

Press Release 2 of Synod Legana 2009

24th June 2009

Relations with Sister Churches Indonesia (ref: Acts [Article 57](#))

Synod decided to continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) in accordance with the adopted rules. Within the contact of this relationship, the FRCA will support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. We will also support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause. Funds will be made available to financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and to familiarize themselves with the Australian churches for three months.

With respect to the Calvin Churches (GGRC) synod decided to continue contact with the GGRC, and assess whether the GGRC still desires and values continued contact with the FRCA, and whether there is still value for the FRCA to have contact with the GGRC. Synod also gave deputies the mandate to encourage the GGRC to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, especially in view of the anticipated unification of the three federations of the GGRI.

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (ref: Acts Articles [58](#), [63](#))

In addition to the deputies report, there were a number of overtures and appeals with re-spect to this item. The main objection was against Art. 102, Decision 3 of the Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006, in which the previous synod "encouraged consistories to take note, and act on, Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ in regard to practical support and in-teraction where these are not restricted to those between sister churches only, e.g. applica-tion of membership from former members of the RCNZ, matters pertaining to the mission field and theological and Christian education." The appeals regarding this decision were not upheld by synod.

In its final decision synod confirmed what was said by Synod 2003, namely to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Synod noted that no substantial prog-ress has been made in the understanding between the FRCA and RCNZ on the matter of the importance of the impediment which prevents the FRCA from entering into a sister relationship with the RCNZ. Synod reaffirmed that the positive view of the FRCA towards the RCNZ has consequences in practical support and interaction, e.g. working together on the PNG mission field and supporting the theological training at the Bible College in PNG. Deputies to be appointed received the following mandate:

- a. to monitor the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA;
- b. to encourage the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA and be consequential in this relationship.
- c. to discuss with the RCNZ their decision made at Synod Hasting 2008, which says that the RCNZ "cannot accept that their sister-church relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to the FRCA accepting their offer of sister-church relations".
- d. to reassure the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them but the matter of their sister relationship with the CRCA remains an im-pediment

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (ref: Acts Articles [32](#), [41](#), [50](#), [51](#), [52](#), [67](#), [71](#))

Synod decided to take a comprehensive approach with regards to its decision about the sister church relationship with the RCN, instead of dealing separately and in detail with every agenda item relating to this sister church relationship. The reason to take this approach was:

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

After various rounds of discussion Synod decided amongst others:

1. To continue the sister church relations with the RCN under the adopted rules.
2. To exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern, 'spirit of the age' (point 3).

Some specific examples mentioned were:

- a. the ongoing concerns about the position of our Dutch sister churches on connecting the fourth commandment to the Lord's Day as a day of rest, as we confess in Q/A 103 of the HC.
- b. the concerns that the public comments of Dr. Harinck have not been retracted, even though he remains a professor in Kampen.
- c. The ongoing concerns regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel (refer art. 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott)

Deputies to be appointed were mandated to also discuss with their Dutch counterparts:

- a. The concerns expressed in the Report of Rev M Nap of which Synod Zwolle Zuid 2008 has pronounced to agree with the desire of further hermeneutic study.
- b. The way deputies Male/Female in the church formulate and discuss within the RCN the framework in which men and women serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks
- c. Our ongoing concerns regarding the RCN decisions on Divorce and Remarriage.
- d. The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns.
- e. The view of the RCN towards recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity.
- f. The need for the RCN to uphold the plain meaning of Scripture regarding Genesis 1-11, 8.

In addition deputies were mandated

1. To share with the RCN the observation that their current direction is placing tension on our sister church relationship.
2. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers in view of the continuing tensions within the RCN and between the RCN and the FRCA.

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (res) (ref: Acts Articles 72, 75)

Synod decided not to accept the RCNr request to acknowledge them as sister churches.

At the same time synod decided to continue contact with the RCN r and to encourage them to discuss the issues and struggles of concern with the RCN in humility and love.

Some of the grounds for this decision were:

Earlier on Synod had already decided to continue the FRCA's sister church relationship with the RCN(lib). Synod 2009 maintains the position of Synod 2006: "We hear in the voice of the brothers of the RCNr a strong desire to remain reformed".

Finally, synod also stated in its grounds, it is a serious matter to separate and this may never be done hastily nor without exhausting every effort to maintain the unity of the faith. The in-junction to remain one in the Lord (e.g. John 17 and Eph 4), sometimes even when serious problems arose as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible. The encouragements to discuss the issues and struggles need to continue because it is very difficult for the FRCA to determine whether all efforts to maintain the unity have been exhausted.