

Reconvening of Synod

Having adjourned on 19 July 2012, Synod Armadale was reconvened on 22 April 2013. The chairman invited the delegates and visitors to sing Ps 122, after which he read from Colossians 3:1-17, exhorting the assembly to bear this in mind when continuing its work, and then in prayer sought the blessing of the Lord. Also welcomed were two fraternal delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), Br. J.H. deJonge and Prof. K. Wezeman.

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN)

In view of the fact that FRCA synods and deputies had expressed various weighty concerns regarding the faithfulness of our sister churches the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN), Synod had earlier decided to address these concerns directly to the RCN synod in the form of an official admonition. The advisory committee mandated to formulate a draft of this document completed its work over the course of the intervening months, and this draft document was received and tabled for consideration, and subsequently amended and adopted. Included were the following statements of concern, which were elaborated on and substantiated in the letter, to be sent to De Generale Synode of Ede 2014.

1. The RCN tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the authority and plain meaning of Scripture for exegesis. This seriously questions the ability and willingness of the RCN to fully uphold the truth of Scripture.
2. The RCN tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. This approach conflicts with what we confess in Belgic Confession Art. 7 concerning the sufficiency of Holy Scripture.
3. Decisions of the RCN about marriage and divorce leave room for a subjective approach in understanding and applying the Biblical norms. It remains our concern that such an approach has not been explicitly excluded by your synods.
4. The study into whether Scripture allows for women to fill the offices of deacon, elder and minister fails to affirm the clear teaching of Scripture that the special offices within the Christian church are reserved for men.
5. The adoption of regulations that allow for the amalgamation of local RCN congregations with those of the NGK promotes a false ecumenism.
6. The past and continuing participation in the National Synod/Protestant Forum promotes a false ecumenism.
7. The RCN has accepted a proliferation of hymns some of which are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.

Sister relations with the RCN were continued, but Synod expressed sadness at the lack of progress to resolve our concerns to date, so that our relationship is strained. Synod also decided to advise local consistories to exercise due care with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCN, and to call the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing struggle for the truth within these churches. Deputies were given a mandate to continue to discuss matters of concern with deputies BBK and to report to the next synod.

Closing of Synod

On 24 April 2013, Synod Armadale could conclude its work. The next Synod is scheduled to be convened by the church of Baldivis in 2015, DV. As the delegates prepared to return to their local churches, it was with a real awareness that their work at synod was accomplished with weaknesses and shortcomings, but at the same time with an earnest desire that the decisions made would receive the approval of the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, and that by their labours His church-gathering work be promoted and His Name be honoured. Soli Deo Gloria.

On behalf of Synod Armadale,
R.E. Pot

(Approved 24 April 2013)