

# **ACTS OF THE 2018 SYNOD**

**of the**

## **FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

**Bunbury, Western Australia  
18 – 26 June 2018**





### **Delegates to Synod Bunbury 2018**

**Back Row:** H Schouten (CanRC), P Kgatle (FRCSA), W Bredenhof, R Bredenhof, C Vermeulen, S Bolhuis, RD Anderson, W Vanderven, G Swets (URCNA), S 'tHart, M Sneep (DGK), C Koster (DGK)

**Front Row:** A Witten (CanRC), H Olde, H Terpstra, T Reitsema, R Pot, W Spyker, A Souman, H Alkema, A Hagg, H Hamelink, J Torenvliet, S Dethan (GGRC), E Heerema, F Missa (GGRI-Timor), C Nguru (GGRI-Timor), J Sawyer (OPC), P Archbald (RCNZ), M Oosterhuis (RCN), J Plug (RCN)



**Moderamen**

Br W Spyker (First Clerk), Rev A Souman (Chairman),  
Rev H Alkema (Vice-Chairman), Rev R Pot (Second Clerk)

## GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Belgic Confession
BoP	Book of Praise
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CO	Church Order
DGK	De Gereformeerde Kerken (formerly RCN <sup>r</sup> )
EPC	Evangelical Presbyterian Church
ESV	English Standard Version
FERC	First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FRC	Free Reformed Church
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
GGRC	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis
GGRI	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia
GGRI-T	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
KPCK	Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
NKJV	New King James Version
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
SCABP	Standing Committee for Australian Book of Praise
SPC	Southern Presbyterian Church
URCNA	United Reformed Churches of North America

## INDEX

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Article #</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Australian Theological Seminary	80	44
Australian Book of Praise	28	17
	60	29
	88	55
Canadian Reformed Churches	47	25
De Gereformeerde Kerken	75	36
Evangelical Presbyterian Church	37	20
First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore	106	75
Free Reformed Churches of South Africa	81	50
FRCA Website	35	19
Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia	96	64
	105	73
Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland	75	36
International Conference of Reformed Churches	82	51
Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea	49	26
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	33	18
	83	52
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands	45	23
	107	77
Reformed Churches of New Zealand	79	41
Southern Presbyterian Church	37	20
Training for the Ministry	90	57
United Reformed Churches of North America	63	32

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Article 1 -	Opening of Synod by Convening Church of FRC Bunbury .....	1
Article 2 -	Examination of Credentials.....	1
Article 3 -	Election of Officers .....	2
Article 4 -	Constitution of Synod .....	2
Article 5 -	Delegates' Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity .....	2
Article 6 -	Adjournment.....	2
Article 7 -	Reopening.....	3
Article 8 -	Welcome to Overseas Visitors.....	3
Article 9 -	Late Agenda Items .....	4
Article 10 -	Adoption of Agenda.....	5
Article 11 -	Time schedules .....	9
Article 12 -	Publishing of Acts.....	9
Article 13 -	Administrative Assistant.....	9
Article 14 -	Financial Advisory Committee .....	10
Article 15 -	Committees of Synod .....	10
Article 16 -	Proposal regarding the format of the Acts of Synod .....	11
Article 17 -	Proposal regarding Article 36 of the Church Order.....	13
Article 18 -	Discussion Rounds .....	13
Article 19 -	Closed Session .....	14
Article 20 -	Instructions.....	14
Article 21 -	Discussion Rounds .....	14
Article 22 -	Deputies for Article 48 CO .....	14
Article 23 -	Archives and Library of Synod .....	15
Article 24 -	Deputies for Marriage Act – Nominating Authorities .....	15
Article 25 -	Reopening.....	16
Article 26 -	Address of the CanRC .....	16
Article 27 -	Address of the RCNZ.....	16
Article 28 -	Australian Book of Praise.....	17

Article 29 -	Adjournment.....	17
Article 30 -	Reopening.....	17
Article 31 -	Discussion Round.....	18
Article 32 -	Committee work.....	18
Article 33 -	Motion regarding address by OPC.....	18
Article 34 -	Discussion Rounds .....	19
Article 35 -	FRCA Website.....	19
Article 36 -	Discussion Round.....	20
Article 37 -	Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Southern Presbyterian Church .....	20
Article 38 -	Reopening.....	21
Article 39 -	Address of the KPCK.....	21
Article 40 -	Address of the RCN .....	22
Article 41 -	Discussion Round.....	22
Article 42 -	Adjournment.....	22
Article 43 -	Reopening.....	22
Article 44 -	Adoption of the Acts .....	23
Article 45 -	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands .....	23
Article 46 -	Discussion Rounds .....	24
Article 47 -	Canadian Reformed Churches .....	24
Article 48 -	Overseas Visitor .....	26
Article 49 -	Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea .....	26
Article 50 -	Discussion Round.....	27
Article 51 -	Committee work.....	27
Article 52 -	Reopening.....	27
Article 53 -	Address of the URCNA .....	27
Article 54 -	Address of the GGRI.....	28
Article 55 -	Address of the GGRC.....	28
Article 56 -	Address of the GGRI-Timor .....	28
Article 57 -	Adjournment.....	28
Article 58 -	Reopening.....	29
Article 59 -	Adoption of the Acts .....	29
Article 60 -	Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise .....	29
Article 61 -	Discussion Rounds .....	31



Article 62 -	Adoption of the Acts.....	32
Article 63 -	United Reformed Churches of North America ..	32
Article 64 -	Committee work .....	33
Article 65 -	Discussion Rounds .....	33
Article 66 -	Reopening.....	33
Article 67 -	Adoption of the Acts.....	34
Article 68 -	Address of DGK .....	34
Article 69 -	Address of the FRCSA .....	34
Article 70 -	Address of the OPC.....	34
Article 71 -	Discussion Round.....	34
Article 72 -	Adjournment.....	35
Article 73 -	Reopening.....	35
Article 74 -	Committee work .....	35
Article 75 -	De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) ..	35
Article 76 -	Appeal of Br J Numan re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ).....	37
Article 77 -	Appeal of Br and Sr J & A Eikelboom re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ) .....	38
Article 78 -	Appeal of Br GJ Bosveld re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ).....	39
Article 79 -	Reformed Churches of New Zealand.....	41
Article 80 -	Deputies for Theological Training – Australian Theological Seminary.....	44
Article 81 -	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa .....	50
Article 82 -	International Conference of Reformed Churches .....	51
Article 83 -	Orthodox Presbyterian Church.....	52
Article 84 -	Discussion Round.....	54
Article 85 -	Reopening.....	54
Article 86 -	Welcome to Overseas Visitors.....	54
Article 87 -	Address of FERC.....	55
Article 88 -	Appointment of SCABP .....	55
Article 89 -	Proposal from Classis Central to amend Psalms 2, 8, 130 and 150 .....	56

Article 90 -	Training for the Ministry.....	57
Article 91 -	Proposal to revise the English translation of Art 30 of the Belgic Confession.....	62
Article 92 -	Proposal to revise the English version of Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism .....	63
Article 93 -	Adjournment.....	63
Article 94 -	Reopening.....	63
Article 95 -	Adoption of the Acts .....	64
Article 96 -	GGRI – Theological Training.....	64
Article 97 -	Discussion Rounds .....	66
Article 98 -	Motion regarding GGRI-Timor .....	66
Article 99 -	Discussion Round.....	67
Article 100 -	Proposal to amend Art 36 Church Order .....	67
Article 101 -	Discussion Round.....	68
Article 102 -	General Secretary Activities.....	68
Article 103 -	Indexing Synod Decisions.....	69
Article 104 -	Report from Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue .....	70
Article 105 -	Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI) .....	73
Article 106 -	First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC).....	75
Article 107 -	Communication of RCN decision (refer Art 45) .	77
Article 108 -	Days of Prayer – Article 66 CO .....	78
Article 109 -	Closed Session.....	79
Article 110 -	Closed Session.....	79
Article 111 -	Proposal regarding the Deputies for Interchurch Relations outside Australia .....	79
Article 112 -	Deputy Appointments.....	81
Article 113 -	Adoption of Acts .....	83
Article 114 -	Reopening.....	83
Article 115 -	Synod Treasury Report .....	84
Article 116 -	Appointment of Convening Church for the next Synod .....	84
Article 117 -	Adoption of Acts .....	85
Article 118 -	Censure according to Article 47 CO .....	85

Article 119 -	Question Period .....	85
Article 120 -	Adoption of the Press Release .....	85
Article 121 -	Closing Address.....	85
Article 122 -	Closing.....	85

## Appendices:

Appendix 1a:	Meditation text by Br K Visser, Chairman of the convening church of Bunbury.....	87
Appendix 1b:	Opening address by the Chairman of the convening church of Bunbury.....	93
Appendix 1c:	Address by Rev A Witten – CanRC .....	95
Appendix 1d:	Address by Rev P Archbald – RCNZ.....	103
Appendix 1e:	Address by Prof S Lee – KPCK .....	105
Appendix 1f:	Address by Rev J Plug – RCN.....	108
Appendix 1g:	Address by Br G Swets – URCNA .....	112
Appendix 1h:	Address by Rev A Palandima – GGRI .....	116
Appendix 1i:	Address by Br S Dethan – GGRC .....	123
Appendix 1j:	Address by Rev M Sneepe – DGK .....	125
Appendix 1k:	Address by Rev P Kgatle – FRCSA .....	130
Appendix 1l:	Address by Rev J Sawyer – OPC .....	134
Appendix 1m:	Address by Pastor NT Chong – FERC.....	142
Appendix 1n:	Closing Speech by Rev A Souman, Chairman of Synod Bunbury 2018.....	145
Appendix 2:	Press Release .....	152



---

**EVENING SESSION**  
**Monday, 18 June 2018**

---

**Article 1 - Opening of Synod by Convening Church of FRC Bunbury**

Synod is convened in the Free Reformed Church of Southern River church building. On behalf of the convening church of Bunbury, the chairman of Consistory, Br K Visser, invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 62:1 and 3, followed by the profession of faith by singing Hymn 1. He then leads in opening prayer.

Br Visser then reads from Proverbs 3:1-18 and delivers a meditation on this passage, focussing especially on verses 5-6 (refer Appendix 1a). He then invites all present to sing Psalm 24:1, 2, and leads in prayer to God for His blessing over the synod.

Br Visser invites all present to sing from Psalm 90:4 and 8, then speaks his opening address (refer Appendix 1b) and declares the 27<sup>th</sup> synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened. He then invites the delegates to the synod table.

**Article 2 - Examination of Credentials**

The three classes had previously submitted the credentials of the delegates. Br Visser advises that the consistory of Bunbury had already examined the credentials and were satisfied with them. It is noted that all primi delegates are present as follows:

**Classis Central**

Rev RD Anderson  
Rev A Hagg  
Rev C Vermeulen  
Elder E Heerema

**Classis North**

Rev R Bredenhof  
Rev W Bredenhof  
Rev A Souman  
Elder H Hamelink

Elder H Terpstra  
Elder J Torenvliet

Elder T Reitsema  
Elder W Spyker

**Classis South West**

Rev H Alkema  
Rev R Pot  
Rev S 'tHart  
Elder S Bolhuis  
Elder H Olde  
Elder W Vanderven

**Article 3 - Election of Officers**

The following officers are elected:

Chairman:	Rev A Souman
Vice Chairman:	Rev H Alkema
First Clerk:	Elder W Spyker
Second Clerk:	Rev R Pot

**Article 4 - Constitution of Synod**

The chairman, Rev A Souman, declares synod duly constituted.

**Article 5 - Delegates' Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity**

The Chairman asks all delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise.

**Article 6 - Adjournment**

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 118:1 and 8, leads in closing prayer and adjourns synod.

---

**MORNING SESSION**  
**Tuesday, 19 June 2018**

---

**Article 7 - Reopening**

Rev Souman reads Proverbs 3:19-35, invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 111: 1 and 5, and leads in prayer.

**Article 8 - Welcome to Overseas Visitors**

The following overseas visitors, each with written credentials, are welcomed and granted the following privileges:

Under Synod Rule 6.1 as sister churches:

Canadian Reformed Churches:	Rev A Witten Br H Schouten
Reformed Churches of New Zealand:	Rev Dr P Archbald
Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI):	Rev A Palandima Br Ev A Bantan
Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea:	Prof S Lee
Free Reformed Churches of South Africa:	Rev P Kgatle

The Chairman requests the above sister church delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise.

Under Synod Rule 6.2 as churches with whom we have temporary ecclesiastical contact:

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN):	Rev J Plug Rev MH Oosterhuis
---	---------------------------------

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) (DGK):	Rev C Koster Rev M Sneep
--	-----------------------------

Under Synod Rule 6.3 as churches with whom we have official contact:

Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC):	Rev YM Bunda Br S Dethan
--	-----------------------------

Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI Timor):	Br CI Nguru Br FS Missa
--	----------------------------

United Reformed Churches in North America:	Br G Swets
--	------------

## **Article 9 - Late Agenda Items**

The Final Draft Agenda as prepared by the convening church is tabled. A number of items not on the Draft Agenda are dealt with as follows:

1. To be added to the agenda (as closed session material), agreed by special resolution on the grounds of exceptional circumstances:
  - a. Report from Art 48 Deputies re Classis South West 8 June 2018.
  - b. An Appeal.
2. Not to be added to the agenda by reason of being late:
  - a. Amended letter of 24 May from the FRC of Darling Downs, received on 6 June 2018.



## **Article 10 - Adoption of Agenda**

Synod's Agenda is adopted as follows:

1. Opening by the Convening Church
2. Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials
  - a. Overseas Delegates and Visitors
3. Visitors
4. Election of Officers
5. Constitution of Synod
6. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
7. Adoption of the Agenda
8. Adoption of Meeting Procedures
9. Incoming Correspondence
  - a. Classis Central
    - i. Proposal to amend Article 36 of the Church Order
    - ii. Proposal for revision of the English translation of art. 30 of the Belgic Confession
    - iii. Proposal for revision of the English translation of Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism
    - iv. Change to Book of Praise Psalm 2
    - v. Change to Book of Praise Psalm 8
    - vi. Change to Book of Praise Psalm 130
    - vii. Change to Book of Praise Psalm 150
    - viii. Proposal for a Theological College of the FRCA
  - b. Classis North
    - i. Proposal regarding ecumenical relations with EPC and SPC
    - ii. Proposal regarding the Acts of Synod
    - iii. Proposal regarding the addition of 19 Hymns to the Book of Praise
    - iv. Proposal regarding relations with Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

- c. General Synod Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKV)
  - i. Response of the General Synod of Meppel to letter
- d. General Synod Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN)
  - i. Letter requesting sister church relations
- e. Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott
  - i. Letter regarding Report of Deputies for relations with Sister Churches – Indonesia
  - ii. Letter regarding Deputies Reports
- f. Free Reformed Church of Launceston
  - i. Letter regarding Acts of Synod Online
  - ii. Letter regarding Appeal of Jelte Numan
  - iii. Letter regarding Book of Praise
  - iv. Letter regarding FRCA Website
  - v. Letter regarding ICRC
  - vi. Letter regarding OPC
  - vii. Letter regarding RCN
  - viii. Letter regarding RCNZ
  - ix. Letter regarding Theological Training
  - x. Letter regarding United Reformed Churches of North America
- g. Free Reformed Church of Baldivis
  - i. Letter regarding Indonesian Sister Churches
  - ii. Letter regarding Theological College
  - iii. Letter regarding Australian Version of the Canadian Book of Praise
  - iv. Letter regarding ICRC
- h. Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs
  - i. Letter regarding Book of Praise
  - ii. Letter regarding United Reformed Churches of North America
  - iii. Letter regarding DGK and GKN

- i. Free Reformed Church of Byford
  - i. Letter regarding Theological Training
  - ii. Letter regarding DGK, GKN & RCN
- j. Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura
  - i. Letter regarding Theological Training
  - ii. Letter regarding RCNZ
  - iii. Letter regarding Book of Praise
- k. Free Reformed Church of West Albany
  - i. Letter regarding Theological Training
  - ii. Letter regarding DGK and GKN
  - iii. Letter regarding GGRI
- l. Free Reformed Church of Albany
  - i. Letter regarding DGK and GKN
  - ii. Letter regarding Theological Training
- 10. Appeals
  - a. Appeal regarding Synod Baldivis's Decision on RCNZ (J Numan)
  - b. Appeal regarding Synod Baldivis's Decision on RCNZ (J & A Eikelboom)
  - c. Appeal regarding Synod Baldivis's Decision on RCNZ (G.J Bosveld)
  - d. Appeal (closed session)
- 11. Instructions
- 12. Reports by Classes
  - a. Classis North
    - i. Credentials - Delegates to Synod
    - ii. Submissions for Judgement of Synod
  - b. Classis Central
    - i. Credentials - Delegates to Synod
    - ii. Submissions for Judgement of Synod
  - c. Classis South West
    - i. Credentials - Delegates to Synod
    - ii. Submissions for Judgement of Synod
- 13. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies
  - a. General Secretary's Report

- b. Sister Church Relations – overall report
  - c. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
  - d. Canadian Reformed Churches
  - e. United Reformed Churches of North America
  - f. Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
  - g. The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (DGK) and the Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKN)
  - h. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)
  - i. Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI)
  - j. Reformed Churches of New Zealand
  - k. First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
  - l. Training for the Ministry
  - m. Australian Book of Praise
  - n. Indexing Synod Decisions
  - o. Article 48 Church Order
  - p. Article 66 Church Order – Days of Prayer
  - q. Archives and Library of Synod
  - r. Archive Inspection
  - s. Nominating Authorities – Marriage Act
  - t. Supplementary Report – Article 48 CO dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018
  - u. Supplementary Report – Article 48 CO dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2018
  - v. Supplementary Report – Article 48 CO dated 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018
- 14. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer
    - a. Treasurers Audit Report
  - 15. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs
    - a. Financial Statement and Budget for Synod Treasury
  - 16. Appointment of Deputies
  - 17. Appointment of Convening Church, and place and time of the next Synod
  - 18. Personal questions

19. Adoption of Acts
20. Approval of Press Release
21. Closing of Synod

#### **Article 11 - Time schedules**

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

9.00am – 10.30am	Break
10.45am – 12.15pm	Lunch
1.45pm – 3.15pm	Break
3.30pm – 5.00pm	Dinner
7.00pm – 9.00pm	Evening session

#### **Article 12 - Publishing of Acts**

The chairman proposes as follows:

1. To place the Acts of Synod on the internet after they are adopted, provided that matters of personal nature will be excluded and in matters relating to other churches discretion will be used.
2. A daily agenda will also be published on the internet.

***ADOPTED***

#### **Article 13 - Administrative Assistant**

At the recommendation of the convening church, the chairman proposes to appoint Sr K van Duyn as administrative assistant to the clerk of Synod 2018.

***ADOPTED***

## **Article 14 - Financial Advisory Committee**

The chairman proposes to appoint as Financial Advisory Committee, according to article 11.1 of the Synod regulations, Br W Spyker and Rev H Alkema.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 15 - Committees of Synod**

The following committees are appointed:

### Committee 1 – Inter-church Relations

Rev C Vermeulen (convenor)

Rev W Bredenhof

Br J Torenvliet

Br W Vandervén

### Committee 2 – Book of Praise

Rev S 'tHart (convenor)

Rev H Alkema

Br S Bolhuis

Br T Reitsema

### Committee 3 – Training for the Ministry

Rev R Bredenhof (convenor)

Rev R Pot

Br H Hamelink

Br H Olde

### Committee 4 – Other (incl EPC-SPC/OPC/ICRC)

Rev RD Anderson (convenor)

Rev A Hagg

Br E Heerema

Br H Terpstra

## **Article 16 - Proposal regarding the format of the Acts of Synod**

### **I. Material**

Item 9(b)(ii) – Proposal from Classis North of 20 October 2017 regarding the format of the Acts of Synod, being to amend the Rules of Synod so that the Acts will:

1. include a summary of the material considered;
2. no longer include defeated proposals.

### **II. Procedure**

The chairman decides to deal with the two proposals separately.

### **III. Proposal 1**

To add to Synod Rule 7.8 the following words: “Under the heading MATERIAL, the Acts shall also summarize the material considered.”

#### **Grounds**

1. This change will improve the readability and transparency of the Acts of Synod for consistories – and general readership in our churches and overseas.
2. Consistories should have ready access to at least a brief description of what the material contained. Responsible review of the Acts is difficult without this level of transparency.
3. The Synod rules (1.3) indicate that all non-confidential material is to be sent to the churches. However, this is done electronically. By the time the Acts are published and then reviewed by consistories, electronic copies of the material can become inaccessible (deleted from hard drives, elders retire, etc.)
4. While consistories may have received (electronic) copies of all non-confidential material, the general

membership of our churches have not. We encourage our members to acquaint themselves with the decisions made by our broadest assembly. It therefore serves them as well to be informed at least briefly of the contents of material submitted.

5. The Acts of our Synods, according to our Rules for Sister Relations, are sent to our sister churches. They, however, do not receive all the material submitted. For them to read, understand, and review our Acts responsibly, they would also benefit from brief descriptions of all non-confidential material.

### ***ADOPTED***

#### **IV. Proposal 2**

To delete from Synod Rule 7.8 the words “Proposals declared in the affirmative shall be recorded as ADOPTED. Proposals declared in the negative shall be recorded as DEFEATED”.

#### **Grounds**

1. This change will improve the readability and transparency of the Acts of Synod for consistories – and general readership in our churches and overseas.
2. There is already a heading of “DECISION(S).” By definition, a decision taken has been adopted. “ADOPTED” would likely still be included in the Acts for extra clarity, but is not strictly necessary – the Acts of Canadian Reformed Synods include “ADOPTED” behind decisions, but this is not required by their Rules for Synod.
3. The inclusion of defeated proposals, since they do not include reasons for the defeat, do not add anything helpful to the Acts.



4. Including defeated proposals adds to the size of the Acts, and therefore the printing costs of the hard copies.
5. Including defeated proposals in the Acts also unnecessarily adds to the work of the First Clerk.
6. It should be noted that the decision and grounds for any material presented to Synod will still be noted in the Acts.

### ***DEFEATED***

## **Article 17 - Proposal regarding Article 36 of the Church Order**

### **I. Material**

Item 9(a)(i) – Proposal from Classis Central of 23 March 2018 to amend Article 36 CO, being to add the words “*as a rule*” in relation to consistory being chaired by the minister.

### **II. Admissibility**

The proposal is declared admissible, noting that the accompanying letter from FRC Byford is provided for information only.

### ***DECLARED ADMISSIBLE***

## **Article 18 - Discussion Rounds**

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the relevant committee to formulate proposed decisions:

- Proposal re Article 36 of the Church Order
- Proposal re Southern Presbyterian Church and Evangelical Presbyterian Church

- Proposal re Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Various Appeals re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ)

### **Article 19 - Closed Session**

Synod holds a closed session.

### **Article 20 - Instructions**

The chairman notes that there are no instructions from the churches.

### **Article 21 - Discussion Rounds**

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the nominated committees to formulate proposed decisions:

- General Secretary's Report and website
- Deputies for Sister Church Relations (overall report) and ICRC
- Report of the Deputies for Training for the Ministry
- Report of the Deputies for Indexing Synod Decisions
- Report of the Deputies for Article 48 CO
- Report of the Deputies for Article 66 CO – Days of Prayer

### **Article 22 - Deputies for Article 48 CO**

#### **I. Material**

Item 13(o) – Report of Deputies Art 48 CO

Item 13(t) – Supplementary Report – Deputies Article 48 CO dated 10 April 2018

Item 13(u) – Supplementary Report – Deputies Article 48 CO dated 19 May 2018

Item 13(v) – Supplementary Report – Deputies Article 48 CO dated 8 June 2018

**II. Decision**

1. To receive the reports and release deputies from their task.
2. To appoint new deputies to assist the classes according to Art 48 CO, with one deputy and one alternate from each classical region, ie according to the manner decided by Synod Armadale 2012, Decision 3 (Art 110, p 80-81).

***ADOPTED***

**Article 23 - Archives and Library of Synod**

**I. Material**

Item 13(q) – Report on Archives and Library of Synod  
Item 13(r) – Report for Archive Inspection

**II. Decision**

1. To accept the report on the Archives and Library of Synod and to thank the archivist for diligently maintaining the records of Synod.
2. To thank the deputies for completing the inspection of the Archives and Library of Synod and accept their report on the matter, and to discharge deputies.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 24 - Deputies for Marriage Act – Nominating Authorities**

**I. Material**

Item 13(s) – Report of Deputies re Marriage Act

## **II. Decision**

To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

***ADOPTED***

---

**EVENING SESSION**  
**Tuesday, 19 June 2018**

---

### **Article 25 - Reopening**

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 147:1 and 4. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what had been achieved during the morning and afternoon sessions today.

### **Article 26 - Address of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

The chairman invites Rev A Witten to present his address on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (refer Appendix 1c).

Br W Pleiter is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our Canadian sister churches.

### **Article 27 - Address of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand**

The chairman invites Rev P Archbald to present his address on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer Appendix 1d).

Rev H Alkema is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our sister churches in New Zealand.

## **Article 28 - Australian Book of Praise**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(m) – Report of Deputies for Australian Version of the Canadian Book of Praise

Item 9(f)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Launceston

Item 9(g)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis

Item 9(h)(i) – Letter from FRC of Darling Downs

Item 9(j)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Mount Nasura

### **II. Admissibility of Version III – Option 6.7**

Version III – Option 6.7 in the Deputies Report is declared admissible (Option 6.7 reads as follows: 2014 version of the Canadian Book of Praise + separate booklet of Australian Church Order).

### ***DECLARED ADMISSIBLE***

After a round of discussion, the matter is referred to the relevant committee to formulate a proposed decision.

## **Article 29 - Adjournment**

Rev S 'tHart reads Psalm 19 and invites all those present to sing Psalm 19:4. He then leads in prayer and the chairman adjourns synod.

---

### **MORNING SESSION**

**Wednesday, 20 June 2018**

---

## **Article 30 - Reopening**

Br W Spyker invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 52:1 and 2. He reads from Ephesians 4:1-16, then leads in prayer. The Chairman then reopens the meeting, with a special welcome to all the students of the catechism classes of the JCCC.

### **Article 31 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the following agenda item, which is then referred to the relevant committee to formulate a proposed decision:

- Proposal for a Theological College of the FRCA

### **Article 32 - Committee work**

Synod breaks for committee work.

### **Article 33 - Motion regarding address by Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

The following motion is made from the floor and seconded:

#### **I. Motion**

To invite Rev J Sawyer to address Synod in order to give greetings from the OPC and to include a text of his greetings in the appendix of the Acts of Synod.

#### **Grounds**

1. Synod has received a proposal from the FRC Southern River, via Classis North, to enter into Ecclesiastical Contact with the OPC. Hearing from the OPC delegate will assist in making a well-considered decision regarding this proposal.
2. The OPC were formally invited to send a delegate as an observer to Synod Bunbury and it would therefore be a display of Christian charity and courtesy to give the OPC delegate the opportunity to address us.

#### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 34 - Discussion Rounds**

Several rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred back to the relevant committees to formulate proposed decisions:

- Report of Deputies for Art 66 CO – Days of Prayer
- Proposal of Classis Central to amend Art 36 CO

## **Article 35 - FRCA Website**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(a) – General Secretary’s Report. The website of the FRCA has been the responsibility of the General Deputies since 2003.

Item 9(f)(iv) – Letter from FRC of Launceston – Launceston would like to see a reinvigorated FRCA website including news items and press releases from the churches.

### **II. Decision**

Synod appoints a new deputyship of four members, some having technical expertise, with the following mandate to:

1. Maintain the existing content on the FRCA website and the associated technical functions.
2. Update the look and functionality of the FRCA website, and to make it mobile friendly.
3. Invite the churches to send news items and press releases to the website committee for inclusion on the FRCA website.
4. Allocate a \$2,000 interim budget.
5. Serve Synod 2021 with a report of their activities, a financial statement, a proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding additional content or functionality.

**Grounds**

1. The churches would be well served by a regularly updated and revamped website.
2. An attractive website will serve to promote the churches in the local and wider community.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 36 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the following agenda item, which is then referred back to the relevant committee to formulate a proposed decision:

- General Secretary's Report - activities

**Article 37 - Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Southern Presbyterian Church**

**I. Material**

Item 9(b)(i) – Proposal from Classis North of 20 October 2017

Classis North submits a proposal to Synod requesting that a committee be established to investigate the possibility of ecumenical relations between the Free Reformed Churches and the Southern Presbyterian Church as well as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Both of these churches have congregations within the Launceston/Legana region with whom the churches of Launceston and Legana have had some contact.

**II. Decision**

That a deputyship be established to investigate the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical



Presbyterian Church and report back respecting the feasibility of further ecumenical contact.

**Grounds**

1. The membership of the Tasmanian FRCs already have regular informal contact with these churches. In addition there has been official contact between the respective consistories and sessions.
2. For further ecumenical contact to proceed, their doctrine, history, including the reasons for their split and continued separation, and their respective national and international contacts need to be investigated. Deputies should show that the marks of the true church (art 29 BC) are present.

***ADOPTED***

---

**EVENING SESSION**  
**Wednesday, 20 June 2018**

---

**Article 38 - Reopening**

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 147:6. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what had been achieved during the sessions today.

**Article 39 - Address of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea**

The chairman invites Dr Sungho Lee to present his address on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (refer Appendix 1e).

Rev S 'tHart is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our Korean sister churches.

## **Article 40 - Address of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands**

The chairman invites Rev J Plug to present his address on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (refer Appendix 1f).

Rev RD Anderson is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for the RCN.

## **Article 41 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the RCN. Before the round commences, the chairman invites Rev MH Oosterhuis, the (then) chairman of Synod Meppel 2017, to present an address about the decisions of the RCN, especially concerning Synod Meppel's decision on the topic of women in office. The round of discussion is then held in relation to the address and the RCN generally.

## **Article 42 - Adjournment**

Rev H Alkema reads John 10:1-4 and invites all those present to sing Hymn 55:1, 2 and 3. He then leads with prayer and the chairman adjourns Synod.

---

### **MORNING SESSION**

**Thursday, 21 June 2018**

---

## **Article 43 - Reopening**

Br H Terpstra invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 112:1, 5. He reads from Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 and leads in prayer. The chairman reopens the meeting.

## **Article 44 - Adoption of the Acts**

Articles 1-29 of the Acts are adopted.

## **Article 45 - Reformed Churches in the Netherlands**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(h) – Report of Deputies for Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Item 9(c)(i) – Letter from General Synod Meppel 2017, advising of their decision to urge the FRCA not to prematurely break off the bond with the RCN, to declare that from their side they see no cause to review the sister church relationship, and to send a delegation to the FRCA to facilitate a face-to-face explanation of their decision

Item 9(f)(vii) – Letter from FRC of Launceston, supporting deputies' recommendation to terminate the sister church relationship

Item 9(h)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Darling Downs, supporting deputies' recommendation to terminate the sister church relationship

Item 9(i)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Byford, proposing to continue monitoring developments in the Netherlands

### **II. Decision**

With sadness to terminate the sister relationship with the RCN.

### **Grounds**

1. The relationship with the RCN has become untenable due to their use of the 'New Hermeneutics' – principles allowing the current cultural context to play a determining role in explaining scripture. This has allowed the RCN to turn away from the clear instruction in God's Word

and to show unfaithfulness by lack of submission to that Word.

2. The evidence of ground 1 above is given particular expression in the recent decision of the RCN (Synod Meppel 2017) to allow women to the office of deacon, elder and minister.
3. There has been no adequate response, let alone repentance, to earlier admonitions:
  - i. Letter of admonition from Synod Armadale 2012 to RCN Synod Ede dated 22 April 2013 (Acts of Synod 2012, Appendix 5);
  - ii. Letter from Synod Baldivis 2015 to RCN Synod Meppel 2017 (Acts of Synod 2015, Appendix 2).

### ***ADOPTED***

The chairman notes that this decision is made with great sadness, and leads the meeting in prayer.

### **Article 46 - Discussion Rounds**

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the relevant committee to formulate proposed decisions:

- Communication of our decision to the RCN
- Report of the Deputies for DGK and GKN

### **Article 47 - Canadian Reformed Churches**

#### **I. Material**

Item 13(d) – Report of Deputies for Canadian Reformed Churches

**II. Decision**

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. monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to Blessings Christian Church in line with the questions expressed in the deputies report;
  - c. stay informed on the developments concerning the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA; and
  - d. send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled in Edmonton-Immanuel during May 2019.

**Grounds**

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. We need to foster mutual understanding and support regarding matters that our respective federations face, including their sister church relations in North America.
3. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the personal contact at the synodical level, which reinforces our contact with them.

**ADOPTED**

## **Article 48 - Overseas Visitor**

The delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Rev J Sawyer, is welcomed and granted privileges under Synod Rule 6.4 as churches who desire to establish contact with our churches, as well as the privilege previously decided in Article 33 of these Acts.

## **Article 49 - Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(f) – Report of Deputies for Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

### **II. Decision**

1. To continue sister-church relations with the KPCK according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
  - b. send two delegates, including (if possible) one Korean speaking delegate, to the KPCK General Assembly in 2019; and
  - c. further investigate the members of our sister churches living in the Perth metro area, with a view to improving contact and cooperation with them.

### **Grounds**

1. The Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions.

2. The inclusion of a Korean speaking delegate has proved beneficial.

### ***ADOPTED***

#### **Article 50 - Discussion Round**

Several rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda item, which is then referred to the relevant committee to formulate a proposed decision:

- Report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches – Indonesia

#### **Article 51 - Committee work**

Synod breaks for committee work.

---

### **EVENING SESSION** **Thursday, 21 June 2018**

---

#### **Article 52 - Reopening**

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 87:1, 2 and 3. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what had been achieved during the sessions today.

#### **Article 53 - Address of the United Reformed Church of North America**

The chairman invites Br G Swets to present his address on behalf of the United Reformed Church of North America (refer Appendix 1g).

Br W Pleiter is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches.

**Article 54 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI)**

The chairman invites Rev A Palandima to present his address on behalf of the GGRI (refer Appendix 1h).

Rev A van Delden is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in Indonesia.

**Article 55 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC)**

The chairman invites Br S Dethan to present his address on behalf of the GGRC (refer Appendix 1i).

Br E Heerema is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches.

**Article 56 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-Timor)**

The chairman invites Br FS Missa and Br CI Nguru to present their address on behalf of the GGRI-Timor.

Br B Bosveld is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches.

**Article 57 - Adjournment**

Rev RD Anderson reads Psalm 119:25-32 and leads with prayer. He then invites all those present to stand and sing Psalm 119:12 and the chairman adjourns synod.



---

**MORNING SESSION**  
**Friday, 22 June 2018**

---

**Article 58 - Reopening**

Br J Torenvliet invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 25:2 and 6. He reads Psalm 1 and leads in prayer. The chairman reopens the meeting.

**Article 59 - Adoption of the Acts**

Articles 30-42 of the Acts are adopted.

**Article 60 - Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise**

**I. Material**

Item 13(m) – Report of Deputies for Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise

9(b)(iii) – Proposal from Classis North of 20 October 2017: Proposal regarding the adoption of the 19 additional Hymns of the Book of Praise (Southern River)

9(f)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Launceston: Agreement with Southern River's proposal to add the 19 Hymns and use the ESV

9(g)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis: Support for a version of the Book of Praise that contains the additional 19 Hymns and uses the ESV

9(h)(i) – Letter from FRC of Darling Downs: Support for a version of the Book of Praise that does not contain the additional 19 hymns, uses the NKJV and capitalises the personal pronouns for God

9(j)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Mt Nasura: Support for a version of the Book of Praise that contains no more than 2 of the additional 19 hymns, uses the NKJV, and capitalises the personal pronouns for God

## **II. Decision**

1. To adopt and produce an Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise that:
  - a. includes the Psalms and Hymns of the 2014 Canadian Book of Praise, including the 19 additional hymns;
  - b. includes creeds, confessions, and liturgical forms as found in the 2014 Canadian Book of Praise, with adopted changes made by the FRCA, as well as the Australian Church Order. This includes the changes identified by Deputies in 1.2.4 and 1.2.5 of the Report, as well as the changes decided by Synod Albany 1987 Art 100;
  - c. makes use of the ESV translation of the Bible; and
  - d. does not capitalise the personal pronouns for God.
2. To call this song book “Australian Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter”, subject to approval from the Standing Committee of the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches, with Deputies for the Book of Praise being granted the liberty to select an appropriate title in the event that the SCBP of the CanRC declines to grant such approval.

## **Grounds**

1. There is a desire within our churches to have a greater sense of ownership over the song book used in our churches.
2. There is merit in keeping the Australian version of the Book of Praise as similar as possible to the Canadian Book of Praise so that they can be used interchangeably by the members, and so that our book closely resembles that used by our Canadian

sister churches. This is also in the interests of promoting the good stewardship of our financial and other resources.

3. The additional 19 hymns were carefully selected and rigorously tested to provide a well-rounded hymnal that reflects the biblical truths as summarized in the Apostles' Creed.
4. The ESV is approved for use in the church services and is clearly suitable for use in the confessions and liturgical forms.
5. Although the capitalisation of the second and third pronouns for God is a tradition that is seen by many to serve as a constant reminder of the fact that God is worthy of great honour and respect, it cannot be found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek texts of the Bible and as such there are no known biblical grounds for this practice. When capitalisation is attempted in, for example, the Messianic psalms, it can easily become a matter of interpretation that may obscure the Old Testament referent.
6. The title "Australian Book of Praise" adequately distinguishes this song book from the Canadian Book of Praise, while reflecting the fact that this is a version of the Canadian Book of Praise.

### ***ADOPTED***

#### **Article 61 - Discussion Rounds**

Several rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda item:

- United Reformed Churches of North America

By special resolution, Synod invited the delegate of the URCNA, Br G Swets, to sit at the table to answer questions.

## **Article 62 - Adoption of the Acts**

Articles 43-57 of the Acts are adopted.

## **Article 63 - United Reformed Churches of North America**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(e) – Report of Deputies for URCNA

Item 9(f)(x) – Letter from FRC of Launceston, supporting Deputies' recommendation to continue contact with the URCNA

Item 9(h)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Darling Downs, proposing to also mandate deputies to investigate and report on the URCNA's relationship with the PCEA, and to address the question of our consistency in relation to having a relationship with two different federations in one country

### **II. Decision**

1. To continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship.
2. To acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work.
3. To discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;
  - b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;
  - c. send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport Ontario in 2020; and

- d. submit a report of work completed, six months prior to the next synod.

### **Grounds**

1. Synod Baldivis 2015, Article 39 gave grounds for establishing contact with the URCNA.
2. This mandate is yet to be completed.
3. Personal contact at a synodical level will enable the deputies to better fulfill their mandate and help the URCNA be better informed about the FRCA.

### ***ADOPTED***

#### **Article 64 - Committee work**

Synod breaks for committee work.

#### **Article 65 - Discussion Rounds**

Several rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items:

- Report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches – Indonesia
- Various Appeals re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ)

---

### **EVENING SESSION**

**Friday, 22 June 2018**

---

#### **Article 66 - Reopening**

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 148:1 and 3. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what had been achieved during the sessions today.

## **Article 67 - Adoption of the Acts**

Articles 58-65 of the Acts are adopted.

## **Article 68 - Address of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGK)**

The chairman invites Rev M Snee to present his address on behalf of the DGK (refer Appendix 1j).

Rev A Hagg is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches.

## **Article 69 - Address of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)**

The chairman invites Rev P Kgatle to present his address on behalf of the FRCSA (refer Appendix 1k).

Rev A Hagg is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in South Africa.

## **Article 70 - Address of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**

The chairman invites Rev J Sawyer to present his address on behalf of the OPC (refer Appendix 1l).

## **Article 71 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the following agenda item:

- Proposal for a Theological College of the FRCA

## **Article 72 - Adjournment**

Br S Bolhuis reads 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and leads with prayer. He then invites all those present to sing Psalm 84:1 and 6 and the chairman adjourns synod.

---

### **MORNING SESSION** **Monday, 25 June 2018**

---

## **Article 73 - Reopening**

Br W Vanderven invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 34:1 and 5. He reads 1 Peter 3:8-12 and leads in prayer. The chairman reopens the meeting.

## **Article 74 - Committee work**

Synod breaks for committee work.

## **Article 75 - De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(g) – Report of Deputies for DGK and GKN

Item 9(d)(i) – Letter from the General Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN), requesting sister church relations with the FRCA

Item 9(h)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Darling Downs, requesting Synod to mandate deputies to investigate now whether there is a lawful continuation of the RCN, and in this investigation to consider both the DGK and GKN, noting that the DGK lay claim to being the continuation of our Dutch sister-churches

Item 9(i)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Byford, proposing to continue to monitor developments in the RCN, DGK and GKN

Item 9(k)(ii) – Letter from FRC of West Albany, proposing that Synod mandate deputies to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and GKN

Item 9(l)(i) – Letter from FRC of Albany, proposing that Synod mandate deputies to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and GKN

## **II. Decision**

1. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
  - a. to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK (De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) and GKN (Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland);
  - b. to encourage the DGK and GKN to work towards unity with each other;
  - c. to maintain contact; and
  - d. to report back to the next Synod.
2. To await recommendations from the churches on how to proceed with these relations.
3. Monitor the relationship that exists between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford, working in close contact with the CanRC deputies regarding these developments.

## **Grounds**

1. Both churches profess to be faithful churches in every aspect of the Reformed doctrine.
2. Their historical backgrounds are similar to ours.
3. The DGK is also working via Rev Gunnink among our Indonesian sister churches.
4. Both the DGK and the GKN have recently sent letters to the deputies for distribution to the local churches requesting a sister church relationship.
5. Although their sister relation with Abbotsford LRC is a potential obstacle in our contact with the DGK



(see Synod 2012, article 99), the recent DGK synod did decide to have a closer look at the situation in Abbotsford.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 76 - Appeal of Br J Numan re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ)**

**I. Material**

Item 10(a) – Appeal of Br J Numan regarding Synod Baldivis’ decision on RCNZ. Br Numan appeals article 38 of Synod 2015 establishing a sister church relationship with the RCNZ

Item 9(f)(ii) – Letter of FRC Launceston interacting with Br Numan’s appeal. Launceston argues that since the appeal is not against the decision of a minor assembly (CO article 31), it ought to be declared inadmissible

**II. Decision**

Synod decides to declare the appeal inadmissible.

**Grounds**

1. According to Church Order articles 30 and 31, individuals who wish to interact with decisions of Synod should begin by addressing their consistories. The local consistory, if they concur with the concerns, may direct an appeal to synod. If the local consistory does not take over the individual’s appeal, he can appeal the local consistory’s decision to classis and thus begin the appeal process in accordance with article 31 of the Church Order. This procedure was not followed by the appellant.
2. Article 30 of the Church Order provides clarity on what defines an ecclesiastical matter and what should be dealt with at the broader assemblies.

Article 31 of the Church Order deals exclusively with the appeal process. Article 31 states clearly, “if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly.” For the individual, his local consistory is the minor assembly. When the consistory accepts a decision of a synod, the individual’s appeal is against the consistory and, therefore, article 31 directs his subsequent appeal to the broader assembly of classis, and then synod.

3. The appellant makes reference to an apparent precedent set by Synod West Kelmscott 2006 in articles 19 and 62. Synod 2006 admitted as admissible some appeals from individuals about matters in common. However, Synod 2018 judges that admissibility must be governed by reference to the Church Order, not historical precedent.

### ***ADOPTED AND DECLARED INADMISSIBLE***

#### **Article 77 - Appeal of Br and Sr J & A Eikelboom re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ)**

##### **I. Material**

Item 10(b) – Appeal of Br and Sr J & A Eikelboom regarding Synod Baldivis’ decision on RCNZ. Br and Sr Eikelboom appeal article 38 of Synod 2015 establishing a sister church relationship with the RCNZ

##### **II. Decision**

Synod decides to declare the appeal inadmissible.

##### **Grounds**

1. According to Church Order articles 30 and 31, individuals who wish to interact with decisions of Synod should begin by addressing their consistories.

The local consistory, if they concur with the concerns, may direct an appeal to synod. If the local consistory does not take over the individual's appeal, he can appeal the local consistory's decision to classis and thus begin the appeal process in accordance with article 31 of the Church Order. This procedure was not followed by the appellant.

2. Article 30 of the Church Order provides clarity on what defines an ecclesiastical matter and what should be dealt with at the broader assemblies. Article 31 of the Church Order deals exclusively with the appeal process. Article 31 states clearly, "if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly." For the individual, his local consistory is the minor assembly. When the consistory accepts a decision of a synod, the individual's appeal is against the consistory and, therefore, article 31 directs his subsequent appeal to the broader assembly of classis, and then synod.
3. There is an apparent precedent set by Synod West Kelmescott 2006 in articles 19 and 62. Synod 2006 admitted as admissible some appeals from individuals about matters in common. However, Synod 2018 judges that admissibility must be governed by reference to the Church Order, not historical precedent.

### ***ADOPTED AND DECLARED INADMISSIBLE***

#### **Article 78 - Appeal of Br GJ Bosveld re Acts of Synod 2015, Article 38 (RCNZ)**

##### **I. Material**

Item 10(c) – Appeal of Br GJ Bosveld regarding Synod Baldivis' decision on RCNZ. Br Bosveld appeals article 38

of Synod 2015 establishing a sister church relationship with the RCNZ

## **II. Decision**

Synod decides to declare the appeal inadmissible.

### **Grounds**

1. According to Church Order articles 30 and 31, individuals who wish to interact with decisions of Synod should begin by addressing their consistories. The local consistory, if they concur with the concerns, may direct an appeal to synod. If the local consistory does not take over the individual's appeal, he can appeal the local consistory's decision to classis and thus begin the appeal process in accordance with article 31 of the Church Order. This procedure was not followed by the appellant.
2. Article 30 of the Church Order provides clarity on what defines an ecclesiastical matter and what should be dealt with at the broader assemblies. Article 31 of the Church Order deals exclusively with the appeal process. Article 31 states clearly, "if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly." For the individual, his local consistory is the minor assembly. When the consistory accepts a decision of a synod, the individual's appeal is against the consistory and, therefore, article 31 directs his subsequent appeal to the broader assembly of classis, and then synod.
3. There is an apparent precedent set by Synod West Kelmescott 2006 in articles 19 and 62. Synod 2006 admitted as admissible some appeals from individuals about matters in common. However, Synod 2018 judges that admissibility must be

governed by reference to the Church Order, not historical precedent.

***ADOPTED AND DECLARED INADMISSIBLE***

**Article 79 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand**

**I. Material**

Item 13(j) – Report of Deputies for RCNZ

Item 9(f)(viii) – Letter from FRC of Launceston supporting the direction of deputies report

Item 9(j)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Mount Nasura requesting Synod to mandate deputies to monitor the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA and to monitor the relationship the RCNZ has with the RTC

**II. Decision**

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ, under the established rules;
2. Make the churches in our bond aware of the practical obstacles that have been identified in relation to the support of retired ministers, which in some cases makes calling each other's ministers difficult, and encourage the churches to engage with the Emeritus Fund to consult with the RCNZ counterpart, in an effort to find a mutually satisfactory solution that would remove these obstacles, so that this aspect of the sister church relationship can function in a meaningful way.
3. Discharge deputies and thank them for their work, and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
  - a. monitor developments within the RCNZ for mutual benefit according to the established "Rules for Sister Church Relations", and

- maintain the contact necessary in exercising the relationship according to these rules;
- b. promote continued familiarisation of the memberships of the RCNZ and FRCA;
- c. if necessary consult with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee and our respective emeritus committees to seek a mutually satisfactory way whereby ministers who serve in each other's churches are able to do so without significant detrimental effect to their retirement entitlements;
- d. meet with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee during the inter-synodical period, subject to finances;
- e. send two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, subject to invitation and finances;
- f. invite up to two delegates from the RCNZ to attend our next Synod;
- g. continue to monitor the RCNZ's relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship with the CRCA, encourage them to continue their warnings, and to be consequential in this relationship in light of the concerns expressed in the report to Synod Baldivis 2015;
- h. continue to encourage the RCNZ to be vigilant in its approach to theological education; and
- i. report to next Synod along with recommendations.

### **Grounds**

1. From the decisions of its most recent synod, and the ongoing contacts observed and reported by deputies, the RCNZ gives evidence of a love for the gospel, ongoing faithfulness to God's Word, and

commitment to the Reformed faith; no evidence has been presented of any deviation or unfaithfulness in this respect.

2. For a sister relationship to function in a meaningful way, it is important for the membership to become acquainted, and given that the relationship is still in its infancy, continued growth is needed to strengthen these bonds in practical ways.
3. Part of a sister church relationship includes the privilege of calling one another's ministers, and if there are practical difficulties that prohibit this due to different models being used for the support of retired ministers, real efforts should be made to remove these obstacles in the proper way.
4. Although there is no evidence that the RCNZ is being unfaithful in its relationship with the CRCA, the ongoing contacts that the RCNZ has with the CRCA via its relationship of ecumenical fellowship and via the RTC means that continued vigilance is needed to guard against any potentially unhealthy influences from the CRCA.
5. Although there is no evidence that the RCNZ is being unfaithful in the matter of theological education, and the RTC is not a denominational seminary of the CRCA, theological students who attend the RTC will have greater contact with CRCA churches and are more open to potentially unhealthy influences from the CRCA.
6. Although the rules of the relationship of "Ecumenical Fellowship" have safeguards in place to maintain the purity of the preaching and the sanctity of the Lord's table, this is still a relatively

new relationship for the RCNZ, and we need to observe how it will be implemented over time.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 80 - Deputies for Theological Training – Australian Theological Seminary**

**I. Material**

Item 13(l) – Report of Deputies for Training for the Ministry – deputies provide two proposals. Proposal one suggests that pursuing our own theological seminary at this time is feasible, proposal two that it is not feasible at this time

Item 9(a)(viii) – Letter from Classis Central of 26 May 2017 – Proposal for a Theological College of the FRCA – propose Synod mandates deputies to develop a seminary in Perth, locate a premises, seek two professors, start an accreditation process, recommence collections for a theological library, develop an adequate library and that we start reducing our support for the CRTS

Item 9(f)(ix) – Letter from FRC of Launceston – FRC Launceston supports the CRTS, and would only support an Australian seminary if it was planned with a wider scope including the Asia-Pacific catchment area

Item 9(g)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis – FRC Baldivis supports proposal two, since a) there is insufficient support from our churches; b) the concerns identified in the letter from the board of governors; and c) the positive benefits of our current model of training

Item 9(i)(i) – Letter from FRC of Byford – FRC Byford propose that it is not feasible to set up our own college at this time, but want to work towards a college in the medium to longer term

Item 9(j)(i) – Letter from FRC of Mount Nasura – FRC Mount Nasura would like to see the establishment of an



Australian seminary, but not at the expense of the CRTS. They would like deputies mandated to consider the best college model, to develop a strategic plan including a broader student catchment area, and to work with our sister churches and ecclesiastical contacts in the Asia-Pacific area

Item 9(k)(i) – Letter from FRC of West Albany – FRC West Albany support proposal two of the deputies, concerned over manpower and that proposal one would not provide high quality training

Item 9(l)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Albany – FRC Albany support proposal two. They are concerned about the impact on the CRTS

## **II. Admissibility**

All of the items received on this matter are admissible.

## **III. Decision**

1. Not to pursue establishing an Australian theological seminary at this time.
2. To mandate the Deputies to:
  - a. develop and submit to the next synod a strategic long term plan for a future Australian theological seminary that will:
    - i. be an accredited seminary to train our men for serving as ministers and missionaries;
    - ii. have the potential to serve our sister churches and other churches in the wider Reformed community in the Asia-Pacific region (eg. the Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa); and
    - iii. have the potential to serve the needs of the broader FRCA community including office bearer training, teacher

- training and enrichment courses for the members;
- b. solicit the churches' input regarding an Australian theological seminary that could serve the wider Reformed community;
- c. continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by the churches as reasons for not establishing our own theological seminary at this time, as outlined in ground 1;
- d. make use of the expertise of CRTS as necessary;
- e. consult with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRCs have contact, regarding the potential benefits of an Australian theological seminary as described above;
- f. consult with the CRTS for opportunities to co-operate in an Australian theological seminary; and
- g. provide a recommendation regarding the execution of this strategic plan, and an associated implementation timeline. This should include the consideration of utilising existing infrastructure.

### **Grounds**

1. There is not broad support among the churches for establishing an Australian theological seminary at this time:
  - a. deputies report that in response to a survey sent to the 16 local churches of the FRCA, eight churches indicated that it is desirable for the FRCA to work towards the establishment of an Australian theological

seminary at this time, while eight churches indicated that it is not desirable at this time; and only four of the sixteen churches responded that the FRCA federation is currently large enough to have its own seminary;

- b. there is concern about the manpower and specialised training required for the men who would potentially teach at a theological seminary. Appointing ministers as professors removes them from active ministry;
- c. the urgent need for starting our own theological seminary because CRTS is the only FRCA-approved theological seminary is overstated. Because of the language barrier and more recently concerns about the theological direction of TUK, for about 25 years CRTS has effectively been the only accepted theological seminary;
- d. the churches have been very well served by CRTS for many years, and CRTS has demonstrated and is committed to continual improvement;
- e. the churches value the input and influence from the Canadian churches that comes via the ministers who are trained at CRTS;
- f. Australian students have historically benefited from the experience of studying overseas at CRTS. Exposure to a wider ecclesiastical scene, the experienced and biblically reformed staff at CRTS, as well as the access to a variety of conferences and seminars are very beneficial in providing a well-rounded training experience for Australian students; and

- g. historically, there has not been a substantial number of Australian young men undertaking studies for ministry. It is unknown whether there would be a large increase of students if an Australian theological seminary were established, and it is also unknown if Australian students would opt for the training offered in such an Australian theological seminary.
- 2. Article 17 of the Church Order does not require us to maintain an institution for the training of the ministry, but sets out two options: it stipulates, “The churches shall support, or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry” (emphasis added). Presently, the FRCA is fulfilling its obligation according to the first option mentioned in the Church Order.
- 3. The new openness of CRTS to distance education (as evidenced by the appointment of a committee for this purpose) suggests that future theological students might be able to partially complete their training in Australia. This could mitigate the concern for students for whom the distance to Canada is a deterrent.
- 4. The letter from the CRTS Board of Governors (see Deputies Report, p. 326-331) expresses three significant concerns about the FRCA establishing its own theological seminary: it would weaken the student body at CRTS by making it less diverse; it would result in a substantial increase in assessments for the Canadian churches; and it would generate a larger demand for ministers with advanced degrees while at the same time increasing vacancy rates.

5. Working towards an Australian theological seminary either in the short or long term requires a strong consensus of support from the churches.
6. There is some support among the churches for the idea of establishing an Australian theological seminary in the medium to long term (6-12 years):
  - a. it is in accordance with 2 Timothy 2:2 that a bond of churches take responsibility for the theological training of their young men;
  - b. an Australian theological seminary could benefit our sister churches and other churches in the Asia Pacific region;
  - c. an Australian theological seminary could benefit the local FRCA through such endeavours as office bearer training, teacher training and enrichment courses for the members;
  - d. accreditation would be a valuable aspect in attracting students, and will help to ensure a quality education with academic integrity; and
  - e. in view of what deputies have reported about the financial feasibility, and the many financial blessings God has given our churches, the financial cost involved in establishing a theological seminary at some point in the future, while likely substantial, is not anticipated to be prohibitive or a decisive factor, given the potential benefits of a theological seminary as described.

**ADOPTED**

## **Article 81 - Free Reformed Churches of South Africa**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(c) – Report of Deputies for the FRCSA

### **II. Decision**

1. To continue sister relations with the FRCSA according to the established rules.
2. To appoint the Deputies Auditor for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided and report to the next Synod.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
  - b. send two delegates to the next FRCSA synod in 2021;
  - c. coordinate responses to any requests for support from Deputies within the FRCSA (including either Needy Churches or Theological Training) and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate; and
  - d. keep the members of the FRCA informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via Una Sancta.

### **Grounds**

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

3. Our South African churches request ongoing financial support as they continue on a road to self-sustainability. Whereas in the past this support was required for needy churches, due to the increase in vacancies the need for support has shifted to include theological training. Such support should be coordinated and the churches kept informed and financial accountability of the support provided is important.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 82 - International Conference of Reformed Churches**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(b) – Report of Deputies for Sister Church Relations – overall report

Item 9(f)(v) – Letter from FRC of Launceston – Launceston notes in this letter that the Deputies for Sister Church Relations received an invitation to attend the last ICRC meeting in 2017. Because attending the ICRC was not a part of their mandate, the deputies were unable to interact with this letter. Launceston, acknowledging the controversy of some years ago, feels that this should not be an obstacle to observing the proceedings of the ICRC today, and so requests that Synod mandate deputies to accept an invitation to attend as observers, especially when the ICRC is scheduled to hold meetings in the Asia-Pacific region

Item 9(g)(iv) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis – Baldivis notes with interest the same comments in the deputies report that Launceston does, placing this within the context of the impossibility of maintaining meaningful sister church relationships with reformed churches all over the world. Therefore, they too request that Synod mandate deputies with the mandate to attend the next two meetings of the

ICRC and to report this to the churches, and then to await a proposal from the churches should it be deemed to be beneficial to reapply for membership of the ICRC

**II. Admissibility**

To declare the proposal to mandate attendance at the next ICRC meeting inadmissible.

**Ground**

A proposal respecting a new contact, even for the purpose of observation, ought to come via the church orderly way from a local church through classis. It is insufficient to create a proposal out of a comment from the introduction of a report of deputies.

***ADOPTED AND DECLARED INADMISSIBLE***

**Article 83 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

**I. Material**

Item 9(b)(iv) – Proposal from Classis North dated 9 February 2018 – Classis North proposes investigating the possibility of entering into fellowship with the OPC , given that they present themselves as faithful churches, have a similar heritage, are sisters with the CanRC and are well-known to us. In addition they themselves desire such a relationship

Item 9(f)(vi) – Letter from FRC of Launceston, supporting the proposal of classis North

**II. Proposal**

Not to accede to the proposal of Classis North.

**Grounds**

1. As a small federation of churches it is important and practical for us to concentrate on relations and



contacts with churches which are geographically closer to us and for whom we have greater responsibility (see Acts of Synod 2015, page 103).

2. There is no current cooperation with the OPC on any mission field nor is there any other relevant contact between members of the respective federations at this time.

### ***DEFEATED***

### **III. Decision**

1. To accede to the proposal of Classis North.
2. To mandate deputies for relations with churches abroad to:
  - a. establish contact with the OPC via its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR);
  - b. investigate the OPC and report to the next Synod with information about these churches and a recommendation as to the feasibility of further ecumenical contact; and
  - c. send one delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC during the next 3 years.

### **Grounds**

1. The 79<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the OPC (2012) authorized its CEIR to invite the FRCA to send a fraternal observer to a future General Assembly. The presence and address of Rev J Sawyer at Synod Bunbury 2018 has confirmed the OPC's desire to establish contact with the FRCA.
2. The OPC is an English-speaking confessionally-Reformed federation which presents itself as having a commitment to the reformed faith. It has a history of standing valiantly for the inerrant truth of

God's Word, as evidenced by its stance with respect to the RCN.

3. The OPC enjoy long standing sister-church relations with several of our sister-churches, including the CanRC, the RCNZ and the KPCK.
4. Whilst Synod 1990 Art 58 decided to concentrate on relations and contact with churches that are geographically closer to us, the above grounds are compelling reasons to pursue this relationship.
5. Australian students at CRTS benefit from OPC internships and in addition the OPC has been active in Asia missions.

### ***ADOPTED***

#### **Article 84 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the following agenda item:

- Proposal from Classis Central re Psalms 2, 8, 130 and 150

---

### **EVENING SESSION**

#### **Monday, 25 June 2018**

---

#### **Article 85 - Reopening**

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 133:1 and 2. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what had been achieved during the sessions today.

#### **Article 86 - Welcome to Overseas Visitors**

The delegates of the First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, Pastor Chong Nam Tuck and Br Johnson See Choon

Hock, with written credentials, are welcomed and granted privileges under Synod Rule 6.1 as sister church.

### **Article 87 - Address of First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (FERC)**

The chairman invites Pastor Chong Nam Tuck to present his address on behalf of the FERC (refer Appendix 1m).

Rev H Alkema is then invited to respond to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for this sister church.

### **Article 88 - Appointment of Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise**

#### **I. Material**

Item 13(m) – Report of Deputies for Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise

#### **II. Decision**

1. To thank the Deputies and discharge them from their duties.
2. To appoint a Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise (SCABP) consisting of 4 members to:
  - a. act as the legal entity within the FRCA to deal with copyright matters, as required;
  - b. produce in a timely manner a version of the Australian Book of Praise as authorised by Synod 2018, and as described in Article 60 of these Acts, and make such a version also available in a digital format suitable for use on mobile devices;
  - c. request Premier Printing to act as the publisher for the *Australian Book of Praise* and request Pro Ecclesia to become the Australian distributors;

- d. maintain good contact with the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
- e. receive, scrutinise and evaluate correspondence from the churches, provide advice where required, and to make recommendations to the next synod as to the validity of any suggestions made. Concurrent with the committee's work, proposals from the churches would follow the ecclesiastical route (Art 30 CO); and
- f. report to the next synod in accordance with Rules for Synods regarding Deputies.

### **Ground**

Article 60 of these Acts records Synod's decision to adopt and produce an Australian Version of the Canadian Book of Praise. The appointment of a Standing Committee is required for the purposes of implementing this decision.

### **ADOPTED**

## **Article 89 - Proposal from Classis Central to amend Psalms 2, 8, 130 and 150**

### **I. Material**

Item 9(a)(iv-vii) – Proposals from Classis Central of 21 October 2016 regarding changes to Book of Praise Psalm 2, 8, 130 and 150

Item 9(g)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis re: a preference to only make changes for exceptional and substantial reasons

### **II. Decision**

Not to accept the proposed changes at this time.

### **Grounds**

1. There is merit in keeping the Australian version of the Book of Praise as similar as possible to the Canadian Book of Praise so that they can be used interchangeably by the members, and so that our book closely resembles that used by our Canadian sister churches (cf. Article 60 of Acts of Synod 2018).
2. Proposed changes to the Australian Book of Praise are to be given to the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise to be scrutinised and evaluated.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 90 - Training for the Ministry**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(l) – Report of Deputies for Training for the Ministry

Item 9(g)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis – FRC Baldivis makes a number of suggestions pertaining to the work of the deputies: to review the current system of funding for students, to suggest ways to promote the ministry among young men, to meet with students periodically to have good oversight over their education, to accept the invitation to participate in the CRTS committee on distance education.

### **II. Decision**

1. To express appreciation for Dr J Smith's visit to the Australian churches.
2. To send a deputy as delegate to attend one convocation and Board of Governors meeting during the next three-year term.
3. To accept the explanation of CRTS regarding distance education for the FRCSA, and to express

thankfulness for their current consideration of this possibility in relation to our churches.

4. To suggest to the churches that Canadian candidates called to serve among churches in Australia should undergo a peremptory examination before applying for immigration.
5. That TUK is not considered a suitable seminary for our prospective theological students.
6. To increase the current number of deputies (4) by one deputy.
7. To discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. continue to collect funds for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and forward them to the seminary;
  - b. request the churches to contribute \$90 per communicant member per annum for the support of CRTS, and to report on the amount of contribution paid by the Canadian churches and propose a matching level of contribution;
  - c. notify all our sister-church deputies and governors for theological training of new deputies in order to maintain contact and exchange information;
  - d. continue to correspond with CRTS;
  - e. continue to collect funds for the support of theological students;
  - f. review the current system of funding for students with respect to its effectiveness in supporting and encouraging students;
  - g. consider and implement new ways to promote the study for the ministry among young men, such as through the local John Calvin schools, local churches and the involvement of local pastors;

- h. to meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to have good oversight over their education;
- i. investigate and report on the applicability of a ministry internship model, taking into consideration models for theological training used by our sister churches (e.g., RCNZ);
- j. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required, in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of the Acts of Synod 1992 (as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994);
- k. continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from CRTS once every three years;
- l. continue to be as closely involved, as practically as possible, in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS;
- m. thank CRTS for providing faithful, godly theological education for our young men;
- n. monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program;
- o. collect and disburse funds for the PTP in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the PTP; and reimburse students taking the PTP in Australia, at an increased level to match Canadian churches' level of support;
- p. continue to oversee the Library and Library Fund; and
- q. accept the invitation from CRTS and participate in the work of the ad hoc

committee that is investigating the possibility of pursuing distance education with CRTS.

### **Grounds**

1. It is beneficial for the Australian churches to keep close contact with the seminary where our students study (Decisions 1 and 2).
2. The deputies have passed on further information regarding CRTS's changed position on distance education (Decision 3).
3. When overseas candidates are called for the ministry of the Word in Australia a peremptory examination prior to applying for immigration (Decision 4):
  - a. could provide greater confidence in immigration application for employment assurance;
  - b. would afford the Australian churches (i.e., classis) greater objectivity in examining candidates without the pressure of considering immigration and employment issues; and
  - c. would give called candidates assurance during time when they are waiting for their immigration papers that there are no ecclesiastical hurdles after immigration.
4. One of the consequences of severing sister church relations with the RCN is that the FRCA cannot approve of Australian students studying at TUK (Decision 5).
5. The deputies are receiving a significant mandate and require the additional manpower to fulfil this mandate (Decision 6).
6. The proposed annual contribution of \$90 per communicant member per annum matches the



contribution currently paid by the Canadian churches (Decision 7.b), which is the criteria that deputies were mandated to use to determine this figure (Acts of Synod Baldivis, Art. 93, VIII.12.1.a).

7. It is good for the FRCA to keep up-to-date with activity regarding theological training among all our sister churches and in particular with CRTS (Decisions 7.c,d).
8. The proposal of FRC Rockingham (Agenda Item 8(c)(viii)) notes that the real or perceived obligation to repay funds should studies not work out, may be a hindrance. Alternative funding arrangements may be more beneficial in attracting students (Decision 7.f).
9. It is essential to find ways to actively foster and promote the work of ministry among young men so that the churches and mission fields can continue to be well supplied with ministers of the gospel (Decisions 7.g,h).
10. The ministry internship model has the potential to train prospective theological students in godliness, expose them to various aspects of ministry, and have their giftedness for ministry tested (Decision 7.i).
11. There should be equity between the PTP student honorarium in Australia with Canada, and Canada has added CPI increases (Decision 7.o).
12. In view of the ongoing consideration of the feasibility of a FRCA seminary, it is deemed prudent to retain and manage the Library and Library Fund (Decision 7.p).
13. CRTS has invited our involvement in the work of the committee considering possibilities for distance

education, and this is a worthwhile venture (Decision 7.q).

***ADOPTED***

**Article 91 - Proposal to revise the English translation of Art 30 of the Belgic Confession**

**I. Material**

Item 9(a)(ii) – Proposal by Classis Central dated 21 October 2016 for revision of the English translation of art 30 BC

**II. Proposal**

That the translation of art 30 be corrected to read:

“There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, are like a council of the church.”

**Grounds**

1. This translation is closer to the Belgic Confession as adopted by the Reformed churches at the Synod of Dort 1618-1619.
2. The Belgic Confession art 30 has never consciously been challenged and therefore altered. Our translation ought therefore to reflect the original text as approved by the churches.

***DEFEATED***

## **Article 92 - Proposal to revise the English version of Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism**

### **I. Material**

Item 9(a)(iii) – Proposal by Classis Central dated 21 October 2016 for revision of the English translation of Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism

### **II. Proposal**

That in the translation of LD 38 the words “especially on the day of rest” be corrected to “especially on the Sabbath, that is on the day of rest”.

#### **Grounds**

1. This translation is closer to the Heidelberg Catechism as adopted by the Reformed churches at the Synod of Dort 1618-1619.
2. This translation makes the connection to the fourth commandment specific.

### ***DEFEATED***

## **Article 93 - Adjournment**

Rev R Bredenhof reads Isaiah 40:25-31 and leads with prayer. He then invites all those present to sing Hymn 13:1, 4 and 5 and the chairman adjourns synod.

---

### **MORNING SESSION**

#### **Tuesday, 26 June 2018**

---

## **Article 94 - Reopening**

Rev C Vermeulen reads Colossians 1:1-23 and invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 8:1-5. He then leads in prayer. The chairman reopens the meeting.

## **Article 95 - Adoption of the Acts**

Articles 66-84 of the Acts are adopted.

## **Article 96 - GGRI – Theological Training**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(i) – Report from Deputies for Sister Churches in Indonesia

Item 9(g)(i) – Letter from FRC of Baldivis requests synod to review the funding arrangements of the Theological college in Sumba, requesting that financial support via synodical deputies be phased out and to have this supported via a local church as a work of mission as per Article 50 CO, or alternatively as a budget amount for the churches to contribute towards

Item 9(e)(i) – Letter from FRC of Kelmscott requests that deputies are tasked to find a local church which takes over the support for the Theological College of the GGRI

Item 9(k)(iii) – Letter from FRC of West Albany encourages Synod to avoid a situation where the financial support we provide to the Theological College is used as a lever to influence or even dictate decisions that the GGRI make, and that Synod continue to view them as an independent church federation

### **II. Decision**

1. To mandate deputies to continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, to submit a budget, proposed assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2021.
2. Not to provide funds for the building of a new campus for the STT-GGRI at this time but to

mandate deputies to consider the best way to responsibly provide financial support for theological training for the GGRI.

3. To mandate deputies to find a local church to assume responsibility for the financial support of theological training for the GGRI following Synod 2021 and to ensure a smooth transition to this new arrangement.
4. To encourage the Board of Governors at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev A VanDelden.
5. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA for three months, subject to available funding from our churches.

### **Grounds**

1. The churches of Baldivis and Kelmscott have made a compelling case that our support for theological education in Indonesia ought to become the responsibility of a local church rather than Deputies for Sister Church Relations. However, out of concern for our Indonesian brethren, this transition ought to be made carefully.
2. The financial support for this theological training ought to be managed with more detailed attention to reporting and accountability, as well as due consideration for best practices related to avoiding long-term dependency.
3. Deputies have expressed concern about the functioning of the Board of Governors at STT-GGRI (Sumba).
4. Recent history has proven the benefit of having FRCA ministers providing assistance in theological

training, as well as having GGRI students and ministers come to Australia.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 97 - Discussion Rounds**

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda item:

- Report of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches - Indonesia

**Article 98 - Motion regarding GGRI-Timor**

**I. Motion**

1. To note that Article 8 of these Acts incorrectly records the GGRI-Timor as churches with whom we have official contact.
2. To not include the address of the GGRI-Timor as an appendix to the Acts.

**Grounds**

1. The GGRI-Timor are a new federation established in 2016. The FRCA have not established “official contact” with this federation and their delegates have attended Synod as observers.
2. The error within Article 8 should be corrected on the record.
3. The Acts should be as succinct as possible.

***ADOPTED***

## **Article 99 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the following agenda item:

- Report of Deputies for Sister Churches Relations – overall report

## **Article 100 - Proposal to amend Art 36 Church Order**

### **I. Material**

Item 9(a)(i) – Classis Central meeting of 23 March 2018 submits a proposal to change art 36 of the Church Order to give room for the possibility for someone other than the minister to chair the meetings of consistory.

### **II. Decision**

To add the clause “as a rule” to art. 36 CO. The first two sentences will then read as follows:

“In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and as a rule be chaired by the minister.”

### **Grounds**

1. Neither Scripture, Confessions nor the *Form for Ordination of Ministers of the Word* indicate that a minister must chair consistory meetings.
2. The churches are not well served by an inflexible rule in the church order to the effect that the minister must necessarily be the chairman.

## **ADOPTED**

## **Article 101 - Discussion Round**

A round of discussion is held in relation to the following agenda item:

- First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore

## **Article 102 - General Secretary Activities**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(a) – Report of the General Secretary deputies

Item 9(e)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Kelmscott – Kelmscott are concerned about the volume of material from the deputies, given the time to consider it. They ask for succinctness and ask that those deputies with lengthy reports, report annually, and ask that deputies highlight all the relevant information

### **II. Decision**

1. To discharge the current General Secretary deputies, and reappoint one new deputy with the following mandate:
  - a. to maintain the central PO Box, distribute the mail to the deputies, and acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary, pass it on to the churches; and
  - b. to collate all deputies reports (apart from that of the Treasurer) and have them printed in an appropriate format. Deputies' reports are to be submitted, 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. To not support the requests from FRC Kelmscott.



### **III. Grounds**

1. The current workload of the General Secretary deputies has been amended and the website given to a new deputyship. This work of General Secretary deputies now requires just the one deputy.
2. Deputies already seek to make their reports succinct and to the point and with all the supporting material.
3. Asking deputies who will be submitting lengthy reports to also provide annual reports is onerous and an unnecessary requirement.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 103 - Indexing Synod Decisions**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(n) – Report of Deputies for Indexing Synod Decisions

Item 9(f)(i) – Letter from FRC of Launceston requesting that all of the Acts of Synod for the FRCA are made publicly available online, in searchable pdf format

### **II. Decision**

To appoint deputies with the mandate to:

1. Collate the decisions of Synod Bunbury 2018 as they relate to articles of the Church Order, and:
  - a. publish these decisions on the official web page of the FRCA; and
  - b. place one bound paper copy in the archives after the decisions of Synod Bunbury 2018 have been indexed.
2. Make all the published Acts of the Synods since the start of the FRCA available on the FRCA website,

without password protection, in searchable pdf format.

3. Place an updated copy of the Church Order on the FRCA website and publish it in a format which can be inserted into the Canadian version of the Book of Praise.

### **Grounds**

1. The churches are well served by the ongoing collation of Synod decisions as they relate to the various articles of the Church Order.
2. The Acts of Synod are of widespread interest both within our churches as well as our sister churches.
3. Making the Acts of Synod online has become common practice amongst our sister churches, and allows for greater access.
4. All information presented in the published Acts of Synod are generated in open session.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 104 - Report from Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue**

### **I. Material**

Item 13 – Report from Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue

### **II. Proposal 1**

1. To thank the deputies for the work done and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. continue to maintain a Synod hosting handbook;

- b. liaise with the next convening church regarding:
  - i. requirements for Synod venue;
  - ii. pass on handbook to next convening church when that consistory calls the "Synod Committee";
  - iii. maintain contact with Synod committee in their deliberations and preparations for Synod;
  - iv. be closely involved with the Venue Sub-Committee;
  - v. request that Synod committee re-evaluates and updates the handbook if necessary and pass it back to the deputies; and
  - vi. arrange storage and setup of Synod table and associated hardware;
- c. provide and operate an audio system which includes the ability for delegates and audience to follow the discussion clearly;
- d. provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which:
  - i. is easy to use;
  - ii. has central data storage;
  - iii. has convenient printing capability;
  - iv. has secure internal email facilities;
  - v. has data and email backup; and
  - vi. includes a data projector for the audience to follow the discussions and also project the Psalm or Hymn that will be sung;
- e. work closely with convening committees and coordinate the audio-visual/computer matters of the Synod venue preparations;

- f. liaise with the convening church prior to Synod for a copy of all reports and agenda items so that the agenda can be setup with links to the relevant documents, and to make this available when delegates log on to the “Synod Server”;
- g. be available and able to assist at all Synod sessions;
- h. provide full computer and sound support; and
- i. report to the next Synod.

### **Grounds**

- 1. Synod must be able to do its work smoothly through the provision of technical equipment that allows:
  - a. delegates to clearly understand each other;
  - b. the audience to follow the discussion;
  - c. flexibility to expand and contract as the number of delegates changes; and
  - d. the computer system to service Synod with an enhanced method of distributing proposals and the like quickly and efficiently.
- 2. This role has been of great benefit in enhancing the smooth preparation and operation of Synod.

### ***ADOPTED***

### **III. Proposal 2**

- 1. To endorse the free use of a church live-streaming service if available for:
  - a. the opening session of Synod up to the point where the elected chairman of Synod takes the chair;
  - b. the evening addresses of overseas delegates and the responses, at the discretion of the chairman and/or vice-chairman of Synod; and
  - c. the closing session.

2. To expressly disallow the use of a live-streaming service for any Synod session other than above.
3. To implement a system that limits access to the streaming services to members of the FRCA and our sister churches.

### **Grounds**

1. Deputies have received various requests for this service.
2. There are many FRCA members who live geographically remote from the Synod location, but would love to partake of the proceedings like their local counterparts can.
3. There are many people overseas who are members of our sister churches (especially from those churches who are addressing Synod) and are interested in these sessions.
4. Re point 3 of the proposal, Synod has historically not allowed/endorsed recordings on any digital equipment of Synod sessions and the live-stream could be misused if allowed to be used during normal Synod proceedings.

### ***DEFEATED***

## **Article 105 - Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI)**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(i) – Deputies Report for Relations with Sister Churches – Indonesia

### **II. Decision**

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

- a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
- b. send delegates to visit the national and regional synods of the GGRI subject to available finance;
- c. support the GGRI with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches;
- d. in consultation with the deputies of the GGRI, to monitor, evaluate and offer advice about troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI;
- e. encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (also with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Smithville Mission Board);
- f. continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their Synods subject to available finance, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;
- g. continue contact with the GGRI-Timor; and
- h. as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI Papua and the GGRI Kalimantan Barat that have united and formed one federation with the GGRI NTT in February 2012, confirming their Reformed character and the implications of this union.

### **Grounds**

- 1. The GGRI shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confessions.
- 2. Our rules for sister church relations indicate that the churches need to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in

doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. The deputies express confidence about the Reformed faithfulness of the federation. At the same time, they do indicate that there are concerns, and it is important that we monitor these things.

3. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI and GGRC and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with these two other church groups in Indonesia.
4. Not enough has been reported about the Reformed character of these federations, although this had been mandated by Synod 2012.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 106 - First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(k) – Report of Deputies for the FERC

### **II. Decision**

1. To continue sister church relations with the FERC of Singapore according to the established rules.
2. To note their new relationship with the Covenant Grace Church of Penang, a small instituted church that is the result of years of their mission work.
3. To accept the agreement made between our respective deputies which addresses the unique way that a sister church relationship with a single church can function:
  - a. it is not always feasible, nor is it always necessary to attend each other's regular meetings;

- b. when the FERC is deliberating important matters such as (1) external relationships with other churches, (2) doctrinal and (3) liturgical issues, the FERC will inform FRCA;
  - c. the FERC will send a copy of its annual reports;
  - d. the FERC will update FRCA on any important issues every 6 months if needed; and
  - e. the FERC will invite delegates when there is a special event in the Church.
- 4. To discharge the deputies, thank them for their work and the appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. visit the FERC of Singapore two times in the next three years in order to continue to learn more about them and strengthen our relationship;
  - b. give timely reports concerning the FERC of Singapore to the members of the FRCA;
  - c. promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the FRCA and the FERC by way of exchange of speakers where opportunity arises, and good communication concerning events that might be of interest for one another's members to attend and participate in;
  - d. offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible;
  - e. invite delegates of the FERC of Singapore to our next Synod; and
  - f. liaise with their respective counterparts in the Canadian Reformed Churches concerning the mutual benefits of a sister church relationship with the FERC.



### **Grounds**

1. The FERC of Singapore gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God.
2. The existing rules for exercising sister relations do not prohibit a sister church relationship with a single church, but there are elements in the exercise of this relationship that need to reflect its unique aspects.
3. The FERC of Singapore is a single congregation, has an official bond with only one other church (which also relies on their support), and they can benefit from continued assistance from time to time, and from the resources the Lord has given us.
4. Visits to Singapore and their visits to us have proven beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 107 - Communication of RCN decision (refer Art 45)**

### **I. Decision**

1. To send a letter to Synod 2020 of the RCN containing Synod's decision.
2. To send a letter to our sister churches in Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada via deputies, informing them of our decision.
3. To send two deputies to Synod 2020 to relay our decision.
4. To send to the convening church of Synod 2020 of the RCN, for inclusion on their agenda, the letter sent to the BBK on 7 March 2016 in response to the request from Synod Ede.

**Grounds**

1. Sending both a letter containing Synod's decision and a delegation underlines the seriousness of the step we have taken.
2. The letter from the BBK dated 16 June 2017 shares with us that Synod Meppel did not receive from us a response to the letter sent to us by Synod Ede. Deputies sent a letter to the BBK on 7 March 2016, indicating that this was our response, but it appears that this was not passed on to Synod Meppel.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 108 - Days of Prayer – Article 66 CO**

**I. Material**

Item 13(p) – Report of Deputies CO 66 – FRC of Baldivis. FRC Baldivis called a day of prayer for February 2017. They explain the reasons and share interactions with the churches

**II. Decision**

1. To accept the Deputies' report.
2. To discharge the Deputies with gratitude for their work over the past three years.
3. To appoint FRC Launceston as Deputies CO 66 for the next three year period.
4. Given that a day of prayer traditionally involves repentance and fasting, deputies should consider whether a day other than the Lord's Day (a day of rejoicing and remembering the resurrection) may be appropriate.

***ADOPTED***

## **Article 109 - Closed Session**

Synod holds a closed session.

## **Article 110 - Closed Session**

Synod continues in closed session.

## **Article 111 - Proposal regarding the Deputies for Interchurch Relations outside Australia**

### **I. Material**

Item 13(b) – Report of Deputies for Sister Church Relations – overall report in which they recommend to absorb the deputyships for RCNZ and FERC into one deputyship for sister church relations and they provide four grounds for this

Item 9(e)(i) – Letter from FRC of Kelmscott re: Report of Deputies for relations with Sister Churches, in which Kelmscott addresses the matter of supervision over the work of deputies for the Indonesian churches

### **II. Decision**

1. To appoint one deputyship for interchurch relations outside Australia.
2. This deputyship can organise itself, if it sees fit to do so, in separate sections (e.g. one section per region), under the conditions:
  - a. that the entire deputyship remains ultimately responsible for the functioning of the sections;
  - b. every section regularly submits a written report of its activities (at least once a year) to the entire deputyship; and
  - c. the entire deputyship meets at least once a year, to exchange information between the

sections and supervise the work of each section.

### **Grounds**

1. In a larger deputyship, the various deputies can learn from one another and can give advice regarding questions that come up with respect to a specific sister church or contact church.
2. One deputyship is practical in maintaining contacts with other churches. Deputies visiting assemblies of sister churches normally meet delegates from other churches at these assemblies. It is helpful if they are aware of what is going on and is being discussed with these other churches.
3. The decision to keep the Indonesian churches as a separate deputyship has been a long-standing practice. However, this does not mean that it should continue. The relations and contact with the Indonesian churches may also benefit from more interaction between the different deputies for relations with sister churches or for contact with other churches. It will also create possibilities for better supervision of their work.
4. It may be practical to divide the work and the deputies in sections (for instance according to regional areas), while at the same time it is important for deputies to remain informed about each other's work.
5. If the entire deputyship functions as a supervisor over the sections, the deputies can be held to account regarding the fulfilment of their mandate.

### ***ADOPTED***

**Article 112 - Deputy Appointments**

In closed session, Synod made the following deputy appointments:

**General Secretary**

Br. J. den Boer

Alternate: Br. W. Amoraal

**Website Committee****Year Appointed**

Br. M. Pot

2012 (convenor)

Br. G. van Burgel

2018

Sr. B. Mulder

2018

Br. L. Vermeulen (jr)

2018

Alternate:

Br. T Brown

**Deputies for Interchurch Relations – outside Australia**

Rev. S. 't Hart

2012 (convenor)

Rev. R.D. Anderson

2012

Rev. A. Hagg

2015

Br. B. Bosveld

2003

Br. P. Witten

2015 (Albany)

Rev. R. Pot

2012 (Albany)

Rev. H. Alkema

2015 (Albany)

Br. G. Brouwer

2018 (Tasmania)

Br. C. Mulder

2018 (Tasmania)

Br. B. Veenendaal

2018

Br. E. Heerema

2009

Br. E. de Haan

2015

Rev. A. Souman

2018

Alternates:

Br. H. Terpstra

Br. H. Hamelink

**Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise**

Rev. C. Vermeulen	2012 (convenor)
Sr. G. Plug	2018
Br. Rob Eikelboom	2018
Rev. R. Eikelboom	2018
Alternate:	Br. D.J. Swarts

**Training for the Ministry**

Rev. D. Poppe	2015 (convenor)
Br. B. Huizinga	2015
Rev. R. Bredenhof	2018
Br. Alwyn Terpstra	2018
Rev. W. Bredenhof	2018 (Tasmania)
Alternate:	Br. W. Vanderven

**Contact with the EPC/SPC**

The churches of Launceston and Legana

Rev. W. Bredenhof (convenor)

**Article 48 CO**

Classis SW:	Rev. R. Pot	Alt: Rev. H. Alkema
Classis Central:	Rev. R.D. Anderson	Alt: Rev. R. Eikelboom
Classis North:	Rev. A. Souman	Alt: Rev. S. 't Hart

**Article 66 Days of Prayer**

Church of Launceston

**Index Synod Decisions**

Br. J. Numan

Br. W. Spyker

**Synod Archive**

Church of Mount Nasura

**Deputies Marriage Act**

Br. H. Faas

Br. W. Spyker

**Synod Venue and Infrastructure**

Br. E. 't Hart

Br. A. vander Wal

**Synod Treasurer**

Br. Robert Dekker

Alt.: Br Ashley Bonker

**Audit Deputies for the Training of the Ministry**

Church of Southern River

**Inspection of Archives**

Church of Byford

**Audit Synod Treasurer**

Church of Darling Downs

**Article 113 - Adoption of Acts**

Articles 85-103 of the Acts are adopted.

---

**EVENING SESSION**  
**Tuesday, 26 June 2018**

---

**Article 114 - Reopening**

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 83:1 and 2. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what had been achieved during the sessions today.

Rev P Archbald of the RCNZ is given an opportunity to speak some words of farewell.

## **Article 115 - Synod Treasury Report**

### **I. Material**

Item 14(a) – Treasurer’s Report and Synod Treasury Audit Report

### **II. Decision**

1. To thank the Deputy for his work and accept the Deputy’s report.
2. To accept the proposed draft budget as presented by the Deputy and amended by the Financial Committee of Synod Bunbury 2018 to allow for those impacted by Synod decisions.
3. To appoint a new Treasurer Deputy, ensuring the requirements of the mandate are provided as per Synod Rule 11.2.
4. To estimate the costs for the next inter-synodical period of 2018 – 2021 to be \$50,000, and authorise the Treasurer to collect this amount from the churches, with the liberty to vary this amount if required.

### ***ADOPTED***

## **Article 116 - Appointment of Convening Church for the next Synod**

### **I. Material**

Item 17 – Proposal from the convening church of FRC Bunbury

### **II. Decision**

That Synod 2021 be convened by FRC Albany.



**Grounds**

1. Tasmania has held Synod in approximately 10 year cycles (1998, 2009).
2. Albany hosted Synod by FRC West Albany in 2000 and FRC Albany in 1987.
3. Metro churches have hosted all other Synods over the last 31 years – a total of 10.
4. The brothers of Albany have been contacted and agree to this proposal.

***ADOPTED***

**Article 117 - Adoption of Acts**

Articles 104-113 of the Acts are adopted.

**Article 118 - Censure according to Article 47 Church Order**

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

**Article 119 - Question Period**

The delegates are given the opportunity for general questions. No questions are asked.

**Article 120 - Adoption of the Press Release**

The press release is adopted (refer Appendix 2).

**Article 121 - Closing Address**

The chairman delivers his closing address (refer Appendix 1n).

**Article 122 - Closing**

The vice chairman thanks the chairman for the good and brotherly way that he chaired Synod. The chairman reads

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 and leads with prayer. He then invites all those present to stand and sing Hymn 85:1, 2 and 3.

The Chairman then declares Synod Bunbury 2018 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia closed.

# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1a: Meditation text by Br K Visser, Chairman of the convening church of Bunbury**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we are here this evening to open Synod and to set in motion a body of brothers that will come together for many hours over this week to consider, deliberate and hopefully make decisions. As members of the bond of churches and as visitors and observers from other bonds we hope and pray that these brothers that are delegated may make decisions that are wise and good. Decisions that are pleasing to God, that build up and serve the wellbeing of the churches whom they serve. I am sure that when the three classis regions considered who should attend Synod and selected these brothers that the wisdom of the brothers was taken as one of the primary considerations in the vote.

So we take it that when these tables here are filled with the delegates that much wisdom is also present.

Yet we all know that wisdom is not in and of our self. Our confessions clearly point out for us our depravity. Only through looking outside of ourself do we become truly wise. So, as we open this meeting I will reflect briefly on wisdom and the instruction of Proverbs 3:5&6.

As God's children we walk each day by faith, not by sight; for without faith it is impossible for us to please God. That's from 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 11:6. There are many other texts that echo these same thoughts. The text out of Proverbs 3 that I have chosen for this meditation helps us understand how we actually need to walk this faith in trust.

The verse starts, "Trust in the LORD with **all** your heart." That is the entirety of your heart. We are not to be half-hearted in our trust in the Lord.

Rather, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:22). But he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind (James1:6).

In our trust in God there is no room for a second substitute, no room for doubts, and no room for a back-up plan.

So also in this coming week as the agenda is worked through we can set our trust in God, for as we sang in opening:

*From Him comes my salvation.  
He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence;  
I shall not be greatly moved*

In trusting in the Lord alone with all our heart, with complete confidence in Him, we can then carry our tasks, we can make decisions knowing that God's desire will shine through them and in them.

God is certainly worthy of the entirety of our whole hearted trust. Scripture clearly show this in multiple places.

*But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;  
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;  
Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You.  
For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous;  
With favor You will surround him as with a shield (Psalm 5)*

*I will love You, O Lord, my strength.  
The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;  
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;  
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.  
I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised  
(Psalm 18)*

The closing portion of Proverbs 3:5 gives the instruction, “And lean not on your own understanding”. We are not to have any manner of self-confidence at all in our own wisdom. We are not to lean in any way, not even the smallest bit, upon our own wisdom and ability. Such a trust and confidence in one-self is actually pride of heart. Thus Proverbs 3:7 instructs us not to be wise in our own eyes, and Romans 12:16 makes it even clearer by instructing us not to be wise in our own opinion.

Yes, Proverbs 28:26 reveals that anyone who sets his trust and confidence in his own heart is a fool.

Yet this does not mean that we are to have no confidence at all. While we are not to lean upon our own wisdom and ability, we are to lean upon our Lord’s wisdom and ability. We are not to walk in self-confidence at all, but we are to walk in God-confidence with all our heart.

How can we walk in God-confidence knowing our shortcomings and weaknesses? Well, without a doubt wisdom has its origin in God. God in turn causes wisdom to dwell in Jesus Christ, and then Christ makes us the recipients of this wisdom through his union with us.

For does not the scripture say that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and does it not say that Christ has become for us wisdom from God? (1 Corinthians 24-30)

For this reason as we lean on Christ rather than our own understanding we can have a God based confidence.

May all the deliberations this week be made in this confidence.

The opening words of Proverbs 3:6 gives the instruction, “In all your ways acknowledge him.” Where it says “ways” the meaning is not in a general sense as an overall direction you are walking in

but a focus on each step you take along the way. In each and every step we take and in each and every decision that we take here at this table this week we are to acknowledge our Lord.

What does it mean to acknowledge Him? It means to acknowledge that He exists and that He is the God over all His creation.

It means that we are to acknowledge His Word, His Law. Since He made us we are His, He owns us and God demands an obedience from us that is in His right to require. To acknowledge God's words then is more than a recognition of their existence. It is to walk and to follow them with a heartfelt desire. Even the opening words of this chapter make this clear; vs 1 - My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands.

We could take it even further, for Proverbs 3:5-6 is quite personal and that makes the verses not simply about God's existence, God's rule over all, but of His relationship with us.

So to acknowledge Him means we must not only recognize that He is actually with us wherever we go but also that He never leaves us nor forsakes us. In each decision of life we know the Lord is with us.

But even this acknowledgement of God is not enough for God does more than just be with us in passive existence, He is more than a relationship that we need to take note of. After we accept Him, trust Him with all our heart and lean on Him (that is to say you are almighty Lord and we are but men), then we have the promise that He will direct our paths.

Therefore not our will, but His will is to be done. We deny our own will, take up our cross and submit to His will, and to follow Him in absolute obedience.

So our Lord is not simply with us to help us along the way; He is also with us to direct us in the way.

We have already made the link that Christ is our wisdom. In Christ and His sacrificial offering we have the way of truth and life opened open us; we have a way in which we can be reconciled to God, and live in perfect holy communion with Him.

And if Christ in His wisdom leads us in such a glorious path, will He not also do all things needed for us in this life. Will He not give to each one of us all the wisdom that we have need of in our daily earthly existence.

The promise given in the closing section of verse 6 is very clear “And He will direct your path.”

If we will trust in Him entirely with all our heart, exclusively and not at all on ourselves; and exactly in complete submission to His will; then our Lord’s promise to us is – that He will direct our paths.

What a beautiful promise we are given! What strength in time of need. What encouragement to be faithful in all that we need to do.

And so in this promise, of His direction for our daily path, His presence with us in Christ, we walk each day by faith, not by sight; for without faith it is impossible for us to please God.

May this promise of God’s direction give encouragement to all who lean on God.



### **Appendix 1b: Opening address by the Chairman of the convening church of Bunbury**

Brothers and Sisters, Delegates, invited observers and visitors. As convening Church for Synod 2018, the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury has the privilege to call together the churches of our bond in this ecclesiastical assembly. It is with pleasure that I can welcome you all here, especially those whom have been delegated from Classis North, Central and South West. 18 Brothers in faith, who though they come with their own and sometimes-different thoughts on topics are nevertheless united in love and faith in Jesus Christ.

Apart from these delegates I also have the privilege of welcoming delegates, visitors and observers that represent a variety of different church federations from around the world. We bid a hearty welcome to you all, may the discussions at this Synod be strengthened by your participation and attendance and may we be of mutual encouragement to one another.

For the benefit of those who do not know who is attending from abroad, we have received letters of attendance for the following;

- From the Reformed Churches of New Zealand – Rev P Archbald;
- From the Canadian Reformed Churches – Rev A Witten and Br H Schouten;
- From the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands – Rev J Plug and Dr M Oosterhuis;
- From the De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland Rev C Koster and Rev M Sneep;
- From the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa - Pastor P Kgatle;
- From the United Reformed Churches of North America – Br G Swets;
- From the Orthodox Presbyterian Church – Rev J Sawyer;

## Appendix 1: Addresses to Synod

- From the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore – Br J See, and Pastor CN Tuck;
- From the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea - Professor of Historical Theology at the Korea Theological Seminary Dr. Sungho Lee;
- From the Theological College in Kalimantan – Lecturer A Bantan;
- From the Theological College in Sumba – Rev A Palandima;
- From the Gereja Geraja Reformasi Calvin – Rev Y Bunda and Br S Dethan;
- From the Reformed Churches in the Philippines – Brs Jeffrey Uriarte and Jan Rey Flores.

Some are here already, others will arrive shortly.

A truly international representation. How great that God is at work in so many different places.

So Brothers and Sisters, why are we here in Perth, when Bunbury is the convening church? Why gather in a place that is 150 km from our local place of worship? Are we not proud of our locality? It is certainly not that. Bunbury is a beautiful part of Western Australia and I encourage you to come and visit. We will welcome you into our worship services and into our homes. The Free Reformed Church was instituted in November 2001 - 17 years ago. Come to think of it that puts us as teenagers, and we've just got our licence...

Bunbury has a membership of 220 souls, in 47 family. Whilst we have a lovely church building we do not have the facilities you see here.

We also know of the many people that like to visit synod, observe the discussion and listen to the speeches and deliberations which is less possible in Bunbury. Then in organizing this event we have an inkling of the logistics and the

work many committees have done in the practical things that have needed to be done. Realistically we came to the conclusion that we could not host the synod in our local church, we just didn't have the depth of facilities and bodies on the ground to do the organization justice.

So we thank our brothers and sisters in Southern River for allowing and opening their building and their facilities for this Synod. Alphabetically you are a long way from hosting yourself, in this way you have a pre taste of what you will have in a couple of decades time. Thank you to the brothers and sisters here for your committee's work and many hours of planning.

Delegates you are here to serve the churches Do it well, do it with confidence, knowing that if you lean on Christ, if you in faith ask him for wisdom he will grant it abundantly.

With that I have the privilege on behalf of the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury to declare the 27<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia open.

### **Appendix 1c: Address by Rev A Witten on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

Esteemed Brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, we extend greetings. The Lord is head of his catholic church, encompassing people from every nation, tribe and tongue. Geographically we are far away, but we are very close to you in faith. Together with my co-delegate Brother Henry Schouten we give you greetings from your Canadian sister church.

There is an amazing unity between our federations that the Lord has allowed us to enjoy for many years. We know you well. Ministers have been called from Australia to Canada, and from Canada to Australia, our young men are trained together for gospel ministry in Hamilton, we often sing from the same Book of Praise in our worship and we cooperate together in works of mission. Thank you for sending a delegation to our Synod in Dunnville in 2016. Our visit to this Synod is intended to demonstrate how we value of that relationship, want strengthen it, and to seek ways support one another better.

### **Theological Education**

To begin with, a matter close to our hearts; theological education. We would like to express officially the appreciation of the Canadian Reformed Churches for your contribution to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. You bring the needs of the seminary before the Lord in prayer, contribute sacrificially to the budget of the seminary, send and financially support students studying in Hamilton and take a lively interest in the work by inviting the professors to visit Australia. Thank you.

On your agenda you have a proposal to begin an Australian seminary. That is an initiative that we very much understand. We are cut from the same cloth. Nevertheless we do have concerns about how this would impact CTRS and the CanRC and also yourselves as our sister church. It would lead to the loss of Australian students studying in Canada. Australian students come from a different ecclesiastical context and make an important contribution to the theological seminary. And that does go both ways. If I could speak personally, I was supported by the church of Albany to study in Hamilton, and have since served in the CanRC. It would be a challenge to grow up in the FRCA, to study at an FRCA seminary and then serve as minister in the FRCA. The interaction between us is healthy for both of us. It also promotes the movement of ministers between countries.

We would add to this concern the increased financial needs and the need for more personnel to serve as professors.

When we share this with you please understand, we want to be clear and frank, yet we understand that you have a responsibility to serve your churches. It is comparable, if you will, to when a minister receives a call to another congregation. Members will share the need, sometimes an urgent need, yet recognize that before the Lord that you must seek wisdom of the Lord to fulfill his calling. We trust that you will receive the guidance to do what is good for God's kingdom.

### **Mission Work**

The work of the seminary is so vital, also because there is a great need for ministers to work in our churches and in overseas mission work. Although we've welcomed many students into the classrooms in Hamilton, we continue to experience a shortage of ministers and missionaries. With ministers retiring, new churches instituted and new professors appointed statistics show that unless there is a significant increase in the number of students there will be a dire shortage in the ministerial ranks in the near future. The Canadian Reformed Churches are active in work in Brazil, the Orient, Indonesia, PNG, Philippines, and a new work in Mexico. There is also a recent trend in our churches, to seek a missionary to work locally. For example, the churches in Manitoba were blessed with receiving an ordained missionary to work outside of Winnipeg. Other churches have similar hopes and plans. There is much work to be done and many workers are needed.

### **Relations with Churches Abroad**

The CanRC is involved International conference of reformed Churches (ICRC). In July of last year this conference was held in Jordan, Ontario. Two new member churches were admitted, the

Christian Reformed Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Uganda. The sad note of the conference was sounded when the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands was suspended because of the decision by their General Synod to admit women to the office of deacon, elder and pastor, contrary to the clear teachings of Holy Scripture, putting it at odds with the ICRC constitution.

Attending this conference provides us with an opportunity to meet with delegates of those churches with whom we have sister church relationship. Beginning closest to you, in Indonesia we, like you, are sister churches of GGRI. Precisely at this time however we have relationship only with the GGRI-NTT. Synod Dunnville mandated the committee for relations with churches abroad to gather and evaluate information regarding the GGRI-KalBar and the GGRI-Papua. We will make grateful use of the information in the supplementary report provided by your deputies on Indonesia, to be able to recommend to the churches that they deal with the GGRI as a national federation instead of dealing exclusively with the GGRI-NTT. We are also considering accepting an offer of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Calvinist Churches of Indonesia (GGRC). Synod Dunnville required more information on this federation, and so we will the Lord willing have a delegation at their upcoming Synod this August.

The CanRC have valued the bond we have with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). The need for mission work in PNG is great and we have long been grateful that we can cooperate with the RCNZ in Port Moresby. A number of Canadian Reformed ministers have been able to help with preaching in vacant RCNZ churches and a former lecturer in church polity at CRTS, Rev. J. deGelder was invited last year to give a series of lectures in RCNZ churches on church polity. So our bond is growing closer and bearing fruit.

With respect to our sister church in the Netherlands. Synod Dunnville expressed thankfulness for the faithfulness that exists in these churches but grief and disquiet over tolerance of deviations from Scripture and confession. Synod Dunnville temporarily suspended the rules for ecclesiastical fellowship pertaining to the receiving of attestations and opening up the pulpits to each other's ministers. This was done in the hope that under God's grace the suspension can be undone, should there be evidence of change. This however, has not happened. Our committee for relations with the churches in the Netherlands has come to the sad conclusion that they must recommend to Synod Edmonton 2019 to terminate our relationship with our Dutch sister church.

Past CanRC synods and FRCA synods have expressed the desire that we cooperate in some of these matters. We have been mandated to invite your various deputyships to take up direct contact with the corresponding CanRC Committee (for example our Standing Committee for the publication of the book of Praise (SCBP), Inter-church relations Committee). From the reports to both Synod Dunnville and Synod Bunbury it is clear that sometimes this has worked well, but not always. Are their areas where this might be improved? Are there ways in which we might facilitate this better? Where possible let us work together to pull in the same direction.

### **Relations with churches in North America**

In North America we live in the context where there are more Church federations that we have come to know which have committed themselves to the Reformed faith as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity and/or the Westminster Standards. The Canadian Reformed Churches are members of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). It meets annually, not as a governing body that takes binding decisions, but as a forum for discussion of issues of common concern,

particularly issues which could lead to greater unity. It enables us to exchange insights and consider ways in which we may become closer. The meetings of NAPARC also provide an opportunity meet with our sister churches within North America, of which we have five.

We continue to enjoy a close relationship with the United Reformed Churches in North America and we are thankful to see your interest in this sister church. We recognize that there is a responsibility for churches that are one in faith to strive to become one federation. That is a process that has required patience. The URC synod put the brakes on this process for 6 years. We do not consider this as an impasse however, but rather a time for reflection and consideration in which we are seeking ways to help the churches in the United States get to know us. The achievements so far as far as the situation in Canada is concerned is already a great work of the Holy Spirit who by the grace of God has overcome many perceptions and misunderstandings. We are enjoying in every part of our country a fellowship and cooperation that was unheard of 25 years ago. In areas where there are CanRC and URC the relationships have flourished. There are often regular pulpit exchanges, cooperation in reformed schools, combined conferences and working together to care for the those with disabilities. It may take time to come to organizational unity, but it will be time well spent to prevent any split from occurring if we push too hard and too soon.

Another sister church with whom we have a long history of contact is the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) They have a longer history in North America than we have and they have been stalwart defenders of the reformed faith. They were instrumental in terminating the membership of the CRC at NAPARC and just last year it was the OPC that brought a proposal to ICRC to suspend the membership of the RCN-Liberated. The OPC has also demonstrated a commitment to ecumenicity. They



exercised patience as the process for the establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship with us took some 40 years. There are differences between us that we discuss but Synods have come to the conclusion that they are no hindrances to a Sister church relationship. So we can commend them to you as a sister in Christ who continues to show herself faithful. Synod Dunnville noted a particular habit they have in their interchurch relations. When visiting they ask series of questions. "Are there specific occasions where you believe we have failed to live up to our commitments to you or have caused you grief? Speaking the truth in love, where do you perceive our testimony or practice to be weak?" It is an attitude we would hope to emulate.

Synod Dunnville decided not to enter into a relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). We have been thankful for the reformed doctrine and practice that is evident through the contact with them. However the RPCNA does not consider the office of deacon an office of ruling authority in the church and therefore has a long history of ordaining women to the office of deacon. Synod Dunnville considered that the office of deacon as we have it summarized in the three forms of unity, by its very nature does involve the exercise of authority in the church and so decided not to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship.

We also enjoy sister church relationship with the Reformed Church of the United States and the Reformed Church of Quebec. This French speaking province of Quebec was once dominated by Roman Catholicism, but now is very secular. Synod Dunnville could note with thanksgiving the blessing of the Lord upon this small and fragile group of churches in a spiritually hostile environment.

## **Conclusion**

To one degree or another we all live in a cultural context that is hostile to God's word. The Canadian Prime Minister and American President are not leading our nations to greater obedience to God's commandments. The opinions and desires of man are often the highest authority in the land. We continue to pray that God would give us humble hearts that would submit to the authority of the word which transcends all cultural contexts.

We are sister churches with you and we desire your assistance in the maintenance, defense and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. Let us together be watchful for deviations. Earlier I mentioned the two questions the OPC asks and which our committee has taken over. They are:

1. Are there specific occasions where you believe we have failed to live up to our commitments to you or have caused you grief?
2. Speaking the truth in love, where do you perceive our testimony or practice to be weak?"

We welcome your answers to these questions.

Even though you in Australia and we in Canada live in cultures that are becoming more and more hostile to God's word, the Lord continues to be gracious to us. We can gather and worship in freedom each week and can still openly practise our faith. The ministry of the gospel in preaching and teaching may continue and the sacraments are administered. The young people, and those new to the Christian faith receive catechetical instruction and the schools can be maintained. Through these means the Lord will continue to gather defend and preserve his church. Our

Lord Jesus promises that he will build his church, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. That is our confidence.

**Appendix 1d: Address by Rev P Archbald on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand**

The apostle Peter writes, in 1 Peter 5, that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (v. 5, quoting Proverbs 3:34). He draws 3 applications from this truth, that are more “inward” looking: humble yourselves; as part of that self-humbling, cast all your anxiety upon Him; and be sober and alert – for the devil is on the prowl.

No doubt, we can look at our own respective federations, and find things to worry about. The devil is certainly seeking the destruction of your churches. Maybe each of us can find things to be concerned about in our own congregations. And we can certainly find things to worry about in our own, personal lives, if we look at ourselves honestly.

But Peter reminds his readers that even as we resist the devil within our own circle, we should do so with the awareness that others of God’s people are going through the same ordeals – be it persecution, attacks from outside; or, the internal attacks of doctrinal deviation, ethical latitudinarianism and in-fighting. Perhaps we should add to that the danger of dead orthodoxy, where the church loses its first love, as John warns in his Letters to the 7 Churches. In fact, you can more-or-less resolve the problems in these churches into the 2 categories of toleration of error on the one hand, and dead orthodoxy on the other.

I draw attention to this because it shows how much we need each other. That is the beauty of a sister-church relationship, we can help each other – with encouragement, advice, admonition,

as well as in various practical ways (in the pulpit, on the mission-field, education etc). There is no doubt that Satan is doing much damage to Reformed churches around the world. We need to offer, and to receive, that help – in a way that does not compromise our own Biblical and Confessional integrity – all the more urgently.

We are therefore thankful for the sister-church relationship we now have with the FRCA. It is rather humbling to see just how seriously you take it – judging by the number of pages in your Deputies' report, and the attention to detail in it. I must commend your Deputies for the thoroughness of their report.

As you will note there, there are some new developments from our side. We have entered a new sister-church relationship, with the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia. That has also opened up a new opportunity to help in missions, with their work in Vanuatu. Our churches are already raising money and perhaps sending personnel to assist there.

You will have noticed that like you, we have suspended our sister-church relationship with the RCN. This is a sad development, though we pray that admonitions from us and others may yet have the desired outcome. In terms of timing, our final decision on this will likely occur after we have a good opportunity to see whether appeals lead to any change of heart. We often say that we are slow to enter sister-church relations, and slow to leave. We generally want to give other federations the chance to hear appeals, until it is clear that these proper processes have been exhausted.

Your Deputies have also catalogued the increasing contact between our churches. This is not just a “paper” relationship, but one where the help I mentioned earlier is really functioning. We hope, and pray, that this will continue to be the case, so that we may draw even closer together.

We also appreciate the attention your Deputies have given to the barrier to the RCNZ calling your ministers. So far as I know, there have been, since your last synod, at least 3 of our churches that have seriously considered calling one or other of your ministers. There are others that might well do so in the future. However, the different systems of support for emeritus ministers makes it difficult. Your ministers could be seriously disadvantaged by accepting a call to NZ. Since availability for call is one of the major ways we help each other in a sister-relationship, this is a problem we really want to solve, if possible. Hence our synod's mandate to the inter-church relations and retirement fund committees to work with our FRCA counterparts. These committees have been aware of the problem for a while now. We have discussed it at our synod, and perhaps you will do so at this synod. It would be good, though, if we could come with a concrete plan of action, so that this barrier may be removed, in a mutually agreeable way, as soon as possible.

Brothers, we thank the Lord for you. We pray for you – and for your deliberations in this synod, asking the Lord to bless you and to enable you to be a blessing to others.

#### **Appendix 1e: Address by Prof S Lee on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea**

Greetings from the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) to the Free Reformed Church in Australia.

Grace and peace in the name of the Lord to all delegates, representatives, and visitors. I am professor of Korea Theological Seminary and a special member of Committee of Foreign Relations in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin). On behalf of my denomination I am very glad to be here and to

give greetings to the Free Reformed Church in Australia. I sincerely congratulate all of you on opening the Synod Bunbury 2018.

First of all, I would like to express our gratitude to the Free Reformed Church in Australia. It is impossible to tell the relationship between two churches without mentioning the late Doctor Soongil Hur. He was a minister of Armadale Church for several years before he served as a president of Korea Theological Seminary. He taught me and my father to be a minister and professor. Doctor Hur's ministerial experience at the FRCA produced some good books on the Reformed ministry. Those books, which was filled with concrete examples, gave a great influence on understanding the Reformed practical theology. His books gave me a great help for planting and building up the church according to the Reformed tradition.

Reading his auto-biography, I also realized that several congregations of FRCA gave a financial support to Korea Theological Seminary in a difficult time. Due to those supports the KTS more easily overcome adversities and became a good and healthy theological institute. I thank you again for your previous helps.

Now I'd like to mention several points on current situations that we are facing. After a great and rapid growth for decades the PCK began to decline in general. Most of the protestant denominations are experiencing the shrinking. The birthrate of Korea is the lowest in the world and the low birthrate is giving a huge impact on Korean society in all aspects. The church used to be filled with children, but according to a recent survey more than half of the Korean protestant congregations don't have any Sunday school for children. Worst of all, the number of applicants for the seminaries has been dropping down. We expect the lack of pastors in the future.

As all of you know, the relationship between the South and North Korea have been dramatically improved for just a few weeks. I think that this is God's answer to the Korean Christians' earnest prayer for peace. We have been waiting for this moment over 70 years. However, there are still many challenges that we have to overcome. Please pray for the peace in Korean peninsula, specially for those who have been long persecuted for the true faith in the north. If it is God's will we expect that the gospel will be echoed in the north soon.

Unfortunately, we have to recognize that the relation between the two churches did not much promoted. The language and distance barrier is much higher than expected. We admit that we have to try harder than now for the closer relationship. The best and easy way to achieve the goal is using internet. If the important articles or essays are regularly translated in each denominational news magazine, this might increase the fellowship between the two churches.

As always, the reformed churches are surrounded by many adversaries. Liberalism is threatening the Word of God, and the same sex marriage is being more and more legalized, Secularism and prosperity gospel continue to attract younger generations. I think that the two churches have to help each other to promote the common good and at the same time to fight against the common enemies. May God use our cooperations to strengthen his church.

Thank you for listening.

Sungho Lee,

A Special Member of Committee of Foreign Relations in  
Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin)

**Appendix 1f: Address by Rev J Plug on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands**

40 years ago, in 1978, Sietze Buning, Reformed storyteller and poet from Sioux County, Iowa, published the book *Purpaleanie and other permutations*. In it there is a poem which tells the story of a hopeless drunk, Benny Ploegster. It is entitled: *Excommunication*, and the story has never let me go.

For years the church elders had tried to change Benny's ways, but to no avail. Benny remained a drunk. The lure of the bottle was too strong, and no amount of church discipline was able to remove this stain from his troubled life. So finally the day came, after all the required announcements, the inevitable day on which he was to be excommunicated.

Benny could have done a variety of things. He could have labelled all churches a bunch of hypocrites and walked away, resigning his membership. He could have joined a more permissive church. He could have faked repentance and continued as a member as well as continuing to drink on the sly. He should, of course, have repented, and given up alcohol. But none of these things happened.

Instead, on the day of his excommunication, Benny came to church. (I imagine he sat in his usual spot, in the centre, a few rows from the front.) And when the form for excommunication was read out, Benny stood up, his suit still crumpled from the night before, his head bowed. His father beside him cried silent tears. The minister declared: *since by his stubbornness Benny daily aggravates his transgression, he is to be accounted as a gentile and a publican. We exhort you to keep no company with him to the end that he may be ashamed.* And so Benny was excluded from the Christian congregation and – we confess – by God himself from the fellowship and kingdom of Christ. He did continue attending the services, as regularly (or irregularly) as



before – although obviously he did not partake of communion – until he eventually died of cirrhosis of the liver.

Buning writes: *it was not in protest, although the dominie thought so, and it was not in stupidity, although the congregation thought so, that Benny stood up for his excommunication. Like Jacob wrestling with God, our Benny was wrestling with us and with God. His standing up said: I am God's child, all right, God's naughty child, but still God's child: Benny.*

Preparing for this synod, preparing to stand here today, I was forcibly reminded of Buning's poem. The situation is not the same, but there are parallels. This is probably the last time that I – or anyone else – will be standing here representing the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, sister church to the FRCA. Your deputies have made an unambiguous proposal: *with sadness to terminate the sister relationship with the RCN*. This fairly represents the conclusions and the mandate they were given by Synod Baldivis 2015. And it seems inevitable to us – barring a miracle – that you will adopt their proposal. For the RCN have not made moves in the direction which Baldivis hoped against hope would prevail. In terms of Baldivis, there has been no repentance; on the contrary, the RCN have moved further on the path of deviation from Scripture, and therefore the mutual relationship has now become untenable.

*In terms of Baldivis.* But also in terms of Armadale 2012. And of previous synods. For the FRCA have consistently come to frame developments within the RCN as knowing and growing unfaithfulness, and their own response as admonition and a call to repentance. In terms of Benny: sin on the one side, and discipline from the other.

Brothers, we can only say that we have accepted your critical stance with utter seriousness. We acknowledge that you are genuinely concerned with our wellbeing. And that your desire is

to do full justice to Gods word and its authority. Your concern mirrors that expressed in the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical inerrancy (as quoted in what has become a bedrock text ‘Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood’): *we are conscious that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible that God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead is a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one’s critical reasonings and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and for the time being basic Evangelical doctrines are still held, persons (and churches, JP) denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from the evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further.*

We have tried, and we have failed, to convince you that we share this concern. That we realize, and genuinely resist, the risk of rooting new arguments outside of the Bible. That we have no interest in manipulating Scripture or subjecting it to hermeneutical twists because its teaching makes us culturally uncomfortable. Yes, wrestling with God’s Word, we have come to insights which we ourselves would have thought impossible a mere generation ago. My colleague and fellow delegate Dr. Oosterhuis will do the best he can to give account of the most recent – and to you most shocking – outcomes. We owe each other that, and more yet, we owe it to the Lord of the church. But, like Benny, if the moment comes that you exclude us from communion with you, we will stand, and say: *we are still God’s children. And therefore still part of the family. We belong together.*

Unlike Benny, when we bow our heads to what at this point seems inevitable, it will not be to acknowledge our disobedience. This is not pride, and it is not stupidity. Yes, we have failed to convince you that we too submit to God's Word and its authority. We have failed to convince you, but we know that we hold as high a view of Scripture as you do. We reject as unfounded and unfair your deputies' dismissal of our response to your admonitions: *instead of repentance, there has been the repeated patronising assertion that the new hermeneutical approach and its results are the only way forward in a modern world.* That hurts, brothers. One: *the new hermeneutical approach* is your characterization of our approach to Scripture, which we have repeatedly tried to demonstrate does it injustice. You may disagree with new outcomes, but we have consistently applied time-honoured biblical and Reformed principles. Two: we have never claimed that these outcomes are *the only way forward in a modern world.* We recognize and respect the validity of biblical arguments which seem to lead to other conclusions. But to the best of our ability we have tried to *not conform to the pattern of this world, but to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.* Three: to call our response *patronising* takes you to a place where you don't belong, to a place where only God has access, the heart and its purposes. God knows how seriously we have listened, how prayerfully we have considered, and how decidedly we came our conclusions, in the conviction that it is to Him that we must all render account.

A wise man, apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with his authority, once wrote – and that was with respect to a fundamental issue threatening to divide the churches of the first century – *who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand... each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* This is the same wise man who earlier found

himself and his beloved brother Barnabas head-to-head at the crossroads. Each fully convinced that *this* is what the Lord demanded of them, no, *that* is what the Lord required. *And they parted company, in sharp disagreement.* It has always been tempting, thinking about that incident, to take sides, to search for clues in the text that *one* was right and the *other* was wrong. When in fact the plain reading of Scripture is that sometimes this just happens. *Each one is fully convinced in his own mind.* But Christ's work continues. And by his grace, differing convictions do not rule out reconciliation in the end. *The Lord is able to make him stand...*

Benny stood. In humility, in determination, and in failure. There was only one way forward, and he was unable to take it. We stand at this crossroads in our sister-church relationship. It is our deepest desire to find a way forward in communion with you. We, from our side, can only lay it in the hands of Him before whose judgment seat we all shall stand. We shall continue, regardless of the outcome, to see you as our sister-churches in Christ, and to offer you the privileges of pulpit and pew and sacrament which belong to that position. To his mercy we commit your churches. And may he have mercy on ours.

**Appendix 1g: Address by Br G Swets on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)**

Fathers and Brothers,

I count it a privilege to be present at this synod and to bring you fraternal greetings from the United Reformed Churches of North America. I am humbled to be able to address this esteemed assembly of brothers and co-workers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Allow me to begin my remarks with some information regarding the URCNA. The URCNA is a federation of churches that was formed in 1996 out the desire to maintain the historic testimony of the churches to the Reformed faith, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and to order its life by a Church Order that conforms to biblical and Reformed principles for the government, worship and ministry of the churches. While our history is relatively brief, we share with you a long and rich history that reaches back to the time of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We cherish our rich inheritances in the Reformed faith and pray that, as we seek to hold fast to what we have received, the Lord will open doors of opportunity for ministering the gospel and making disciples from all nations.

Our federation gathers for a synodical conference (General Synod) at least every three years, but recently we have been meeting every two years. We send two delegates from each congregation. Each delegate is assigned a subcommittee. Much of the work is divided into subcommittees which make recommendations to the full body where action is decided. The URCNA is further divided into eight classes which (ordinarily) meet twice each year. We have 125 congregations, including mission works and church plants not yet officially organized spread throughout the United States and Canada. The federation consists of 16,000 communicant members and over 24,000 members in total, including baptized covenant children. Ministers in the federation have gathered from several different seminaries. The URCNA does not have a federation operated seminary. Prior to be declared a candidate for the ministry, he must sustain a rigorous examination before his consistory and the classis. After having received a "call" from a congregation, and having successfully sustained a rigorous ordination examination before the calling consistory with the concurring advice from that classis, is ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the URCNA. This process appears to be very

similar to yours. In fact as I reviewed your church order we have so much in common. In our federation the classis is a broader assembly and the synod is considered the broadest assembly. The local consistory, which we consider the narrowest, comes to the broader assemblies for advice, but is the Final Authority/governing body. This also applies to church planting and mission work. I understand that Rev Paul Murphy an URCNA pastor in New York City, who was instrumental in our mission and church planting model, will be coming to a FRCA conference this fall.

Our federation has constituted a number of synodical committees with representation from each classis. Two of these committees have a mandate to initiate, respond to and cultivate ecumenical relations with other denominations and federations. These are CERCU (Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity), which devotes its attention to churches in North America. The second is CECCA (Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad), which I am a member of. Our responsibility oversees our relationships internationally, or abroad. The first official phase in our relationship with other federations or denominations is Ecumenical Contact. Through CERCU we are in ecumenical contact with 7 churches Through CECCA we are in official contact with seven churches internationally. The second phase in a relationship is Ecumenical Fellowship or sister churches where two denominations share an “oneness” despite geographical boundaries. According to the guidelines of CECCA, our ecumenical fellowship comes to expression in several ways: occasional pulpit fellowship, intercommunion, exercise of mutual concerns and admonition, agreement to respect each federation’s discipline, joint action in areas of common responsibility and agreement to inform each other of changes in polity, doctrine or practice. Through CERCU we are in “fellowship or sister churches” with 5 churches in North America, including the CanRC. Internationally, through

CECCA, we are in ecumenical fellowship with the (RCNZ) Reformed Churches in New Zealand, which we encourage you in your relationship with them. Also with the United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC), GKSA (South Africa), Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC-NTT), and Free Church of Scotland the continuing church (FCC).

Most recently, we are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, India, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. At synod 2016 we officially appointed a mission coordinator, who help the local churches pool financial resources to support missionaries and he also provides help, logistics and direction to the missionaries in their work.

We just completed Synod 2018 Wheaton last week. A note of significance was that it was a combined meeting with the OPC General Assembly. The highlights included the release of the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal that we produced in conjunction with the OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church). Other actions included discontinuing relations with Reformed Churches of Netherlands (GKv) in a unanimous vote, moved to Phase I Evangelical Contact with African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC), and to Phase II Fellowship with Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW), which will require ratification by a majority of the consistories by December 31 to be adopted. We also adopted an “Affirmation Regarding Marriage” as a doctrinal statement.

Finally I would like encourage you brothers, as you seek to do God’s work in an increasingly secular world. Know that we will pray for you and ask that you keep two things in mind. Pray for our ongoing process of seeking unity between our federation and other Reformed bodies, especially the CanRC. Though this process has proven difficult, further steps need to be taken for greater unity to be achieved. It is important to seek unity with those of like confession and practice. We need to be purposeful,

that we develop relationships that are beneficial for the growth of the Church. Second pray for the work of URCNA in evangelism and missions, that the Lord would prosper our efforts and use us to reach many with the gospel.

May the Lord bless you in your work and may the spirit guide you. Thank you

In Christ' service

Gerald Swets

Delegated from the URCNA

**Appendix 1h: Address by Rev A Palandima on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI)**

Esteemed delegates, Brothers and sister

On behalf of the GGRI first of all I would like to extend you the best regards from the deputy chairmans of the GGRI to this synod that God will bless your Synod to make it successful.

Thank you for your welcome, and also for affording us an opportunity to address the esteemed members and delegations of the national Synod of Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Our visit in this occasion is at the invitation of the Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for Contact with Reformed Churches of Indonesia. The purpose of our visit here basically not to attend the Synod, but based on your Synod (2012) decision which mentioned as follows "Article 118 VII.7. To support two students/ministers financially 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 financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches". Anyway, the deputy of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia for relations of with Churches Abroad had entrusted us as delegates to represent the GGRI as well.

Since we arrived in Australia on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, we always welcome and enjoy the hospitality and dialogues. More than feeling welcome, I feel a deep sense of indebtedness to, and enrichment by this Church. We having great impression and experience the real bonds of brotherhood as a communion of saints by faith in Jesus Christ. We feel not as a stranger here but as we are living in a real family although our family bonds is not by blood but by faith in Christ Jesus. We regard that the older men and woman as our parents and close relatives, the youngs as our brothers and sisters, especially in the family of dear Reverend father Arthur van Delden which is the pioneer who makes our sistership Church's relation bonds together, and in the family of father Johs Swarts our host family during the stay in Australia and in some of the FRCA Church's Family who has invited to their home and treat us with hospitality, friendship, and kindly. May God Bless FRCA bountifully in faith and thanksgiving to the Father and Lord Jesus Christ. From the bottom of my heart I express my thankfulness and the most sincere gratitudes to all of you.

As a delegate to represent the 3 federations of GGRI which is now become one, that is GGRI-NTT (South East Timor Island), GGRI-P (Papua) and GGRI-KB (West Kalimantan). I would like to tell few things relate to our sistership and the discussions agenda in this Synod.

First of all, I apologize to you that I can not say any thing specifically matters about the GGRI because we are not a privilege delegation which is chosen and sent by our regional or national Synod. So I will address you generally speech about our

Church matters arising in our country and in the topic discussions arising in this Synod.

Firstly, The GGRI-NTT expresses you her sincere gratitude for your helpful friendship and good relationship support to their Church for last few years both materially and spiritually by fund and prayer, such as sending a lecturer, trainer and speakers to build their Church's resources, I can't mention of all, just to represent, I say. Rev. Arthur van Delden, Br. John Bosveld, Br. Bryan Bosveld, Br. Erick Dehan, Br. Eric Hareema, Br. Chriss and Charlotte and so all. You also help us with financial for churches bilding, buy motorcycles for church service and sponsoring theological students. And sponsoring some people to come to Australia for studying English and exchange Church living between GGRI and FRCA.

Diferent to GGRI-NTT, we don't have intense contact and relationship with the FRCA. But we have been visited three times by sisters Church in Australia. The first time is in the 2008 when we held our National Church Federation Conference in Bengkayang Kalimantan Barat which is attended by delegate from FRCA Rev. Arthur Van Delden. The second time is the visitation LITINDO board mission project from Mundijong Church, Br. Eric Hareema, Chriss and Charlotte Bruning. The third time was last year, Rev. Arthur van Delden, Br. Eric Hareema came as a delegates from the FRCA. We also have been visited by the delegates from GGRC and GGRT.

Because this is the first time for the delegation of GGRI West-Bengkayang attending your Synod. I would like to share you about the current situation, the task and the barriers of our church ( GGRI-Kalimantan Barat) as a mandate bearer of the great world mission of Jesus Christ to a became a fisher of man; to became a salt of the world; to become a light of the world and to become a live's letter of Christ.

The GGRI-West Kalimantan are the fruits of Mission Works of The RCN. The first missionary who first steps his feet in the our region is Rev. Agema its about 1950-es to 1962. At the time he could not reach the native people because they were still not been civilized yet. It,s hard to communicate with because they can not write, nor read at all. What he did was taken and trained some young immigrant from Sumatera Island (Batak tribe) to preach the gospel. Its easier to train them because they can read and write . Then the trained preacher went to the villager to teach them writing and reading and preaching the gospel and they married the native people. And many villager who has concerned about the importance of education send their children study in the town. And in the 1980s Two Missionaries came in the Sentagi Bengkayang and built a school dormitory . At the dormitory they got the Bible Study too. The benefit is that many student had an interest to study,. Then they built a Senior High School Seminary and a Junior High School Seminary named Rehoboth Reformed Seminary and Rehoboth Junior High School. Two of qualified graduated student were sponsored to study at the High School Theological Colledge in the Pontianak to have their Bachelor Degree (S.1). Because of the demand of the equality educated people both for teaching and working in the government office, in the year 2000. The two graduated student, up-grated the Senior High School Seminary to become a Theological Academy Seminary, and then 2006 till now are up-grated again to become High School Theological College named STTR-Bengkayang (stand for Reformed Theological High School College). While the school program goes, they sponsored 2 graduated student again to SETIA college Jakarta, its my friend and I. And we got our Bachelor Degree on 2004. After graduated my friend were selected to teach at the college and I was appointed to be a an evangelical coordinator and evangelist as well at the Classes Seluas of GGRI. In the 2008 my friend was taken away by God. And in 2011 one of graduated Lecturer from Pontianak Teological College were also pass away. So I was called

to be part time lecturer in the . And the RCN also took a man from Alor Island of Timor to help us to teach at the STTR-Bengkayang. He is very educated and clever man, he graduated from the TUK Netherland, formely he works as a lecturer in SETIA Bible College Jakarta and the DVN contracted him to help us. And he is very helpful both for our Church and College. And in September 2012, DVN sponsored me for advance post-graduated study to get the Master Teological Degree (M.Th). That is the intensif program study which arranged for three months study in one semester (in April-July and September-December. I graduated in December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015. And then I worked as full-time lecturer till now.

The RCN regarded that we were sustainable enough for our self and can became independent. So, In the year 2000, they resign from mission work, and didn't sent missionaries anymore. Every church must become self-sufficient. But they financially still support the Church to pay their minister's salary but the salary will gradually decrease 10% annually and the congregation must increase their support also 10% annually to pay their minister salaries. And this year the minister still have 30% money support for the minister. They still support the program/project which is not-long lasting. And also support the STTR-Bengkayang. They also had ever promised in a meeting that they would support our theological education till the end of the day. But in our last synod they disavowed their promised will not support our college anymore, because it cost to expensive to fund and they had not enough money for that. Anyway they still want to help our college by looking for personal sponsorship. And they will gradually decrease their support to our college. Started from the last year we have decided that every head of the church's family member would support Rp. 50.000 per year for the GGRI and the College.

Nowadays we have to level building college and 8 room. Some furniture and about 400 title of books and about 600 examplars

of books in library. We have 3 full-time lecturer, and 5 honorer. 2 person Theological Master degree and 1 Christian Education Master degree. 2 Bachelor degree in Theological and 35 student. 6 major in theological and 29 major in Christian Education.

Our Church number consist of 30 congregation, 9 active minister, 5 emiritus minister 14 evangelist. Approximately 5000 members. That all the brief summary picture about GGRI-KB (West-Kalimantan).

The conclusions is that we still lack of educated people and struggle in financial matter to sustain our church.

Secondly, on behalf of our federation GGRI-West Kalimantan and I personally are very thankful that I can meet our former mother Church and now as a sister Church of GGRI. We feel very indebted both spiritually and mentally to them because by their care and work mission many soul are save and our human resources are built in our country. It is not arguable that I would not be here without their fruit mission. God has use their as blessing for us.

Thirdly, I was very struck and surprised to hear that our former mother church and now as sister church in their synod and in the last speech neglected the humble plea of the FRCA to repented from their disobedience in the reformed doctrine and tradition about woman in church office. I am not stand to judge anyone. But believe that every disobedience has its own consequence. I believe that the RCN is disobedience in the creation and the headship order which is teach by the Scripture. To hold the Bible teaching is the most important than to relay in our own perspective or mind. We should not put in our mind any suspicious or doubt in what God has revealed in the Scripture.

I believe in the holy catholic church, not denominationally. Every Church has its own role as a part of the body of Christ. I also

believe that we should not judge each other. And I also believe that Jesus not willing that we be separated but pray that we may become one in him. And at last I believe that we have to love one and other because God is love.

I just wonder of what the is the matter or reason which insist of the RCN to accept the woman in church office? Is It because the woman desire to or wanted to that position or the job? Or is it because of the weakness or the church's condition where there is not enough capable man to do their task in the church?

If the answer is because of the desire of woman, please be aware may be you are being tempted. God has ordained in the creation that woman would be helper of man and will be the mother of the living. They will be happy and bless in that condition and order. And so as well in the Church and family order. Lest we forget that the doubt of Eve has mad man fall into sin. She brought Adam to take over the dominion of God and want be like God.

In the time of judges, God commanded Barak to lead the Israelite to fight against Sisera but Barak is a coward man. The consequence is that the man not worthy to receive the honor and glory but God give it to the women (Deborah and Yael)

There also happened in the Israel when they realized that there were in danger living in the mids or the gentiles the felt worried that they will stand firm to the enemies attack. So they wanted to have their own king as well as the gentiles around them. It make God sad that they has rejected God as their almighty king. Then God tell them some consequence of having a king and they the suffered it.

In the speech also quoted about the divorce, Jesus doesn't give a specific perspective of interpretation but to emphasize that event they disobedient in God rule and order God still care for

them and love them. Even Eve is fall God still love them, even Barack is a coward God still protect their people from the enemy, even Israel rejected God as their mighty king God still give a king to release them from the enemy, and even Rehoboam rejected the advises of the wise elders, God still keep the kingdom of Judah and Israel.

Conclutions is if RCN accept the woman in church office because of the condition and the lack of capable men in the church, May be God want to save the RCN churches too. Let them do as what their wanted. may be someday God will change the situation and strengten them again. Dont judge them, don't break our relation, don't hate them but love them and encourage them. May be they are in weakness and oppressions. Thank you.

**Appendix 1i: Address by Br S Dethan on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC)**

Esteemed Brothers,

Let me begun this speech by praising our Triune God, for His love and protection that Rev. Yawan and me may be here in your midst.

It is a great joy for us to address you in this Synod on behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC).

Through this golden opportunity, on behalf of our federation we would like to pass on Christian greetings from all the Brothers and Sisters in our federation GGRC in Indonesia, to you all here. Also for all the members of Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) Please accept our brotherly greetings and love.

On behalf of our federation, we would like to thank you all, and specifically your Deputy for relation with churches abroad, for its contact and correspondence via email as well as discussions at meetings through which me and Rev. Yawan are able to come here, to see you and sit together with you in this pivotal Assembly. It is wonderful to be here with you and to experience the Christian atmosphere of this Synod.

As federation we thank the Lord for our relation so far as Contact Churches. We were so happy and praise our Lord for this relationship that we may know each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord and hold the same confessions. It is great that through this we are not only knowing each but also can pray for each other and help each other growing in reformed faith and characters.

We also would like to thank you for always attending our Synod meeting and thank you also for giving seminars for our Pastors, Elders and congregations. Next year in the beginning of August our federation is plan to hold our General synod in Roti Island in the very south of Indonesia. Thus through this opportunity we would like to give our formal invitation to you to please send some delegates to our General synod.

Last year we also from GGRC had visit the regional synod of GGRI Kalimantan Barat and Regional synod GGRI NTT and National synod of GGRI, it is one of our proof that we are willing to be united with GGRI that come out from our deepest hearth, without any forced from others. We also hope that in the future we from GGRC will have invitation to fallow the National Synod of GGRI and DV in that time we can talk about the unification.

We also would like to invite any of you here who has time, can come and visit us through the church or personally. If you are willing you also could come to visit and help teach our people, elders and pastor through Seminars.



Brothers, it is our prayer that the Lord, our Covenant-keeping God, bless you and grant you His strength and wisdom – so that you may have a productive Synod for the up-building of God's Kingdom. May He also bless our relationship for His name's sake. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Let me close this speech with one of my favorite Psalms – Ps. 121.

This Psalm 121 is such a beautiful and comforting Psalm. The LORD is our Helper, our Keeper who never sleeps and never slumbers. He is always with us. At the end of this Psalm it talks about His promise to be with us forever. That reminds us of what our Lord Jesus said in Mat. 28: 20 before he went up to heaven. He says, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Yes, He is our Immanuel God. God is with us.

Thank you for your wonderful welcome and hospitality. May God richly bless you and the churches you serve.

Dank U Well and Toot Zient....

Humbly submitted

Rev.Yawan M. Bunda and Br.Soleman Dethan  
Vice Chairman and Secretary,  
Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of Calvinist  
Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC)

**Appendix 1j: Address by Rev M Sneepe on behalf of De  
Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGK)**

Chairman, brothers delegates, brothers and sisters in our Lord  
Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the DGK (restored) it's our privilege to offer you heartfelt greetings. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to say some words to you. Our own synod in the Netherlands closed only two weeks ago. We regard ourselves greatly privileged for being able to be present at your synod these days. Not because we can't get enough of synod meetings. But because we really like to meet you and especially want to show that our request to your churches is well meant and cordially put forward. That is to say to further extend the contacts with us with the ultimate purpose, God willing, of reaching a sister-church relationship. Finally it gives us the opportunity to inform you of a number of important decisions recently made by our synod.

### **Explanation of the situation of DGK**

What is the present situation of DGK (restored)? We have about 1.300 members, divided among 9 churches and 2 ward congregations. In our federation, especially in Groningen, we see an increase of members coming from the RCN. Especially we'd like to mention that the ministers rev. van Egmond and rev. Gunnink (both recently retired ministers) made the transfer from the RCN. Virtually every week our prayers are devoted to the Lord for the repentance and turning back of the brothers and sisters in the RCN. They are brothers and sisters with whom we are still connected in many ways, through friendships, relatives, schools. At the same time we are most thankful that in recent times the Lord gave courage and strength to many people to break with the unscriptural ways of these churches.

At present our federation has eight ministers, five of them in active service and three retired. A number of ministers also cooperate at the theological training college. In our search to give this training college the most fruitful content we also watch with great interest to what your synod is going to decide concerning the question starting you own theological seminary.

## **Contacts with GKN**

We'd also like to inform you on the contacts between DGK and GKN. During the last contact with your previous synod and deputies you rightly urged our churches to seek contact with and make overtures to the GKN so we may come to unity with them. As you know, DGK and GKN both are federations originating from the RCN. As DGK we also see it as our calling to seek contact with GKN with an eye to growing closer together and, the Lord willing, unity. Our churches experienced it as particularly painful that the GKN sees an obstacle in the substantial talks between the two federations. The GKN demands that DGK publicly distances itself from an article which was published on a personal title in our church magazine. DGK deputies, speaking for our churches with deputies of GKN, kept and keep saying that everything can be discussed. Many of the actual matters and other things which are written about have a connection with a private vision of the past. Those matters should be talked about. But to our great disappointment GKN now has conditioned that no further talks are possible, unless the concerning article has been taken back. Both our deputies and later our synod thought it an unnecessary, but certainly also an unfair and not to be justified condition for continuing the talks. Three weeks ago our synod sent a letter to GKN in which the hearty wish and desire to re-enter talks is expressed. We'd like to ask your deputies if you can advise us how to re-open these talks with GKN. For we really wish to come to closer relations with the GKN. We realise that in these times of secularisation in which so many people leave the churches we as small reformed churches in the Netherlands need each other badly.

## **Contacts with foreign churches**

Furthermore about our contacts with churches abroad. We'll start with our sister church in Abbotsford (Canada).

The synod decided to enter talks with the sister church at Abbotsford about the catholicity of the church in connection with the justification of its secession and its present ecclesiastical position. This decision has been made, because expressions of Abbotsford about churches with the Westminster Standards, have raised various questions with us regarding their vision on the catholicity of the church. We really hope that our sister church in Abbotsford will have an open mind for this discussion and that it may contribute to a right vision and way of acting, particularly there where the catholicity of the church is at stake. This decision makes it clear that DGK wants to be fully reformed and roundly catholic. In this light we'd like to enter talks with the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) as well.

Next we'd like to mention shortly that we continue our contacts with churches in Northern Ireland and South Korea. The churches in Indonesia have also been put to our attention by rev. H.G. Gunnink. In the eighties Rev. Gunnink worked as a missionary in Kalimantan Barat (Western Borneo). In 2016 they sent rev. Gunnink an invitation to give a seminar on the Canons of Dordt. The seminar was attended by office-bearers of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia, Kalimantan Barat and students of the theological training institute. During that visit he was asked to teach at their seminary (STTR) He was able to do this in 2017 and 2018, each time for a few weeks, and was requested by their teaching staff to continue doing this each year as long as he sees fit.

Especially for the churches of South Korea and Indonesia it is our wish to communicate with your deputies, so as to make mutual use of each other's knowledge and experience as much as possible.

Via one of our congregations we maintain contact with rev. Z. Toth, a reformed minister in Western Ukraine/Transkarpatië.

Finally we don't want to keep it from you that DGK made a decision in which we had the Australian Free Reformed Churches as an example. As you may know we have a national church magazine, the Bazuin, published under the responsibility of our synod. Our recent synod decided to make it a magazine which no longer is the responsibility of synod, but nevertheless is bound to the churches. This binding has been realised in the same way you have organised things with your magazine Una Sancta. We hope that in this way our family magazine may contribute even better to the growth of the belief in our triune God and to a life dedicated to the LORD.

We thank you very much for the space and time you have given us here. We wish to ask you to keep praying for the churches of Jesus Christ in the Netherlands. We are small and vulnerable churches, which in spite of sins and shortcomings want to build on the foundation Christ Himself has laid.

We would also like to use the opportunity to convey the hearty greetings of our retired rev. P. van Gorp. Some of you wonders if retired ministers are able to contribute for longer time towards your one seminary. Well it is possible we can tell. Rev. van Gorp still does at his age of 97<sup>th</sup>.... Ok he is special. Some of you may know him from the time he was a minister in Albany a long time ago. Especially you brother Olde. He wishes to express his sympathy and love for you, the churches which he used to serve here in Albany. He'd like us to pass on the following on his behalf to you:

*I understand your earlier reservations which you had with regard to our liberation in 2003, because you thought it was premature. With sadness we have to establish that since that time the decline and deformation of the RCN have been unstoppable. I would appreciate it so much when your synod might see an opening to work on a way to restore a sister-church relation with us. aan I remember*

*the early years of the Australian churches during which our Dutch ministers by their efforts have impregnated and formed the reformed course of your churches, in which course you have remained over the years. .It would really be heart-warming if those old and special bonds could be restored and continued.*

We pray for God's blessing for the rest of your synod work. May the LORD bless your work for the edification of His congregations in Australia. May the LORD give you continuing faith and love for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally we wish to encourage you with the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 28:20: And see, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

We thank you for your attention.

On behalf of deputies DGK churches in the Netherlands for relations with churches abroad:

Rev. C. Koster

Rev. M.A. Sneep

**Appendix 1k: Address by Rev P Kgatle on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)**

Dear Chairman and all the Delegates of the Synod, Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you all in Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the Synod as a delegate from Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. It is a great honour for me to be present at your Synod

and to convey warm greetings from your sister-churches, the F.R.C.S.A.

The F.R.C.S.A. share many of the issues that you are discussing in this Synod. For example the training of theological students to enter into ministry. The F.R.C.S.A has started a pilot project with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), to further train our theological students to be equipped as to their standard. The pilot project is to use video recordings of classes at CRTS, under guidance by an experienced ministers. Since early 2018, the CRTS has established a work committee to investigate the possibility of distance education. Both the FRCA and FRCSA are can look to this opportunity that can help our own federations with their own theological training.

From the planning process for the new training model with the CRTS resources being considered for distance education it has become clear that we need a leading theologian with experience in training, to become an anchor theologian for the F.R.C.S.A. His tasks will consist of managing the training process, curriculum development, contextualisation and adaption of CRTS material. The FRCSA theological training may become a blended model in the near future, by combining CRTS material ant its contextualisation to the South African situation.

The F.R.C.S.A convened their 39<sup>th</sup> Synod in August 2017 that lasted for a week. We had the presence of the delegates from our sister churches of Canadian Reformed churches, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) and Free Reformed churches of Australia. As sister churches we need each other for support and mutual encouragements.

*This synod of Soshanguve decision of our sister churches (RCN) lead to long deliberations on how to proceed with the relationship in future. At the one hand there is gratitude that these churches want to remain Reformed, support us as FRCSA in*

*prayers, access to Reformed literature and the huge support in mission and other projects. On the other hand there is concern and sadness about the direction these churches took with the allowance of women in office. It is evident that previous calls not to follow the new hermeneutic approach (a new way of using Scripture which undermines the infallibility and clarity of Scripture), were not listened to. Also the Scriptural arguments against opening the offices were not taken seriously. To a question whether we as FRCSA could have done more to warn the RCN and call against opening the offices, the Dutch deputies BBK who attended our synod answered that we had done everything possible. A decision was taken that our synod will write a letter to the next RCN synod in 2020, enquiring what synod (and deputies BBK) had done with our arguments.*

Synod 2017 of the FRCSA mandated Curators of the theological training to work towards the calling of an Anchor theologian to facilitate the distance education with CRTS.

The synods meetings are good platform for our sister relations. They can help us to share our own experiences to find practical ways to discuss important issues. May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom and guide us in this right direction for our sister churches relations.

The F.R.C.S.A is thankful for the support we receive from our sister churches. We are a small federation with two classis, namely classis North and classis South. We have a total of 7 churches, 4 in the Classis north and 3 in the classis south. We have a total 7 mission's congregations, 5 in the classis north and 2 in the classis south.

We currently have 3 vacant churches in our federations. Our vacants church are due to retired ministers and ministers called to serve in other countries. One of these vacant churches, namely the FRC Pretoria, has called a minister from Ukraine, Rev.



Erich Van Alten to be their minister. We thank God that he has accepted the call and will be coming back to South Africa in 2019. The F.R.C.S.A experiences challenges to call ministers from abroad to serve in South Africa, because of our government laws.

We currently have 2 students, who have completed their theological training and are being prepared to enter into ministry.

We ask for your prayers with the 2 vacant churches, FRC Soshanguve north and FRC Johannesburg.

As the F.R.C.S.A we continue to spread the gospel according to our Lord's command found in Matthew 28:19-20: <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." We continue to stimulate the reformed thinking and actions in our churches.

We have a number of social activities initiated by our own church members in South Africa among our communities. South Africa faces a lot of social challenges, such as the AIDS epidemic and drugs abuses. We have an organization from our churches called the (Khothatsong) which means a place of comfort, which helps with AIDS orphans & helps also drugs addicts teens in our communities.

We also have a Reformed Study Centre, which is led by one of our minister. The Reformed Study Centre distributes Reform literature in Africa electronically. They also started a French distribution with the support some Canadian Reformed churches.

We are very thankful in particular to the F.R.C.A. in providing financial support to the needy churches in our federation and support towards our theological training.

In Conclusion, I would like to close with the words of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-20:

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

May the Lord grant us the wisdom through this gatherings, may he bless us with his grace and peace through Jesus Christ,

Amen.

#### **Appendix 11: Address by Rev J Sawyer on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches (OPC)**

Fathers and brothers, delegates of Synod, fellow fraternal delegates and observers, assembled guests, *those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in*

*every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.*

John Calvin wrote to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in April of 1552 the following:

"Amongst the greatest evils of our century must be counted the fact that the churches are so divided one from another that there is scarcely even a human relationship between us; at all events there is not the shining light of that holy fellowship of the members of Christ, of which many boast in word, but which few seek sincerely indeed. In consequence, because the members are torn apart, the body of the church lies wounded and bleeding. So far as I have it in my power, if I am thought to be of any service, I shall not be afraid to cross ten seas for this purpose, if that should be necessary."

Perhaps it is one of the few things I have in common with John Calvin, but in the kind providence of our Lord, having crossed the Pacific ocean 20 times and 8 other seas and Oceans, it is my very great privilege to be among you in order to bring you Christian greetings in behalf of my church family in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We are thankful to acknowledge your comradeship in the faith once for all delivered to the Saints, and thank you for the fellowship which we enjoy with you through numerous personal and ecclesiastical connections. Though we be on the far side of the world from one another, God's providence has in the past brought us together in significant ways. Among many examples that I might recount let me share but two. Rev. W. Huizinga was trained at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia for his first year by OPC professors and went on to serve as Pastor for many years at your Armadale Congregation. A fellow student with him in those days was Keith Van Dam who would go on to lecture for many years in Old Testament at the CRTS in Hamilton where he would train numerous of the corps of

ministers in the FRCA. On another note, the Rev. Dean Anderson, here to my right was catechized by an OPC pastor, was tutored in Hebrew by an OPC pastor and encouraged to train for the ministry at the CRTS in Hamilton, also by the same OPC pastor.

The OPC has just celebrated the 82nd anniversary of her founding on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1936. In 1935 Prof. J. Gresham Machen, prominent Presbyterian Church leader and Professor of New Testament and founder of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, was deposed from the ministry of the PCUSA for his refusal to obey unscriptural demands by the hierarchy of the church. This hierarchy insisted on his support for an agenda of unbelief then being promoted at home and on the mission field. In 1936, during the height of the Great Depression, 5000 souls, out of a church of millions, separated themselves, along with those ministers and elders who had been deposed along with Machen. In 1936, in order to return to the Word of the Lord and establish a truly Presbyterian Church, a brave little group convened in Philadelphia as the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America. (Later being sued by the PCUSA over the use of the name PCA our fathers having little or no money to contend a lawsuit, surrendered the name PCA and would become the OPC in 1939)

Now 82 years later and still preserved in the faith of our fathers as a self consciously Reformed and Confessional Presbyterian Church, the OPC consists of 16 Presbyteries in the USA and Canada. There are over 300 churches and mission works, of which the median size is between 75-80 members. There are approximately 500 ministers and teachers, 1000 ruling elders, and 800 deacons, serving slightly over 31,000 souls who constitute the communicant and non-communicant membership of the church.

The OPC continues to be vitally committed to the work of worldwide outreach through denominational ministry in Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education.

OPC missionaries have been active on foreign fields from Uruguay to Uganda to the Ukraine, from Austria to Ethiopia; from Switzerland to South Africa; from Port au Prince, Haiti to Quebec City; from China to Columbia in South America. The fields are white unto harvest and we request you to pray for us and our missionaries. Going forward we would hope someday to invite you to consider seconding your short and long term missionaries to our works as the Reformed Churches of New Zealand have done for many years.

Home Missions and church planting also continue to be a priority of our General Assembly and Presbyteries and new congregations have been gathered, organized, and instituted on a regular basis for which we are most grateful to the Lord. You are welcome to have a look at the website of our Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension.

The OPC promotes Christian Education through Sunday School curriculum materials produced by the arm of Great Commission Publications. A Timothy program exposes high school students to the experience of theological education via a conference hosted at various seminaries that feed our corps of ministers, and yearly expose young men to the possibility of a pastoral life. An intern program supports candidates as they prepare for a call and ordination. A web presence is maintained through the highly utilized ministry of [opc.org](http://opc.org). Most encouraging is the publication of a new Psalter Hymnal in partnership with the United Reformed Churches in North America, highlighting the OPC's commitment both to catholicity of the church, and its commitment to Reformed worship as called for in our understanding of the regulative principle of worship.

Diaconal Ministry is supported through a Diaconal Committee overseen by the General Assembly. Last year's hurricane season saw this committee facilitate teams of volunteers who are still working in disaster relief missions to Puerto Rico, Texas, and Florida. Widows and orphans are cared for, as well as retired ministers who face financial shortfalls in later life.

In the area of ecumenicity, we have now Ecclesiastical Fellowship 20 churches around the world. The OPC remains committed to the cause of Catholic, Calvinistic, Confessional Ecumenicity.

On a very positive note, our 85<sup>th</sup> General Assembly met concurrently with the URCNA Synod June 11-15 at Wheaton College. The Lord graciously allowed us to hold numerous joint sessions for worship in order to inaugurate our new Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

We continue to exercise active membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council and the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We were very grateful to find ourselves of one mind with your sister churches in the unsought and unpleasant task that fell to the OPC in calling for the ICRC to suspend the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands from membership in the Conference. We pray that the Lord will turn the RCN back to the old paths, the faith of their fathers and ours.

This case illustrates a historical providential pattern in our ecumenical history. It is a significant historical record that demonstrates, I trust, our bona fides as a Reformed Church. This includes our past (in the 1980's) contending with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands/Synodical in the RES; with the Christian Reformed Church of North America (1990's), bilaterally and in NAPARC, with the Reformed Church of Japan (2000's); and finally with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands/Liberated in ICRC. Thus we are a Presbyterian Church, but one that is well

aware of the Continental Reformed Churches. We know the significance of the Afscheiding, Doleantie, and the difference between Vrijgemaakte and Synodaalen. After all, among our founding ministers were Cornelius Van Til, N.B.Stonehouse, and R.B. Kuiper. The heritage of their influence is still cherished among us.

As we recently celebrated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, we have invited sister churches to ponder afresh with us one of the foundational slogans of that age. It also is one worth pondering and preserving: ***ad fontes***. Arguably, without the return to the fountainhead of Scripture and the church fathers like Augustine, there would have been no revival of the other solas of the Reformation. On his death bed the great reformer (ironically, who had instituted so much biblical change in Geneva) John Calvin, who was steeped in the original texts of Scripture and with a keen knowledge of the Church fathers urged the leaders of Geneva, ***“not to innovate-we often ask for novelties-not that I desire for myself by ambition what mine remains, and that we retain it without wanting better, but because all change is hazardous and sometimes harmful.”*** “The advice of this leader is filled with layer upon layer of wisdom,” yes also for the OPC and her sisters.

Nevertheless, a day came when Geneva itself no longer walked in the footsteps of its own ***great ille theologus***. Even Geneva, ***“the most perfect school of Christ since the apostles”***, left her Reformed birthright. How much more then should we heed Calvin’s death bed charge. How much more likely are we to have our lamp stand removed from its place among the churches of Jesus Christ? Often and again we hear the siren call to be relevant and contemporary. We hear, ***ecclesia reformata semper reformanda***, a Reformed Church is always Reforming. Yes indeed, but not by revolution, but by a fresh application, ***ab initio***, from the first principles of our fathers and our own sincere embrace of their practice of ***ad fontes***. Does not the discerning

eye note that history is strewn with churches that did not heed Calvin's dying plea? God help us to beware of innovation and asking for novelties, remembering, all change is hazardous, and sometimes harmful.

Nearly 70 years ago, our fathers of blessed memory came to an ecclesiastical scene in New Zealand and Australia that was impoverished by innovation. In NZ Led by men like the Rev. Bill Deenick trained at Kampen as I understand by Dr. K. Schilder, our fathers, looking ahead and seeking to be relevant in a new land and culture, nevertheless returned *ad fontes* to the fountainhead, with the fully self conscious goal (as the Rev. Deenick wrote to me in 1993) ***"of establishing the bona fides of our churches as faithful, fully confessional Reformed Churches."*** ***(The OPC has had very close Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCNZ since 1957)***

The OPC history is exactly parallel to this. We also are a church of secession from the insidious innovations wrought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by modernism in the PCUSA. This separation was necessary in order to return to the Word of God, the Westminster Standards (***"the creed God has taught us in His Word"***), and Scriptural Church Government. Paraphrasing Machen on June 11, 1936, ***" the pain of the long years of struggle having melted away ... our hearts were filled with joy that at last we were members of a true, Presbyterian church.*** This is an historical narrative that no doubt resonates with you as children of your own historical " secession and return" to the Word of God.

I end with an anecdote from my history, and yours. 28 years ago in 1990 it was my privilege to attend Synod Armadale in behalf of the RCNZ. I still have the notes of my speech. I concluded my address with two pleas: 1) come over and help us, and 2) please do not bury your talent in the ground. Though it took 25 years of



careful discussion, I was absolutely thrilled to hear that in 2015 the RCNZ and FRCA at last became official sister churches!

During the ICRC 2017 in Ontario (where I was one of the OPC delegates) when the matter of the suspension of RCN membership was before the Conference, my visit in 1990 to Synod Armadale came to my mind. And it struck me that your voice and your presence were missing in that moment when the integrity of the ICRC as an ecumenical organization was at stake. And I determined that if the Lord would ever allow me to come to your Synod again, that I would renew that plea: "Come over and help us, and please do not bury your talent in the ground." With esteem and affection, I suggest that the English speaking Reformed community needs your voice in these dark days of deformation and decline in Western Civilization, church and state. You have been given so much, and to whom much is given, much is required by the one who is King of the Church, and to whom we will give an account.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, fathers and brothers, for the great privilege you have afforded me in behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to address you Synod.

Now may the blessed Lord Jesus, King and Savior, continue to subdue us to himself and his Word, that as fellow pilgrims together on the narrow path that alone leads to life, we may continue hearing and heeding the words of the Prophet: ***Stand by the way, and behold, and seek for the ancient paths where the good way is; and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.***

**Appendix 1m: Address by Pastor NT Chong on behalf of the  
First Evangelical Church of Singapore**

Dearly beloved brethren in Christ,

I would like to convey warm Christian greetings to you from the First Evangelical Reformed Church, Singapore (FERC).

We would like to express our heart-felt appreciation to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for inviting us to be at this Synod meeting and be given this opportunity to say a few words.

I thought it would be good for me to just briefly give some updates here regarding FERC and also what we have experience since the establishment of the sister church relation with FRCA at the previous synod meeting (Synod Baldivis).

**1) Updates on FERC**

Since FERC entered into a sister church relation with Covenant Grace church (CGC) in Penang, Malaysia, a church we have helped to establish since year 2003; once every month, our Pastor and Elders would take turns to fill their pulpit and to minister to the brethren there.

CGC is now in the process of having one of their Elders undergo training to be a Minister of the Word and we are also assisting them in this where we are able.

In helping with the gospel outreach efforts of the CGC to the children of a fishing village in Penang, the young people of FERC would organize Vacation Bible School programs for those children 4 times a year.

Besides helping the gospel cause in Penang, some members of FERC would also regularly travel to Johor Bahru in Malaysia to reach out to the children over there with the gospel.

FERC sought to establish a fraternal relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches during their last Synod meeting but was turned down due to our single church status.

We would like to seek the advice of FRCA on whether we should pursue this further and whether FRCA can in any way help us.

## 2) Since the establishment of sister church relation with FRCA

We very happy and thankful to God as there has been a discernible increase in the number of brethren from the FRCA worshipping with us whenever they travel through Singapore.

These visits and interactions surely strengthen our bonds with one another and clearly exhibit the unity we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we are very thankful also for every now and then when FRCA's Ministers were to be in Singapore, we would have them minister God's Word to us at our pulpit.

So far we have had Pastor Hendrik Alkema, Pastor Ted VanSpronson, Pastor Steven T'Hart, Pastor Wes Bredenhof preached at our pulpit.

Pastor Ted and Pastor Steven had also been the speakers at our annual church camps while Pastor Wes Bredenhof was the speaker at our Reformation Day Conference a couple of years back.

There had also been regular communications between us and FRCA through the deputies.

In consultation with the deputies from FRCA who visited us, we are also beginning to use more established organs of communication to strengthen contacts and information-sharing - we have started subscribing to the *Una Sancta*; we would also try to regularly publicise each other's activities, so that members of our churches may be aware and when they are able to, participate in those activities.

One example of the usefulness of doing this is our recent annual church camp which saw four brethren from the FRCA and two brothers from the Philippines join us.

It is really a great blessing to be able to enjoy one another's fellowship through such activities. We look forward to more of such spiritually edifying opportunities between our churches.

Going forward, FERC is interested in opportunities to work with FRCA or participate in the area of missions and training of leaders especially in the South East Asian region.

Due to the ministerial needs of FERC with 2 English services and one Chinese service every Lord's Day, and our support to CGC in supplying their pulpit once a month, we wish to highlight to you that we are hoping that FRCA ministers in retirement or in sabbatical can consider coming over to help us for a 1-2 month periods, or if possible, to even have a Minister on loan from the FRCA to help us.

FERC is very thankful and happy for the sisterly relationship with the FRCA, and the many spiritual benefits and blessings we have enjoyed out of it.

We wish you all the Lord's blessings and would remember you all in our prayers.

May our gracious Lord continue to bind us in His love and grant that we may all be found faithfully occupying ourselves in His service till He comes!

In the Lord

Pastor Chong Nam Tuck

On behalf of the Session of the First Evangelical Reformed Church, Singapore

### **Appendix 1n: Closing Speech by Rev A Souman, Chairman of Synod Bunbury 2018**

Synod Bunbury 2018 is drawing to a close.

The delegates were tasked with working through the matters that were put on the agenda by the churches. Today, we got all those matters done and now we may close this synod; the delegates may return home, and for the churches the process begins of working through the acts and consider the practical implications of decisions made by this synod.

Looking back on a synod, delegates usually want to find something that makes that synod important. Would it not be nice to be able to say, later, when you talk to our grandchildren: I was at that synod, that made those important decisions. And certainly, for a chairman it would be great to be able to say: I was chairman at that important, historical synod.

So what makes Synod Bunbury 2018 into a synod to be remembered? What are some of the great feats we can boast in?

Brothers and sisters,

I think it is important to realise that the work being done at this synod was done in humility.

We did not come to this synod to write history. We came to this synod to serve the churches, and to serve the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

We have made decisions; in weakness; also in obedience to God's Word. If it pleases God to use these decisions, we may be thankful for the privilege that God chose to use us. It is not our work that we boast in. It is the faithfulness and the care of the LORD, and of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, which we will exalt, in thankfulness that He made this synod possible.

With that in mind, we can reflect on this synod.

One week and one day ago, we were together here, for the opening of synod. On the agenda were some important matters. About church relationships. About the Book of Praise, a seminary, and more. During the past eight days, synod also listened to and spoke with a lot of delegates from sister churches and other churches with which we have contact. This is an important part of the meeting of synod and much time has been spent on dealing with sister churches. As Free Reformed Churches of Australia, we are not alone in this world. Christ is gathering His Church from all nations, and throughout all times.

For us as churches, to recognise that by welcoming delegates from churches abroad with which we are one in faith, is a blessing. We do not live for ourselves, but for our Lord Jesus Christ. We are all together His body. He places other churches on our path, they are given to us to encourage us and hold us to account. We also are given to them, to encourage them and hold them to account.

We did so for many years with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. For many years, for generations, we could be a blessing to each other. However, over the last fifteen to twenty years, we had the task to discuss with them matters that raised concerns. We were worried about our big sister in the Netherlands. When time progressed, our concerns turned to sadness. Our sister didn't want to listen to us, despite our urgent pleas. At this synod it became abundantly clear how far we have grown apart. We heard from the delegates of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands how they came to their decision to open all offices for women. Their way of reading the Bible has become so foreign to us, that we cannot recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd anymore in the way they read and interpret the Bible. Because much pleading and admonition remained fruitless, we had to make the decision, with great sadness, to terminate the relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

There was also thankfulness: that we can experience the unity of faith with several sister churches. We decided to continue the relationships with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea, the First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

We continued contact with other churches: the United Reformed Churches in North America. We decided to take up contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, also in North America, as well as with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Southern Presbyterian Church, both in Eastern Australia. Our deputies will continue to monitor the situation in the Netherlands with regard to the two small federations of reformed churches, the DGK and GKN. We decided to continue the work in Indonesia, working with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor, although some changes have been and will be made in the way of working of our deputies.

From time to time we speak about the Canadian Reformed Churches as our closest sister, although in distance we could consider it the sister who lives farthest away. Close, because we have so much in common. Our students for the ministry go to Hamilton, ON, Canada, to study at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). We make use of the Canadian Book of Praise. Some like this close relationship so much that they wouldn't mind being part of the Canadian Reformed Churches, being considered classis 'Down Under'. However, we are not part of them, and we made it clear at this synod. We make our own decisions, for instance, about the Book of Praise and about the seminary. It is with thankfulness that we can make use of much of the good work that has been done and is being done by our Canadian sister. There is a good cooperation between our two church federations. Let it be clear that it is not out of animosity, that we decided to have our own Book of Praise. The name shows it: the Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise (as it was called at synod), or as it will be: the Australian Book of Praise. Synod decided to stay as close to the Canadian Book of Praise as possible, so that at least in the short term, members who bought a Canadian version of the Book of Praise can continue to use their version in our church services. Synod, therefore, decided not to adopt certain proposed changes to four psalms.

There is also a desire to start our own seminary in Australia. Not because we believe that the CRTS is not doing a good job. There are good reasons to train brothers for the ministry here in our own country. However, Synod decided that now is not a good time to start such a project. Deputies have been appointed and mandated to make a strategic plan. In that plan, attention should be paid to the possibility to involve sister churches in New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, South Africa, and possibly also others with whom we have contact.



These are some of the decisions Synod Bunbury 2018 made. I'm not going to repeat here all the decisions that have been made. A press release will be published which summarizes them, as well as the Acts of Synod, which describe in detail what has been decided.

At the end of Synod there are a lot of people to say thank-you to.

First, I want to express my thankfulness to the delegates that you entrusted me with the task of chairman. It is an honour to be appointed to such an important task. It expresses your confidence in me. It was not that I desired this task. It was hard work, and especially the first few days, it was not always easy to get into all the rules of Synod. I hope, brothers, that I didn't disappoint you. I thank you all for the excellent cooperation which we had here at synod, and for your support which I could experience time and again in many different ways. It was a great experience, and I can say: I did enjoy working with you.

There was a good atmosphere at synod, from beginning to end. We all worked together in a spirit of humility, and the desire to serve. That was noticeable in the fact that delegates were willing to see past their own opinions and work together to come to decisions which were often supported by a large majority and not unfrequently even unanimously. I am impressed with and thankful for this cooperation, brothers. May this be a good example to our churches: that we all may live in good harmony as brothers and sisters, where we can listen to each other, even if we disagree, and still work together and trust and encourage each other, serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

A few brothers I want to mention in particular.

In the first place the vice-chairman, rev. Alkema. You were a great help to me, keeping track of the speakers in every round, giving me advice several times, also being in charge of

forwarding the proposals and amendments, making sure that everyone had the right material at the right time. A lot of work is being done by the vice-chairman that often does not get noticed by many. Thank you very much.

Also my thanks to the clerk, br. Spyker. You are a reliable clerk, quietly working on the Acts together with the assistant, sr. Kina van Duyn. You are familiar with the rules, have a thorough knowledge of previous synod decisions, and I could rely on you to correct us whenever we did not abide by the rules or the adopted order. Thank you very much.

Then the second clerk, Rev. Pot. The bulk of your work begins now: writing letters. During synod, you helped me out and encouraged me in many different ways. Together, we tried to discover how to apply the rules of synod. The rules of synod are not always clear. For instance the rules about contact with other churches. If even the chairman has difficulties understanding these rules, how can we expect our visitors from these churches to understand all this? It may be good to have another look at these rules and if possible propose improvements to a next synod. Rev. Pot, thank you very much for your help and support.

More words of thanks:

Thanks to sr. Kina van Duyn who so capably assisted us by not only helping the clerk by making the Acts, but also providing us with an updated copy of the proposals after we amended them, and many other things. That helped us greatly in making our decisions and working through the agenda.

Thanks to the convening church of Bunbury, for preparing this synod, and to br. Visser for opening this synod. Thanks to the church of Southern River for making available their church building for the meetings of this synod.

This is the first time that I am at a synod where at the end of every evening I can go to my own home and sleep in my own bed, even though I realise that not every delegate was able to do that. Some came from farther away. We thank those who made sure that all the delegates who came from farther away had a place to stay.

Words of thanks for the technical committee. The way you helped us with the infrastructure, was great. Thank you very much for all your work.

The catering committee did an excellent job and continually provided us with good food.

Many brothers and sisters were involved in preparing for this synod and making synod run smoothly. I thank all those who have been involved.

After all this it is fitting that our highest praise and thank goes to God, Who made it possible that we could be together and make our decisions and do our work. Thanks be to Him, Who gathers His Church, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that we do our work with weaknesses. He is the Lord of the Church, He continues to work and does not depend on us. It is humbling to know that He does use us and that we could do our work here.

May He bless the work of this synod and may He continue to work in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

## **Appendix 2      Press Release**

### **Press Release of Synod Bunbury 2018 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia**

*June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018*

#### **Opening of Synod**

Although the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury was appointed by Synod Baldivis 2015 as the convening church for the next synod, brothers and sisters of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia assembled in Southern River on the evening of June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. In view of the space limitations of the church in Bunbury, the Free Reformed Church of Southern River had graciously offered the use of their facilities in a rather unique arrangement of cooperation between the two churches. The chairman of the Bunbury consistory, Br.K.Visser, invited all those gathered to sing praises to the Lord and led in opening prayer. In this prayer of intercession, Br.Visser expressed thanks to the Lord for His care and protection over the churches in the inter-synodical period, as well as a desire for God's blessing over the work of synod in the coming days. He then read from Proverbs 3:1-18, and focused on verses 5-6 in his subsequent meditation: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.* In his address, Br.Visser emphasised to the delegates in particular the great need for spiritual wisdom focused on heeding the instruction and clear teaching of Scripture. He declared Synod Bunbury 2018 officially opened and welcomed all delegates to take their place at the synod table.

#### **Delegates and Officers**

Br.K.Visser confirmed that the church at Bunbury had examined the previously submitted credentials and found them to be in

good order. All primary delegates from the three classes were present:

<i>Classis North:</i>	<i>Classis Central:</i>	<i>Classis South West:</i>
Rev.R.Bredenhof	Rev.R.D.Anderson	Rev.H.Alkema
Rev.W.Bredenhof	Rev.A.Hagg	Rev.R.Pot
Rev.A.Souman	Rev.C.Vermeulen	Rev.S.'t Hart
Elder H.Hamelink	Elder E.Heerema	Elder S.Bolhuis
Elder T.Reitsema	Elder H.Terpstra	Elder H.Olde
Elder W.Spyker	Elder J.Torenvliet	Elder W.Vanderven

The election of officers to serve synod took place in a series of votes, yielding the following results: Rev.A.Souman elected as chairman, Rev.H.Alkema as vice-chairman, Elder W.Spyker as first clerk, and Rev.R.Pot as second clerk. Sr.K.VanDuyn was appointed as an administrative assistant, and thankfulness was expressed for her willingness to serve once again at synod in this capacity. The chairman declared synod to be duly constituted, after which the delegates rose to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Rev.Souman then closed the evening in prayer and adjourned synod for the evening, giving an opportunity for all those present to enjoy a time of fellowship.

### **Foreign delegates**

Synod was privileged to welcome foreign delegates representing a number of church federations in various levels of relationship with the FRCA. For the first time, a delegate from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand could be welcomed as a representative of a sister church (Rev.Dr.P.Archbald). Delegates from other sister churches were also welcomed, including representatives from the Canadian Reformed Churches (Rev.A.Witten, Br.H.Schouten), the Reformed Churches of Indonesia [GGRI] (Rev.A.Palandima, Br.Ev.A.Bantan), the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (Prof.S.Lee) as well as the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (Rev.P.Kgatle). Delegates from the

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Rev.J.Plug, Rev.Dr.M.H.Oosterhuis) were received by synod in the category of temporary ecclesiastical contact, the result of the decision of Synod Baldivis 2015 to suspend the relationship of the FRCA with the RCN. Representatives from the churches of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [DGK] (Rev.C.Koster, Rev.M.Sneep) were also welcomed to synod in this category. Synod received delegates from churches with whom we have official contact, including representatives from the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia [GGRC] (Rev.Y.M.Bunda, Br.S.Dethan as well as (for the first time) the United Reformed Churches in North America [URCNA] (Br.G.Swets). Also attending synod were representatives from the Reformed Churches of Indonesia [GGRI Timor]. (Br.Cl.Ngura, Br.F.S.Missa), A few days after the opening of synod, Rev.J.Sawyer of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was welcomed, and given the opportunity to address Synod Bunbury. In the second week of synod, delegates from our sister church of the First Evangelical Church of Singapore [FERC] (Rev.Chong Nam Tuck, Brother Johnson See Choon Hock) were also heartily welcomed.

Synod Baldivis 2018 made the following decisions in connection with various church federations:

**Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC)**

Contact between the Free Reformed Churches in Tasmania and both the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as well as the Southern Presbyterian Church led to a proposal from Classis North to investigate the potential of this contact in a more formal way. Synod decided to create a deputyship to investigate the EPC and the SPC and report back to the next synod concerning the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. In the case of the EPC, this would not be a case of initiating contact for the first time on an official basis, but re-establishing the contact that was broken

off at the synodical level in 1992 stemming from the lack of interest from the EPC at that time. Twenty-six years later it remains to be seen whether a relationship between our churches and these small federations will be possible.

### **Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)**

The relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches is one that members of our churches have cherished dearly for many years. It is our closest relationship, and now also our oldest. In his address to synod, Rev.A.Witten affirmed the close bond that is felt and experienced by members of our respective federations in an array of different ways. Cooperation between our federations continues on a variety of levels and strengthens our relationship. It was with thankfulness that synod could decide to continue our relationship with this sister church. In their report to Synod Bunbury, the deputies identified one area of concern to be a number of the decisions taken by the Blessings Christian Church, noting irregularities with respect to the practice of Reformed church polity: “Deputies question how such developments function within the CanRC and whether they are consistent with the plain reading of the agreed Church Order.” With this in mind, synod mandated the deputies very specifically to investigate these concerns. Ongoing attention was also given to the continued discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA with respect to a potential merger. Although the last URCNA synod fixed a waiting period of six years for federative unity with the CanRC, it was still felt beneficial for our churches to remain informed on this issue.

### **United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)**

In late 2014 contact with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia was initiated by the United Reformed Churches of North America. These churches are not unknown to us; their sister church relationship with the CanRC and efforts at working

towards federative unity with them have made the URCNA a federation that has been on our ecclesiastical radar for some time now. Nevertheless, their efforts at establishing separate contact with our churches led Synod Baldivis 2015 to mandate deputies to explore the possibilities and advise the next synod on how to proceed with the initial contact. In the inter-synodical period since 2015 minimal progress was made, and as a result Synod Bunbury essentially re-mandated the deputyship. The deputies were given the task to continue to liaise with the URCNA, attend their synod in Wellandport, Ontario in 2020, and recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in a sister church relationship. It was good to have the presence of Br.G.Swets of the URCNA at our synod, which was a reflection of both the intent and the seriousness of this federation when it comes to a possible relationship with us.

### **Kosin Presbyterian Churches in Korea (KPCK)**

While our sister church relationship with the Kosin Presbyterian Churches in Korea is one that we are thankful for, cultural and linguistic differences have historically made close interaction and cooperation with each other very difficult. Throughout the years the FRCA have taken different approaches to fostering increased familiarisation with the KPCK. At Synod Baldivis 2015 the deputies were tasked with the mandate to investigate the model and mode of missionary work being done by the KPCK in order to assist the local churches of the FRCA to determine whether and how they might cooperate together in their missionary calling. Although work was done by the deputies to learn more about the activities of the KPCK in the Asian region, their conclusion was that limited possibilities exist, and at Synod Bunbury this mandate was discontinued. One complication in the relationship involves the presence of Koreans in the Perth area and the establishment of churches in this area by the KPCK without any significant communication with the FRCA. For this reason, our deputies were mandated to further investigate the members of



our sister churches living in the Perth metro area, with a view to improving contact and cooperation with them.

### **Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN)**

The potential termination of the relationship between the FRCA and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands was a matter weighing heavily on the hearts of many members of our churches heading into Synod Bunbury 2018. Serious, detailed and prolonged calls for repentance in recent years have fallen on deaf ears. At Synod Armadale 2012 a significant effort was made to formulate a clear and exhaustive outline of the concerns held by the FRCA. Concerns about the RCN resulted in Synod Armadale classifying the relationship as being “under strain.” Sadly, the Dutch Synod of Ede 2014 rejected the admonitions sent by the FRCA, which led the deputies to present Synod Baldivis with the option of either terminating or suspending the relationship. Synod Baldivis chose the latter option, and emphasized the seriousness of the FRCA’s concerns with the decision to send to the consistories of the RCN a copy of the letter sent to Synod 2017 of the RCN. This letter included the assertion that “the FRCA’s sister relationship with the RCN will become untenable if the next Synod of the RCN in 2017 does not express and demonstrate evidence of repentance from the deviations mentioned in the letter of the Synod of Armadale 2012 to the Synod of Ede 2014.” Synod Baldivis also encouraged the FRCA congregations to “pray that the Lord would grant the RCN to uprightly hold and defend the Scriptural truth as maintained in the Three Forms of Unity.” A significant number of churches submitted letters to Synod Baldivis 2015 in connection with the relationship with our sister church, yet very few churches did so in preparation for this Synod. Decisions taken by the RCN in the inter-synodical period, and in particular the decision of Synod Meppel 2017, simply confirmed that the repentance prayed for and so desired by both our churches and our sister churches had not materialised. The need for the

termination of our relationship with the RCN appeared to be clearly understood by the churches, and this need was underlined by the content of the address at synod of Rev.Dr.M.H.Oosterhuis. As a result, a decision was taken, with great sadness, to terminate the sister relationship with the RCN. The following grounds were given to support this decision:

1. The relationship with the RCN has become untenable due to their use of the “New Hermeneutic” – principles allowing the current cultural context to play a determining role in explaining scripture. This has allowed the RCN to turn away from the clear instruction of God’s Word and has shown unfaithfulness by lack of submission to that Word.
2. The evidence of ground 1 above is given particular expression in the recent decision of the RCN (Synod Meppel 2017) to allow women to the offices of deacon, elder, and minister.
3. There has been no adequate response, let alone repentance, to earlier admonitions:
  - i. Letter of admonition from Synod Armadale 2012 to RCN Synod Ede dated 22 April 2013 (Acts of Synod 2012, Appendix 5);
  - ii. Letter from Synod Baldivis 2015 to RCN Synod Meppel 2017 (Acts of Synod 2015, Appendix 2).

The historic decision to terminate our relationship with Reformed Churches of the Netherlands was one taken with soberness and sadness. We hope and pray that the LORD would call this federation back to Himself. Synod Bunbury 2018 made the decision to convey this decision by sending two deputies to the next synod of the RCN.

### **Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (DGK) & Reformed Churches Netherlands (GKN)**

Synod Baldivis 2015 mandated deputies to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN, and upon submitting their report, deputies considered their mandate to be completed. A number of letters from the churches urged Synod Bunbury to re-mandate the deputies in the interest of continuing contact with these church federations. Synod made the decision to mandate deputies to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN, and encourage these two federations to work towards unity with one another. An obstacle in the development of our relationship with the DGK has been their acknowledgement of the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA). Synod Armadale 2012 decided that “the [DGK’s] relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA) may be an impediment to a future sister church relationship with the [DGK].” Since Synod Baldivis 2015, some positive steps have been taken by the DGK towards the LRCA on the matter of their separation from the CanRC. Synod Bunbury mandated the deputies to keep informed on the nature of the developments between the DGK and the LRCA, and to communicate with their respective Canadian Reformed counterparts on this issue.

### **Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)**

The history of our contact with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and our internal discussions concerning them goes back many years. Over time, progress was made to such an extent that in preparation for Synod Baldivis 2015 the deputies submitted the following recommendation: “to offer [a] sister church relationship to the RCNZ under the established rules, and to accept their offer of a sister church relationship.” Synod Baldivis accepted this recommendation, and the historic decision was made to enter into a sister church relationship with the

RCNZ. Since that time, various efforts have been made to increase the communication between our respective federations, and a natural process of increased interaction has begun to take place, which has been a wonderful blessing to both federations. Concerns with respect to the potential impact on the RCNZ with their relationship of ecumenical fellowship with the CRCA as well as the theological training at the Reformed Theological College (RTC) in Melbourne were identified as matters that deserve specific attention by deputies. Deputies will monitor these issues. A positive testimony of our sister church is captured in the first ground of the decision of Synod Bunbury in connection with the RCNZ: “from the decisions of its most recent synod, and the ongoing contacts observed and reported by deputies, the RCNZ gives evidence of a love for the gospel, ongoing faithfulness to God’s Word, and a commitment to the Reformed faith, and no evidence has been presented of any deviation or unfaithfulness in this respect.” In many ways, our relationship with the RCNZ is growing and maturing in a natural way. There is one point, however, that deputies identified as requiring further thought and consideration, which is the matter of coordinating financial arrangements for retiring ministers. Deputies have been mandated to help overcome this obstacle, so also in this respect the bond with the RCNZ may be strengthened to the benefit of our churches.

### **Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)**

It was with great thankfulness to the Lord for the relationship that we enjoy with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa that Synod Bunbury welcomed Rev.P.Kgatle to give his address. In it he outlined both the blessings as well as the challenges faced by the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, and treated all those gathered to an interesting and informative slide show which highlighted the various congregations in the FRCSA. Some of the most pressing issues faced by the FRCSA remain the number of vacancies in the federation and the challenges of

calling ministers from abroad to serve in their churches. There are also ongoing deficiencies in theological education, but a recent arrangement with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary has been put in place to allow a form of distance education which has already proven helpful. There also remains the need for financial support. The provision of financial support for the FRCSA was included in the mandate for the deputies at Synod Baldivis 2015, and at Synod Bunbury the deputies were once again mandated “to coordinate responses to any requests for support from Deputies within the FRCSA (including either Needy Churches or Theological Training) and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate.” It is our hope and prayer that the Lord would continue to support and uphold the churches of the FRCSA in their various challenges.

### **First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)**

While contact with the First Evangelical Church of Singapore has taken place on an informal basis for a number of years, it was at Synod Baldivis 2015 that the offer of a sister church relationship was formally extended to the FERC. This offer was accepted by the FERC shortly afterwards, and in the inter-synodical period the interaction between our two federations has increased. The Lord has blessed the FERC with the establishment of a sister church relationship with the Covenant Grace Church of Penang (Malaysia), a small instituted church which is the result of years of mission work by the FERC. At the same time, there are also challenges associated with being a single-church federation. For this reason, they have sought support from our federation in requesting ministers from our churches to teach and preach in their midst. They also initiated contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches and submitted to Synod Dunnville 2016 a request for a sister church relationship, which was turned down by the Canadian Reformed Churches. Deputies were mandated to visit Singapore twice in the next three years, give timely reports concerning the FERC to the membership in the FRCA and

to offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible. We pray that the Lord would continue to bless the relationship with our sister church in Singapore.

### **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**

Classis North submitted to Synod a proposal to investigate the possibility of entering into fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Synod Bunbury decided to accede to this proposal, and mandated Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to establish contact with the OPC and report to the next synod with information about these churches. Deputies were also given the task to make a recommendation to the next synod concerning the feasibility of further ecclesiastical contact. It was also decided to send a delegate to the General Assembly of the OPC once in our inter-synodical period. A number of grounds were listed in support of these decisions: the history of this federation's strong stand for the inerrant truth of God's Word as well as its long-standing sister-church relationship with several of our sister churches, including the CanRC, the RCNZ and the KPCK. We will see whether it is the Lord's providential will that our church federations grow closer together now that this initial point of contact has been made.

### **Reformed Churches in Indonesia**

The FRCA have for some time enjoyed a sister church relationship with Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI). Synod Armadale 2012 noted that "this is now a larger federation as a result of the union in February 2012 of what were previously three federations, namely the federation of GGRI-NTT (our original sister church), the federation of churches in Papua, and the federation of churches in Kalimantan Barat" and mandated the deputies to report to the churches with more information concerning this larger federation with its three regional synods. At both Synod Baldivis 2015 as well as Synod Bunbury 2018 this

mandate was again renewed, since it was decided that not enough has been reported about the Reformed character of these federations. It was also made clear to the delegates of Synod that in the GGRI some troubling aspects in the area of church polity and liturgy have developed. These concerns were deemed sufficiently serious to require the addition of a new element to the mandate of the deputies: monitoring, evaluating and offering advice about these developments. Contact with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) was continued, while Synod also mandated deputies to establish official contact with a newly-formed federation in Indonesia, the GGRI-Timor. This is a federation that came into existence in 2016 and was the result of mission work sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville, Ontario. The relationship between these three federations is one that is not always easy for the deputies to work with, yet they were also given the task to encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor. One final element in connection with the GGRI discussed and debated by Synod Bunbury was the matter of theological training. A number of churches submitted letters to Synod recommending that deputies be tasked to find a local church to take over the support for the Theological College of the GGRI. Synod mandated deputies to continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, yet also gave the deputies the task of finding a local church to assume responsibility for the financial support of theological training for the GGRI following Synod 2021.

Synod Baldivis 2018 made the following decisions in connection with the workings of our own federation:

### **Australian Version of the Canadian *Book of Praise***

The topic of a potential Australian Book of Praise (or an Australian Version of the Canadian *Book of Praise*) is one that has surfaced at a number of synods preceding Synod Bunbury. The

Australian churches have consistently expressed their thankfulness for the Canadian *Book of Praise*, and have gratefully acknowledged a debt of gratitude to our sister church in this respect, but at the same time there has been an ongoing and increasing desire in the Free Reformed Churches in recent years for some form of our *Book of Praise*. Synod Baldivis gave the deputies a very challenging mandate to prepare a number of different versions of the Book of Praise for possible adoption. These included the use of either the NKJV or the ESV, none of the 19 additional hymns, all of the 19 additional hymns, or some number of them. It was clear from the variety of submissions to Synod Bunbury that this topic is one that very much holds the interest and attention of the churches. It was also clear to the delegates at Synod that coming to a common consensus on this issue would be challenging. Synod decided to adopt and produce an Australian version of the Canadian *Book of Praise* that includes the psalms and hymns of the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise*, including the 19 additional hymns, makes use of the ESV translation of the Bible and does not capitalize the personal pronouns for God. This song book will be called the “Australian Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter”, and will include the creeds, confessions and liturgy forms as found in the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise*, with adopted changes made by the FRCA, as well as the Australian Church Order. Synod Bunbury also created an Australian Standing Committee for the Book of Praise and gave the committee the task of making the practical arrangements necessary for the printing and distribution of this Book of Praise. Of particular note is the second ground listed under this decision: “there is merit in keeping the Australian version of the Book of Praise as similar as possible to the Canadian Book of Praise so that they can be used interchangeably by the members, and so that our book closely resembles that used by our Canadian sister churches. This is also in the interests of promoting the good stewardship of our financial and other resources.” This emphasises the fact that the



current 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise* can be used up until and beyond the time when the Australian version of the Book of Praise is ready for distribution.

### **Training for the Ministry – Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary**

Synod Bunbury approached the subject of training for the ministry as a topic separate from that mentioned below: an investigation in the possibility of establishing an Australian Theological Seminary. In connection with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, Synod made a number of decisions. These included accepting the invitation from the CRTS to participate in the work of the ad hoc committee that is investigating the possibility of pursuing distance education with the CRTS and requesting the churches to match the contributions of our Canadian brothers and sisters (\$90/pcm) in support of the CRTS. Synod also mandated the deputies to review the current system of funding for students with respect to its effectiveness in supporting and encouraging students as well as considering and implementing new ways to promote the study for the ministry among young men. In light of the current and anticipated vacancies in the FRCA and the CanRC, this is a crucial step. Further decisions were taken to investigate and report on the applicability of a ministry internship model and monitoring the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of the CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the minister and students participating in this program. Regardless of what future decisions may be taken by the FRCA in connection with the establishment of a federational or regional seminary, strong support for and appreciation of the CRTS remains a prominent feature in the relationship between the FRCA our sister churches in Canada. We praise God for the faithful, quality instruction given at the CRTS and pray that the Lord would continue to bless this institution.

### **Australian Theological Seminary**

Two members of the Deputies for Theological Training presented Synod Bunbury with a proposal in connection with the feasibility of an Australian Theological Seminary. One proposal recommended the establishment of an Australian Theological seminary in the short term, while the other recommended that Synod decide “that it is not feasible to establish a Free Reformed Theological Seminary at this time.” These proposals were the end product of the mandate these deputies received at Synod Baldivis 2015: “to investigate the feasibility of establishing an FRCA Theological Seminary, and report back to the next synod”. Much work was done by the deputies in fulfilling their mandate. A survey was presented to the churches with the results compiled and included in their report, while input from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary was solicited and formed part of the analysis. A number of submissions from the churches presented various arguments on both sides of the issue, while a letter from Classis Central recommended that Synod mandate deputies to develop a seminary in Perth, locate premises, seek two professors, start an accreditation process, and pursue other preparations for the immediate establishment of an Australian Theological College. After much deliberation, Synod decided not to pursue establishing an Australian Theological seminary at this time. A number of reasons were given for this decision, including the lack of broad support among the churches for this initiative, the understanding that Article 17 of the Church Order does not by definition require the establishment of a federational seminary, and acknowledgement that concerns expressed by the CRTS Board of Governors were significant. At the same time, Synod recognised that among the churches of our federation there exists some support for the idea of establishing an Australian theological seminary in the medium to long term. This recognition is in line with some of the submissions from the churches in which the potential for an

Australian Theological seminary was considered within the context of the broader Asian-Pacific community, including our sister churches in the region. For now the FRCA will, with thankfulness, continue to send students to the CRTS in Hamilton.

### **Miscellaneous Decisions**

Throughout the course of synod, a number of other decisions were taken:

- a) A decision was made to amend the Rules of Synod to allow for changes in the way the Acts of Synod are compiled. The decision seeks to improve the readability and transparency of the Acts of Synod for consistories and general readership in our churches and overseas. Early reaction to the Acts of Synod posted online has been very positive.
- b) Deputies were mandated to collate the decisions of Synod Bunbury 2018 as they relate to articles of the Church order, and to publish these decisions on the official web page of the FRCA. It was also decided to mandate the deputies to make all the published Acts of the Synods since the start of the FRCA available on the FRCA website, without password protection, in searchable pdf format.
- c) Classis Central submitted a proposal to synod recommending that Article 36 of the Church Order be changed to make an allowance for an office bearer other than the minister to chair consistory meetings. Synod saw the wisdom in this proposal and adopted it, meaning that the second sentence of Article 36 now reads: *"In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and as a rule be chaired by the minister."*

d) As the result of the adoption of the proposal from the church at Launceston, the decision was made to create a new deputyship of four members to update the look and functionality of the FRCA website, and to make it mobile friendly.

### **Closing of Synod**

Delegates at Synod Bunbury 2018 labored over the course of six memorable days with the expressed desire of honouring the LORD and serving Him and His churches with decisions that were in accordance with His Word. Despite a variety of opinions and viewpoints, the delegates were able to work in a productive and harmonious manner. All would confirm that they served in weakness, but that by the grace of God issues could be addressed, discussed and decided upon. These decisions were made with a continual desire to be truly Reformed, time and again judging by the standard of God's Word and the principles found therein. May the King of the church bless these decisions, to His glory and our benefit. We praise Him for lighting the path forward for us through these past days: *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:105).

For Synod Bunbury 2018,  
H.Alkema  
(vice-chairman)