kalbar Conference 2008 was again confirmed, and the churches were again encouraged to send their students to STTR Waingapu, NTT. It is for this reason very important to help the Theological Seminary STTR in Waingapu (and it's board YASTRI) to improve its standard as well as facilities.

- 2.5 Deputies were instructed 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.”

The deputies could follow up this mandate and following the

recommendation of the Indonesian deputies, invited the now Rev. Benjamin Rohi (at the time of his stay in Australia he was an Evangelist in the GGRI, but after his return he passed his exams and was ordained as minister) to come to Australia. He spent three months in Australia in order to receive English instruction and to become familiar with church life in our bond of churches. He visited church services in Rockingham, Byford, Southern River, Kelmscott and Baldivis. He also joined in with a number of consistory meetings with the Rockingham and Baldivis consistories. He was able to attend Catechism classes a number of times in Rockingham, Baldivis and Byford. As much as possible he joined the men's bible study club in Rockingham and Baldivis as well as a congregation meeting in Baldivis where he did a mission report on the work in Sumba. He gave a written account in *Una Sancta* and wrote a meditation for the mission magazine all in English with little help. He could follow the English course at Phoenix Language Academy in Fremantle and received a positive report. In his opinion it was a very worthwhile exercise. He also expressed as his opinion that in Australia the people all work hard and the Indonesians could learn something of our work ethics.

At the moment deputies are busy getting a second student to Australia but for all sorts of practical reasons his arrival has been delayed. The support of these students is a combined effort of the Australian and Dutch deputies. With the Dutch deputies we could share the costs of this part of our work.

- 2.6 We received the mandate to** “provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.” It was possible to support some of the students with laptops received from members of the churches in Australia. We are also thankful that at the location of the purchased land for the Seminary Internet connection can be made available. A lot of communication still goes via Rev. Pila Njuka, but no financial support was given anymore.
- 2.7 As deputies we had 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.” In our contacts at Synod level we encouraged the GGRI to seek unity with the GGRC. At the moment we do not have the impression that there is any progress in seeking this unity. One of the main problem is that the deputies of the GGRI-NTT are located in Sumba, and the GGRC have their local churches in Kupang (West Timor) and on the island Roti. The GGRI has only one local church in Kupang (Rev

Mada Biha). We often encouraged the GGRC to seek contact with the GGRI. At the regional synod NTT and at national synod of the GGRI we encouraged and must continue to encourage the GGRI to actively and more zealously seek this unity.

2.8 As important task the deputies were instructed to “keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Canadian sister churches regarding the Indonesian churches.”

Regarding the Dutch deputies: Deputies assumed that this mandate also related to our contact with the deputies of our Dutch sister-churches. At the moment the Australian churches together with the churches in the Netherland actively supported the GGRI-NTT and their Theological Seminary. To gear our activities to one another deputies decided to send a delegate to Sumba in May/June 2010 to discuss matters of mutual interest with the Dutch deputies. In an open discussion we were able to fine tune the arrangements for support. With deputies DVN of the Dutch churches (sr. J. de Vries) it was possible to develop a strategy regarding the financial support. DVN send the money for the 1st quarter of the year; then the 2nd quarter. DVN has to receive from the Indonesian deputies an audit and accountability report and the financial figures of the 1st quarter before they send the money of the 3rd quarter. This is to build up a responsible way of accountability and reporting. Australia will follow this strategy as well. At the moment the Australian churches are committed to AU\$18,000 per financial year.

The involvement of DVN in the work in Indonesia is broader than the involvement of the Australian churches. As deputies Australia we are only involved in ecclesiastical matters as establishing the Theological education. At the moment DVN hasn't contributed to the costs of the acquisition of the land for the Theological College. For DVN the buying of the land is more or less a passed station. They want to focus more on the establishing of the theological training, building and equipment. But it has to be admitted that for DVN the establishing of the SSTTR is not the only focus point. The Dutch churches and the Indonesian churches will develop a Memorandum of Understanding.

It was recognised that there were a few positive developments regarding the accountability, activity and ownership of the plans regarding the theological training. The lecturers have visited some local congregations for instance, to inform the congregations of the plans and to ask for spiritual and financial commitment to the

plans re the theological training. Some congregations have already pledged financial support. The lecturers will continue to visit the congregations.

The Australian deputies will inform DVN when extra payments (if any) are sent, and the purpose for which they are sent. DVN will do the same, so that there is no overlap of payments for assistance requested.

The deputies are thankful for this positive development of more consultation in our contacts with the Dutch deputies.

Regarding the Canadian deputies, it was possible to have some contact to discuss their involvement in the GGRI (mainly in Kupang, because of Rev. Edwar Dethan is as missionary sent by the CRChurch of Smithville in Canada). Some e-mail contact resulted in a visit of Rev. A. Pol to Australia. He was invited to attend one of our meetings. Rev. Pol was able to give some explanation about the involvement of the Canadian deputies in the reconciliation process between the GGRC and the GGRM (see also our report re the GGRC).

There had been a clash of personalities between two leaders in these churches. In the development it became clear that the problems were deeper than just between two brothers. It was also between two church federations especially with regards to women in the office of deacons. With thankfulness it was possible that there was progress towards reconciliation. Deputies could also discuss with Rev. Pol the different structure of the school organized by Rev. Yonson Dethan, and the Theological College arranged by Rev. Edwar Dethan. It would be beneficial for the Theological Seminary in Sumba to use the expertise of Rev. Yonson Dethan and Rev. Edwar Dethan.

In our discussion it was underlined that good contact between the two deputyships is a requirement. The Australian deputies have tried to organise a so called 'skype-meeting' with the Canadian deputies. For practical reason this has not eventuated yet. As deputies we will share our reports also with the Canadian deputies.

- 2.9 As our last mandate re the GGRI we received the instruction to** "encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 4,5,6,7 above." It is with great thankfulness that we may report that all the churches generously supported our work and were willing to support especially the

Theological Training of future ministers in the GGRI. Furthermore, when one of our FRCA ministers lectured at the Theological Seminary in Sumba, the churches showed their support by having their ministers preach in his congregation.

We could keep the churches informed about our activities via Una Sancta and also about the state of our finances

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 continue 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 and Canadian sister churches in this matter as much as possible. The deputies shall see to it that there are no conflicts of interests among those involved. The deputies should 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 encourage the GGRI and their deputyship re the Theological Seminary to seek the expertise and help of the people/deputyship involved in the establishing of a theological training of the GGRC and Mission Smithville in Kupang.
6. 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.
7. To see to it that effective communication with the people involved is possible and if necessary also to make limited financial support available.
8. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to bring this to the attention to the regional and general synods of the GGRI so that they are willing to actively seeking this federal unity with the GGRC.

9. To keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Dutch and Canadian sister churches regarding the GGRC churches.
10. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 2 – 8 above mentioned.

4. Regarding the GGRC

- 4.1 We received the mandate** 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” and “To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance” and also “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” and “To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in above.”

The best way is to take all the subsequent mandates as a whole and to report about our contact with the GGRC. At first it seemed to us as if our relationship with the GGRC was deteriorating. We could have hardly any contact with their deputies. Still we received the invitation to visit their synod in 2011. As a result of our talks with the Canadian deputies and our own observations deputies decided to send delegates in order to encourage the GGRC again to seek unity with the GGRI. Our delegates could report back in a very positive way.

The GGRC has six churches and two mission posts on Rote Island, two churches and a mission post on Sabu Island and four churches in the Kupang area. The GGRC has 1610 members, six ministers and four evangelists as well as some candidate ministers. In 2005 a rift in the GGRC caused a split which resulted in a new bond being formed called the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Musyafir (GGRM). The GGRM has two churches consisting of 877 members and three ministers in the Kupang area.

High on synod agenda was reconciliation between the GGRC and GGRM. The conflict between the two bonds has wasted considerable energy within the churches and caused disorder and fighting. Thankfully reconciliation meetings could take place in May 2011 between some of the leaders and it was agreed that the matter would be further discussed at the Synod of the GGRC.

To fulfil deputies mandate concerning the GGRC and given the items

on the agenda of the Synod, it was decided to send two Australian delegates to this synod. The invitation to the synod of the GGRC was viewed by our deputies as a good opportunity to encourage unity between the GGRC and the GGRI.

Before synod started our deputies could have talks with Rev. Yonson Dethan and Rev. Yawan Bunda as well as with Rev Eli Fangidae from the GGRM. Rev. E. Fangidae has been a minister at the Galilee church in Kupang but due to his age (74) and some health issues he was to retire on the following Sunday and so he invited us to attend the church service where a new minister (Rev. Isak) would be installed. Rev. Fangidae has since suffered a stroke and his health continues to deteriorate.

Our discussions with all parties focused around the reconciliation between the GGRC and GGRM but also more specifically between the GGRC and GGRI. We pointed out that all have the same scripture, confessions and church order and on the basis on Ephesians 4 there should thus be unity. In our discussions we also focused on church life in general, i.e. women in the office of deacon, church discipline, church attendance, consistory meetings. As deputies of the GGRI were present Rev. Madah Biha GGRI (Kupang), Rev. Yan Parialaminya and Rev. Pila Njuka GGRI (Sumba) and Rev Edwar Dethan from the Smithville mission post. We addressed synod and urged them – after the reconciliation between the GGRC and GGRM – to continue in that way and to actively seek unity with the GGRI. The main point of this synod was the reconciliation between GGRC and GGRM but many churches put other proposals and requests forward to be discussed. More than once the Australian deputies heard the comment from those at synod that ‘we need help also from the Australian churches and your wisdom as we grow’.

A delegate of the GGRI, Rev. Pila Njuka, addressed Synod on behalf of GGRI. In his address he expressed thankfulness for the reconciliation between GGRC and GGRM and he also urged the GGRC to seriously consider being one federation with the GGRI as they have the same confession and church order. That is, one federation which can be formed into different classis’ in the different regions. The two bonds have recognised each other as sister churches since 1992. He pointed out that in Indonesia there is a need to unite in order to also be recognised by the government. They do not want to pressure this synod to do so not but maybe in the future.

The delegates had the impression that their attendance at synod had a positive influence on the Synod, and that the GGRC does value our relationship. It was also possible to have more informal contact and talks with Rev. Yonson Dethan. The delegates could also visit the theological college set up by Rev. Edwar Dethan with the help of the congregation in Smithville, Canada. Wherever possible the delegates encouraged the people to seek unity between GGRI and GGRC. On Sunday the delegates were able to attend the 'farewell service' for Rev. E. Fangidae. Also representatives of the GGRI were present. Rev. W. van der Jagt was invited to give a speech on behalf of the Australian churches in which he encouraged those in attendance to seek further unity with the GGRI.

It is difficult to get a clear picture of church life within the GGRC by attending only one synod and one church service. However as a result of their discussions with many members our delegates could report back that the churches meet regularly, the sacraments – Holy Supper and Baptism are administered and that church discipline is used for the correction of sin.

The delegates were also able to attend a kind of church-planting project. The congregation was small (40 members) and worship services take place in a renovated house which it has purchased in a predominantly Muslim area. The choice was deliberate as the intention was also to witness and evangelise to those in the area.

In conclusion the deputies can report that contact with the FRCAustralia with the GGRC is highly appreciated, that the GGRC are looking also for further guidance from the FRCAustralia. At the moment further unity with the GGRI still has to be encouraged, because the people do not really understand that it is necessary. A complicating factor is that there is only one local congregation of the GGRI in Kupang and that there is hardly any contact with the GGRI churches in Sumba. At the moment there are frequent pulpit exchanges between the minister of the local GGRI and the ministers of the GGRC. In this way local churches acknowledge that they need each other's support. Deputies are also convinced we have to continue to address the unity between the GGRI and the GGRC in major assemblies of the GGRC as well as those of the GGRI. Since the unity between the three federations of the GGRI became a fact it is also important that the FRCAustralia brings the unity between the GGRI and GGRC to the attention of the General Synod of the GGRI.

Regarding the financial consequences of our contact with the

GGRC we are allowed to repeat what is previously mentioned, 'It is with great thankfulness that we may report that all the churches generously supported our work.'

5. Recommended mandate regarding the GGRC

We recommend that synod appoints deputies with the following mandate:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the reformed character of these churches by advice or other means as seminars etc
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance.
3. To encourage the GGRC strongly to work towards federal unity with the GGRI and thus a sister-church relationship with the FRCAustralia.
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. Recommendation regarding the deputyship Indonesian churches in general.

Given the fact that one of our deputies (br. H. Swarts) was not able to function in the deputyship for a long period of time deputies request synod to appoint one new member to our deputyship and given the experience to use the exemption clause re the term of being a member of a deputyship for the other members.

Report of Deputies for contact with the RCNZ.

1. Synod Acts and Appointments

Synod Legana 2009 Art. 91 appointed Br. J. L. van Burgel (convenor) and Rev. J G R Kroeze as deputies for contact with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, with Rev. R Eikelboom as alternate.

Synod Legana 2009 Art. 63; 5d authorised two deputies to visit the next RCNZ synod, the relevant portions of which follow the end of this paragraph. Since br. J.L. van Burgel was unable to attend Rev. J Kroeze and Rev. R Eikelboom attended their synod, held from 3 to 9 September 2011 in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach, Auckland, which despite its name is a RCNZ congregation.

1. To thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. To confirm what was said by Synod 2003, namely to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To note that no substantial progress has been made in the understanding between the FRCA and RCNZ on the matter of the importance of the impediment which prevents the FRCA from entering into a sister relationship with the RCNZ.
4. To affirm that Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ has consequences in practical support and interaction. e.g. working together on the PNG mission field and supporting the theological training at the Bible College in PNG.
5. To renew the mandate of deputies to strive for sister-relations with the RCNZ by:
 - a. Monitoring the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA;
 - b. Encouraging the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA and be consequential in this relationship.
 - c. To discuss with the RCNZ their decision made at Synod Hasting 2008, which says that the RCNZ "cannot accept that their sister-church relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to the FRCA accepting their offer of sister-church relations".
 - d. Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest.
 - e. Reassuring the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them but the matter of their sister relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.
 - f. 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).
 - g. Providing information about the RCNZ to the membership of our churches.

6. To deny the overture of FRC Mt Nasura.
7. To decline the invitation of the RCNZ that we attend as observers at the meeting of the ICRC to be held DV in September 2009 in Christchurch.

2. Overview

We arrived on Saturday afternoon, after the moderamen had been chosen, but were taken to the evening service for the opening of synod. On Sunday we attended services in Bucklands Beach in the morning. In the afternoon Rev. J Kroeze attended a service led by Rev. J Sawyer in North Shore, while Rev. R Eikelboom visited Bucklands Beach again. The services were respectful and the teaching was scriptural. As for the rest we were well received and enjoyed our time with our RCNZ brothers.

Monday the synod began and a variety of topics were discussed. Topics of especial interest included:

Who May Preach; The conclusion of this discussion was that as a norm only ministers, students and emeritus ministers, although in keeping with their view that there are only two offices (their synod acts 1983, Article 12), elders and deacons, ruling elders are also allowed to preach, but by way of exception.

Psalms and Hymns; The RCNZ is working towards a unified book of worship, much like our Book of Praise. They, however, also allow the use of various other hymnals for use in their churches. They are at present attempting to get some order into this.

Forms and Confessions; The forms were debated vigorously. The Form for Baptism produced the most difficulty and it has been sent back to the committee for further work and consultation with the churches. We were thankful for that, for we do not think that the committee fully understood the ramifications of what they were proposing.

3. Relation CRCA and FRCA

For us, however, the main point of interest was the relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA;

At its synod in 2009 the CRCA had decided as follows:

3. *Re the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ):*

1. To concur with the work done in relation to the RCNZ.
2. To express deep gratitude for the progress being made in reducing the strain between our churches.

3. To endorse the CER's move to work with the IRC to redefine the relationship with the RCNZ so as to move beyond the current environment in which various issues repeatedly become a stumbling block and a cause of strain.
4. To discuss, during Synod 2009, the issue of the use of images of Christ for the purpose of meditation or worship, and address the concerns of the RCNZ and others within the CRCA.
5. To consider the RCNZ's difficulty with our 'ordination' of women into the office of deacon and give consideration to the practice of 'commissioning' so as to remove the cause of strain that exists at this time in our relationship.
6. To send two fraternal delegates to the next Synod of the RCNZ.
7. To send two CER representatives for up to two inter-synodical meetings between the CER and IRC.

[http://www.crca.org.au/files/Minutes - Day 3.pdf](http://www.crca.org.au/files/Minutes%20-%20Day%203.pdf)

In response the RCNZ decided as follows:

1. To establish a new category of interchurch relations in addition to the existing sister church relationship called Ecclesiastical fellowship.
2. To adopt provisionally the proposed "Rules for ecclesiastical fellowship" as rules for this new relationship.
3. To discontinue sister church relationship with the CRCA and establish instead a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
4. To inform the CRCA of this new relationship with them and seek ratification of this at the next synod of the CRCA.
5. To send two delegates to the next synod of the CRCA.

It is obvious that there is a reduction in the type of relationship between the CRCA and the RCNZ. However, the CRCA has Ecclesiastical Fellowship as its highest relationship, so looked at from another perspective the RCNZ is coming into line with the new CRCA relations. Nevertheless, the RCNZ continues to have a relationship called Sister Church Relationship. Therefore, this change is still a significant step.

The disappointment is that the practical rules for this new relationship are the same as for sister-church relationships except for a lower duty of care. These rules are, however, provisional. It remains to be seen what will be done with them.

With respect to the FRCA the RCNZ decided:

1. To continue our offer of sister church relations with the RFRCA.
2. To send one delegate to the 2012 synod of the FRCA.

4. Meeting with RCNZ Deputies

Your Deputies met with their International Relations Committee (IRC) on Friday over lunch. This was one of the only time slots available for a meeting due to the pressures of synod, and unfortunately it was rather hurried.

Their question to us, and it was asked several times by various people during the time of the Synod, was if we were truly desirous of a sister-church relationship with them. This question was answered in the affirmative by Act 63 of Synod Legana, which we had given to them previous to the meeting.

We also passed on to them an email received from Rev C. Vermeulen referring to an article that appeared in Faith in Focus. This article, which was written by an emeritus minister of the CRCA, Rev M. Geluk, implies that an Arminian church that accepted the inspiration of Scripture could be recognised as a true church. Rev. Vermeulen wished to know if this was an acceptable position in the RCNZ. http://www.rcnzonline.com/fnf/backissues/Aug_2010.pdf

At the meeting we basically went through our Acts Art 63 to discuss any points of difficulty. We note with respect to

- Point 2 - that the recognition of the RCNZ as true churches of Christ was made explicit in the address made at that synod by Rev. J Kroeze (annexed).
- Point 3 - there continues to be lack of progress to sister-church relations with the RCNZ, but that may change now with the change in their relation with the CRCA.
- Point 4 - there has been practical support and interaction between the RCNZ and the FRCA on the mission field, specifically in Port Moresby at the RCBC.
- Point 5
 - a) this monitoring is evident in this report.
 - b) that was done in the address, in personal discussions as well as in the meeting. Your deputies were not supportive of the reduction of duty of care that came with the new relationship. We argued for a reduction in the practical expression of fellowship and a maintenance of the duty of care.
 - c) Act 96.2 Synod Hastings 2008 - *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. - was not discussed due to the haste of the meeting and also because that sister church relationship has changed. Nevertheless it would be fair to say that their position has not changed with respect to that. Their relations are their business and not ours, just as our relations are our business and not theirs, unless they involve us in disobedience to God (cf. 2 Chr 19:2). Then we must submit to each other's admonitions (Eph 5:21).

- d) done
- e) that was done in the address, in personal discussions and at the meeting.
- f) done.

5. Changed circumstances

Synod Rockingham 2003 gave deputies the instruction, amongst others:

“to assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister church relations”

Acts of Synod 2006, Report of deputies, appendix 10, page 387

Deputies reported to synod West Kelmscott 2006 with a lengthy report on the principles involved and provided a number of conclusions. In respect to conclusions 5 and 6, the deputies were divided and provided separate conclusions (A and B). Consequently two separate sets of recommendations were submitted to synod which subsequently adopted version A (Acts Synod West Kelmscott 2006, art 102 page 70,71). The implication, although not implicitly stated in the decision, was that Synod agreed with version A of the conclusions and maintained that a possible triangular relationship continued to be an obstacle.

Deputies to Synod 2009 worked with the decisions of Synod 2006 and the understanding that the only impediment to full sister relations remained the issue of triangular relations regarding the CRCA but no further progress was made in regard to resolving these triangular relations.

As is stated in this report, there has in this intersynodical period been a development in the triangular relations which may impact on Synod's position regarding accepting sister church relations with the RCNZ.

1. The CRCA and RCNZ are downgrading their sister church relations to fraternal relations. The CRCA will no longer be a sister church of the RCNZ, although the CRCA retains significant privileges in fraternal relations. We do not as yet know if the CRCA will accept the change, although we do not think that the CRCA will refuse this

amended relation as it simply brings both churches into line.

Your deputies do not think much will change in practice. The move initiated by the CRCA is more a practical one rather than a principled one. However the decision was underpinned by frustration with the continued strained relations between the two federations over issues such as women in office. We can be thankful that the RCNZ continued their principled stand which led to this decision. Whilst we sought and preferred more, this is a change in the relations between the RCNZ and the CRCA which our Synod needs to take cognizance of.

2. Two of our sister federations (RCN and CanRC) are now sisters of the RCNZ.

Your deputies did not raise objections to the decisions by our sister federations, as we understood the triangular relationship problem to be one within one's own country. Were it not so, then the FRCA would have had to express its opinion about the numerous relationships that our overseas sister churches have. This point is not well understood by the RCNZ who have at times suggested a double standard. However the fundamental difference between triangular relationships at home and abroad is that at home we are obliged to seek unity with other true and faithful churches. Such a unity must have as aim organic unity. Organic unity is not the aim of overseas relations.

The RCNZ decisions to accept sister relations with our sister churches overseas underscores what has been previously reported by deputies that the RCNZ increasingly exercise its activities and overseas relations apart from the CRCA. The RCNZ is member of the ICRC and conducts mission work in cooperation with the CanRC and the FRCA.

3. A number of families, previously members of the RCNZ, have joined the FRCA in recent years in preference to joining the CRCA.

6. Recommendations

1. Synod again offer the RCNZ a fraternal relationship as previously decided by Synod Albany (2000; Act 93; p 51). That offer proposed the following rules:

To offer to enter into a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ according to the following rules:

- a. Fraternal relations shall be used to promote ecclesiastical fellowship with churches with which we do not yet have sister church relations;
 - b. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or their Minutes and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to their respective churches (if possible in translation);
 - c. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties;
 - d. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations;
 - e. The churches shall give account to each other concerning substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms;
 - f. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as fraternal delegates.
2. Synod instruct deputies to report to next Synod on the outcome of the CRCA decision on fraternal relations, and the RCNZ reaction to it, with a view to advising Synod if the changed circumstances are sufficient to enable it to offer full sister relations.

Grounds:

1. Synod Albany offered fraternal relations to the RCNZ, but they rejected that offer as they did not have such a relationship. Since they have now created such a relationship for contact with the CRCA, perhaps they will be willing to reconsider their decision for the interim.
- 2 Past Synods have said that the possible triangular relationship with FRCA/RCNZ/CRCA was an impediment to full sister relations, If the CRCA accept the RCNZ offer on fraternal relations, the FRCA will need to evaluate the finalised and changed situation with respect to a decision to offer full sister relations to the RCNZ.

Rev J G R Kroeze

L van Burgel.

Address RCNZ Synod September 2011

By way of introduction, my name is John Kroeze. I am a minister in the FRC of Legana, and one of the FRCA deputies for contact with the RCNZ. Earlier this year we received your invitation to attend your synod and Rev. Richard Eikelboom and I have been sent in response to it.

When I told my family that I would be going to Auckland to attend this synod this announcement was met with great glee. My children are avid fans of The Lord Of The Rings and they issued all types of dire warnings about the type of reception we would get from the orcs in Orcland. However, since my arrival here, I must say that the Lord of the Rings has given Auckland a bad rap. The welcome has been most friendly, for which I would like to thank you all.

For those who are not too familiar with the FRCA - We are a federation of 16 congregations. The total number of members would be in the vicinity of 4000.

We maintain sister church relationships with GKN(v), the CRC and with the FRCSA.

We are involved in mission work in PNG, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and we give financial support to mission in South Africa as well I believe.

One congregation is exploring the possibility of calling a minister for urban mission in Fremantle WA. There are evangelistic outreach programs in various churches.

We support the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We draw most of our ministers from there, although we still have a number of ministers who were trained in the GKN(v) theological college in Kampen, the Netherlands. That's it for the introduction.

Your half sister greets you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I say half sister, because we have not come to that stage where we are operating as full sisters. We have reached an impasse in our relationship, although the paternity suit has been settled. We recognise that we have the same Father, the same Lord and that the same Spirit dwells in us.

From the report of your IRC we see that you understand our position well, so I need not add anything to that. We would like to add that we also understand your desire for a better relationship with the CRCA and the difficulties that that currently labours under.

We also note that your IRC is willing to propose a modified relationship with the CRCA called Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Back in 2000 the FRCA synod mooted a proposal for a fraternal relationship with you, which you, and our own churches as well, declined. If this synod adopts the IRC's proposal, I have good hope that a way forward may be opening up for closer relations between the FRCA and the RCNZ. Our last synod also spoke of such things suggesting that the implications of our recognition of the RCNZ as a true church meant we should find ways of practical support and interaction. As an expression of that I have just spent a very pleasant month working alongside your Rev Alan Douma in the RCBC. So despite all the difficulties on the road to sister church relations there are positive developments and we hope that these may facilitate further developments, understanding and knowledge of each other.

We also hope that your continued relations with the CRCA may bear fruit still. Last year I attended a conference hosted by the CRCA congregation of Box Hill, Melbourne, where a plea was made to the CRCA to return to the old ways. This conference, as you will know, came about as the result of the invitation of a certain Dr. Tony Campolo to address the CRCA youth, but that was only the catalyst. Other issues of concern were addressed also. Somewhat later I met their minister in an airport and heard from him that the matters were still being dealt with in the ecclesiastical assemblies, but I gained the impression that the pleas had largely fallen on deaf ears. The RCNZ is aware of all this and we urge her to do her best to correct her ailing sister and to stand by those in the CRCA who want to walk in God's ways and not compromise the truth. We pray that you may continue to apply pressure and that it may aid in the return of the CRCA to biblical ways.

To move on to another topic, Reformed churches in general have entered a new battle zone. I refer to the battle between the so called Federal Vision and the Westminster Confession's view of covenant. This is in reality an old battle and has been fought various times since the Reformation. Ultimately this battle has its roots in the conflict between a systematic theological covenantal structure and a more biblical, theological, covenantal approach. When the Three forms of Unity speak of the covenant of grace they mean the New Covenant in Christ's blood and they include in it the believers and all their children. When the Westminster speaks of the covenant of grace it means a covenant God makes with Christ and all the elect in Him. This covenant then only includes the elect children. This difference is clearly seen in the understanding of baptism, which I note is one of the topics to be discussed at this synod.

The battle between these views is raging in the USA and its effects are

being felt everywhere. The RCNZ too is at risk as you have the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession in your constitution. I have seen signs in Faith in Focus that you are aware of the danger and that some tension does exist. We hope and pray that you will be able to deal with these differences without becoming internally divided, or worse, split. The differences are not such that they ought to separate brothers in Christ. I would add that the difference is not one of the basic doctrinal components of the system, but how they are systematised.

Finally, all of the Lord's churches in the western world face a creeping secularisation, or more explicitly a creeping desacralisation, which, perhaps, not that strangely, often manifests itself in consecrating to God what is offensive to Him. We want to enjoy the good things of this world and so we become materialistic instead of living for God. We want to attract people to church so we adapt our worship to attract fallen human nature instead of honouring God. We want unity in the church so we accept more and more sinful aberrations in our churches instead of conforming sinful man to our Holy God. We don't want doctrinal divisions between Christians so we relegate more and more doctrines to the non essential category instead of maintaining that every truth of God ought to be maintained, but that some are more weighty than others. If we allow this trend to creep to continue we will end up like the world and our churches will be considered God botherers by God Himself. That creep we must all resist.

You are gathered in a synod to discuss certain matters placed before you by your churches. We urge you not to take the road of least resistance, but the road of faithfulness to our God. That road may be hard and it may be painful at times, but that is the only road on which you will receive God's blessing. We recommend you, your churches and your synod to our Lord and pray that your synod may be a blessing to your congregations and the Church at large as well.

Thank you for allowing me the pleasure of addressing your synod.

Rev. John Kroeze

Note: This is an approximation of what was said as I did not read my paper.

Deputies for Relations with the Reformed Churches of Brazil

16 February, 2012

Synod 2012

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

C/- consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale PO Box 213

Armadale WA 6992

Dear brothers,

Synod Legana 2009, in its Article 91, appointed the undersigned as *Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad*, specifically for the *Reformed Churches in Brazil*.

The mandate that was given to these deputies is outlined as follows in Article 21 of the *Acts*:

“Investigate whether meaningful sister church relations are possible”

The following *Grounds* for this decision were recorded in the *Acts*:

1. The FRCA have fraternal contacts with RCB's sister churches in Holland and Canada.
2. The RCB will have contacts with one more faithful church and involved with the Word of God.
3. These contacts will create the possibility of exchange of advice and experience for Reformed faith and practice.
4. Synod 1990 decided to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches which are geographically closer to us (Article 58, Acts of Synod 1990)."

Deputies took up this task in July, 2009: in a short letter we introduced the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to the *Comissao de Contato com Igrejas no Exterior*, the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in Brazil. In that letter we reminded them that the catalyst which prompted our letter was their initial approach to us; we also informed them of our synod's decision regarding them; and we sent them a few current issues of the *Una Sancta*. No response was received.

While it may be argued that deputies should have been more persistent, and written to the RCB a second time, that course of action was not followed. Instead we remained mindful of our mandate, namely, "to investigate whether *meaningful* sister church relations

are possible.” Our goal was not to get a response, but rather to gauge whether mutual contact would grow naturally and become meaningful. At this point in time deputies have no reason to believe that sister church relations would be meaningful; and therefore we propose to synod that this initiative be dropped. If, on the other hand, synod disagrees with this proposal, we would be quite willing to go on serving on this committee.

With Christian greetings,

Rev. JGR Kroeze

Convenor

Rev. RJ Eikelboom

Clerk

Deputies for the Book of Praise

MANDATE AND INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS.

Synod 2009 charged the deputies with the following mandate:

Art 24

3. To appoint deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Monitor developments with the Canadian *Book of Praise*.
 - b. Resume investigations regarding copyright, printing costs and feasibility of producing an Australian Book of Praise only if the Canadian *Book of Praise* is substantially altered such that it is no longer suitable for use by the Australian churches.
 - c. Keep the churches informed of, and elicit responses from the churches regarding developments with the Canadian *Book of Praise*.

(page 38, *Acts of the 2009 Synod*)

Art 42.

2. To extend the mandate of the *Deputies for the Book of Praise* to include the following:
 - a. To scrutinise the revised sections of the *Book of Praise*, especially the completely revised Psalter, and that portion of the 28 additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010.
 - b. To invite comments from the churches on these revisions.
 - c. To receive and assess comments from the churches about that portion of the 28 additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010.
 - d. To pass on the findings to the Standing Committee of Book of Praise so that the Standing Committee of Book of Praise can use them.
 - e. To report to our next synod so that it can decide on the above matters.
 - f. to give account to synod of the principles and guidelines used to scrutinize these hymns.

(page 55, *Acts of the 2009 Synod*)

In order to fulfil their mandate deputies, in addition to regular email contact, met formally on 6 occasions. Fairly early on in the piece (mid 2010) Rev Dr J Smith left to go to Canada reducing the deputyship to three. Then in

October 2011 br H Schoof indicated that he was no longer able to function on the deputyship. As a result (after consultation with one of the ministers) br H Ballast was asked to take his place. We note that synod 2009 did not appoint an alternate. So the deputyship has seen some changes over the course of three years. This has made the work more difficult.

In compiling this report we have taken a systematic approach by reporting on each aspect of the mandate. This is followed by recommendations and finally the grounds for these recommendations. You will notice that it is a bit of a divided report. Deputies were not able to agree on all points. Where this occurred we have shown the two positions present among the deputies. It is and remains our prayer that the Lord, the King of the Church will bless the work of Synod Armadale 2012 for the glory of His name and the benefit of His church gathering work here in Australia.

February 2012,

Andrew Vermeulen
Aart Plug
Henk Ballast

REPORT

1. Art 24 No. 3a Developments with the Canadian *Book of Praise*

(Note: in order to avoid confusion, the Hymn numberings of the Authorized Provisional version of the *Book of Praise* (APV) are used throughout, and the General Synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches will henceforth be referred to as GS2004, GS2007, GS2010 and GS2013 respectively).

- 1.1 As mandated by GS 2004 of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches (SCBP) submitted to GS2007 for its consideration a selection of 28 hymns (henceforth known as the Augment) for possible addition to the hymn section of the Book of Praise. GS2007 recommended these hymns for testing within the Canadian Reformed Churches. GS 2007 appointed an ad hoc committee to provide an independent review of the hymns contained in the Augment. The ad hoc committee solicited and received feedback from numerous Canadian churches, and sent their comments and recommendations to the SCBP
- 1.2 Having considered the feedback from the ad hoc committee and the churches, the SCBP submitted a report to GS2010, in which they recommended the provisional adoption of:
 - The revised rhymings of the 150 Psalms,
 - The revised text of 21 of the existing hymns. 6 of these revisions were substantial, and 15 incorporated minor linguistic updates. The remaining 45 hymns to be retained without alteration
 - 14 of the 28 additional hymns contained in the Augment.
- 1.3 GS2010 of the Canadian Churches provisionally adopted:
 - the revised rhymings of the Psalms
 - the revised text of the existing hymns
 - 19 of the 28 additional hymns contained in the Augment. In doing so, it broadly followed the recommendations of the SCBP. In addition, Synod also adopted five hymns from the Augment (33, 45, 45, 57, 58, 75) that the SCBP had not recommended.
- 1.4 GS2010 authorized the SCBP to publish a provisional edition of the Book of Praise, incorporating all the changes and additions to the Psalms and hymns as described above, and including the updated prose sections (including quotations from the NIV) that

had already been adopted previously. This Authorized Provisional Version (APV) was to allow the SCBP to undertake revisions and corrections as required, with a view to the adoption of the definitive version of the Book of Praise at GS2013.

- 1.5 Synod also extended an invitation to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to send its comment and feedback to the SCBP.
- 1.6 The APV was published early in 2011, and copies of it were received by the deputies and the FRCA in the following months.
- 1.7 The deputies have engaged in some correspondence with the SCBP, for the most part to gain information concerning publication dates and details in relation to the APV.
- 1.8 In one of its replies to the deputies, the SCBP wrote the following:

“We also appreciate your input as we prepare our submission to GS 2013. In light of the mandate we have received for GS 2010, we have asked the churches to evaluate the APV for errors. As Committee we do not envisage a whole-scale evaluation of the Psalms and Hymns. To be consistent, our Committee will treat any input from the Australian churches via your committee in a similar way.”

In the light of the statement of GS2010, deputies found this comment rather disappointing, and inconsistent with the intentions of GS2010. It does not appear likely, at this point, that the SCBP will be disposed to interact in any substantial way with input from the Australian Churches.

This should not, however, prevent the deputies – nor for that matter, Synod itself – from communicating their feedback to the SCBP as per the invitation of GS2010.

2. Art 24 No. 3b. Pursuing the development of an Australian Book of Praise.

- 2.1 Synod Legana 2009 instructed the deputies to resume investigation regarding copyright, printing costs and feasibility of producing an Australian Book of Praise only *“if the Canadian Book of Praise is substantially altered such that it is no longer suitable for use in the Australian churches.”* On the basis of this mandate deputies have not resumed these investigations. Although feedback from some of the churches did indicate a

desire to go down the road of an Australian Book of Praise, no church contended that the *Book of Praise* had been '*substantially altered such that it is no longer suitable.*' Deputies have not seen the need to undertake any further action in this direction.

3. Art 24 No. 3c Providing the Churches with information, and soliciting their responses.

- 3.1 A letter was sent to the churches in September 2010, informing them about developments arising from GS2010 of the Canadian churches, and inviting their comments and feedback about the revised *Book of Praise*, and in particular about those hymns that GS2010 decided to adopt.
- 3.2 Previous Acts of Synods of the FRCA made mention of a set of guidelines for the selection and scrutiny of hymns. Deputies engaged in an extensive search for these guidelines and wrote to the churches asking for their assistance, but up to this point these efforts have been unsuccessful.
- 3.3 At various times, the deputies received items of correspondence from the churches. Usually, these were brief or informal requests for clarification and/or information, and were sent and replied to by email.
- 3.4 In view of the fact that the APV was not available till April 2011, the amount of time given to the churches to submit their responses was quite limited, and in the event proved to be entirely unrealistic. Deputies therefore extended their deadline for responses by several months. As of the time of writing this report, deputies received responses from 11 churches.
- 3.5 A summary of responses received from the churches is attached as **Appendix 6**, below.

4. Art 42 No. 2a Scrutiny of Psalter and Additional Hymns

Deputies completed a fairly thorough scrutiny of Psalms 1-78 of the Psalter. Time did not allow a detailed examination of the entire Psalter, but this was considered to be a large enough sample to be representative. The text of the revised rhyming of each Psalm was compared side-by-side with that of the (existing) 1984 rhyming, noting:

- The extent of revision (ranging from minimal to a complete rewrite)
- Relative closeness to the text of Scripture, including the degree of

‘padding’.

- Quality of language: clarity & immediacy, archaic vs. contemporary language, use of verbal imagery, overall poetic quality, including ‘singability’.
- Specific points of note, if any

Appendix 2 (below), provides an illustrative sample, and a fairly extended selection of summary comments.

4.1 The Psalter: Deputies agree that the revision of the text of the Psalms is a definite improvement on the current Book of Praise. Although they have suggestions on some of the revisions, the overall direction is positive and the deputies recommend endorsement by the Australian churches:

4.1.1 It should be noted that the degree of revision varies strongly, from quite minimal (replacing the ‘thee’s’ and ‘thou’s’ with you’s, etc) through to very substantial. Approximately 30% of the Psalms have been completely or almost completely rewritten.

4.1.2 The text of the revised rhymings is faithful to Scripture, and in many cases follows the text of Scripture more closely than the previous version. The demands of versification at times require the addition of some ‘padding’, but this has been reduced from the earlier rhymings, and overall the rhymings are ‘tighter’. In some cases, this has enabled the number of stanzas to be reduced, and the text structure of the Psalm itself to be better represented.

4.1.3 From a language perspective, the revisions are a definite improvement. In most instances archaic and obscure language has been replaced with contemporary equivalents, making the text of the rhyming more transparent and easier to follow (and probably easier to memorize). A stronger poetic quality is evident. Language use is generally fresh and vivid, and at numerous points the imagery of the Bible language has been strikingly represented. Only rarely could a case be made that the older version was better than the new.

4.2 The Hymn Section: In its revision of the Hymn Section, GS2010 of the Canadian churches:

4.2.1 Continued the inclusion of 45 existing hymns without change. Deputies noted that this usually continued the use of some archaic language, (including thee’s and thou’s).

However, in most cases this concerned traditional hymns, where the text has been established long ago. In other cases, the text may still be under copyright. Either way, deputies recognize that for these hymns the SCBP either was justified in not revising the text of the hymns, or was unable to do so.

4.2.2 Adopted minor linguistic revisions to 15 of the existing hymns. These changes were noted without comment.

4.2.3 Adopted substantial revisions or complete rewrites of 6 of the existing hymns. These revisions were examined in the same way as the revisions to the Psalter (see 4.1, above). Our conclusions mirror those of the Psalms, and deputies have no difficulty in recommending that they be adopted.

4.2.4 Adopted 19 additional hymns for inclusion in the *Book of Praise*. We have already pointed out that five of these hymns were not recommended for inclusion by the SCBP. As instructed by Synod, deputies scrutinised these hymns, making use of *Principles and Guidelines* listed in **Appendix 1**, below. In their scrutiny, deputies took into account the feedback from our own churches and the material provided by the Canadian churches. A detailed summary of the deputies' scrutiny is provided in **Appendix 5**, below.

4.2.5 Deputies have relied on those who are experts in music to provide comment on the music of the new or altered hymns. With the resignation of br Schoof, deputies no longer had the musical expertise to comment on this, and leave it in synod's court to determine the value and usefulness of these comments. A summary of their work (primarily from the Albany organists) is included as **Appendix 7**, below.

4.2.6 For the information of Synod, the following material is included as appendices:

4.2.6.1 Appendix 3: an overview of the content of the Hymn Section

4.2.6.2 Appendix 4: a listing of the hymns retained from the previous edition of the Book of Praise, subdivided into three groups: no change; minor revisions; substantial revisions or rewrites.

4.2.6.3 Appendix 5: a listing of the additional hymns,

with comments arising from the scrutiny by the deputies:
Please note that at times these comments may be contradictory. This reflects the range of views among the deputies.

4.2.6.4 Appendix 6: feedback from the churches

4.2.6.5 Appendix 7: feedback from the organists of FRC Albany on musical aspects of the additional hymns.

4.3 The Prose Section:

The prose section of the *Book of Praise* had already undergone revision previously, and we note that previous FRCA Synods had already agreed to permit these revisions. In 2010, in response to a request for clarification, deputies wrote to the churches:

Synod Legana 2009's decision "To permit the 2008 interim Book of Praise with NIV prose section for use in the churches" (Acts, Art 24, XI, 4) supersedes all previous decisions made by our churches with respect to the text of the prose section.

This means that the changes made in the 2008 edition have now been implicitly taken over by our churches, with the exception of those points where our Synods have made an explicit decision to use a different text from that adopted by the Canadian churches. These are:

- 1. Not to include the word "Christian" in Article IX of the Apostles' Creed (I believe a holy catholic church... (Acts of Synod 1987, Art 100).*
- 2. To re-insert the words "only-begotten Son" in the Belgic Confession, Article 18; the Canons of Dort I, Article 2 and II, Article 4, and in the Forms for Baptism, prayer of thanksgiving. (Acts of Synod 1987, Art 100).*
- 3. To add the words "Encourage the congregation to..." in the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons so that the charge to the deacons reads: "Encourage the congregation to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith". (Acts of Synod 1996, Art 89).*
- 4. The Church Order as adopted by our Synods.*

In view of the above, and in the absence of specific instructions, deputies concluded that their mandate did not include a scrutiny of the prose section. In any case, they did not have sufficient time to give any attention to this section of the *Book of Praise*. We do note that the pronouns referring to

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are no longer capitalized, in line with the NIV translation.

5. Art 42 No. 2b. Invite Comments from the Churches on the Revisions

5.1 See Number 3 above.

6. Art 42 No. 2c. Receive and Assess Comments from the Churches on the Hymns.

6.1 Deputies received feedback from 11 churches. Submissions were at times fairly lengthy and showed evidence of assessing the changes to the *Book of Praise* in quite some depth. Some submissions also included comments from individual church members, normally via their consistories. The table in **Appendix 6**, below, summarises in some detail the content of the submissions from the churches.

6.2 It is important to note that several consistories did not respond to requests for feedback themselves, but simply passed on, without further comment, and without any endorsement or recommendations of their own, submissions received from committees appointed for the purpose, or from individual members. In those cases, it was not possible to determine the positions of the consistories themselves on the strength or merit of the issues raised.

6.3 Overall conclusions:

1. There was general support for the revised Psalms and the revisions of the existing hymns.
2. Several churches expressed concern over the lack of capitalisation of pronouns referring to God.
3. Several churches expressed the view that they saw no reason to reject the proposed additional hymns, and that the churches would be well-served by them.
4. Some of the other submissions appeared to take the view that most of the additional hymns were acceptable, or at least not unacceptable.
5. Some unease was expressed at the increase in the number of hymns, and what effect this could have on the primacy of the singing of Psalms in the worship service. In this connection,

reference was made to decisions taken by previous FRCA Synods.

6. A number of submissions expressed objections to or concern over specific hymns. These included:
 - The doctrinal soundness of some of the hymns was questioned. Most notably, these included Hymns 30, 33, 57, 58, 75 and 79. They were regarded as doctrinally weak, ambiguous or wrong, or omitting what was seen to be essential, leaving room for error in the understanding of the doctrine of Scripture.
 - The question was raised whether the need for all of the hymns had been demonstrated. The view was expressed that a number of hymns did not add significantly to what we already have.
 - The musical quality of some of the hymns was questioned.
 - For some hymns, their suitability for worship was questioned.

(It should be noted, however, that some of the questions or concerns raised were of a lower order, and did not necessarily imply that the hymns were considered unacceptable).

7. Some of the churches expressed regret that the development of an Australian Book of Praise would not be pursued, and suggested that this option should be reconsidered.

7. Art 42 No. 2d. Passing on Findings to SCBP

- 7.1 In correspondence received from the SCBP we were given the impression that their committee was only interested in grammatical and typographic errors. (see 1.6.1 above) It appeared that the time for significant changes was over.
- 7.2 Our mandate is to pass on the findings to the SCBP so that the SCBP can use them. As yet deputies have not done this for the following reasons:
 - a. the SCBP only desires us to notify them of minor errors (see No.1 above).
 - b. GS2010 acknowledged the need to work together with the Australian churches in coming to final decisions regarding the Book of Praise, and instructed the SCBP *“to give the Australian churches opportunity to comment on this version*

(...of the *Book of Praise*...) *via Synod Armadale 2012*" (Acts, Art 115, 4.2) and to "*communicate with the CanRC, as well as the Deputies of the FRCA, and seek and consider further suggestions for improvements to the Book of Praise.*"(Acts, Art 143 4.2.4) (for the full text of relevant GS2010 decisions see **Appendix 8**, below).

- 7.3 Deputies believe that the SCBP has not done justice to their own synod's decisions. Art 115 of the Acts of GS2010 clearly request feedback via Synod Armadale 2012. Yet correspondence from the SCBP indicates that such feedback is not really useful anymore. Deputies believe that the SCBP has erred in this regard, and that the FRCA should write to the next Canadian Synod, drawing attention to this matter.

8. Art 42. No. 2f. Principles and Guidelines used to Scrutinize new Hymns

- 8.1 Deputies went to considerable lengths to find the principles and guidelines used by Australian BoP deputyships in the past, but were unable to find any.
- 8.2 Back in the 1950's and 1960's our churches concluded that "*it is our intention to limit the songbook to.... the book of Psalms and other songs from the Bible*" (Acts 1959 art 40). So the thought back then was to move down the path of hymns which were primarily versifications of Scripture. This historical background led to the period in which our churches used the Canadian *Book of Praise*, but did not sing all of the hymns. At Synod 1987 this changed and all the hymns were adopted.
- 8.3 The principles used by the SCBP (Canada) have been included in Appendix 1. Deputies agree with these principles. Deputies were not able to agree on further principles beyond these.
- 8.4 Deputies agreed that Hymns 38, 50 and 60 meet the guidelines agreed upon and should be included in the revised hymns section.
- 8.5 Additionally, deputies agreed that all the following hymns meet the principles agreed upon – Hymns 9, 10, 32, 34, 46, 62, 66, and 75. Deputies disagreed, however, on whether that should mean that these hymns be recommended for use in the churches.
- 8.5.1 Some of the deputies held that none of these hymns

should be recommended, since they do not make an independent contribution; they are already substantially duplicated elsewhere.

8.5.2 Another deputy argued that the principle of uniformity with Canadian sister churches allows us to recommend such hymns. In addition, some of them (such as 9, 46 and 62) fill a definite need, and ought to be included on their own merits.

8.6 Deputies were unable to agree on recommending Hymns 30, 33, 45, 57, 58, 70, 79 and 81, for reasons relating to their content. Specifically, their doctrinal soundness was questioned. They were seen to be in varying degrees doctrinally weak or ambiguous, or omitting what was essential, leaving room for error in the understanding of Scripture, and leading to neglect of Biblical truth. Further details at this point can be found in **appendix 5**, below.

8.6.1 In this connection, deputies noted that GS2010 adopted Hymns 33, 45, 57, and 58 and 75 against the recommendation of the SCBP. Deputies also noted that GS2007's *ad hoc* review committee took an even more restrictive stance, which, if followed, would have led to the adoption of only 9 additional hymns. Deputies who object to the inclusion of the above hymns believe that GS2010 took an approach to judging hymns that is not consistent with good reformed practice of erring on the side of caution.

8.6.2 The Acts of GS2010 document the reasons for the Canadian Synod's decisions regarding the additional hymns. For instance, in relation to Hymn 33: *The Strife is O'er, the Battle done*, the Acts state: "*The arguments presented by the SCBP against the inclusion of this hymn are not strong. Stating that a hymn adds little new material is not an argument against including that hymn. Pointing out that some words used in a hymn are not "found anywhere in Scripture" does not make those words unscriptural. The words in question reflect, in a poetic way, the swift and decisive character of Christ's victory over death.*"(Acts, Art. 139). And in relation to Hymn 30: *Christ Jesus lay in Death's strong bands*, we read: *While it is true that many concerns have been raised in connection with this hymn, the real issue is: What is the true weight of these concerns? The objections have been adequately answered in the light of Scripture and confessions (Art. 27)*

The deputies question whether the consideration GS2010 gave to adopting the hymns that the SCBP did not recommend was indeed adequate. The Acts of GS2010 themselves acknowledge Synod's limitations in this regard: *It is impossible for Synod Burlington-Ebenezer to give satisfactory consideration and do justice to all the details contained in the submissions regarding any part of the Book of Praise within the short time General Synod is convened.* (Acts, art 143, consideration 2).

The deputies believe that in the circumstances, GS2010 would have done better to err on the side of caution.

- 8.7 Some of the Australian deputies strongly advocate an approach which states that a proposed hymn needs to be distinctly Biblical and confessional with no ambiguity. Additionally, the need for the new hymn ought to be clearly demonstrated. It was also felt that the more hymns we have the less likely we are to know what we already have.
- 8.8 On the other hand, another deputy advocates a different approach at some points:
 - FRCA Synod 2009 decided that, on balance, our churches would be best served by using the Canadian *Book of Praise*, unless there were compelling reasons to do otherwise. By extension, it is reasonable to apply a comparable default position to the selection of individual hymns. A case would need to be made for the *exclusion*, rather than the *inclusion* of the additional hymns that were proposed.
 - We have every reason to respect highly the doctrinal, liturgical and procedural competence and integrity of the brothers and sisters in Canada. This does not imply that we must agree with all their conclusions, or rubber-stamp their choices. It does mean, however, that we need to give serious consideration to the arguments they present, and that any different conclusions we come to will need to be supported by strong arguments of their own.
 - There is less ambiguity in the proposed hymns than many comments suggest. This perceived ambiguity is frequently potential rather than actual. When understood within the context of Reformed worship and sung – as intended – in conjunction with the proclamation of the Word, their evident meaning is clear and Biblical.
 - The suggestion that many of the proposed hymns add little or

nothing to what we already have cannot be sustained. These additional hymns were originally proposed because they were seen to provide in an identified need, and thoughtful reading shows that in almost every case they do highlight a significant aspect of Christian faith and life that does not appear elsewhere.

- Objections that some of the hymns appear to ‘miss something’ are often unrealistic and unreasonable. By this criterion, most of our Psalms, if taken in isolation, would also fall short. Highlighting one aspect of, for example, the meaning of baptism does not imply that aspects not explicitly mentioned are downgraded, ignored or set aside, as long as they are adequately expressed elsewhere.

- 8.9 We regret that we were not able to come to agreement; yet we have endeavoured to serve the churches with a single report and trust that we have supplied synod with the information it needs to make a Scriptural and edifying decision.

Recommendations:

1. To decide in principle to adopt the revised Psalter after it is approved in its final form by General Synod 2013 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This in-principle decision to be confirmed at the 2015 FRCA Synod.
2. To decide in principle to adopt the revisions of the existing hymns after they are approved in their final form by General Synod 2013 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This in-principle decision to be confirmed at the 2015 FRCA Synod
3. To endorse the guidelines listed under Appendix 1, below, as a starting point in the evaluation of the proposed hymns, as well as other hymns which may come up for consideration in the future.
4. To approve for adoption, in principle, Hymns 38, 50 and 60 after the final version of the new *Book of Praise* is approved by General Synod 2013 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This in-principle decision to be confirmed at the 2015 FRCA Synod
5. To consider Hymns 9, 10, 32, 34, 46, 62, 66, and 75 in light of the comments raised in this report.
6. To give careful consideration to Hymns 30, 33, 45, 57, 58, 70, 79 and 81 in light of the comments raised in this report.

7. To decide in principle to adopt the completely revised *Book of Praise*, with the exception of those hymns deemed unnecessary or unsuitable for worship, after it is approved in its final form by the General Synod 2013 of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This in-principle decision to be confirmed at the 2015 FRCA Synod
8. To write to the next Canadian Synod expressing a desire to continue to have a shared song book, and to request their synod (GS2013) to instruct the SCBP to take substantive input from the Australian churches seriously even if that means a delay in the final adoption of the revised BOP.
9. To consider writing to the Canadian Synod indicating that their method of adopting new hymns is not consistent with good reformed practice of erring on the side of caution.
10. To discharge the deputies.
11. To appoint new deputies (including alternates) to monitor developments in relation to the new Book of Praise, to communicate with the SCBP of the Canadian Reformed Churches, to report with relevant recommendations to the 2015 Synod, and to carry out any other task Synod deems appropriate.

Grounds:

- a. Synod FRCA2009 decided that at this time the use of the Canadian *Book of Praise* is preferable to the development of an Australian church book, unless the Canadian church book is altered to the point where it is no longer suitable for use in the churches. No evidence has been brought forward that such a situation has arisen.
- b. At this point, the Canadian sister churches have adopted a provisional version of the revised *Book of Praise*. While no great changes are envisaged, all details have not yet been finalised, and the final form has not yet been established. It would be prudent for the Australian Churches to await this final form, before deciding on a definitive adoption.
- c. Generally speaking, the text of the revised Psalter is as faithful to Scripture as the previous version, and often follows the text of Scripture more closely.
- d. The language of the revised Psalter has been significantly

improved. It has been brought substantially into line with current usage, and for the most part its clarity and poetic qualities have been enhanced.

- e. The improvement of the small number of existing hymns that have undergone significant revision mirrors that of the Psalms.
- f. The text of Hymns 38, 50 and 60, recommended by the deputies, is clearly Scriptural and clearly follows the guidelines. There is no evidence of any ambiguity with the wording of these hymns. The need for their inclusion can also be demonstrated. As such they will be good, God glorifying additions to the *Book of Praise*.
- g. Hymns 9,10, 32, 34, 46, 62, 66, and 75 were judged by the deputies to meet the criteria for inclusion. However, they were deemed by some to be either unnecessary or a duplication of existing Psalms or hymns.
- h. In regard to Hymns 30, 33, 45, 57, 58, 70, 79 and 81, doubts have been expressed about their doctrinal soundness, and/or their suitability for worship. These matters need to be carefully examined by Synod.
- i. GS2010 of the Canadian Churches decided to invite input from the Australian churches before finalizing the revisions of the *Book of Praise*. Scrutiny of the revision has thrown up a number of matters that are worthy of consideration. It would be remiss of the Australian churches not to avail themselves of this opportunity. The Canadian as well as the Australian churches would benefit from taking the time to ensure these matters are properly considered.
- j. The decision of the SCBP to consider suggestions for minor corrections only, while understandable within the process, appears to be inconsistent with GS2010's decision to invite comment from the Australian churches. Up till now, the Australian Churches have not had opportunity to provide substantive input, and now it appears to have become effectively impossible. This is not a healthy situation, and every effort should be made to correct it.
- k. It could be argued that GS2010, in adopting hymns contrary to the recommendations of the SCBP and/or the ad hoc committee appointed by GS 2007, and in the face

of arguments brought forward by some of the Canadian churches, acted hastily and without due caution. The Acts of GS 2010 themselves acknowledge this possibility: *It is impossible for Synod Burlington-Ebenezer to give satisfactory consideration and do justice to all the details contained in the submissions regarding any part of the Book of Praise within the short time General Synod is convened.* (Acts, art 143, consideration 2).

- l. Within the framework of the mutual obligations of a sister-church relationship, and bearing in mind that in this matter the FRCA are directly affected, it is appropriate for Synod to address its Canadian counterparts in this matter.
- m. Until such time as the revised *Book of Praise* is finalised and adopted, the task of deputies is not complete. The need to monitor, communicate and report to the churches remains.

APPENDIX 1:

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF MUSIC IN THE CHURCH

as used by the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise (SCBP) of the Canadian Reformed Churches

1. The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹
2. The Book of Psalms is foundational for the Church's songs. Therefore, all of these Psalms, in their entirety, ought to be included in the Church's songbook.
3. When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text.²
4. In the case of songs other than the versification of Scripture, the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.³
5. The songs of the Church must be intelligible and edifying to the body of Christ.^{4 5}
6. The songs of the Church must reflect and preserve the language of the Church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends.⁶
7. In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, and individualism.
8. The music of the song should suit the text.
9. The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.
10. The music of the Church should not be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the Church and the worship of God.⁷
11. The melodies and harmonies of church music must be suitable for congregational singing, avoiding complicated rhythms, excessive syncopation, and a wide range of pitch.

1 Psalm 147:1

2 Psalm 92:1-4

3 Proverbs 30:6

4 I Corinthians 14:15

5 Colossians 3:10

6 Romans 12:2a

7 Ephesians 5:18-21

APPENDIX 2:

Summary of the Deputies' scrutiny of the Psalm section of the revised *Book of Praise*:

Illustrative sample of the side-by-side scrutiny of revised Psalm 20.

PSALM 20

1984	2010 DRAFT
<p>1. O May the LORD in days of trouble From Zion hear your cry. Protect you, scattering like stubble Those who His name deny May He recall your gifts of spices And from His sanctuary With favour see your sacrifices And quell your adversary.</p>	<p>1. O may the LORD in days of trouble From Zion hear your plea. With His support may you be able To gain the victory. May Jacob's God remember ever Your offerings of spices And from His dwelling look in favour On all your sacrifices.</p>
<p>2. May all your heart's desire be granted And God fulfil your plans! May we the victory you wanted Extol with song and dance. He made your way and war victorious, And we, His Name professing, Will set up banners great and glorious. God crown your prayers with blessing.</p>	<p>2. May all your heart's desire be granted; may God fulfil your plans. May we with shouts of joy unstinted your victory enhance. Then we shall praise the Lord so glorious, His holy name professing, and let our banners fly victorious. God crown your prayers with blessing.</p>
<p>3. I know now that the LORD's anointed Will with His help be blessed. The LORD hears whom He has appointed And grants him his request. Yes, from His heaven high and holy His right hand strong and mighty Shall stay the proud, exalt the lowly, And with great deeds delight me.</p>	<p>3. I know now that the Lord's anointed will with His help be blessed. He hears the one He has appointed and grants him his request. Yes, from His heaven high and holy His right hand strong and mighty shall curb the proud, exalt the lowly, and with great deeds delight me.</p>
<p>4. Some boast of chariots, some of horses, But we boast in the Name Of Him who rules all heaven's forces, Our LORD so great in fame. They will collapse and fall before us, But we shall rise undaunted. O LORD, make Thou the king victorious, That so our prayers be granted.</p>	<p>4. Some boast of chariots, some of horses, but we boast in the name of Him who rules all heaven's forces, our God so great in fame. They will collapse and fall before us, but we shall rise undaunted. LORD, save the king, make him victorious, that so our prayers be granted.</p>

Extensive revision in stanzas 1 & 2, minor revision in 3 & 4. On the whole follows the text of Scripture fairly closely. A few minor insertions, probably justified in the context.

Sample of Summary comments:

Note: this sample is not really representative, as it tends to focus more on the psalms that have undergone more substantial revisions.

Psalms 1:

Stanza 2, lines 1 and 2: Not in text of Scripture, but consistent with it

Stanza 4, last line: Brilliant imagery!

Overall: *Almost a complete rewrite, significant improvement. Verse divisions better aligned with text structure.*

Psalms 6:

Stanza 2, line 3: Why do you tarry, Lord? Archaic, we suggest: Why do you wait, O Lord?

Overall: *Minimal revision.*

Psalms 8:

Stanza 4, Line 1: Exegetically not wrong, but the 1984 rhyming is better. Clumsy line, doesn't sing so well. This line is not an improvement.

Overall: *Largely rewritten, some elements of previous rhyming retained. Follows the text of Scripture very closely.*

Psalms 10:

Stanza 1, Line 7: It makes sense in the context, but it doesn't actually say in Scripture

Stanza 2, lines 4&5: a wonderfully clear and direct rendering

Overall: *Substantial revision, in some stanzas a complete rewrite. Linguistic update, language is fresh and full of impact. Close to Scripture. This difficult-to-sing psalm has had a welcome facelift.*

Psalms 16:

Stanza 3: Do two lines in Scripture really need to be stretched out over a whole stanza?

Stanza 4, lines 4-6: a laboured and roundabout rendering of the Scripture text

Overall: *The 1984 version was a not a success, a worthy effort by a non-native speaker, displaying little feel for the rhythm and flow of English. That was all the more unfortunate, because it is sung very often. This is a thorough and partly successful revision, but it could have been better still. With exception of the points noted above, it does follow the text of Scripture closely.*

Psalms 19:

Overall: *A complete and very welcome rewrite. Follows the text of Scripture very closely – the stanza divisions reflect the structure of the Psalm well.*

Psalms 23:

Stanza 2, lines 1 and 2: Much closer to what Scripture actually says.

Overall: *Making changes to this well-loved rhyming was always going to be a*

courageous move. However, all the changes are improvements, bringing the language closer to Scripture, and making it fresher and more straightforward.

Psalm 25:

Overall: *This Psalm was badly in need of revision. Language was clumsy, archaic, and in places quite obscure. Almost a complete rewrite, very successful indeed. Follows the text of Scripture closely. Tighter writing could have combined 8&9 into one stanza.*

Psalm 29:

Stanza 1: A very clear, direct and accessible rhyming. “Oh mighty ones” (vs 1) is interpreted as ‘heavenly hosts’. Literally, the Hebrew says: “sons of god(s)”, which in the OT is consistently used to mean ‘heavenly beings’

Overall: *Stanza 1 mostly rewritten. Others slightly revised. A close representation of the text of Scripture.*

Psalm 34:

Overall: *almost identical to the previous rhyming*

Psalm 36:

Overall: *A complete rewrite. Stays very close to the text of Scripture, language is fresh and vivid. It sings very well indeed.*

Psalms 42 and 43:

Overall: *By now, both of these psalms have undergone their 3rd or 4th revision/ adaptation of Dewey Westra’s original 1931 rhyming, and it shows. They are a patchwork of styles. There are definite improvements, both in their closeness to the text of Scripture, and (especially) in the updating of archaic and obscure language, but they don’t go far enough. The SCBP might have done better to start from scratch and replace them with entirely new rhymings.*

Psalm 45:

Stanza 3, line 1: “Your throne, like God’s own throne, will stand forever.” Follows the reading of the RSV, rather than the NIV or NKJV. This is a textual decision, which lies beyond our competence. We can assume that it was thoroughly examined by the theologians on the SCBP.

Overall: *A very thorough revision. Follows the text of Scripture closely. Language is much improved.*

Psalm 47:

Overall: *The earlier rhyming dates back to 1931, and has continued with virtually no changes since then. In spite of its many archaisms, the 1931 rhyming is far superior to the revision. The poetry is much stronger, and flows beautifully with the melody. There is nothing really wrong with the new rhyming (it uses contemporary language, and follows the text of Scripture more closely), but there isn’t much right with it either. As poetry it is mediocre at best, and it simply does not sing well.*

Psalm 50:

Stanza 11: A fairly loose rendering of the Scripture text

Overall: *An almost complete rewrite, with some elements of the previous rhyming retained. For the most part, a tight and accurate following of the text of Scripture. Straightforward, with vivid and accessible language. Should sing well.*

Psalm 56:

Overall: *Modest revision, just language updates. In the Scripture text, vss 4 and 9-10 are a repeated refrain. It's a pity this does not come out in the rhyming.*

Psalm 59:

Overall: *A fairly substantial revision. Rhyming follows text of Scripture closely. Language is vivid and immediate, and it should sing well (not that anyone ever sings Psalm 59, but we live in hope...)*

Psalm 63:

Overall: *A limited revision, mostly linguistic updates. The wonderful interplay between music and text that marked the earlier rhyming has been successfully retained.*

Psalm 65:

Overall: *A limited revision. Where in many places the 1984 rhyming sings about God, the revision addresses God directly – a significant improvement, which brings it closer to the text of Scripture, and sings much better.*

Psalm 67:

Stanza 1: By exchanging lines 2 and 4, the rhyming is brought closer to the text of Scripture, and echoes the benediction at the end of the worship service.

Overall: *A moderate revision. The most archaic language has – thankfully – been replaced.*

Psalm 68:

Overall: *A very thorough revision, in many places a complete rewrite. The verb tense is consistently brought back into line with the text of Scripture (see for example stanza 5) The language modernization is a definite improvement.*

Psalm 75:

Stanza 2, lines 6,7: Follows the text of the NIV here; the intent is more clearly expressed.

Overall: *A substantial and welcome revision of a weak and clumsy rhyming. A complete rewrite might have been better still. It follows the text of Scripture more closely and brings it out more clearly.*

Psalm 78:

Overall: *According the words of its title, Psalm 78 is intended as a song for instruction. Even more than other Psalms, its language therefore needs to be as clear, direct and vivid as possible, so that it hits its intended audience between the*

eyes, serving its instructional purpose as effectively as possible. That's the way it was in the Hebrew; that's the way it ought to be in English. Unfortunately, the impact of the earlier rhyming was marred by a great deal of obscure and archaic language. It's a great pleasure to see just how much this has been corrected and improved in the revised rhyming. Perhaps we will now sing much more of this Psalm, much more often!!

APPENDIX 3:

Overview of the revised Hymn Section of the Book of Praise:

Old	New	Revision
1A	1	
1B	2	
2	3	Substantial revision
3	4	Thee/you
4	5	
58	6	Completely rewritten
5	7	
6	8	
	9	New
	10	New
7	11	Very minor
8	12	
9	13	
10	14	Thee/you
11	15	Very minor
12	16	
13	17	Substantial revision
14	18	Completely rewritten
15	19	Thee/you
16	20	
17	21	
18	22	Rewritten
19	23	
20	24	
21	25	Very minor
22	26	Thee/you
23	27	
24	28	
25	29	
	30	New
26	31	(2 tunes)
	32	New
	33	New
	34	New
27	35	Very minor
28	36	
29	37	
	38	New
30	39	
31	40	
32	41	Thee/you
33	42	
34	43	
35	44	
	45	New

Old	New	Revision
	46	New
36	47	Thee/you
37	48	Thee/you
38	49	Very minor
	50	New
39	51	
40	52	
41	53	
42	54	
43	55	
45	56	
	57	New
	58	New
44	59	
	60	New
46	61	Thee/you
	62	New
47	63	Completely rewritten
49	64	
48	65	
	66	New
50	67	Thee/you
51	68	
52	69	
	70	New
53	71	
54	72	
55	73	
56	74	
	75	New
57	76	
59	77	
60	78	Thee/you
	79	New
61	80	
	81	New
62	82	
63	83	
64	84	
65	85	

APPENDIX 4:**Summary of Hymn Section: Hymns from Previous edition**

No change – 45 hymns out of 85 – 53%			
New	Old	Title	Comments
1	1A	Apostles' Creed	
2	1B	Apostles' Creed versification	
5	4	Holy, holy, holy	Trad. hymn – no editing
7	5	Glory be to God the Father	
8	6	Praise God from whom all blessings flow	Trad. hymn – no editing
12	8	Song of Moses	
13	9	Do you not know...	
16	12	O come, o come Emmanuel	Trad. hymn – no editing
20	16	A great and mighty wonder	
21	17	While shepherds watched their flocks	
23	19	Let us of Christ our Lord and Saviour sing	
24	20	With heart and mouth I all confess	
27	23	Hark how the adoring hosts above	Trad. hymn – no editing
28	24	Salvation unto us has come	
29	25	All glory, laud and honour	Trad. hymn – no editing
31	26	Christ has risen, hallelujah!	2 alternate tunes
36	28	The God and Father of our Lord	
37	29	Hallelujah, praised be the Son	
39	30	Our Saviour, when he told his own	
40	31	The Lord ascended up on high	
42	33	Where high the heavenly temple stands	
43	34	Lo, what a cloud of witnesses	
44	35	Rejoice, the Lord is King	
51	39	O faithful is this well-known word	
52	40	The church's one foundation	
53	41	A mighty fortress is our God	
54	42	O God, our help in ages past	Trad. hymn – no editing
55	43	Who trusts in God, a strong abode	Trad. hymn – no editing
56	45	Loving Shepherd of thy sheep	Trad. hymn – no editing
59	44	Come take by faith the body of our Lord	
64	49	What is in life and death your only aid	
65	48	If you but let the Father guide you	
68	51	Jesus is our sure defence	
69	52	Lo, round the throne, a glorious band	Trad. hymn – no editing
71	53	The hope of faith shall not deceive us	
72	54	Behold, the amazing gift of love	
73	55	Lo, what a glorious sight appeared	
74	56	Our outer nature wastes away	
76	57	Thank the Lord and come with praise	Trad. hymn – no editing
77	59	We praise thee o God, our Redeemer, Creator	Trad. hymn – no editing
80	61	Give to our God immortal praise	
82	62	All glory be to thee, Most High	Trad. hymn – no editing
83	63	I'll thank thee, o my God and Saviour	Trad. hymn – no editing
84	64	Ye servants of God	Trad. hymn – no editing
85	65	Now thank we all our God	

Summary of Hymn Section: Hymns from Previous edition (continued):

Minor Changes			15 hymns out of 85 – 18%
New	Old	Title	Comments
4	3	We praise you, God the Father, the Creator	Thee, etc → you, etc
11	7	The Ten Commandments versification	A few minor language updates
14	10	The prayer of Habakkuk	Thee, etc → you, etc
15	11	Comfort, comfort now my people	Some minor language updates
19	15	The people who in darkness walked	Thee, etc → you, etc
25	21	Who has believed our message from on high	Minor revision in stanza 3
26	22	You, Holy Lamb of God we bless	Thee, etc → you, etc
35	27	If God is on our side, against us shall be none.	Minor revisions in stanzas 2,4
41	32	Christ, above all glory seated	Thee, etc → you, etc
47	36	He has come, the Holy Spirit	Thee, etc → you, etc
48	37	Come, praise the Holy Spirit	Thee, etc → you, etc
49	38	The Spirit sent from heaven above	Minor revision in stanza 3
61	46	We thank you, Father, you have planted	Thee, etc → you, etc
67	50	Come, Lord Jesus, Maranatha!	Thee, etc → you, etc
78	60	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	Thee, etc → you, etc

Revision or Rewritten			6 hymns out of 85 – 7%
New	Old	Title	Comments
3	2	<i>Te Deum</i> : O God, we praise you	Some revision: Thee, etc → you, etc; a faithful contemporary rendering of one of the church's earliest hymns.
6	58	Praise God most high, you servants of the Lord	One of the early church's Trinitarian hymns, completely rewritten in contemporary language: closer to the text of the original than the previous rhyming
17	13	Magnificat: The Song of Mary	A very substantial revision. Language is a significant improvement over the awkward and archaic rhymings of the previous version. Both are equally close to the text of Luke 1.
18	14	The Song of Zechariah	A complete rewrite. Very faithful to the text of Scripture. One stanza shorter, with much of the padding removed. Language is contemporary and very straightforward.
22	18	The Song of Simeon	A complete rewrite. Close to the text of Scripture; strong, up-to-date poetic language.
63	47	The Lord's Prayer	Completely rewritten. Strongly echoes the confessional language of the Heidelberg Catechism. Stanzas 7 and 8 are shorter and tighter than the previous 7-10. Simple, straight-forward, everyday language. Will serve as a powerful instructional tool for young people.

APPENDIX 5:**Summary of Scrutiny by the Deputies of the proposed additional hymns in the Book of Praise.**

Hymn No.	Title	Comments:
9	Glory be to the Father	<p>Recommended by SCBP. Not recommended by <i>ad hoc</i> committee, but no reason given.</p> <p>Doctrinally – fine. Says very little, if anything, not found already in hymn 7. Although it praises the Lord it does not give us the reason for this praise. Unnecessary and need not be included.</p> <p>A classic Trinitarian doxology that goes back to the earliest days of the NT church. Was frequently used as the congregation's response to the recitation of the Creeds, reading of Scripture and/or the benediction at the end of the service. "As it was... etc" powerfully confronts early (and contemporary) Arian heresy. A valuable addition; Should be included</p>
10	Now blessed be the Lord our God	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Faithful versification of Scripture. In that sense have no problems with it. It is a bit repetitive and does not say any more than Psalm 72:10 (rhymed version). We would be better off singing the rhymed version as found in the Psalms of the BOP. No need to include.</p> <p>An arrangement of the inspired OT doxology that comes at the end of each of the 'books' of the Psalms (41, 72, 89, 107, 150).</p> <p>Acceptable; a useful alternative to Hymn 9</p>

30	Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands	<p>Recommended by SCBP. Not recommended by <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Two concerns. 1. A personal concern – don't like the: "and sing to God right thankfully" 2. Verse 4, second line – does the Lord invite us to keep the festival (Lord's Supper), or covenantally should we see it as a command? Not recommended.</p> <p>Written by Martin Luther. Not a rhyming of a Scripture passage, but contains numerous references and allusions to Scripture. The invitation to celebrate is at the same time a covenant command – no contradiction. Acceptable</p> <p>This does not appear to be a very accurate translation of the original German hymn. For some reason two verses from the original have been left out. Agree with Mt Nasura's final evaluation on this one. Hymn 32 does a better job on this topic.</p>
32	Christ the Lord is risen today	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Hymn 26 largely covers the same material, therefore an unnecessary hymn.</p> <p>A well-known hymn of praise and rejoicing. 'Death in vain forbids him rise' – metaphorical language consistent with the teaching of Scripture (Romans 6:9). Highlights aspects (restoration of creation and restored access to paradise) not contained in other hymns. Acceptable</p>

33	The Strife is o'er, the battle done	<p>Not Recommended by SCBP or <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Very similar in content to Hymn 32 and so do not find in necessary. Also verse two and four are not too clear. Ambiguity needs to be avoided – especially for the sake of the youth. Reject</p> <p>The 19th century language is rather archaic but not ambiguous.</p>
34	God gave to us this day of days	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Ok but doesn't add too much if anything that we don't already have. Unnecessary addition</p> <p>A Christian reflection on the meaning and value of Christ's death and resurrection, drawn from the teaching of Scripture. Goes back to the early church. Acceptable.</p>
38	Since our great High Priest.	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Beautiful hymn. Fits the criteria above and also reflects the reality of life. Accept.</p> <p>A versification of and reflection on a passage of Scripture. Acceptable</p>

45	Jesus shall reign	<p>Not recommended by SCBP or <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Not unacceptable</p> <p>verse 2 first line: can be misunderstood. If we (in our own sinful opinion) are not receiving blessings then is that evidence that Christ is not reigning? Of course not but it could be understood that way.</p> <p>“the prisoners leap to lose their chains” refers to us as prisoners to sin redeemed in Christ. However, this is not explained in the hymns as the following line is. Younger people especially would misunderstand this. Also the language of the last line of verse 2 is not likely to be understood by the younger generation. If that line was in one of the psalms it would have been reworded in the revision. Not acceptable.</p>
46	Christ shall have dominion	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Also based on Psalm 72 but doesn't add anything that isn't already in the BOP. Psalm 72 is probably a more faithful versification of Scripture.</p> <p>A wonderful reflection on the fulfilment in Christ of the OT gospel of Psalm 72, in a way that is not readily apparent in the Psalm itself.</p> <p>A valuable addition.</p>
50	The Spirit came, as promised.	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Attention for the Person and work of God the Holy Spirit ought always to be welcome in a Reformed church (see the Nicene Creed). Biblical and doctrinally sound. A valuable addition.</p> <p>Fine hymn found back in Corinthians. Fits the criteria. Exhorts and admonishes based on Scripture. Acceptable.</p>

57	We Praise you, Lord, for Jesus Christ	<p>Not Recommended by SCBP or <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Obviously a baptismal hymn. Very limited in its use (only for baptism). No objections to the wording, but does not focus on all of baptism. Focus is on the 'baptism into the Son', but not too much or at all into the Father and the Spirit. So it's more what it misses out that is of a concern. Not acceptable.</p> <p>Suitable for Baptism. Highlighting some aspects of baptism need not – and does not – imply that Biblical truths not explicitly mentioned are downplayed or ignored. No problem.</p> <p>Hymn confuses covenant and church. Also, it promotes the universal church concept: all those who bear the cross (followers of Christ) belong to 'your house'. Not acceptable.</p>
58	Our Children, Lord, in Faith and Prayer	<p>Not Recommended by SCBP or <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Not sure about this one. Is the focus too much on the children and not enough on God? It is a prayer. Some of the elements of the prayer at the end of the baptism form are reflected in this hymn. However, the assuredness of the first part of the prayer in the form is not evident in this hymn.</p> <p>Verse 1 seems to be a prayer/request that they share in the covenant rather than that they are already covenant children. Not acceptable</p> <p>Suitable for Baptism. Similar comments to Hymn 58. Do not agree with perceived dilemma noted above. The two go together, as evidenced in the <i>Form for Baptism</i>. Acceptable</p>

60	Until He comes	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Fine hymn, although I find that Hymn 59 has more depth. Acceptable</p> <p>A reflection on one aspect of the Holy Supper celebration that does not often get attention. Suitable and welcome.</p>
62	For the Bread which you have broken	<p>Recommended by SCBP. Not recommended by <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>We already have hymn 59 and 60. This one doesn't add too much more, so do not find it necessary.</p> <p>We end the Holy Supper celebration with these words: "Therefore my heart and mouth shall proclaim (!) the praise of the Lord from now on and for evermore." This hymn puts that praise into words, and is a worthwhile addition.</p>
66	Great is Thy faithfulness	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Well-known hymn. Verse one and refrain very much based on Lamentations 3:22 and 23. Beautiful song of praise by a covenant child to his God. Expounds biblical doctrine of a number of God's attributes.</p> <p>A much-loved hymn, which will be well received. No objection.</p> <p>Doctrinally no objections. Will be well received and consequently sung a lot. Tune is catchy. However, the psalms show historical context and hence more covenantal depth. My fear is that this hymn is likely to substitute to some extent many psalms which we have expounding God's faithfulness. It has the potential to further narrow the singing repertoire.</p>

70	Day of Judgement, day of wonders	<p>Recommended by SCBP. Not recommended by <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Initial reaction was ok, but on closer thought and consideration I don't think the last line of verse 3 is correct. Doctrinally it is correct, but do we ever in psalm and hymn address those who reject the Lord. In the Psalms the sinner and evildoer is often mentioned, but always in prayer to God; not as an address to the sinner. (see rhymed version of Psalm 83:7,) So this is a deviation from the Scriptural norm (I think). Where we do sing directly to the sinner (Psalm 2) it is to call them to come and repent and bow down before the Lord. Here in this hymn it nearly comes across as a kind of gloating. Really after verse 3 there should be a verse which calls the sinner who may hear this hymn to repent before it is too late. Not acceptable.</p>
75	Alleluia, Alleluia	<p>Not Recommended by SCBP on musical grounds. Not recommended by <i>ad hoc</i> committee.</p> <p>One of those general-purpose hymns to which there can be no objection, and which doesn't need a specific reason to be included. It will be sung with joy and fervour to the praise of God</p> <p>We already have hymn 76 (current hymn 57) which covers similar content – in a better way. Therefore if hymn 75 is sung it will most likely be at the expense of hymn 76. In that sense it will only weaken what we already have. Not acceptable.</p>

79	We come, O Christ, to you.	<p>Recommended by SCBP. Not recommended by <i>ad hoc</i> committee.</p> <p>We don't pray to the Son. We pray to the Father through the Son. This hymn is a prayer/praise directly to the Son. Does it attribute all things to the Son and thereby ignore/downplay the work of the Father and the Spirit? Not acceptable.</p> <p>Agree that it is wrong to pray to the Son or Holy Spirit; Christ teaches us to pray: 'Our Father' ...</p> <p>Biblical reflection with a strong Reformed pedigree. Scripture does not rule out prayer to the Son or the Holy Spirit. In fact, a number of such prayers are recorded in Scripture, and the Nicene Creed presupposes it. Highlighting the work of the Son does not imply that the not explicitly mentioned work of the Father or the Spirit are downplayed or ignored. No objection.</p>
81	Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing.	<p>Recommended by SCBP and <i>ad hoc</i> committee</p> <p>Some nice parts in this hymn. However, some aspects are questionable. For example is verse 2 (proclaim the name of Christ) really my task as an individual member? That is the task of the church. Not acceptable.</p> <p>Not unacceptable. The perceived dilemmas in stanza 2 are not supported by Scripture, and in any case do not detract from the value of this hymn.</p> <p>Incorrect in the last verse where it speaks about the church in heaven. The universal church concept is found in many hymns (eg hymn 52 (old hymn 40) and hymn 57) K.S. rightly pointed out that there is no church in heaven and that the sum total of the elect is NOT a church.</p>

APPENDIX 6:

Summary of comments received from the churches regarding the revised Book of Praise:

Church	Issues Raised
Albany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response was to forward (without recommendation or endorsement) a report from a consistory appointed committee. Their report to consistory raised the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Thorough evaluation of selected Psalms using documented guidelines o Thorough evaluation of all the new and changed hymns using deputy supplied guidelines. o Consideration of the style of music. o From the Psalms evaluated the report concludes that overall there is no through to overall improvement. On a number of occasions the report believes that the new Psalms do not offer any improvement. o Refers back to old Acts of Synods regarding direction of hymns in Australian churches. o Acceptable new Hymns – 38, 50, 60, 70 o Question the need for these hymns but no real objection – 9, 10, 34, 46,62 o Some question remain about content of these hymns – 32, 45, 66, 81 o Objectionable hymns – 30, 33, 57, 58, 75, 79

<p>Armada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No official response from consistory. However, points below include responses from individuals. It also appears that some individuals were asked to respond to specific groups or allocations of Psalms/Hymns. Issues raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No capitalisation for He, Him, His, You, Your when referring to God. Disrespectful/irreverent. This is step backwards. o Would have liked to see some of the music of some of the Psalms changed too. o Some new tunes hard to sing. Some dreadful. o Some old hymns have new tunes. Old tune was/is much nicer. Eg Hy 48. Hymn 31 o Reprinting music on each new spread is good. o Generally good revision of Psalms. "We love it" o Some Psalm verses the old version was clearer. o Some 'Thees' and "Thous" not changed in some hymns. o Too many hymns will lead the church astray. o Some people had a big issue with some wording of some hymns. Eg Hy 57, 58, 79 o We have enough hymns already. o Now some double up of hymns. o We have enough Psalms and Hymns also for special occasions eg baptism.
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Baldivis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No theological grounds to reject APV. However, the following general comments arose from within the congregation: o Question as to why these particular hymns were chosen. Also some do not seem necessary. o Some tunes awkward. o Some hymns not based specifically on Scripture and more on human feelings – eg Hy 33 o Need more canticles (hymns taken from Scripture) o Changes to Psalms received a mixed reaction. o Overall format and layout appreciated.
Bunbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response
Busselton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objections
Byford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response
Darling Downs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response
Kelmscott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Not in favour of increasing the number of 'free' hymns. Previous synods have called for songs directly based on Scripture. o Consistory has decided to appeal Art 24 of 2009 Acts and to ask to revert back to previous recommendation to proceed with the Australian BOP.

Launceston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Significant improvement to the text of the Psalms. o Increase in size of hymnal is modest and no cause for alarm. o Binding of BOP is not user friendly – especially for organists. Doesn't lay flat. o The following two points were brought forward by their committee looking into the new hymns: o Question the need for some additional hymns – specifically 58, 60, 62 o Objections to 10, 18, 30, 31B, 33, 46, 50, 57, 70, 75, 79
Legana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined with Launceston
Mount Nasura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Generally happy with the changed wording of the Psalms. They suggest some further improvements o Hymns – we as churches have historically taken an approach not to multiply hymns. o Acts 1962 (art 40) and Acts 1966 (art 46) give clear direction to base hymns directly on parts of Scripture. o To be consistent with our advice to the RCN we need to avoid adding hymns. o Happy with revision of Hymns 17, 18, 63. o Some hymns too simplistic or too emotionally charged or too repetitious. o Specific comments about specific hymns are included o Finally a call to reconsider our own BOP.

Mundijong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Judged the hymns by their aesthetics, doctrinal accuracy, necessity and place in liturgy. o Desire to go down the road of our own BOP o Appreciate wording of revised psalms. o Don't appreciate lack of capitalisation. o Suspect a generation gap might arise between those who know old psalms compared to new. o The reasons for changing BOP may be relevant for Canada's situation but not for ours. o The basis for our strong bond is much deeper than a common song book. o Lots of comments on all of the new hymns. Their final comment is to either recommend or not recommend. Some they are divided on. o Low recommendation – hymns 9, 10, 48, 57, 58, 62, 70, 79 o High recommendation – hymns 30, 33, 38, 50, 60, 66, 75 o Uncertain or divided – hymns 31A, 33, 34, 45, 46, 81
Rockingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response. Generally happy with the revised Psalms. A small number of concerns raised but somewhat resigned to the fact that the new BOP is going to happen anyway.
Southern River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response

<p>West Albany</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official consistory response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Asks deputies to also give consideration to changes in some hymn melodies and also revision to words of existing hymns. o Inconsistent Thee/Thou and You/Your. o Concern over lower case for pronouns. • Comments from individual members (including some from office bearers and minister) include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Is there really a need for change? Need for new hymns has not really been demonstrated. Can the churches honestly say that we need the new hymns? o Some of old psalms are closer to the Bible than the new ones. Have our own BOP so we can have our own church order in it, etc. o Lots of comments (some positive some negative) about the new hymns. General feel is that we don't need the new hymns for worship in church. o Concern over lower case when referring to God. o Like the music on each new spread. o Don't like the fact that some of the existing tunes have been changed. o More hymns means less psalm singing. o Individual comments about individual hymns (especially doctrinal considerations) point to areas of concern. Some excellent points are raised (both for and against) which we (as deputies) may need to refer to later. (especially submission by Rev R Pot and br P 'tHart. o Need to maintain a high standard when choosing hymns for worship. This does not appear to be the case. o On basis of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 only recommend those hymns which receive clear support from the churches. o Give more time for evaluation.
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APPENDIX 7:

Evaluation of musical aspects of additional Hymns, provided by organists of FRC Albany

HYMN	COMMENT	REC.	FOUNDATIONS
6	In line with Genevan tune Ps 124	Yes	Genevan
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not very exciting tune (not much to it), and very short text. Tune has little to offer as far as form of music is concerned. It is somewhat 'chant like' and unless this Hymn has specific liturgical use it is somewhat laborious to sing. 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are more hymns with this theme which have a nicer tune.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune isn't that good – also doesn't feel majestic enough for the text. Not convinced that this Hymn is singable and of its similarity to existing hymns. It has a lot of variation in rhythm, which can be somewhat unpredictable to the average singer. It's not impossible to become used to, but it's doubtful that it will be a 'loved' tune to sing. 	No	
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune is not very nice 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (see comment)
30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This old hymn is quite singable and has a predictable structure. It has no difficult to reach parts for the human voice and has natural flow and musical structure in line with our current hymns. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (see comment)
31A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It seems strange with A-flats missing in first part of tune Last line goes to high F (a bit high for most people) 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune of Hymn 31B more suited to congregational singing

Deputies for Book of Praise

32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well know hymn. The only concern could be the Al-le-lu-ia at the end of each line. Has been sung by our church choir in the past. I wonder if all the Al-le-lu-ia parts will become boring to sing verse after verse. This tune is better sung in four parts and not in unison as we are accustomed to. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A joyful tune to suit the text/theme of Easter
33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tricky rhythms, especially first line Old fashioned tune 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune does not do justice to the text.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Al-le-lu-ia before first verse only is good, but what if the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th verses are sung and not verse one? Apart from this, the tune is quite learnable and has a musical quality that one can appreciate. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See comment
34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune is gloomy, and does not do justice to text 	No	
34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This hymn has some variation in rhythm, however it is still written using only crotchets and minims. This means that the tune will be easier to learn and has a more predictable direction. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to be learnt (see comment)
37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A kind of “non-rhythmic” version of former Hymn 29 	No (to the new tune)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune of former Hymn 29 is more joyful and varied, and suits the words better. The existing rhythm is better.

38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key of this hymn goes down to an A below middle C (not impossible, but no other psalm or hymn goes this low). The tune has many instances of two quaver notes for one word. This could lead to messy singing with the organ. Piano may be better for these types of hymns; where smaller groups like choirs or small churches have more control of acoustics and togetherness. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune and text.
45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lovely tune. Fairly well known and has predictable structure. Fits with current hymns. 	Yes?	
46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A better version than Hymn 10 (new). Well structured hymn tune with what could be called subject and then the answering. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good tune to match the text.
48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same words as former Hy.37, but different tune Tune OK, but some big intervals Strange ending....seems to need another line! Same words as current Hy 37. New tune has more variation in intervals of notes. The last line will take some getting used to, but the tune sounds more joyful and less mournful. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good tune (except for last line) to match the words

Deputies for Book of Praise

50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well known tune with good structure and range. Enjoyable to sing and would become a favourite of many. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune to match the text
57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same tune as former Hymn 23 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happy tune to suit text
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as current hymn 23 tune. Not a very nice tune (whiney, chanty) and one is more than enough in the hymn book. 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See comment
58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is obviously a hymn to celebrate baptism. When we compare it to our well known psalm 105 one could quickly conclude that this hymn tune is somewhat 'cheap.' Strange ending. Prefer existing Hymn 45 which has a similar theme 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune not very good, with a strange ending
60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This hymn has a tune, but that's about it. It's not familiar to other tunes we currently have. Holding notes for 3 counts at the end of a line is asking for some to sing it correctly to time while most will not. This will lead to the musical structure of this hymn to be lost. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tune is "OK" to match the theme about Holy Supper
62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very singable and praise worthy <p>Tune OK.</p>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See comment
63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised text of former Hymn 47 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good tune to suit text

66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional tune. Already well known. This hymn is very nice but do we want a hymn with a refrain? This can become somewhat tedious and laborious, if the tempo is not brisk. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune and text
70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This tune suits the words and is clear and singable for the congregation to express praise to God. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune and text
75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are all those Alleluias going to be sung cleanly by large congregations? This tune is more suited to a choir or small congregation. Very nice Hymn , not sure what to recommend. Will be difficult for young and not so young. 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See comment
79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well structured and singable hymn; not necessarily a fantastic tune though. 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune.
81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune and text 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nice tune.
81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sounds like a nursery rhyme, chant, and out of sync with our current selection of hymns. 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See comments

APPENDIX 8:

Excerpt from the Acts of the General Synod 2010 of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Article 115 – SCBP: Contact with the FRCA

1. Material

- 1.1 SCBP Report, Section One, 4.0 (8.2.j).
- 1.2 Letters from Grand Valley (8.3.J.9) and Coaldale (8.3.J.11).
- 1.3 *Acts of Synod Legana*, Article 42, VI (Final Acts on the FRCA Website).

2. Observations

- 2.1 A couple of churches have drawn our attention to the need to communicate to our sister churches in Australia to give them ample opportunity to comment on a revised *Book of Praise*.
- 2.2 The only official communication of the SCBP with the FRCA has been about the copyright of the current *Book of Praise*.
- 2.3 Synod Legana 2009 of the FRCA has instructed its deputies to “scrutinize the revised sections for the *Book of Praise* especially the completely revised Psalter, and that portion of the 28 additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC synod 2010” and “to invite comments from the churches on these revisions” (Article 42).

3. Considerations

- 3.1 Our sister churches in Australia exclusively use the *Book of Praise* for their worship.
- 3.2 They are interested in being involved in the development of our *Book of Praise*.
- 3.3 It would be considerate and prudent to include the FRCA in the final revision process.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To instruct the SCBP to continue to maintain good contact with the Australian Deputies for the *Book of Praise*.
- 4.2 To make available to the FRCA deputies the provisional edition of the *Book of Praise*, and to give the Australian churches opportunity to comment on this version to the SCBP via Synod Armadale 2012.
- 4.3 To empower the SCBP to incorporate helpful input of the Australian churches in the proposal for the finalized edition of the *Book of Praise* to be presented to Synod 2013.
- 4.4 To report on the contacts with the FRCA to Synod 2013.

ADOPTED

Article 143 – Publication of the *Book of Praise*

1. Material

1.1 Letters from Guelph (8.3.J.4), Grand Valley (8.3.J.9), Coaldale (8.3.J.11), Winnipeg-Grace (8.3.J.12), Hamilton-Providence, (8.3.J.8), Chilliwack (8.3.J.16), Burlington-Fellowship (8.3.J.18), Edmonton-Immanuel (8.3.J.19), Neerlandia (8.3.J.23), Willoughby Heights (8.3.J.24), Taber (8.3.J.27), London (8.3.J.30), Langley (8.3.J.31), Glanbrook (8.3.J.32), Abbotsford (8.3.J.37), Cloverdale (8.3.J.39), Winnipeg-Redeemer (8.3.J.41), and Lynden (8.3.J.44).

1.2 SCBP Report, Section 6, 12.2 (8.2.j).

2. Observations

2.1 Though quite a number of churches expressed the desire to see a finalized publication of the *Book of Praise* after Synod 2010, at least ten churches urge synod to give the churches more time to test the revised Psalter and hymns as well as the additional hymns being proposed from the Augment. A number of these churches suggested that a provisional edition of the *Book of Praise* be printed for the purpose of testing in the churches, and for final revision and for adoption by Synod 2013.

2.2 One church addressed Synod concerning the possibility that the present version of the NIV may no longer be published after 2011. This could mean that the churches may again need to revise the wording of the Scripture references mentioned in the *Book of Praise* before a final version is printed.

2.3 One church also proposed further testing of a revised *Book of Praise* in order to give the FRCA ample opportunity to comment on it.

2.4 A church has also pointed out that the need for more deliberate and lengthy testing of the proposed revisions should outweigh the Standing Committee's concern about "financial implications," for if the churches rush to a final decision in 2010, the financial implications could be just as considerable if, over the next years, churches find weaknesses and shortcomings in the work which then have to be corrected in constantly updated and corrected versions.

2.5 The church at Cloverdale requested General Synod to provide clarity with respect to the use or testing of the revised psalm versifications by the churches.

2.6 The SCBP (Report Section 6, 12.2) requests General Synod to authorize the committee to publish a new edition of the *Book of Praise* containing the revised Anglo-Genevan Psalter and the hymns adopted by General Synod as outlined above.

2.7 Some churches noted that General Synod Smithers 2007 (Article 148) did not make a clear decision to provisionally approve the revised and updated Psalms for a period of testing and that this caused uncertainty among the churches, and that many churches request clarity about this matter.

2.8 The SCBP also requests Synod adopt the committee's proposal regarding the renumbering of the Hymns for publication in the next *Book of Praise*.

3. Considerations

3.1 Many churches have considered it unwise to introduce revised Psalms to the congregational worship which they felt had not formally been approved for use in this context.

3.2 It is impossible for Synod Burlington-Ebenezer to give satisfactory consideration and do justice to all the details contained in the submissions regarding any part of the *Book of Praise* within the short time General Synod is convened.

3.3 Synod takes note of the wish of the majority of the churches who have expressed the desire for a longer period of time to consider additional changes proposed by the SCBP. It would not be wise to proceed to a final edition at this time as proposed by the SCBP.

3.4 Synod considers that publishing a provisional edition at this time, though more costly in the short run, will be more prudent in the long run, as the final edition will have been well-tested and corrected by the time of printing after 2013.

3.5 A provisional edition would allow a further time of testing and refining and getting used to the revised Psalms and Hymns as well as the additional hymns.

3.6 It needs to be made clear to the churches that this provisional edition of the *Book of Praise* is for use in the worship services in the churches.

3.7 It would be beneficial for churches and members who will be testing the provisional *Book of Praise* to be able to access the revised *Book of Praise* electronically on the web.

4. Recommendation

That Synod decide:

4.1 To pass on to the SCBP the letters of the churches with proposed

4.2 To instruct the SCBP:

4.2.1 To publish a provisional edition of the complete *Book of Praise*, including the changes adopted by this synod, with a renumbered hymn section, for use in the churches according to Article 55 CO. This provisional edition has been sufficiently prepared for the purpose of evaluation and will be amended by the SCBP and presented to Synod 2013 for final approval and printing.

4.2.2 To communicate to the churches that they determine for themselves how to purchase and distribute the copies of this provisional *Book of Praise*, noting that if churches purchase copies of this edition for all the members of their congregations, a discount on the cost is available from the publisher.

4.2.3 To make the provisional *Book of Praise* available also electronically.

4.2.4 To communicate with the CanRC, as well as the deputies of the FRCA, and seek and consider further suggestions for improvements to the *Book of Praise*.

4.2.5 To present a final version of the *Book of Praise* to Synod 2013 for approval and prepared for publication. The actual direction to publish will come from synod.

ADOPTED

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA NOMINATING AUTHORITIES - MARRIAGE ACT 1961

7 February 2012

Synod 2012

C/- Free Reformed Church of Armadale

PO Box 213

ARMADALE WA 6992

Esteemed brothers

Deputies' Report

Mandate

Synod Legana 2009 made the following decision with respect to Nominating Authorities (Article 79):

1. To thank the Deputies re: Marriage Act 1961 for having completed their mandate and for their report, and to discharge deputies
2. To appoint new Deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961.

Background

On 22 September 1999, the Governor-General 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).

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 (Rev ‘t Hart, Rev Pot)
- The relevant State Registrars have been advised of departing ministers from the bond of the FRCA (Rev Smith)
- The records of the ministers within the FRCA kept at the relevant State Registrars have been kept up to date
- 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.

Recommendation

Deputies recommend that Synod Armadale 2012 resolve:

1. To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

Respectfully submitted

Humphry Faas

Tim Houweling

Deputies Synod Archives

The Consistory

Free Reformed Church at Mt Nasura

Esteemed brothers,

Report On Archives and Library of Synod

As archivist and librarian of synod I hereby submit my report in accordance with 'Rules for the Archivist', Synod Acts 1998, Appendix 11, point 3. *"The Archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; stating who has received or seen items, and the items involved"*.

Please note that the Rules of Synod as published in the Acts of Synod 1998 Appendix 12 and Acts of Synod 2003 Appendix 11 did not incorporate the Rules for the Archivist.

Contents Of Synod Archives

Additions to archives after May 2009 report.

Synod 2009: Items 09.01 - 09.72

A detailed chronological listing of all documents added to the synod archive collection since May 2006 is attached. the Appendix.

Inspection

With Christian greetings,

Mrs A.C.Hordyk

APPENDIX ONE

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX TO SYNOD ARCHIVES

(Items added after last report dated 23 May 2006)

SYNOD 2009 - AGENDA CREDENTIALS

- 9.1 Agenda.
- 9.2 Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials for Classis North and South.
- 9.3 Credentials Presbyterian Church of Korea.
- 9.4 Credentials BBK – relations Churches abroad Netherlands.

SYNOD 2009 – CORRESPONDENCE INWARD

- 9.5 FRC Mt Nasura Appeal re Art 7 Acts Classis North 2008.
- 9.6 FRC Mt Nasura Overture re term of synod appointed deputyships.
- 9.7 FRC Mt Nasura Overture re Synod Acts publication time delays.
- 9.8 FRC Southern River Overture re Art 13 Acts Synod 2006 re non delegated ministers being invited as advisors to Synod.
- 9.9 FRC West Albany Appeal re Art 94 Acts Synod 2006 re Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.
- 9.10 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Art 102 Acts Synod 2006 re RCNZ.
- 9.11 FRC Darling Downs Appeal re Art 76 Synod 2006 re Appeal FRC Mt Nasura.
- 9.12 FRC Mt Nasura Overture re RCNZ.
- 9.13 FRC Mt Nasura Appeal & Overture Art 95 Synod 2006 re RCN.
- 9.14 FRC Kelmscott Appeal Art 102 Synod 2006 re RCNZ.
- 9.15 FRC Kelmscott Appeal Art 93 & 94 Synod 2006 re RCN.
- 9.16 FRC Southern River Overture re Deputies for Training for the Ministry report.
- 9.17 Canadian Reformed Churches Letter of greeting.
- 9.18 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Deputies for Training for the Ministry report.
- 9.19 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Deputies for Canadian Reformed Churches report.
- 9.20 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Deputies for Presbyterian Church of Korea report.
- 9.21 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Deputies for Reformed Churches in the Netherlands report.
- 9.22 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Deputies for Reformed Churches of NZ report.
- 9.23 FRC Darling Downs Overture re Deputies for Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) report.
- 9.24 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) letter 19.05.09

declining invitation.

9.25 FRC Southern River Overture re Deputies for Australian Book of Praise report.

9.26 FRC Albany Overture re Deputies for Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) report.

9.27 FRC Albany Overture re Deputies for Australian Book of Praise report.

9.28 FRC Mt Nasura Overture re General Secretary's report re Reformed Churches of Brazil.

9.29 FRC Byford Overture re Deputies reports RCNZ, RCN and RCN(r).

9.30 FRC Launceston Overture re Deputies Australian Book of Praise report.

9.31 FRC Armadale Overture re Deputies Australian Book of Praise report.

9.32 FRC Mt Nasura Overture re Deputyships .

9.33 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) letter 29.04.09 declining invitation.

9.34 Greetings from FRCSA.

9.35 Greetings from GGRI.

9.36 Greetings from GGRC.

REPORTS CLASSIS SOUTH

9.37 Overture re Rules for Synod relating to appeals.

9.38 Overture re Formation Three Classes.

9.39 Overture re 28 Additional Hymns and Book Of Praise.

SYNOD 2009 DEPUTIES REPORTS

9.40 Supplementary Report re Korea.

9.41 Deputies needy Churches of South Africa.

9.42 Supplementary Report re South Africa.

9.43 Letter from BBK 09.03.09 re invitation.

9.44 Deputies for Training for the Ministry.

9.45 Deputies audit of books re Art 17 and 18.

9.46 Deputies Synod Treasury.

9.47 Deputies inspection synod archives and library.

9.48 Deputies Synod Archives and Library.

SYNOD 2009 CORRESPONDENCE OUT

9.49 Letter to CCIE-IRB re: relations Reformed Churches of Brazil.

9.50 Letter to BBK 07.04.09 re invitation.

LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT / THANKS

9.51 Deputies Training for the Ministry - Rev E Rupke (Convener)
R.Heerema, M. Hoogerdyk, J(Jim) van der Plas, Alternate B (Bruce)

- Huizinga.
- 9.52 Deputies Relations Churches abroad. - RevPKA de Boer, W Pleiter, W Spyker, W Vanderven, Rev A Veldman (convenor). GB Veendaal Rev C Vermeulen alternate .Deputies Church Order Classis North - Rev PKA de Boer, Rev A Veldman.
 - 9.53 Archives and Library of Synod: FRC Mt Nasura.
 - 9.54 General Secretary Deputy: J.L. VanBurgel – J (Jack) den Boer (assistant).
 - 9.55 Auditors for Synod Treasury: FRC Kelmscott.
 - 9.56 Inspection of Archives and Library of Synod: FRC Byford.
 - 9.57 Synod Archives and Library – AC Hordyk.
 - 9.58 Website Assistant – D Veltkamp.
 - 9.59 Deputies Relations with other churches -Indonesia / Phillippines – B Bosveld, E Heerema, H Swarts, Rev A van Delden, Rev W van der Jagt (convenor), P van Dyke-alternate.
Deputies Church Order Classis South - Rev. A van Delden, Rev. W van der Jagt.
 - 9.60 Deputies Australian Book of Praise – Rev J Smith(convenor), A(Aart) H(Hans) Schoof, A (Andrew) Vermeulen.
Deputies Church Order – Rev PKA de Boer (Classis North), Rev A Veldman (Classis North), Rev W van der Jagt (Classis South), Rev A van Delden (Classis South), Rev J Smith- alternate.
 - 9.61 Deputies Relations with other churches – RCNZ – Rev JGR Kroeze, JL Van Burgel (convenor), alternate- Rev R Eikelboom.
Deputies Reformed Churches of Brazil – Rev JGR Kroeze (convenor), Rev R Eikelboom, alternate J (John) Wielstra.
 - 9.62 Deputies Article 66 Church Order (Days of Prayer) – FRC Launceston
 - 9.63 Deputies Synod Treasury – E Eikelboom, alternate D Bonker.
 - 9.64 Deputies for Indexing Synod Decisions – J (Jelte) Numan (convenor) Rev R Eikelboom.
 - 9.65 Deputies re Marriage Act 1961- Nominating Authorities – T (Tim) Houweling (convenor), H Faas.
 - 9.66 Deputies for Synod venue and infrastructure – E (Eric) 't Hart, A(Alan) van der Wal.

LETTERS OF DISCHARGE AND THANKS

- 9.67 Deputy Training for the Ministry – M Plug.
- 9.68 Deputies Book of Praise – E Swarts, W Amoraal.
- 9.69 Deputies Reformed Churches in Indonesia – W Geurts, J Bosveld.
- 9.70 Deputy Relations with Churches Abroad – AMC Bruning, AC Breen, Rev W Huizinga.

2009 CLOSED SESSION

CORRESPONDENCE INWARD

9.71 FRC Mt Nasura Appeal re Art 7 Acts Classis North 2008.

9.72 Appeal Rev.C Bosch Re Classis North.

CORRESPONDENCE OUTWARD

9.73 Letter Rev C Bosch.

CONTENTS LIBRARY

Acts of Synod 2006

Deputies Report Synod 2009

Acts of Synod 2009

Deputies for Indexing Synod Decisions

Synod 2012

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

C/- consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale

PO Box 213

Armadale WA 6992

Dear brothers,

Synod Legana 2009, in its Article 78, mandated *Deputies for Indexing Synod Decisions* to:

1. continue the work of the late Rev. G. VanRongen in collating the decisions of Synod as they relate to articles of the Church Order;
2. publish these decisions on the official web page of the FRCA;
3. notify the churches of any changes when these decisions are updated.

As the index of synod decisions grows longer and longer, deputies struggle to balance the principles of conciseness and completeness. For this reason we included in the index only the synod's decisions and not the grounds on which the decisions were based. Only in a few instances, where the recorded decisions were unintelligible without the grounds, did we make an exception to this rule. It should be noted that the full text of the decisions, including the grounds, is available in the official Acts, which are also available on-line at <http://synod.frca.org.au/2009/acts/FRCASynod2009PublishedActs.pdf>.

Although the deputies left it until February 2012 to fulfill their mandate, there were never any indications that the churches were waiting for the Index of Synod Decisions to be updated ... which makes us question the value of this work. Moreover, in view of the fact that digital versions of Acts of Synods from 2003 onwards are now available on the web, and sophisticated search functions enable rapid searches, the need to provide a separate index appears to have become superfluous. For these reasons the deputies recommend that Synod Armadale 2012 seriously consider terminating this project. However, if synod judges that the project should continue, we are willing to continue doing it.

With Christian greetings,

Jelte Numan (convenor)

Richard Eikelboom

February 16, 2012

Deputies for Training for the Ministry

Contents

1	Mandate	249
2	Composition	250
3	Financial support Hamilton Theological College	250
4	Contact with Hamilton, South Africa, Kampen and Korea	250
5	Theological Library Fund	252
6	Investigation – theological training	253
7	Publication and promotion	255
8	Financial aid to students	255
9	Guest lecturer	256
10	Involvement with Hamilton's Board of Governors	257
11	Pastoral Training Program	258
12	Recommendations	258
13	Greetings	260
Appendix A – Financial Statements: Hamilton Theological College Fund		261
Appendix B – Address of Rev E Rupke to the 40 th Anniversary Meeting and 35 th Convocation of the College at Hamilton held on 11 September 2009		263
Appendix C – Financial Statements: Theological Library Fund		265
Appendix D – Financial Statements: Needy Students Fund		266
Appendix E – Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada) - Adapted by Deputies Training for Ministry and then adopted by Synod 2009 Legana for the Australian Context		267

1. Mandate

- 1.1 Article 17 of Acts of the 2009 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Legana, 15-24 June 2009) records Deputies' 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, noting that the deputies' mandate to 'maintain contact and obtain information' includes that information which may cause concern is reported to Synod; further, in view of the temporary appointment of a non-sister church lecturer, to remind the Canadian Churches that our support of the college is based on the fact that we agree with their foundation and by-laws so that their maintenance remains highly important to us;
 - c. continue to collect funds for theological training, but discontinue the collection of funds for our own theological library;
 - 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;
 - k. investigate the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT).

- 1.2 Deputies met 9 times to discuss matters concerning its mandate, besides corresponding in between meetings.

2. Composition

Synod 2009 appointed Reverend E Rupke as convener of Deputies and the Brothers R Heerema, M Hoogerdijk, and J (Jim) van der Plas as the remaining Deputies.

- 2.1 Deputies were organised as follows:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| a. Convener: | Reverend E Rupke |
| b. Secretary: | Brother M Hoogerdijk |
| c. Treasurer – Theological Students: | Brother J van der Plas |
| d. Treasurer – Theological Library Fund: | Brother J van der Plas |
| e. Treasurer – Theological College: | Brother R Heerema |

3. Financial support Hamilton Theological College

- 3.1 Deputies collected A \$400,370.00 from the Churches, and forwarded A\$400,200.00 to Hamilton during the period January 2009 to December 2011.
- 3.2 During the period the churches were levied at a rate of \$50 per communicant member for 2009 (synod year) and \$ 65 per communicant member in 2010-11 (in accordance with decision 13.1 of Article 17 of the Acts Synod Legana 2009)
- 3.3 Interest accrued during this period amounted to A\$2858.99.
- 3.4 A total of \$15,000. 00 was paid in 2009 to Churches who were supporting PTP students, and A\$2985 was paid for a PTP student's airfare. Synod Legana 2009 decided to adopt the rules for PTP students (based on the Canadian model). Following this decision, future PTP students will be paid for by the churches after being assessed. See rules in Appendix E.
- 3.5 Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded are contained in Appendix A.

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 2009 and 2010. In 2011, we conveyed a message of congratulations and fraternal greetings to Hamilton only. There has been minimal reciprocal contact from Kampen. There is never any acknowledgement of our correspondence with them or any reply to our correspondence.

- 4.2 Deputies conveyed greeting to and informed Hamilton, South Africa, Kampen and Korea of our appointment, as outlined in heading 2 above.
- 4.3 Contact with Kampen remained low key, being limited to the above greetings.
- 4.4 Contact with South Africa has been very limited. In 2009, we sent them a letter to inform them of the new composition of the deputies. We received from South Africa a Ministers Training newsletter from August 2009. Since then, no further reports or newsletters have been sent to the Deputies.
- 4.5 Contact with Korea was limited to sending greetings. We have received no response from Korea during the past two years.
- 4.6 Deputies received Hamilton's financial reports and budgets.
- 4.7 In the past, Deputies normally would receive the following from Hamilton:
 - 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.

However, during these past two years, Deputies have only received items as listed under point (d). Recently, there has been telephone contact with one of the governors from Hamilton where this issue was discussed. The governor would look into this matter and rectify the problem.

- 4.8 Rev. E. Rupke visited Hamilton for the occasion of the 40th Anniversary Meeting and 35th Convocation of the College in Hamilton and a meeting of the Board of Governors of Hamilton in September 2009.
- 4.9 Rev. Rupke received opportunity at the Convocation to extend greetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The address delivered at the Convocation Meeting is contained in **Appendix B**.
- 4.10 Deputies also corresponded with Hamilton's Board of Governors concerning:
 - a. the Australian contribution to Hamilton's funding;
 - b. delivery of programs by distance education / IT and the set-up of a freshman year of study in Australia (please see heading 7 below); and
 - c. supplying a guest lecturer.

5. Theological Library Fund

- 5.1 Synod 2009 "Acts" Article 17 Final Decision 13.5c mandated the discontinuation of the collection of funds for our own theological library. Thus the only amounts received from the churches since Synod 2009 were those that had been levied prior to that decision.
- 5.2 As a consequence, deputies collected a total of \$ 28,428.62 from the churches for the period following November 2008, that being the cut off date for previous financial reporting to synod for the Theological Library Fund. This comprises receipt of outstanding levies on the respective churches prior to Synod 2009's decision taking effect. This fund presently receives no further contributions from the churches, but remains invested on the churches' behalf for possible future application according to the purpose for which it was collected.
- 5.3 Financial statements detailing amounts collected and invested in the Theological Library Fund, and transactions of the Theological Student Support Fund are contained in **Appendix C**.
- 5.4 The collection of donated study books towards an Australian Free Reformed Theological Library remain housed at the Support Office of the John Calvin School in Armadale. A full inventory,

and borrowing-return system has not yet been compiled or implemented. This collection, together with a total of \$ 107,835 invested in the Theological Library Fund Investment Account comprises the total assets of the Theological Library Fund.

6. Investigation – theological training

- 6.1 Deputies wrote to Hamilton's Board of Governors by letter dated 8 June 2011:
 - a. reiterating part of the mandate given to the 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, and to investigate the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT).'
 - b. requesting Hamilton to consider ways in which they can assist us in these plans.
- 6.2 Hamilton's Board of Governors responded by letter dated 5 December 2011. However, Deputies have not had an opportunity to meet since the receipt of this letter, and will deal further with Hamilton's response at their next meeting in 2012.
- 6.3 Deputies wrote to each minister of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, as well as a few other suitably qualified brothers in the churches, to see whether there was a willingness and ability to teach the subjects of the Freshman Year in Australia. These letters were dated 18 April 2011. Deputies received a good and positive response from the vast majority of those who received a letter.
- 6.4 Deputies had a meeting with Dr. Van Dam during his visit here in June 2010. At this meeting, Deputies had a discussion concerning the opportunities for theological training in Australia. Dr. Van Dam responded in a personal and tentative nature, since he could not speak officially for the Board of Governors and/or the Theological College in Hamilton. He could sympathize with the idea of having theological training for our own students here in Australia, and expressed the opinion that Hamilton would be willing to help Australia in any way it could. However, he also explained that there are significant challenges in moving in this direction. He explained that Hamilton needed to remain accountable to the Theological College Act (1981) it was granted by the government of Ontario to the College. As well, Hamilton

is in the process of seeking accreditation through the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), and Dr. Van Dam felt it would be unlikely that ATS would approve of leaving their first year program for Australians to the type of program envisaged by Australia. Dr. Van Dam also had some concerns about structural issues, such as the teaching of the language courses. He felt that the personal contact between professor and students is very important, especially for the language courses. There is also the fear that if Australian students didn't come for the Freshman Year, this would eventually lead to the dismantling of the first year program, especially if students from Western Canada would request a similar arrangement.

- 6.5 Dr. Van Dam offered the following suggestions to the Deputies of how to approach the Board of Governors:
- a. In addition to ensuring that the normal admission requirements regarding language are met, search out Hebrew and Greek courses at the university level that could possibly function as credible replacements for the first year courses at CRTS and ask Hamilton for permission to use these courses as substitutes for the first year.
 - b. Ask the CRTS whether it would be possible to package some freshmen courses in a digital format which could be sent to Australia and whether a process of interacting with the relevant professors as necessary would be feasible.
 - c. Before approaching Hamilton, investigate whether there are seminaries in North America that offer internet courses as part of their degree program. If there are such schools, what percentage of internet courses are allowed for a degree program? These and related issues should be fully studied before presenting a proposal to Hamilton.
 - d. Besides investigating how other schools may handle the issues at hand, it would also be helpful to investigate the website of ATS to see whether there are guidelines respecting the use of IT in degree granting programs for accredited institutions.
- 6.6 Deputies recommend that Synod decide to mandate Deputies to continue to investigate the feasibility of offering a basis year of theological training to the churches in Australia, taking into consideration the concerns expressed by Hamilton and Dr. Van Dam.

7. Publication and promotion

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 Rev Rupke wrote an article regarding his visit to Hamilton in September 2009, which was published in Una Sancta in October 2009.
- 7.3 Deputies wrote a letter of congratulations to br. Arend Witten concerning his graduation from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, as well as his ordination into the ministry of the Word in Vernon, BC, Canada, dated 11 February 2011.
- 7.4 Rev Rupke wrote an article regarding training for the ministry in the Una Sancta in April 2011.
- 7.5 Deputies arranged for advertisements in the Una Sancta and the Perth District Bulletin inviting prospective theological students to a meeting with Dr. C. Van Dam in June 2010 and with Dr. A.J. de Visser in July 2011. Similar advertisements for the meeting with Dr. Van Dam were placed in the Albany and Tasmanian Bulletins as well.
- 7.6 Deputies have sent out letters to the Consistory of each Free Reformed Church of Australia dated 18 April 2011, concerning the encouragement of young brothers to study for the ministry, to remember this in the preaching, catechism lessons, public prayers, and home visits. In addition, the Deputies have responded to correspondence received from a few individual Free Reformed Churches in relation to this matter.

8. Financial aid to students

- 8.1 Deputies continued to support Brother Arend Witten (Free Reformed Church of Albany) and Brother Sean Wagenaar (Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs). These brothers have since completed their theological studies successfully. Br Witten is serving in the ministry in the Canadian Reformed Church of Vernon, and Br Wagenaar is presently engaged in further study whilst residing in Tennant Creek, Northern Territory. The aim of

this is to prepare for a potential ministry amongst members of the Australian indigenous community. This is being facilitated and supported by a committee, called the Indigenous Ministry Advisory Team (IMAT), which is made up of members of the Free Reformed Churches.

- 8.2 Upon request, Deputies commenced financial support for Br Ben Schoof (Free Reformed Church of Mt Nasura) in the second year (2010) of his theological studies at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. This support is continuing in 2011, and it is envisaged that it will terminate DV at the conclusion of the 2012 academic year.
- 8.3 In addition to providing financial support, Deputies have endeavoured to maintain contact with those students being financially supported by the churches. This is to maintain awareness of their general circumstances while studying, to provide encouragement, and to determine progress by way of requesting copies of academic reports.
- 8.4 Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to students during Deputies' current term are contained in **Appendix D**. Deputies have benefited from a favourable exchange rate since last synod. This has enabled the accumulation of a small surplus.
- 8.5 Deputies also had a meeting with a student who utilized the Needy Students Fund but has since completed his study. This meeting took place in May 2011. The aim of the meeting was to have a mutual understanding of the Rules and Regulations for Needy students as adopted by Synod 1992, Art 50 and amended by Synod 1994, Art 56. The outcome was that both parties (deputies and student) clearly understood the terms and conditions of financial aid from the Australian Churches to needy students as adopted by Synod 1992 and 1994.

9. Guest lecturer

- 9.1 Deputies were able to secure a visit of a guest lecturer in June 2010. Dr. Van Dam, Professor of Old Testament at that time, was able to visit the churches in the Perth Metro area, Albany, and Tasmania.
- 9.2 The total cost (to the Australian Churches) of the visit was just over \$6400.00.

- 9.3 Dr. Van Dam delivered two speeches, one entitled 'Multiculturalism: Biblical Principles and their Implications', and the other, 'Prayer as an Incense Offering'. At the invitation of the FRC Byford, he also presented a paper entitled 'The Elder and Church Discipline' at an office-bearers conference. Dr. Van Dam also presented one or more of these speeches in Albany, as well as in Tasmania.
- 9.4 Dr. Van Dam also had a meeting with the Deputies to discuss the issue of the Australian Churches setting up a basis year of theological training for their own students.
- 9.5 Dr. Van Dam met with prospective theological students to present them with relevant information and to answer any questions these brothers and/or their parents had. This meeting was quite well attended.
- 9.6 Deputies recommend that Synod increase the amount set aside for the costs of a visiting lecturer from \$6000/trip to \$7000/trip, considering the increased costs of travel, especially when including substantial domestic travel within Australia.
- 9.7 Deputies also recommend that Synod consider inviting a guest lecturer from Hamilton once every two years, rather than every three years, since there are very clear benefits to the promotion of theological study in having these visits.
- 9.8 Although not here on the invitation of Deputies, Dr. A.J. de Visser also made a presentation to prospective theological students in July 2011, when he came to Australia to present speeches to the Evangelism Conference hosted by the FRC Bunbury. This meeting was very well attended in the Consistory Room of FRC Byford.

10. Involvement with Hamilton's Board of Governors

- 10.1 Deputies resolved that Rev. E. Rupke attend the September 2009 meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors.
- 10.2 Rev. E. Rupke attended the meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors held on 10 September 2009, being made welcome and invited to full participation.
- 10.3 Matters discussed at this meeting pertaining to the Australian Churches were as follows:
 - a. In discussion of the Budget for 2010, the Chairman expressed

gratitude for the substantial contribution to their budget from the Australia Churches, including the decision to increase contributions from \$50/communicant member to \$65/communicant member.

- b. Inviting a guest lecturer to visit Australia in 2010.
- c. Convey to Hamilton the Australian Churches' concerns about the appointment of the temporary professor from a non-sister church.
- d. To make Hamilton aware that the 'IT' issue is still on the Australian agenda.
- e. To make Hamilton aware and to discuss with them Australia's intention to continue to investigate the possibility of offering a basis year of theological training in Australia, and to seek information and advice about this from Hamilton.

11. Pastoral Training Program

- 11.1 Br Arend Witten completed his Pastoral Training Program under the supervision of the consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury in the time period of 1 June till 16 August 2009. Br Sean Wagenaar completed his Pastoral Training Program under the supervision of the consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Rockingham in the time period of 1 June till 16 August 2009. A total of \$15 000 was paid to the churches of Bunbury and Rockingham to cover the expenses of these two students, along with \$2985 for student airfares for a return flight. This was paid from the Hamilton Theological Fund. In the future this will be paid according to the adopted rules for PTP. See also **Appendix E.**
- 11.2 Deputies have requested feedback from br. Arend Witten and br. Sean Wagenaar, as well as from Rev. E. Rupke and Rev. A. Van Delden, as part of the mandate given to Deputies to monitor the practical implications of including the Australian Churches in the Pastoral Training Program.
- 11.3 In the future, any students requesting to do the Pastoral Training Program under the supervision of one of the consistories of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia will be dealt with under the guidelines as adopted by Synod 2009. The adopted guidelines are contained in **Appendix E.**

12. Recommendations

Deputies recommend that Synod decides to:

- 12.1 Request the churches to contribute A\$65 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2013.
- 12.2 Set aside \$7,000 per trip (currently \$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. Also, it is recommended to invite a guest lecturer once every two years, rather than every three years. This would mean two visits between this Synod 2012 and Synod 2015, but then only one visit between Synod 2015 and Synod 2018.
- 12.3 Set aside \$4,000 (currently \$3000) from General Synod funds for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors and the Convocation between Synod 2012 and Synod 2015.
- 12.4 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" in order to maintain contact and obtain information, and to send notification of new deputies for the purpose of communication with "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea";
 - c. continue to collect funds for theological training;
 - d. continue to oversee the Library Fund;
 - 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 two years; (explain reasoning)

- h. continue to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
- i. monitor the effectiveness the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College within the Australian Churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program,
- j. collect and disburse funds for the Pastoral Training Program in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program, and;
- k. continue to investigate the feasibility of offering the Freshman (i.e. First) Year of theological study to the churches in Australia.

13. 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 M Hoogerdijk
Secretary

Br R Heerema
Treasurer – Hamilton Theological College Fund

Br J Vander Plas
Treasurer – Theological Library Fund / Needy Students Fund

Appendix A – Financial Statements: Hamilton Theological College Fund

Deputies training for the Ministry
Hamilton Theological College Fund

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Statement of Receipts and Payments January 2009 to January 2012

Opening Balance \$28,361.32

Receipts	2009	2010	2011	Totals
Albany	12100	15990	15405	43495
Armadale	13450	17810	17160	48420
Baldivis	3650	6890	7930	18470
Bunbury	3950	5655	5590	15195
Byford	10850	9360	9750	29960
Darling Downs	5400	7085	8125	20610
Kelmscott	9000	12155	11245	32400
Launceston	6300	9100	9555	24955
Legana	3450	4745	4680	12875
Mt Nasura	8600	10075	9945	28620
Mundijong	n/a	6175	6370	12545
Rockingham	9000	10790	10660	30450
Southern River	12850	17550	18395	48795
West Albany	9400	12025	12155	33580
Interest	902.6	971.32	985.07	2858.99

Total 403228.99

Opening balance \$28,361.32

Total Income 431590.31

Expenditure 418910.77

Balance 12679.54

Payments

2009

Hamilton	105 000
Bank fees	64
PTP Rock/Bunb	15000
Student airfares	2985

2010

Hamilton	145 000
Bank fees	112
C vDam Lecture	381.77

2011

	150200
Bank fees	168

total	418910.77
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- Notes :**
1. Busselton combined with Bunbury 2011
 - 2 PTP will in future be levied to Churches as per rules Synod 2009

Appendix B – Address of Rev. E. Rupke to the 40th Anniversary Meeting and 35th Convocation of the College at Hamilton held on 11 September 2009

Speech for the 40th Convocation of the Hamilton Theological College

Friday, 11 September 2009

Esteemed Governors, Senate, students, and brothers and sisters,

It is my privilege to bring to you this evening the greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The churches of Australia have in the past year, and will continue to, support the Theological College in Hamilton, financially as well as in our prayers. We remember the College, the Board of Governors, the professors and staff of the College and the students often in our prayers in the worship services. Our deputies for the training of the ministry keep the churches of Australia informed about what goes on in Hamilton via our church magazine, the *Una Sancta*. And so we are able to share your sadness in difficult times - I think of the continuing ill health of prof. DeJong and prof. Gootjes. May our Lord God give the brothers strength and surround them with his love and compassion. We may also share in the joy of good times. We rejoice with you tonight as three brothers graduate from the College, brs. Ken Bergsma, Ryan DeJonge, and last but definitely not least, our true blue Ozzie brother Rodney Vermeulen, who can then be presented to the churches to begin their task of ministers of the Word in the church of Jesus Christ, here in Canada or abroad.

Yes, the Lord of the church continues to bless the Hamilton College. In Rev. VanVliet you have found a brother, in a temporary appointment initially, to follow in the footsteps of dr. Gootjes and dr. Maris, as a dogmatics teacher. And currently you are also looking into the appointment of a professor Old Testament, in the place of dr. VanDam, in due time. Indeed, time goes on, one professor comes after another. So it goes, and so it has gone in the last 40 years. By the grace of God this College, in the last 40 years, has taught many young brothers how to be humble and godly shepherds of Christ's flock in Canada and in many other countries, including Australia. This evening, on this 40th anniversary of Hamilton Theological College, the churches of Australia join in the thanksgiving and praise offered to God for his goodness and blessings.

Not only the number 40 plays through our minds this evening, but also the number 500. The year of our Lord 2009 also marks the 500th birthday of John Calvin. And that brings me to what brings Australia and Canada together in this Theological College. What joins us, is the Christian faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is confessed and summarized in the three

Forms of Unity. What brings us so close together is the Reformed faith, in the tradition of, among others, John Calvin. He was a very important instrument in the hands of God. Our Lord used this man through his Holy Spirit to lead his church out of the darkness of ritualism, superstition and even corruption, into the bright light of his Word in Jesus Christ. Only God's Word is the authority for our faith, for what we believe, and for how we believe. We can do nothing to work our way into heaven, for we are all sinners. But Christ died for us, in our place. Only faith in him saves a man. And besides, if our salvation should depend on our works, then who could be saved? John Calvin is one of the great Reformers, who gave this wonderful gospel back to the church, who opened the eyes of believers again for the work of Jesus Christ. That is why we thank and praise God for the gift of this extraordinary man, John Calvin.

But time has not stood still since John Calvin. Reformed theology is not a static discipline. It is not simply repeating what was once said some 500 years ago. Reformed theology is a dynamic discipline. It develops and matures as research and study of God's Word continues. Through the centuries we grow richer in knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his church. We grow in knowledge as we stand on the shoulders of the Reformers and others. Hamilton College may play an active role in this growth and development, as is it a centre of Reformed theological studies. This makes it a privilege for professors and lecturers to teach here, and it is a blessing and a privilege for students to learn here. It also brings responsibility. The gospel of Jesus Christ must go out to all the nations, and here also the Hamilton College has a role. Students come from far and wide, even from Korea and Singapore and elsewhere. We hope and pray that this College may continue to see the broad context and scope of her work, not only in preparing men for the ministry, but also in theological research and study, and in publications made available to many. May the Lord God use the College so that the riches of Reformed theology may go out and be a blessing to all believers.

I close off with a prayer of Paul (Eph. 3:17-19): "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." The love of Jesus Christ surpasses knowledge, but that should not keep God's children from delving into the riches of the revelation of God's love in his Word. We pray for a blessing on the work that is done in this institution, so that God's name be praised and glorified in this world.

Thank you.

Appendix C – Financial Statements: Theological Library Fund**Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry**

*Australian Theological Library Fund
Statement of Receipts and Payments, Funds
November 2008-November 2011*

Opening Balance	\$69,804.30
Receipts	
FRC Albany	\$1,850.70
FRC Armadale	\$11,675.21
FRC Baldivis	(paid in full)
FRC Bunbury	\$1,085.90
FRC Byford	\$2,066.76
FRC Busselton	(not yet inst.)
FRC Darling Downs	\$859.30
FRC Kelmscott	\$1,734.45
FRC Launceston	\$3,500.00
FRC Legana	(paid in full)
FRC Mt Nasura	(paid in full)
FRC Mundijong	(not yet inst.)
FRC Rockingham	\$1,132.00
FRC West Albany	\$1,311.50
FRC Southern River	\$3,212.80
Account Interest	\$1,415.37
Term Deposit Interest	\$9,086.93
	\$108,735.22
Expenses	\$900.06
Closing Balance of Fund	\$107,835.16

Appendix D – Financial Statements: Needy Students Fund

Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry

Needy Students Fund

Statement of Receipts and Payments

November 2008-November 2011

Opening Balance	17,628.59
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Receipts

FRC Albany	3,864.00
FRC Armadale	11,921.99
FRC Baldivis	4,425.81
FRC Bunbury	3,916.07
FRC Busselton	0.00
FRC Byford	9,955.26
FRC Darling Downs	16,872.00
FRC Kelmscott	8,019.36
FRC Launceston	6,803.95
FRC Legana	3,222.80
FRC Mt Nasura	6,359.03
FRC Mundijong	760.00
FRC Rockingham	9,071.31
FRC Southern River	6,847.68
FRC West Albany	9,884.61
Interest	212.21

Total	102,136.08
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Payments

Student Support	104,261.50
Administration	117.40

104,378.90

Balance	15,385.77
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Appendix E – Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada) – Adapted by Deputies Training for Ministry and then adopted by Synod 2009 Legana for the Australian Context

Guidelines developed by the Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee (Canada)

Adopted by Synod 2009 Legana 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.

Deputies for Article 66 Days of Prayer

Synod 2012

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

C/- consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Armadale PO Box 213
Armadale WA 6992

February, 2012

Dear brothers,

Synod Legana 2009, in its Article 91, appointed the Church at Launceston to be *Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order (Days of Prayer)*.

During the time of this appointment our nation experienced significant flooding in both Queensland and Victoria; there were bushfires in the Kelmscott area which affected some church members; and

there was also the political issue of legalization of 'Gay Marriage'. Consistory discussed all these issues with a view to possibly calling a special Day of Prayer. Consistory decided, though, that they all fell outside the scope of Article 66 which refers to "general calamities and other great afflictions *the presence of which is felt throughout the churches.*" While we had no doubt that they were all occasions for prayer, and even ought to be prayed for in all the churches, it was our judgment that they did not warrant the calling of a special Day of Prayer.

With Christian greetings,

Richard Eikelboom Wayne Griffioen

(for consistory)

Deputies Auditing Books Art 17,18

8 February 2012

The Consistory

Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura PO Box 207

Armadale WA 6112

Esteemed brothers,

Audit of the accounts Deputies Training for the Ministry, Art 17 and 18 of the Church Order.

Further to your instruction dated 31 January 2012, the undersigned audited the books of the Deputies Training for Ministry on 8 February 2012 and found the accounts for the Hamilton Theological College, the Needy Student Fund and the Theological Library to be in good order.

With brotherly greetings

GJ De Vos

A Hordyk

