

ACTS

OF THE 1987 SYNOD

of the

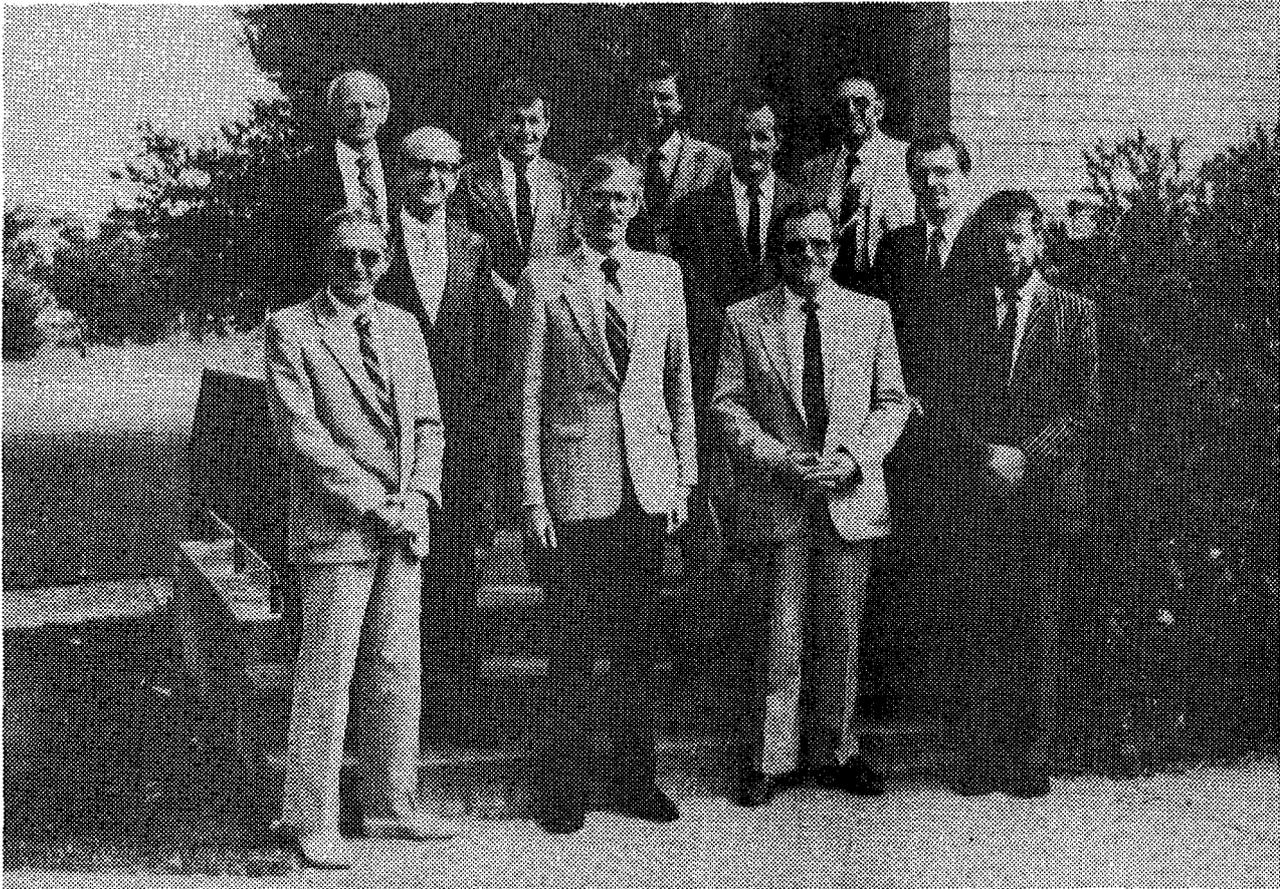
FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Albany, Western Australia

1987

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Delagates to the 1987 Synod

Front row: elder K.A. Wieske (2nd clerk), Reverend W. Huizinga (1st clerk), Reverend A. V. Veldman (chairman), Reverend K. Jonker (vice chairman).

Middle row: elder J. VanderRos, elder J. DeVos, Reverend C. Bouwman (adviser).

Top row: elder L 'tHart, elder P.O. Posthuma, elder H. Gunnink, elder J. Van Dijk.

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ACTS

OF THE 1987 SYNOD OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

CONVENED AT ALBANY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1987

FIRST SESSION - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1987

MORNING SESSION

ARTICLE 1

OPENING

On behalf of the convening church at Albany the Rev. A. Veldman calls the meeting to order. He requests that Psalm 133:1, 2 be sung. He opens the meeting in prayer, beseeching the Lord for His wisdom and indispensable blessing. He reads the letter of Christ to the church at Philadelphia, Revelation 3 : 7 - 13.

He addresses the meeting as follows:

"Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

"On behalf of the consistory of the convening church I welcome you to the opening of the fifteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. I will extend a special welcome to the brothers delegates. We are thankful that all of you have safely arrived in time. The church of Albany counts it a privilege to have you in our midst. We hope that you in turn will enjoy our hospitality.

"I realize that there will not be much time for you to relax at this nice spot on the southwest coast of Australia. After all, you have come to Albany to fulfil your mandate on behalf of the churches that have sent you. It will be a busy time for you. Many items are to be discussed.

"It is our sincere wish and prayer that these discussions may take place in a brotherly atmosphere, like we have just sung with the words of Psalm 133, and above all that the decisions will be taken in accordance with the infallible Word of God and in agreement with the confessional standards, which is the foundation of the church, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone.

"In his first letter to Timothy the apostle Paul writes that the church of the living God is a pillar and bulwark of the truth. In the portion of Scripture we have read this morning we come across this same word 'pillar'. Our glorified Saviour promises his church in Philadelphia: "He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God." We are to read this rich promise in close connection with the preceding verse of this letter, where Christ summons the church of Philadelphia: "Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown."

"These words point us to the enormous responsibility which the church has. It must keep the truth pure. In fact, this is the first mark of the true church. This is, however, not an easy task. After all, when the church fulfills this task faithfully it will be confronted with counter forces which are aiming to dilute this truth. Today's ecclesiastical climate gives us a clear picture of this battle.

"I have referred to the church as a pillar and bulwark of the truth. But Scripture also tells us that beside this bulwark of the truth another bulwark will be raised that also claims for itself the name of church. But it is not the church that has its anchor in heaven, but a church that expects everything from beneath. In this context one may give thought to today's ecumenism, a movement that has as its aim to become as Christians more and more one in the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is aiming for this unity at the cost of the truth. Thus we see around us an increase of apostasy.

"Over against this increasing apostasy we are called to hold fast what we have. We are called to keep the truth pure. Brothers delegates, that is also your task now you are called to deal with matters that pertain to the life and well-being of Christ's church here in Australia. You are to keep the truth pure. Don't forget this when you are discussing the items which are on the agenda of this synod. An enormous responsibility rests on your shoulders.

"Mentioning just a few things, I think of the report of deputies for contact with the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia as well as the report of Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad. What is the direction which this synod will take?

It is the task of the church to strive for unity with those who profess the same faith. With Article 27 Belgic Confession we confess that the church which Christ gathers through His Word and Spirit "is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world." Thus we have met brothers and sisters in the Lord elsewhere in Australia as well as overseas. And where possible we are obliged to work towards unity. Yet, you as delegates should continually keep in mind that this unity is never sought at the cost of the truth. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

"Brothers, you may feel small when you think of the responsibility which rests on your shoulders. Yet, you are not called to fulfil your mandate in own strength. You may have the firm assurance that the Father of lights will provide you with wisdom from above.

"In this context I will point you once again to the portion of Scripture we have read this morning. The summons we read in verse 11 is preceded by a promise. The glorified Saviour says to his church in Philadelphia: "I am coming soon." He is on his way to come to the help of the church, whilst He has also sent his Spirit who will guide His church in the truth. It is only in this way that we are able to hold fast what we have.

"Brothers delegates, the King of the church has called you to fulfil a responsible task. He expects from you that you fulfil this task in ready obedience, true humility and thankful service. Once again, I realize that it is not an easy mandate which you have to fulfil. Yet, be assured that during this time of synod many prayers will be sent up to our Father in heaven that He will guide you by His Holy Spirit and thus will provide you from above with wisdom and proper speech. May the Lord bless your labours in every respect.

"With these words I now declare the Fifteenth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened."

After this opening address Hymn 48:l, 4 are sung.

ARTICLE 2

EXAMINATION OF CREDENTIALS

The chairman appoints elder L. 't Hart and Rev. K. Jonker to examine the credentials. After they have scrutinized these and compared them with the attendance list, they report that all the churches are duly represented by primi delegates and that all the following delegates have proper credentials:

From the church at Albany: Rev. A. Veldman and elder L. 't Hart

From the church at Armadale: Rev. W. Huizinga and elder J. vanDyk

From the church at Byford: elder J. DeVos and elder H. Gunnink

From the church at Kelmscott: elder P.O. Posthuma and elder K.A. Wieske

From the church at Launceston: Rev. K. Jonker and elder J. VanderRos

The church at Launceston has given its delegates one instruction for the synod.

ARTICLE 3

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following officers are elected:

- Chairman : Rev. A. Veldman
- Vice-Chairman : Rev. K. Jonker
- First Clerk : Rev. W. Huizinga
- Second Clerk : Elder K.A. Wieske

ARTICLE 4

CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD

The convener invites the moderamen to take their respective places. The chairman, Rev. A. Veldman, declares the synod to be constituted. He thanks the delegates for the confidence placed in the moderamen, and expresses the hope that this confidence will not be misplaced.

ARTICLE 5

AGREEMENT WITH THE THREE FORMS OF UNITY

The chairman requests the delegates to stand to testify to their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates comply.

ARTICLE 6

GREETINGS FROM ABROAD

A letter of greetings from the sister-churches, The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, is read. They express the hope that the Triune God may bless this assembly.

A letter of greetings from the sister-churches, De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, is read. They wish the synod God's wisdom and guidance.

A letter of greeting from the sister-churches, The Canadian Reformed Churches, is read. They hope that the deliberations and decisions may benefit our mutual relations and the upbuilding of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

ARTICLE 7

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourns the synod to allow the moderamen time to propose arrangements and procedures for synod.

AFTERNOON SESSION - SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 5 1987

ARTICLE 8

REOPENING AND REV. C. BOUWMAN

Synod is reopened by the singing of Psalm 25:2

A Letter from Byford, informing synod about its reasons for not sending Rev. C. Bouwman as primus delegate but as an alternate delegate, is read. The moderamen proposes that Rev. C. Bouwman be admitted as a member of synod in an advisory capacity. This is accepted.

ARTICLE 9

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

After some additions the final agenda is adopted as follows:

AGENDA FOR SYNOD 1987

- 1 Opening
- 2 Examination of credentials
- 3 Election of officers
- 4 Constitution of Synod

- 5 Agreement with the Three Form of Unity
- 6 Adoption of the agenda
- 7 Adoption of procedures to be followed
- 8 Correspondence received from:
 - 1 FRC Albany re Art. 50, Acts of the 1985 Synod
 - 2 FRC Albany re Art. 32, Acts of the 1985 Synod
 - 3 FRC Armadale re the Transfer of Mission Assets to the Church of Albany, see Art. 107, Acts of the 1983 Synod
 - 4 FRC Armadale re Extending Pulpit Exchange arrangements
 - 5 FRC Byford re Art. 74, Acts of the 1985 Synod
 - 6 FRC Byford re Appointment of Deputies
 - 7 FRC Byford re Dates of Synod
 - 8 FRC Kelmscott re Art. 45 and 46, Acts of the 1983 Synod
 - 9 FRC Launceston re Art. 67, Acts of the 1985 Synod
 - 10 Appeal and requests of Rev. W. Huizinga re Hymn Section of the Book of Praise
 - 11 Br. K.A. Wieske re Art. 89, Acts of the 1985 Synod
 - 12 Br. and Sr. L. Woonings sr. re Bible Translations
 - 13 Letter of br. and sr. R. Evans re Bible Translations
 - 14 FRC Armadale - Overture re Bible Translations
 - 15 Letter of Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia
 - 16 FRC Kelmscott re Institution of a New Congregation
 - 17 Letter of Rev. G. van Rongen re Item 8.2.
 - 18 Report of FRC Albany re Colloquium Doctum for Rev. C. Bouwman
 - 19 Report of FRC Launceston re Dismissal of Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur
 - 20 Report of the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds Appointed by the 1985 I.C.R.C.
 - 21 Letter of P.W. Dekker re P.C.E.A.
 - 22 Letter of P.W. Dekker re E.P.C.I. and F.C.S. and R.P.C.T.
 - 23 Letter of J. Numan re P.C.E.A.
 - 24 Appeal of Rev. G. van Rongen
 - 25 Report of FRC of Kelmscott re Colloquium Doctum for Rev. W. Huizinga
 - 26 Letter from Byford re Kelmscott's request Linguistic Revision of the Church Order
- 9 Instructions
- 10 Reports:
 - 1 Church visitations
 - 2 FRC Armadale re Publishing the Decisions Pertaining to the Referral of the Task of the Classis to Classis Church or Synod
 - 3 FRC Kelmscott re Archives and Library of Synod
 - 4 FRC Byford re Supervision of Archives and Library of Synod
 - 5 Treasurer of Synods
 - 6 Deputies for Revision of the Rules for Synods
 - 7 a Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

- b Supplementary report
- 8 Deputies for Contact with Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- 9 Deputies for the Church Book
- 10 Deputies re Bible Translations
- 11 Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the Word
- 12 Deputies for Study of proposed Art. 26, C.O., on Evangelism
- 13 Deputies for a Linguistic Revision of the Adopted Texts of the Regulations for the Financial Aid of Students and Rules for Students Support Fund, see Art. 93, Acts of the 1985 Synod
- 14 Deputies ad Arts. 48 and 76 C.O.
- 15 FRC Launceston re Audit of Synods' Treasury
- 16 FRC Launceston re Audit of the Books of Deputies ad Arts. 18 and 19 C.O.
- 17 Report ad Art. 39, Acts, 1985 Synod of Launceston
- 18 Report ad Art. 66, Church Order
- 11 Determination of Percentages for Sharing Synodical Expenditures
- 12 Appointment of Deputies
- 13 Appointment of the Convening Church, Time and Place for the next Synod
- 14 Question Period ad Art. 41 C.O.
- 15 Personal Question Period
- 16 Adoption of the Acts of Synod
- 17 Approval of the Press Release
- 18 Censure ad Art. 47 C.O.
- 19 Closing

ARTICLE 10

ARRANGEMENTS

A MEETING TIMES

accepted as follows:

Morning Sessions 9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. (Coffee 10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.)

Lunch 12:30 p.m.

Afternoon Sessions 2:00 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. (Tea 3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.)

Supper 5:30 p.m.

Evening Sessions 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. (Coffee 8:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.)

On Saturday there will be no evening session.

B RULES FOR SYNOD

- 1 There will be no smoking during the sessions and in the buildings on the premises.
- 2 Incoming correspondence received after this declaration is made will not be dealt with unless the synod agrees for exceptional reasons to permit a late submission.
- 3 Daily closing of the synod will be conducted by delegates in alphabetical order.
- 4 Deputies are invited to attend the meetings of the advisory committees as well as the full sessions when their reports are being discussed.
- 5 Proposals and amendments shall be submitted in writing.

6 The acts of each day will be adopted, as much as possible, in the full session on the following day.

C ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The following advisory committees are appointed:

Committee 1:

- Rev. W. Huizinga, convener
- Elder L. 't Hart, clerk
- Elder H. Gunnink
- Elder P.O. Postuhma

It is assigned agenda-items: 8.3, 9, 15, 20, 21-23, 10.7a, 7b, 8, 9

Committee 2:

- Rev. K. Jonker, convener
- Elder J. VanderRos, clerk
- Elder J. VanDyk
- (Rev. C. Bouwman)

It is assigned agenda-items: 8.1, 2, 5-8, 11, 16, 17, 26, 10.2, 3, 4, 13

Committee 3:

- Rev. A. Veldman, convener
- Elder K.A. Wieske, clerk
- Elder J. DeVos

It is assigned agenda-items: 8.4, 10, 12-14, 24, 10.5, 6, 10-12, 15-18

If one committee is finished its workload, it should help another committee which is not finished.

ARTICLE 11

ADJOURNMENT

In order to give the advisory committees an opportunity to organize themselves the full session is interrupted for a little while.

ARTICLE 12

REOPENING AND ADJOURNMENT

After the chairman reopens synod, the advisory committees inform the synod which items of the agenda they hope to deal with first and which may serve at the full session on Monday evening.

Rev. K. Jonker requests that Psalm 84:1 be sung. He closes the session with prayer.

SECOND SESSION - MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1987

MORNING SESSION

ARTICLE 13

REOPENING

The synod is reopened by the singing of Psalm 103:4,7. The chairman reads Rev. 1:9-20 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

ARTICLE 14

AGREEMENT WITH THREE FORMS OF UNITY - C. BOUWMAN

Since the Rev. C. Bouwman has also been made (an advisory) member of synod, the chairman asks him to rise to demonstrate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. He complies with this request.

ARTICLE 15

FRATERNAL GREETINGS

The PCEA via a letter, which is read, sends its fraternal greetings.

Fraternal greetings will be sent to the general synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, a synod which will be convened shortly.

Fraternal greetings will also be sent to the "De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland", expressing our best wishes for an enjoyable and informative "schooldag" as well as God's blessings on the work of the Theological Seminary in Kampen.

ARTICLE 16

APPENDICES

It is decided that all the reports of the deputies will be added as appendices to the Acts of synod. It will be decided what to do with the reports concerning Relations with Churches Abroad and the PCEA later on.

AFTERNOON SESSION

ARTICLE 17

METHOD OF REPORTING

Committee 3 proposes that the reports of the advisory committees be made in the 'Canadian' manner, using observation(s), consideration(s), and recommendation(s). After a discussion, synod decides to adopt this proposal.

The advisory committees meet for the remainder of the afternoon.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 18

REOPENING

Synod is reopened by the singing of Psalm 111:3,5. Guests attending the full session are welcomed.

ARTICLE 19

TRANSFER OF MISSION ASSETS

Committee 1 presents:

A Material - Agenda item 8.3

- 1 Report re the Transfer of Mission Assets

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod decided that the deputies (the church at Armadale) for transferring the mission assets be requested to report to this 1987 synod about such transfer of assets to Albany for the work in Papua New Guinea.
- 2 The deputies report that
 - a all property, except the Mission Hall in Pinjarra, was disposed of prior to March, 1985. Since it was impossible to dispose of the hall, it has been rented out;
 - b an amount of \$53,500 was passed on to the Mission Treasurer of Albany;
 - c a balance of \$472.83 was retained by the church at Armadale to maintain the Mission Hall in Pinjarra;
 - d all books and records are stored in the archives in Armadale;
 - e copies of an audit of the financial records have been passed on to the church at Albany.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The deputies have carried out their mandate.
- 2 Since mission matters are now not dealt with by the synod but by Albany and its cooperating churches, it would be proper that any further communication, e.g. about the Mission Hall, be carried out between Armadale and Albany.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod takes note of the activity of the church at Armadale and thanks it for the work done.
- 2 Synod recommends that any further communication about mission assets be done directly between Armadale and Albany.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 20

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.15

- 1 Letter from the Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The synod of these churches sends its greetings to our synod and seeks from us information on our churches' policy on contact with other reformed churches.
- 2 It includes a list of its official contacts with other churches.
- 3 It informs us that it is also seeking information from the PCEA, and that it is considering an application for membership in the ICRC.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 A request for information should be thankfully complied with. This is the more so since we might meet these churches in the ICRC, and since they are also seeking contact with the PCEA.
- 2 As there may be need for extended communication, it would be best to appoint and to instruct deputies to comply with this request for information.
- 3 Deputies for contact with the PCEA could handle this request.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod decides to instruct the deputies for contact with the PCEA to comply with the request for information from the EPCA.
- 2 If the EPCA seeks membership in the ICRC, synod instructs these deputies to investigate the EPCA and provide the deputies responsible for the ICRC with information about these churches.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 21

DRAFT REPORT ON THE ECUMENICAL CREEDS FOR THE ICRC

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda 8.20.

- 1 Letter from Rev. G. van Rongen with a draft report on the ecumenical creeds for the ICRC

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Rev. G. van Rongen sends a letter which includes his draft report on the ecumenical creeds, which report will serve at the next meeting of the ICRC.
- 2 Reports for the ICRC must reach the member-churches two years before the next conference.
- 3 This report was received on the eve of this synod and consequently the deputies responsible for the ICRC did not have an opportunity to report to synod on it.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 This draft report will serve, hopefully, at the 1989 ICRC.
- 2 A report adopted by the ICRC would be sent to the member-churches for their consideration.
- 3 This draft-report should be dealt with by the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (including the ICRC).

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod decides to receive this draft-report for information with thanks.
- 2 Synod decides to pass on this draft-report to the proper deputies for study.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 22

COLLOQUIUM DOCTUM FOR REV. W. HUIZINGA

A report from the church at Kelmescott about the favourable outcome of a colloquium doctum for the Rev. W. Huizinga is read and noted with thanks. This classis-church, after ascertaining that all the necessary documents were in order, approved of the call extended to Rev. Huizinga.

ARTICLE 23

COLLOQUIUM DOCTUM FOR REV. C. BOUWMAN

A report from the church at Albany about the favourable outcome of the colloquium doctum for the Rev. C. Bouwman is read and noted with thanks. Albany as classis-church, after ascertaining that all the required documents were in order, approved the call extended to Rev. C. Bouwman.

ARTICLE 24

DISMISSAL OF REV. DR. S.G. HUR

A report from the church at Launceston is read about the dismissal of the Rev. S.G. Hur from the bond of the Free Reformed Churches. He could be honourably dismissed from his duties within the bond of churches and commended to the Presbyterian Churches in Korea for labour in their Theological Seminary in Busan. This letter is read and synod noted with thanks Rev. Hur's labours in our midst.

ARTICLE 25

REPORT AD ART. 66, C.O.

The Church at Launceston, as deputies, report that they did not need to call a special day of prayer. This letter is read and noted with thanks.

ARTICLE 26

COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND ADJOURNMENT

Owing to the unanimity of synod, the business is finished at 7.30 p.m., bringing the full session to an end. Synod continues by having the advisory committees meet.

At 9.30 p.m. Psalm 127:1 is sung and Rev. C. Bouwman closes synod for the day by thanksgiving prayer.

THIRD SESSION - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1987

MORNING AND AFTERNOON SESSIONS

ARTICLE 27

REOPENING

Synod reopens with the singing of Psalm 48:3. The chairman reads Zech.2:1-5, and leads in an opening prayer. All delegates are present.

The letter of greetings to be sent to De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland is proposed and read. Synod approves it.

The advisory committees meet for the remainder of the morning and in the afternoon.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 28

REOPENING AND ADOPTION OF ACTS

Synod reopens with the singing of Psalm 119:13. The chairman welcomes all delegates and guests.

Acts, Arts. 18-26, are adopted.

ARTICLE 29

RULES FOR SYNODS

Committee 3 presents its proposal on agenda-item 10.6, the rules for synods. After two rounds of discussion the committee decides to take it back so that it can incorporate the comments made.

ARTICLE 30

BOUNDARIES

Committee 2 reports on its proposal on agenda-item 8.1, about boundaries for the care of scattered members. After one round of discussion the committee takes its proposal back so that it can incorporate the comments made.

ARTICLE 31

COPYRIGHT

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda items 8.2 and 8.17

- 1 Letter from the Church of Albany re copyright arrangements for publication of the Church Order and the decisions of Synods. This letter proposes that the arrangements be revised.
- 2 Letter from Rev. G. van Rongen on this subject.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Church of Albany is perturbed over the contents of a letter by Rev. G. van Rongen quoted in the Acts of the 1985 Synod, art.32, in which he refers to his copyright on the publication of the decisions of synods.

- 2 Rev. G. van Rongen outlines his involvement in this subject, and expresses his willingness to continue this important work, requesting the privilege to receive an early copy of the Acts of the 1987 Synod. He also relates how the Church of Armadale, charged with publishing the past decisions of the 1983 Synod (Acts Art.112 (II.a.III)), had asked him to take translation and selection of the material in hand.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The concern of the Church of Albany may not have arisen, if it would have contacted Rev. G. van Rongen before it put its comment and proposal to synod, an action of which he was not aware.
- 2 The personal involvement of Rev. G. van Rongen in the publication of the Church Order with the decisions of synods, as it evolved under the auspices of the Church of Armadale since 1983, has been implicitly accepted by 1985 Synod (Acts Art.81).
- 3 Both translation and selection of the material, as presented to the churches in this publication, are a matter of personal responsibility.
- 4 It is clear that the publication referred to in Art.81 re Art.79, C.O., Conclusion 4 of the Acts of 1985 Synod should be compared with the publication of a continuing collection of "standing decisions" of synods of the Dutch sister churches undertaken by Rev. H. Bouma of Assen.
- 5 The 1987 Synod is unable to "revise Art.32 Synod 1985" - as requested by the Church of Albany - as it was adopted by that synod.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 that Rev G. van Rongen correctly holds the copyright to the publication entitled "The Church Order of Dordrecht as revised by the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia with the standing decisions made by their respective synods and a synopsis of all their decisions".
- 2 to grant to Rev. G. van Rongen the privilege of receiving an early copy of the Acts of 1987 Synod.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 32

PULPIT EXCHANGES

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.4

- 1 Letter of F.R.C. of Armadale proposing pulpit exchanges.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The church of Armadale proposes that synod adopt an extended pulpit exchange arrangement where the Albany and Launceston churches are visited by ministers from congregations in the Perth metropolitan area in W.A. twice annually.
- 2 Moreover, that the minister from Launceston visit the W.A. churches annually, with the proviso that this arrangement be interrupted during a synod year.
- 3 This proposal is intended to help offset the relative isolation of the two congregations in question.
- 4 Church visitation to the two congregations concerned should be synchronised with the proposed arrangements.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 As bond of churches we have a responsibility towards each other's well-being, particularly to those churches who reside in geographic isolation.
- 2 The proposed arrangement is a matter that concerns the churches in common, as indicated in Article 30 of the Church Order.

- 3 Any costs associated with the implementation of the proposed arrangement should be borne by the bond of churches.
- 4 To minimise the costs referred to above, church-visits should be conducted simultaneously with the visit(s) proposed.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 To adopt the proposals as submitted by the church of Armadale, as detailed in the accompanying roster.
- 2 That the Church of Albany be appointed to monitor the implementation of the roster attached.
- 3 That the costs incurred in the implementation of these arrangements be shared by the Bond of Churches in accordance with the cost-sharing formula adopted by this synod.
- 4 That church visitation be synchronised with the visits wherever possible.

ROSTER FOR PULPIT EXCHANGE FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF	1988	1989	1990
KELMSCOTT	ALBANY 1 Sunday	LAUNCESTON 2 Sundays	ALBANY 1 Sunday
ARMADALE	LAUNCESTON 2 Sundays	ALBANY 1 Sunday	LAUNCESTON 2 Sundays
BYFORD	ALBANY 1 Sunday	LAUNCESTON 2 Sundays	ALBANY 1 Sunday
LAUNCESTON	ARMADALE/BYFORD 1 Sunday	KELMSCOTT 1 Sunday	ARMADALE/BYFORD 1 Sunday
	ALBANY 1 Sunday	ALBANY 1 Sunday	ALBANY 1 Sunday
ALBANY	LAUNCESTON 2 Sundays	ARMADALE/ KELMSCOTT 1 Sunday	LAUNCESTON 2 Sundays
		BYFORD/KELMSCOTT 1 Sunday	

Notes:

- 1 The actual dates to be arranged by the minister concerned, the minister who arranges church-visits and the consistories.
- 2 If a church is vacant, the minister of another church will be asked to fill the appointment.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 33

(LINGUISTIC) REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda items 8.8 and 8.26

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Church of Kelmscott requests synod to appoint deputies with the mandate to
 - a Examine the Revised Church Order of the F.R.C.A. as adopted in draft form by the 1985 Synod with respect to its linguistic content.
 - b The Church of Kelmscott mentions as grounds
 - 1 The C.O. is an extremely important document in the life of our churches, which purports to honour the Scriptural injunction that "all things should be done decently and in good order" (1 Cor.14:40);
 - 2 The final draft of the Revised Church order of the F.R.C.A. was not able to be approved by the 1983 Synod, nor was it by any subsequent synod;
 - 3 in Kelmscott's view, the C.O. is in many ways linguistically unsound, both in matters of syntax and meaning. Kelmscott provides examples, some of which are:
 - a art.5 - "The calling takes place, under invocation of the Lord, by the consistory..." The word "invocation" appears to be used as a verb and cannot be used in this sentence structure.
 - b art.13 - "...rightfully remains a minister of the Word". The article deals with a minister who "is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office", and it intends to convey that he will retain the honour and title of a minister.
 - c art.23 - the word "proportional" has the meaning of "corresponding". The word "proportionate" must be used in this context.
 - c The Church of Byford suggests that "should synod accede to the request for a linguistic revision, deputies be further instructed to study the Canadian Church Order and to adopt its formulation as much as possible", and mentions as grounds:
 - 1 Should the formulation apply to the Australian situation, much unnecessary work will be saved;
 - 2 In many ways the Canadian situation is similar to the Australian one. Consequently it is beneficial, where possible, to make use of each other's work;
 - 3 The Canadian Church Order is in everyone's possession as it is included in the Book of Praise.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod did not discuss a final draft of the C.O. That would imply that the 1985 Synod considered the work of 1983 re C.O. as finalized.
- 2 Though some of the examples re translation mentioned by Kelmscott may be somewhat forced, it is evident that there is much room for improvement of the language of the C.O. The current text displays many dutchisms.
- 3 The Canadian sister churches have subjected their C.O. to linguistic correction. It is desirable that we use their wording as far as possible.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 to appoint deputies to scrutinize and improve the language use of the C.O.
- 2 to charge the deputies to make use of the Canadian text in so far as possible
- 3 to charge the deputies to report to next synod.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 34

LETTER OF LAUNCESTON RE ART.67 OF THE 1985 ACTS

Committee 1 presents its proposal about agenda-item 8.9, Launceston's appeal against Art. 67 of the Acts of the 1985 Synod. One round of discussion takes place before the closing of the evening session. This item is deferred till the next day.

ARTICLE 35

ADJOURNMENT

After Hymn 63.1 is sung, br. J. DeVos closes synod for the day with thanksgiving prayer.

FOURTH SESSION - WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1987

MORNING AND AFTERNOON SESSIONS

ARTICLE 36

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 32:1. The chairman reads Zechariah 3 and then leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

ARTICLE 37

VOTING - ART.32, C.O.

A discussion re art. 32, C.O. about voting takes place. It is proposed and adopted that, according to art. 32, delegates should refrain from voting if a matter concerns themselves personally or if it concerns a matter of their own local churches.

ARTICLE 38

ADJOURNMENT

To allow the advisory committees time to prepare for the evening session the synod is adjourned.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 39

REOPENING

Hymn 11:1,2 are sung to reopen synod. The chairman welcomes all the delegates and the many guests present.

ARTICLE 40

ADOPTION OF ACTS

Arts. 27-35 of the Acts are adopted.

ARTICLE 41

LETTER OF LAUNCESTON RE ART.67 OF THE 1985 ACTS

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.9

- 1 Letter of Launceston re art.67 of the Acts of the 1985 Synod requesting art.67 of the Acts of the 1985 Synod be rescinded.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Launceston requests synod to rescind the declaration made in art. 67, Acts of the 1985 Synod because it was made and issued contrary to Article 33 of the Church Order. Moreover, no proposal from the minor assemblies was tabled to amend the guidelines recorded in the Acts of the 1983 Synod (Art.96, Observation B). That these guidelines were used by previous synods proves that this matter was finished, and should not have been reintroduced unless amendment was desired.

- 2 Launceston requests this rescinding of art.67 because the declaration was not proposed by a minor assembly but by a member of synod.
- 3 Launceston asks synod to rescind art.67 because it conflicts with Art.30, C.O. Since points 2 and 3 of the declaration in art.67 were new, it should have arisen from the churches and been prepared in the minor assemblies.
- 4 The rules of synod (art.3.b, page 25 of the Acts of the 1980 Synod) stipulate that such new items must be placed on the agenda eight weeks before the synod. Since this was not done, the declaration is illegal and should be rescinded.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The Acts of the 1983 Synod, art.96, deal with the PCEA. In its observations it outlines the guidelines used in the past for the RECOGNITION of true and faithful churches. The Acts of the 1985 Synod, art.67, also deals with the PCEA. It records a declaration about the CONSEQUENCES of recognizing churches as true and faithful. In order to decide whether the synod was ready to recognize the PCEA as true and faithful churches, it first considered the practical results of such a possible recognition of the PCEA. Thus there is an obvious difference between the observation of 1983 in art.96 and the declaration made in 1985 in art.67. One cannot thus conclude that this matter was finished in 1983.
- 2 Art.67 records a declaration of synod, which was made in the context of the discussion about the PCEA. This shows that it is related to the synod's task to come to a decision about possible recognition of the PCEA. Thus it was legitimately proposed by a member of the synod in the discharge of synod's task.
- 3 Art.67 of the Acts of the 1985 Synod deals with the contact with the PCEA. Admittedly, the declaration is couched in general terms, but this was unavoidable, since what applied to the PCEA would also apply to other churches. So this declaration must be read in the context of the contacts with the PCEA. As such it is not a new matter, since the contacts with the PCEA had been in progress for some time.
- 4 The rule that agenda items must be in eight weeks before the convening of synod is irrelevant here because it concerned deliberation on an item which was properly on the agenda of synod.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides not to accede to the request of the church at Launceston.
ADOPTED

ARTICLE 42

LIBRARY & ARCHIVES OF SYNODS

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.3

- 1 Letter from Church of Kelmscott re archives and library of synod.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Church of Kelmscott forwarded to the churches a report re the archives and library of synod on 29.4.1987.
- 2 Included in the report are references to
 - a transfer of material to the archivist's residence, making the purchase of a filing cabinet superfluous,
 - b efforts to trace the missing minute book of closed sessions 1964 to 1980. As yet, this book has not been found,
 - c instructions contained in Acts 1985, art.95/3 have been carried out,
 - d the Church of Byford inspected the items on 25.4.1987 and found them in order.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 to note the report;
- 2 to express its appreciation for the work done by the Church of Kelmscott and the archivist on behalf of the bond of churches;
- 3 to discharge deputies;
- 4 to appoint new deputies, and to request them to continue the search for the missing item.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 43

INSPECTION OF LIBRARY & ARCHIVES OF SYNODS

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.4

- 1 Letter from the Church of Byford reporting on its inspection of the archives and library.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Church of Byford reports that library and archives have been filed, catalogued and recorded in a commendable fashion.
- 2 The material has been relocated to the archivist's residence.
- 3 The missing minutes of closed sessions of synods from 1964 to 1980 have not been found.
- 4 Some library items appear to be missing.
- 5 The Church of Byford proposes that:
 - a Synod express its appreciation for the manner in which Kelmscott has cared for archives and library;
 - b an independent accession register be drawn up and kept up-to-date.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 to note the report by the Church of Byford;
- 2 to instruct new Deputies to draw up an independent accession register for the contents of archives and library;
- 3 to thank the Church of Byford and to discharge them of the supervision of synods' archives and library.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 44

DELETED HYMNS

A discussion of the proposal of committee 3 regarding agenda- item 8.9 (re the deleted hymns) is begun. Two rounds of discussion take place. The committee takes the proposal back so that they can incorporate the comments made.

ARTICLE 45

ADJOURNMENT

Psalm 27:2 is sung. Br. H. Gunnink closes synod for the day with prayer.

FIFTH SESSION - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1987

MORNING SESSION

ARTICLE 46

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Hymn 36:2,4. The chairman reads Zechariah 4 and then leads in prayer. He welcomes all present.

ARTICLE 47

ADJOURNMENT

Synod is adjourned to allow advisory committees to meet.

AFTERNOON SESSION

ARTICLE 48

REOPENING

Hymn 40:1,2 are sung to reopen synod. The chairman welcomes all the delegates and especially the children of the Albany John Calvin School.

ARTICLE 49

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (GENERAL)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, Sections A, B, C.

- 1 The Report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad: Sections A,B,C (Mandate, Meetings, and General Activities)

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The deputies reprinted their mandate as recorded in the Acts of the 1985 Synod of Launceston (pp.69-71).
- 2 The deputies report that they have met on six occasions
- 3 The deputies report about their mandate to draft rules for correspondence with sister-churches (Acts of the 1983 Synod of Kelmescott, Acts, Art.112.5.a). Deputies reprinted the existing rules as found in Art.26 of the Acts of the 1970 Synod, but, owing to their ongoing consultation with sister-churches about this, were not able yet to draft revised rules. They have consulted with the sister-churches and followed discussions of the sister-churches on this point. An appendix to their report includes the proposals of the Dutch deputies on this matter for the 1987 General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord. A Supplementary Report included the proposed rules for the 1987 Synod of Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika.
- 4 The deputies have followed the discussion which the sister-churches have about the matter of rules for temporary contact. Decisions of and proposals to the sister-churches are included in the report. The decision of the 1985 Synod, Art.74.II, is reprinted but no draft rules for temporary conduct are recommended. Instead the deputies request a renewed mandate to consult with the sister-churches and thus to come to a recommendation for the next synod.

- 5 The deputies received declarations for visiting ministers of sister-churches. Declarations were given for our ministers who were visiting sister- churches abroad. In some cases, contrary to the adopted rules, no such declarations were received for visiting ministers who conducted worship services in our churches.
- 6 Rev. G. van Rongen prepared a booklet introducing the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. These are to be used for recent and future contacts abroad.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The deputies have been diligent in meeting and fulfilling their mandate. Their extensive report, which testifies to this, should be preserved as a valuable document for our churches and our sister- churches abroad.
- 2 The deputies, owing to their ongoing consultation with sister-churches about the rules for correspondence (cf. the Supplementary Report about the sister- churches in South Africa, whose deputies have proposed such revised rules), have not finished their mandate to draft (revised) rules for relations with sister-churches, and they thus should be given a renewed mandate for this.
- 3 The deputies, owing to ongoing consultation with sister- churches on rules for temporary contact, have not been able to finish their mandate to draft such rules. They should be given a renewed mandate to do this as soon as possible.
- 4 The matter of declarations presented some problems since this rule was not always kept. It will be good to re-state this rule, namely, that:
 - a ministers visiting sister-churches abroad request our deputies for such a declaration that they are ministers in good standing;
 - b the deputies send such a declaration to the relevant deputies abroad so that they can publish it;
 - c the deputies give the visiting minister copies of this declaration;
 - d and, vice versa, the same be required of visiting ministers from sister-churches abroad.
- 5 The Introductory Booklet may need supplementation so that it can remain a useful tool in our international contacts.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To thank the deputies for the extensive and well- printed report, and to include their report, appendix and supplementary report as an appendix to the Acts. Synod discharges the deputies.
- 2 To renew the mandate that the deputies, after the consultation with the sister-churches is finished, to draft rules for relations with churches abroad.
- 3 To renew the mandate that the deputies, after their consultation with the sister-churches is finished, draft rules for temporary contact with churches abroad, keeping Art. 74.II, Acts of the 1985 Synod in mind.
- 4 To instruct the deputies to stress and to clarify to the churches the requirement of declarations for visiting ministers (cf. Cons. 4 above).
- 5 To thank the deputies, especially the Rev. G. van Rongen, for the Introductory Booklet about the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. If (a) supplementary sheet(s) is (are) necessary, these should be made so that this booklet can be well used in our international contacts.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 50

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CANADA)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda items 10.7a & b

- 1 The Report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad: Section D - Canada.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Fraternal greetings were sent in a response to the invitation to attend the 1986 General Synod of Burlington of The Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 2 The deputies of The Canadian Reformed Churches responded to a request of our deputies to forward information about the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Churches of Korea.
- 3 The deputies offer much information from the Acts of the 1986 General Synod of The Canadian Reformed Churches. They report about The Theological College, the BOOK OF PRAISE, the Church Order, contact with other churches (the OPC) and relations with sister-churches (see Section D of the Report in the Appendix).
- 4 The deputies do not include a report of the decisions about the appeals against Articles 148, 165, 166 of the Acts of the 1983 General Synod of The Canadian Reformed Churches. The answer to these appeals is extensive and reveals how The Canadian Reformed Churches have unanimously defended and adhered to the reformed confessions on doctrinal matters.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The rules of church correspondence have been fruitfully put to work in the relations with The Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 2 It can be confidently stated that the Acts of the 1986 General Synod of The Canadian Reformed Churches reveal that these sister-churches maintain the Three Forms of Unity and the reformed church polity.

D RECOMMENDATION

- 1 To continue the relations as sister-churches with The Canadian Reformed Churches.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 51

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (THE NETHERLANDS)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, Section F (The Netherlands)

- 1 The Report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad: Section F, dealing with the sister-churches in The Netherlands.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The rules for church correspondence have been maintained in the exercise of these relations.
- 2 The deputies give a useful summary of the important decisions of the Acts of the 1984/85 General Synod of Heemse (see the appendix).
- 3 The deputies give a summary of the report of the Dutch deputies for the 1987 General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord. In an appendix to their report our deputies give the proposal of the Dutch deputies, concerning rules for entering into and maintaining relations with churches abroad (see the appendix to the Acts). Both these proposals will be dealt with by the General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord after its summer recess.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Our deputies have fulfilled their mandate.

- 2 From the correspondence with De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and from their Acts of the 1984/85 General Synod of Heemse we may gratefully conclude that these sister-churches are faithful to God's Word as confessed in Three Forms of Unity and as practised with the Church Order.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work done.
- 2 Synod decides to continue the relation of sister-churches with De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the adopted rules.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 52

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (KOREA)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b

- 1 The Report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad: Section E - Korea.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The deputies received invitations to attend the 1985 and 1986 General Assemblies of The Presbyterian Church in Korea. The deputies responded with fraternal greetings.
- 2 Only the minutes of the 1985 General Assembly were received, but with no English summary as was done in the past. Rev. S.G. Hur studied these minutes and reported orally to the deputies that they contained nothing contrary to the Scripture and the confessions.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The report of deputies is very scanty and shows that the relations with The Presbyterian Church in Korea have not been fruitful.
- 2 In order to practise relations as sister-churches according to the adopted rules it is imperative that there be good and understandable correspondence. Other sister-churches have specified that the (summary of the) Acts or Minutes be delivered to sister-churches in the language used in their correspondence.
- 3 The Acts of the 1985 Synod, Art.74.VIII, records a mandate to evaluate the two chapters added to the Westminster Confession by The Presbyterian Church in Korea. This mandate is not mentioned in the report of the deputies, but should still be done.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To express disappointment that the relations with The Presbyterian Church in Korea have been frustrated by a lack of information and by language barriers.
- 2 To urge the deputies to make every possible effort to make the relations with The Presbyterian Church in Korea fruitful so that we can adhere to the adopted rules for sister-church relations.
- 3 To make arrangements with The Presbyterian Church in Korea that the minutes of their general assemblies be sent in an English summary.
- 4 To renew the mandate to the deputies that they evaluate the two additional chapters of the Westminster Confession of The Presbyterian Church in Korea.
- 5 To continue the relations with The Presbyterian Church in Korea as sister-churches, according to the adopted rules.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 53

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (SOUTH AFRICA)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, Section H.

- 1 The report of the deputies, section H, dealing with the correspondence with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The deputies were instructed to maintain the relations as sister-churches with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika according to the adopted rules.
- 2 Exchange of Acts of synods took place according to the adopted rules. The Acts of the 1984 and 1986 Synods of Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika were received and the 1986 Acts were scrutinized.
- 3 The deputies give a useful summary of the highlights from the 1986 Acts, including information on such things as their Church-Service Book, church-life, contact with other churches in South-Africa, and contact with foreign churches (see the deputies' report which is an appendix in the Acts).
- 4 The 1986 Synod unanimously decided to apply for membership in the ICRC.
- 5 One important item is their intention to send an appeal to the 'Dopperkerken' (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, GKSA) in order to remove impediments to church unity. Two such impediments are GKSA's membership in the RES and its correspondence with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (formerly the 'buitenverbanders'). Their 1987 Synod in Oct. will deal with this appeal.
- 6 In a supplementary report the deputies give information about the report of the South-African deputies to their 1987 Synod to be convened in October (see appendix).
- 7 The deputies recommend to continue the relations as sister-churches with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Relations with our South-African sister-churches have been fruitfully exercised in accordance with the adopted rules.
- 2 The correspondence with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika and the Acts from their 1986 Synod reveal that these sister-churches are faithful to the Scriptures as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and as practised with the use of the Church Order.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work done.
- 2 Synod decides to continue the relations as sister-churches with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 54

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (INDONESIA)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, Section G.

- 1 The Report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad: Section G, about our relations with The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The deputies were instructed to continue the relations with the Indonesian sister-churches according to the adopted rules.
- 2 The 1985 Synod instructed the deputies to visit the first (1985) Synod of The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu.
- 3 The deputies were not able to comply with the instruction to send a delegate to the 1985 Synod of The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu. Instead, fraternal greetings were sent.
- 4 A provisional agenda for the 1985 Synod was received and it is highlighted in the report of the deputies. To date no information was received about decisions made at the 1985 Synod.
- 5 The deputies propose that they be authorized to send two delegates to the 1987 Synod of The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu, to be convened November 3-6, 1987.
- 6 The deputies also propose to continue the correspondence with The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu according to the adopted rules.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The report about these sister-churches is short and scanty. Acts of their 1985 Synod still had not been received, though this could be expected according to the rules for correspondence.
- 2 Seeing that the Dutch sister-churches have sent Rev. Klamer and Rev. Boersema to Indonesia, one could expect a better exercise of these relations. The deputies should request, as do the sister-churches in the Netherlands and in South-Africa, a summary of the Acts in the language used in correspondence.
- 3 Nothing has been reported to cause us to conclude that The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu have deviated from the Word of God as confessed in the reformed confessions.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To thank the deputies for their work done.
- 2 To instruct the deputies to do everything possible to ensure that the exercise of these relations according to the adopted rules is fruitful (see considerations 2 & 3).
- 3 To continue the relations as sister-churches with The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu according to the adopted rules.
- 4 To authorize the deputies to send two delegates to the 1987 Synod of The Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 55

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourns synod so that the advisory committees can meet.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 56

REOPENING

Psalm 135:1,10 are sung to reopen synod. The chairman welcomes all delegates and guests.

ARTICLE 57

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The Acts, Articles 36-45 are adopted.

ARTICLE 58

RULES FOR SYNOD

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.6

- 1 Report from deputies
- 2 Letters from all the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Deputies have submitted a revised set of rules for synods to the churches and sought their responses.
- 2 It was requested that the churches indicate whether they could agree to the proposed rules so that, if possible, they could be accepted by mutual agreement prior to the 1987 Synod.
- 3 Letters were received from the churches of Armadale, Byford and Kelmscott indicating agreement with the rules as proposed by deputies.
- 4 The church at Launceston submitted a letter claiming that the proposed rules showed signs of 'over regulation' and that 'changes of substance' have been proposed.
- 5 A letter from the church at Albany indicating support for Launceston's proposal that the matter be referred to the 1987 Synod for its consideration.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Since all churches - except Launceston - have indicated their agreement with the revised rules for synods as proposed by the deputies, synod has only to deal with those objections and/or amendments lodged by Launceston.
- 2 There is no evidence to support the claims advanced by Launceston that deputies have proposed changes of substance, or that their revision shows signs of over-regulation or that the responsibilities of the convening church and synods has been detracted from.
- 3 When the deputies speak of the 'provisional agenda' in their revision, it is not consistently clear what is meant by the term.
- 4 That the admissibility of agenda items is not determined by the opening session of synod, but that the agenda items on the provisional agenda are allocated to the currently used advisory committees who, after examining them, advise synod of their deliberations after which synod decides their admissibility.

Therefore, the reference to 'provisional agendas' in the proposed rules is irrelevant.

- 5 The proposed rules 11 and 12 are already adequately in the Church Order.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 To thank deputies for their work and discharge them.
- 2 To adopt the proposed rules as submitted by the deputies, with the following amendments:
 - a that all words after "date" in Article 3(c) item (2) be deleted.
 - b that all words after "Rules" in Article 3(c) item (3) be deleted.
 - c that Article 3(d) be deleted entirely.

- d that the phrase "including those of any committee synod may appoint" in Article 4(a) be deleted.
 - e that Article 5 be deleted entirely.
 - f that the words "if possible" in Article 8(b) be deleted.
 - g that the last sentence in Article 10(b) be amended to read: "Supplementary reports and late reports dealing with matters which took place after the reports' due date shall also be submitted to the convening church in writing for inclusion on the draft agenda."
 - h that Article 10(c) be deleted.
 - i that Articles 11 and 12 be deleted.
 - j that the introductory sentence to Article 13 be amended to read: "As long as Classes have not been formed, the approbation of calls shall be done by the classis church, which shall report to the following synod."
 - k that the phrase "Declaration of Departure" in Article 13(3) and 13(4) be amended to read: "Certificate of Dismissal".
 - l that the word "Register" in Article 16(2) be replaced with the word "List".
 - m that Article 16(6) be amended to read: "Adoption of the Agenda."
 - n that the following item be added to Article 16: "Report by Classis Church." This item should be included after number 9. This will necessitate that all items after the present number ten will have to be adjusted upwards by one
 - o wherever the rules speak of "Synod meeting(s)" it should be amended to read "Synod(s)"
- 3 That the amended rules for synods be printed as an appendix to the Acts of Synod.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 59

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

A discussion about the proposal of committee 3 takes place. The committee withdraws the proposal so that it can incorporate the comments made.

ARTICLE 60

BOUNDARIES

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.1

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Church of Albany requests synod to determine the various areas under the care of the churches. Albany thought the decision of the 1985 Synod, Acts Art.50, to be vague. ("What is South East - South West - North of W.A." etc.)
- 2 A new congregation is expected to be instituted in December, 1987, in the Kelmscott area.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 It is within the province of synod to determine which church is responsible for which area of our country (art. 39 C.O.).
- 2 The 1983 Synod decided (Acts, Art.57) in relation to church members who reside away from their congregations:

That each of the churches maintain contact with those of its members who decide to reside in areas which place them outside the effective fellowship of the communion of saints.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides that

- 1 New boundaries of areas under the care of the churches are to be as follows:
 - Albany: South of the line Busselton - Katanning - Esperance, including those towns South Australia.
 - Armadale: Queensland.
 - Byford: South of the line starting from Mandurah to Northam following the Great Eastern Highway to the line Bunbury - Katanning - Esperance, including the towns of Mandurah and Northam.
 - Kelmescott: Northern Territory
 - New Congregation : Western Australia North of the Great Eastern Highway.
 - Launceston: New South Wales, A.C.T., Victoria, Tasmania.
- 2 Before the institution of the new congregation becomes fact, the Church of Kelmescott is responsible for the area allocated to the new congregation.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 61

DATES OF SYNODS

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.7

- 1 A letter from the Church of Byford concerning the timing of synods.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Byford proposes "to incorporate in the rules the stipulation that synods be conducted during the school holiday periods".
- 2 Byford suggests that a larger proportion of elders are teachers these days; that during school holiday periods more people are able to visit synod's sessions; that less disruption to catechism classes and youth club meetings would occur if synods are held in holiday periods.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Art. 45 C.O. stipulates that synod itself shall determine the time of the next synod.
- 2 No synod should have the right to impose upon the churches that a certain class of elders is enabled to be delegated to synod in preference to other elders.
- 3 School holiday periods cannot be proven to attract larger attendances at the open sessions, held during evenings. The opposite could be true where groups of families are away on holidays.
- 4 Catechism classes can be conducted anytime by elders whereas elders are not involved in youth club meetings.
- 5 School holiday times vary between the states.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides not to accept the proposal by the Church of Byford.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 62

REQUEST OF BYFORD

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.5

- 1 Letter from the Church of Byford re decision of the 1985 Synod, Acts, Art.74.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Byford requests synod "to ensure that the acts of this synod clearly record whether churches are sister churches or are in a different state of correspondence".
- 2 Byford illustrates the background to its problem by reference to Art.74.VI of the Acts of the Synod of 1985: "to continue correspondence with the Gereja- gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timur- Sabu".

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The request concerns the Acts of the Synod of 1987.
- 2 All the churches abroad mentioned in Art.74 of Acts of 1985 are sister churches. The "adopted Rules" are referred to.
- 3 The same terminology "to continue the correspondence" has been applied to Die Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (item VII).

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides to take note of the letter from the Church of Byford.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 63

ARTS. 73, 74, CHURCH ORDER

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.11

- 1 Letter from br. K.A. Wieske re the text of Art.73 and 74 Church Order.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Br. K.A. Wieske requests synod to replace the word "consent" in art. 73 and 74 by the word "advice", denoting the role of classis in matters of discipline;
- 2 The 1985 Synod, in response to a letter from the Church of Kelmscott, gave a number of considerations on this issue and decided to take no further action on it.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 There is little, if any, distinction in the ecclesiastical meaning of both terms;
- 2 Br. K.A. Wieske has not adduced new reasons to change the adopted text of the Church Order from "consent" to "advice".

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides not to grant br. K.A. Wieske's request.

The following AMENDMENT is ADOPTED:

Replace considerations and recommendation by:

C CONSIDERATION

- 1 Synod has decided to appoint deputies for the linguistic revision of the Church Order. This submission should be passed on to them.

D RECOMMENDATION

- 1 Synod decides to pass on this submission to the appointed deputies for the linguistic revision of the Church Order.

The amended proposal is ADOPTED.

ARTICLE 64

INSTITUTION OF A NEW (KELMSCOTT) CONGREGATION

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.16

- 1 The letter from the Church of Kelmscott.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The Church of Kelmscott informs synod of the formation and institution of a new congregation on December 1, 1987.
- 2 Kelmscott requests this to be noted, so that the necessary arrangements can be made to incorporate this new congregation within the bond of churches, and so that a counsellor be appointed.

C CONSIDERATION

- 1 The appointment of a counsellor by a synod can only be done on request by the church concerned (art.43 C.O.).

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod takes note of the intended institution of a new congregation in the Kelmscott area.
- 2 Synod also notes that, as it is unable to appoint a counsellor, the new congregation will have to make the relevant request to the ecclesiastical body indicated by art.43 C.O.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 65

PUBLICATION OF CHANGES IN CHURCH ORDER

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.2

- 1 Free Reformed Church Armadale re publishing the decisions pertaining to the referral of the task of the classis to classis church or synod.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod instructed the Church of Armadale to publish the changes of the Church Order as recorded in its Acts art.81 in a suitable form for insertion in the printed booklet of the Church Order of Dordrecht.
- 2 Armadale published this booklet in April 1986.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The published booklet by Armadale contains most of the changes of the 1985 Synod, art.81. In one instance the change decided is not taken up, i.e.
in art.5 C.O.- In the sentence commencing with - The examination both of doctrine and life.....; here "classis church" should be changed to "synod".

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 to take note of Armadale's publication;
- 2 that two of the changes still have to be inserted;
- 3 that this change will be made in the publication of the C.O. after the linguistic scrutiny of the C.O.
- 4 to thank Deputies for their work.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 66

METHOD OF APPOINTING DEPUTIES

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.6

- 1 Letter from the Church of Byford re appointment of deputies by synod.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Byford notes that deputies are generally appointed during an "open session" of synod, usually with a large audience in the last session.
- 2 Byford proposes to have deputies appointed in a closed session, because of the importance of their positions and because of the possibility to lodge objections against a certain nomination as "such arguments should be presented only in closed session".

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 All appointments of deputies by synods of the F.R.C.A. have been made in open sessions since the 1954 Synod, although not always in the final sessions.
- 2 Such appointments are made upon nomination by the moderamen and commonly reflect the abilities of the persons concerned without reference to arguments of a personal nature.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides not to accede to the request by the Church of Byford.

Br. K.A. Wieske moves and Br. J. DeVos seconds a counter-proposal. A general discussion about both proposals ensues.

The proposal of the advisory committee is DEFEATED.

The counter-proposal is ADOPTED. It reads as follows:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.6

- 1 Letter from the church of Byford re appointment deputies by synod.
- 2 Committee 2 proposal.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Byford notes that deputies are generally appointed during an open session of synod, usually with a large audience in the last session.
- 2 Byford notes that appointments made in open sessions cannot be objected to as arguments in opposition to proposed appointments could very well be of a personal nature. Such arguments should only be presented in closed sessions.
- 3 Committee 2 indicates that all appointments of deputies by synods of the FRCA have been made in open sessions since the Synod of 1954, although not always in the final session.
- 4 Committee 2 advances that such appointments are made upon nomination by the moderamen, and commonly reflect the abilities of the persons concerned without reference to arguments of a personal nature.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The practise of the appointment of deputies in open sessions orginated in the Netherlands (a large confederation of churches), where people do not know each other as well as we, being a much smaller confederation of churches, do.
- 2 The development of a convention does not elevate it to the standard of a norm.
- 3 Byford has a valid point in asserting that objections against proposed appointments - regardless of whether they are of a personal nature - should be presented only in closed sessions.
- 4 Openess and frankness should be encouraged in the important work of appointing deputies as they are positions of responsibility within the bond of churches.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides to accede to request of the church at Byford.

ARTICLE 67

ADJOURNMENT

Psalm 121:1,4 are sung. Br. L. 't Hart closes synod for the day with prayer.

SIXTH SESSION - FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1987

MORNING SESSION

ARTICLE 68

REOPENING

Synod is reopened by the singing of Psalm 56:4,5, whereafter the chairman reads Zechariah 8:1-8 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

ARTICLE 69

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman advises the delegates about the open sessions for the afternoon and evening, and then adjourns the synod so that the advisory committees can meet.

AFTERNOON SESSION

ARTICLE 70

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 107:1. All delegates are present.

ARTICLE 71

RULES FOR AID AD ARTS. 18 & 19, C.O.

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.13

- 1 Report br. J. Eikelboom re changes in the adopted texts of the Regulations for the Financial Aid of Students (art.18 & 19 C.O.) and the Rules for Students' Support Fund.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Art. 93 of Acts of the 1985 Synod records that the committee charged with examining the linguistic aspects of the Rules for Student Support (ref.Acts Art.82) could not complete its work.
- 2 There is no record of any such committee having been appointed by the 1985 Synod.
- 3 That br. J. Eikelboom has been appointed to arrange a linguistic scrutiny of the Rules for Student Support may be deduced from the report he sent to the churches in August 1985, and to a note he sent to the synod reporting that "these revised texts were adopted by mutual consent between the churches" in May, 1987.

C RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 to note that the revised texts of the Regulations for the Financial Aid to Students and the Rules for Students' Support Fund have been adopted;
- 2 to thank br. J. Eikelboom for his work

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 72

EXAMINING THE LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCES

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.17

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Article 39, of the Acts of the 1985 Synod indicates that a committee was appointed to examine the linguistic aspects of the ecclesiastical ordinances as they relate to:
 - a restructured Subscription Forms for Ministers, Elders and Deacons;
 - b translated Ecclesiastical Ordinances.
- 2 Article 93, of the Acts of the 1985 Synod indicates that the committee could not complete its work, and that synod decided that these matters are to be finalised by the churches by the end of 1985 by mutual agreement.

C CONSIDERATION

- 1 The committee has failed to complete its work.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides that deputies be appointed to finalise these matters and report to next synod.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 73

AUDIT OF SYNOD'S TREASURY

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.15

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The church of Launceston reports that the books and records of the synodical treasurer have been audited and found in good order.
- 2 It was found that the financial records of synods are not always well provided with supporting documentation from the treasurers of the respective churches.
- 3 The report draws attention to the need for ongoing cash flow between synods in view of pulpit exchange arrangements and travel by deputies.
- 4 They report that it would be of benefit if a general fund were established. A financial levy could be imposed upon the churches after synod is closed, as this would allow the establishment of the desired fund.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Although the manner in which past deputies have submitted their accounts to the synodical treasurer has worked satisfactorily, the rising costs demand a general fund from which these expenses can be paid.
- 2 Such a fund can be created by the imposition of a general levy.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 Every synod shall adopt a budget, including all the costs which are to be borne by the churches together, from the date of the opening of synod until the next synod;

This budget shall include:

- a cost of the synod
 - b costs re pulpit exchange
 - c any costs incurred by the deputies in the discharge of their mandate
- 2 To instruct the synodical treasurer to levy the churches an amount determined by dividing the total budget amount among the churches on the basis of the cost-sharing formula.
 - 3 To include this decision as an appendix to Rules for Synods.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 74

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Committee 3 comes with a new, amended proposal concerning the training for the ministry. After one round of discussion the committee withdraws its proposal so that it can incorporate the comments made.

ARTICLE 75

AUDIT OF THE BOOKS AD ARTS. 18 & 19, C.O.

A favourable audit of the books of the treasurer for the fund ad arts. 18 & 19, C.O. is read. Synod takes thankful note of this audit.

ARTICLE 76

DELETED HYMNS

The proposal of committee 3 re the appeal and requests of W. Huizinga about the deleted hymns is tabled. A motion duly moved and seconded, declaring this submission inadmissible on the grounds of art. 33, C.O. is defeated.

ARTICLE 77

ADJOURNMENT

In order to give the delegates time to prepare for the evening session, the chairman adjourns the synod.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 78

REOPENING

Synod reopens with the singing of Psalm 87, all stanzas. A hearty welcome is extended to all delegates and to the many guests.

ARTICLE 79

Churches abroad, Relations with; Ireland, art. 79 RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (IRELAND)

Committee 1 (majority) presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda items 10.7 & 8.22 (Ireland)

- 1 Deputies' Report re EPCI
- 2 /Letter from P.W. Dekker

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod gave Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad the following mandate with respect to the E.P.C.I.:
 - a "to thoroughly investigate ...the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland..., and submit comprehensive reports to the churches and to the next synod, paying particular attention to the marks of the true church and the question of church government."
 - b "to maintain contact with these churches at the present level." (Acts 1985, Art. 43).
- 2 Deputies served synod with a report. This report mentions o.a.:
 - a The EPCI, in its history, has demonstrated a desire to remain faithful to the Word of the Lord.
 - b This small federation of churches has a sister church relation with The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands on the basis of the mutually accepted rules for a sister-church relation.
 - c in 1979, the EPCI terminated its membership in the RES, because of this organization's tolerant attitude toward liberal ideas and practices.
 - d The EPCI lives in an unstable political environment, resulting in some subtle persecution by their countrymen.
 - e The EPCI has adopted an elaborate Church Order called 'The Code'. In this Code we read:
"The Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the supreme standard of the Church." (4.1)
 - f This Code further records:
"The subordinate standards of our Church are the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; we believe these subordinate standards, as amended in this sub-section, accurately summarise, interpret and apply the teaching of the Scriptures on important points of doctrine and worship." (4.2)
 - g The EPCI adheres to the traditional presbyterian church polity.
 - h As to the marks of the true church, deputies report:
 - 1 "Our committee was not in the position to extend their investigations to the 'local scene'. Therefore we cannot report on e.g. the church services and in particular on the preaching of God's Word. However, more than once deputies of the Dutch sister churches visited the EPCI and reported favourably." (6.3)
 - 2 because of God's covenantal promise, baptism is administered according to the Word of God to children of members who have made a credible profession of faith in Christ. (5.2.2)
 - 3 with regards to the third mark of the church, the Code stipulates that:
"The elders - including the minister or interim-moderator (in our Church Order: the counsellor appointed to assist a vacant church) comprise the Session, which has to do with the whole spiritual oversight of the congregation, including the admission to, or exclusion from, the sacraments of the church, and church discipline (in necessary cases in conjunction with the presbytery)." (5.3.2)

With regards to office bearers, they, according to The Code, are required to renew annually their commitment to Scripture and Confession. (5.1.2)

Further, the presbytery has the responsibility to:

"Try charges against ministers, ruling elders, deacons, licentiates and missionaries and, if necessary, administer censure."(5.3.9.10)

- i Deputies feel that, because the F.C.R.A. acknowledged The Presbyterian Churches of Korea as a sister church, "it is not necessary to make an evaluation of the confessional standards of the EPCI." (6.1)
 - j Deputies are of the opinion that the EPCI has tried to safeguard itself from the danger of hierarchy. (6.2)
 - k Deputies conclude that the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott was correct in its conclusion that the EPCI is a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - l Deputies propose to enter into a relationship of sister churches with the EPCI. At the same time, deputies see a difficulty in proposing such a relationship with the EPCI on the basis of existing rules because these rules are strange to the EPCI. Nevertheless, deputies note that the EPCI "has decided to accept these rules as far as they are practicable for their relationship with the Dutch sister churches." Deputies suggest that the FRCA do the same, "in the meantime waiting for the result of the special study of the existing rules undertaken by our Dutch sister churches."
- 3 Br. P.W. Dekker, in his submission to synod:
- a wonders "on what basis non-communicant members are allowed to have their children baptized. Are they able to answer yes to questions similar to the ones we ask of parents at the baptism? Are non-communicant members also admitted to the Lord's table?"
 - b expresses his wish that "a little more information" regarding the marks of the true church had been presented.
 - c feels that "the power of The presbytery, to "examine, approve, ordain and/or install ruling elders," is an appalling form of hierarchy."
- Consequently, br. P.W. Dekker concludes that "these churches haven't been shown to have the marks of the true church," and therefore disagrees with the deputies recommendation to reaffirm the EPCI as true and faithful, and so establish a sister-church relationship.

C CONSIDERATIONS

Synod considers:

- 1 The 1983 Synod "confirmed" that the EPCI "are faithful churches of the Lord." (Art.75).
- 2 The 1985 Synod determined "The decisions recorded in Article 75 of the Acts of the 1983 Synod were taken with undue haste and without due consideration."
Despite this judgment, the 1985 Synod did not feel that the decision of 1983 should be undone, since: "Synod can only rescind a decision of a previous Synod when that decision is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order (Article 31 of the Church Order)" (Art.43 Ground 1).
Instead, the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad were instructed as per mandate quoted in observation 1 above.
- 3 In the report submitted by the deputies, there is much that gives reason for great thankfulness for the faithfulness found in these Irish churches.
- 4 On the question of church government, deputies have compiled a comprehensive report.
Although one cannot say that the presbyterian form of church government is fully sound in every point, their general conclusion that "the government of this church is in the hands of those who "have been appointed by (the Head of the Church)" is accurate.

To state that "the power of the presbytery to 'examine, approve, ordain and/or install ruling elders is "an appalling form of hierarchy" is an overstatement. It should not be forgotten that elders in the presbyterian system are elders for life. Consequently, this ordination to office has a more far-reaching impact on a congregation than ordination of term elders. Ordination of elders- for-life is more akin to our ordination of ministers - which cannot take place without the cooperation and consent of classis and deputies of synod.

- 5 On the matter of "paying particular attention to the marks of the true church," deputies have been less diligent. Their report contains no concise discussion on this matter, with as consequence that information about the marks of the church must be gleaned from various parts of the report.
- 6 Deputies' statement that "we cannot report on e.g. the church services in particular on the preaching of God's Word" does not assist synod in determining whether or not the decision of the 1983 Synod (to declare the EPCI as faithful church of Jesus Christ) was correct or not. Deputies add that "deputies of the Dutch sister churches visited the EPCI and reported favourably." Yet synod is not served much with this observation because the 1985 Synod stipulated that:

"While synod ought to consider the reports of our sister churches it is on weak grounds when its decision is based on such information without prior evaluation of the material in the deputies' report."
(Art.43, Ground 4)
- 7 Re baptism: deputies quote from the 'Code' that children of persons who have made a credible profession of faith in Christ are baptized because of God's covenantal promise, and received as infant members of the congregation, (5.2.1 & 5.2.2) So it would appear from The Code that non- communicant members are not allowed to have their children baptized.
- 8 Re Lord's supper: the deputies report is negligible. Since the Lord's supper is part of the second mark of the true church, this oversight does not assist synod. This is the more so since the practice of fencing the Lord's supper table has arisen in contacts with other presbyterian churches (both in Australia and with our sister churches in Canada).
- 9 According to the adopted Westminster Standards and the 'Code' of the EPCI, church discipline is to be carried out over the congregation by the session according to the Word of God. Deputies tell us nothing about whether this intention is indeed practiced.
- 10 Given that deputies have not paid particular attention in their report to the marks of the true church, synod has not received adequate grounds to judge whether the hasty decision of the 1983 Synod was correct or not. Consequently, it is premature for the 1987 Synod to alter the present contact of the FRCA with the EPCI.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 to thank deputies for the work and discharge them from their mandate.
- 2 that the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad appointed by the 1987 Synod be instructed to investigate whether indeed the EPCI displays the marks of the true church (per Art.29 B.C.) and submit a report on this subject to the churches and to the next synod.

To carry out their mandate synod authorizes the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to send two delegates to Ireland.
- 3 until the next synod has dealt with the above mentioned study, contact with the EPCI shall be maintained at the present level.

Committee 1 (minority) presents:

A MATERIAL (same as in the majority report)

B OBSERVATIONS (same as in the majority report)

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The 1983 Synod confirmed that The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland is a faithful church of the Lord (Art. 75).
- 2 The 1985 Synod determined that "the decision recorded in ... Article 75 was taken with undue haste and without due consideration" (art.43). In spite of this judgment the 1985 Synod did not undo the decision of 1983 since it did not have grounds to show that it was in conflict with the Bible or the Church Order (cf. first ground for art.43 of the 1985 Acts). Instead, synod gave the deputies instructions which have been observed above.
- 3 The report of the deputies about the history of The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland demonstrates their obedience to the command of the Lord to separate themselves from apostate churches.
- 4 The report gives reason for thankfulness in that they have terminated their membership in the RES because of the fact that apostate churches are tolerated in that organization, which tolerance causes disunity of faith.
- 5 These churches have demonstrated a willingness to seek unity of faith with true and faithful churches. They have enjoyed full sister-church relations with De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland for some years. Also, they have become member-churches of the ICRC.
- 6 The report gives good attention to the form of government in The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Good orderly and biblical principles are followed for the government of the church. Jesus Christ is certainly recognized as the only Head of the church.
- 7 Br. P.W. Dekker's contention that the form of government shows "an appalling form of hierarchy" is incorrect. Since there is equality between the ruling elders and teaching elders (both are elected and ordained for life), it is normal that the presbytery examines such candidates and approves them for ordination, as is done for candidates for the ministry by our classes. Moreover, congregational members nominate such brothers for office; the local sessions train future elders; and the congregation elects elders to be.
- 8 As for the marks of the true church, the deputies did not adhere closely to their mandate. Nowhere do they give a specified and orderly evaluation of these marks. Instead, such an evaluation has to be gleaned from various points of the report. This is a lamentable deficiency of the report, as br. Dekker also rightly points out.
- 9 Concerning the marks of the church the following can be considered:
 - a THE PREACHING OF THE WORD
 - 1 Though the deputies could not report on this personally they do refer to the favourable report on this by the deputies of the Dutch sister-churches. However, the 1985 Synod (in ground 4 of art.43) required that deputies evaluate such reports of sister-churches. This is impossible unless the deputies be authorized to visit The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.
 - 2 The report records the ordination vows which ministers of the Word must undergo. In addition, annual subscription to the confessions of the church without any reservations insures that the ministers preach and teach only what is according to the Word of God. This is very important for the evaluation of the mark of the true preaching of the Word.
 - 3 The churches examine students of theology and annually check up on their progress. Students must undergo three presbytery examinations. Also, 6 months of practical experience are required before a man enters the ministry. These provisions help to ensure the purity of preached doctrine.
 - 4 Students are usually trained at a faithful seminary such as the one at Edinburgh. This is important for the faithfulness in the ministry of the Word.

b SCRIPTURAL ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS

- 1 The 'Code' states that membership in the church and admission to sacraments is done by the session and by means of a credible profession of faith. This is in accordance with reformed, biblical principles.
- 2 It is reason for great thankfulness that The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland stipulates that "children of such members (who have made a credible profession of faith) - though (the children are) not yet admitted to full communion - are, because of God's covenantal promise, received as infant members of the congregation in the sacrament of baptism" (5.2.2 of the report).
- 3 As these Irish churches maintain the Westminster Confession of Faith we can ascertain that the supervision of the Lord's table is done by the elders of the church (confer 5.3.2 of the report where these duties of the local session are recorded). This confession specifies that the Lord's supper is only for worthy partakers and not for ignorant and ungodly persons (Chapter XXIX. VIII). The session is therefore responsible for the admission to the table and the exclusion from the sacraments by church discipline (cf.5.3.2. of the report).
- 4 There is thankfully no mention in the report of adherents being allowed to participate in the Lord's supper.
- 5 Personal and direct evaluation of this mark can only be done by a visit to these Irish churches.

c CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- 1 The report gives convincing information about the exercise of church discipline as this is required by their confession, (WC, chapter XXX).
 - 2 From the extracts from the 'Code' we consider that the session practises the spiritual oversight over the whole congregation; that the minister pays special attention to the supervision over the believers and their children; and that the ruling elders pay heed to the ministry of Word (cf.5.1.4.5 and 5.3.2).
 - 3 We can satisfy ourselves about these marks most meaningfully by a visit to these churches.
- 10 There is therefore a basis for reconfirming the decision of the 1983 Synod to regard these churches as faithful.
- 11 The deficiency of the deputies' report is that no first-hand evaluation is made of the marks of the church. Though there is enough information to reconfirm the decision of the 1983 Synod, it would be good to satisfy ourselves on this point, and to help to cement relations by a visit to these churches. This might possibly give us the confidence in 1989, D.V., to offer a sister- church relation to them.
- 12 Since recognition of the churches should now be possible, but some questions remain, it would be best to move ahead in stages in our contact with The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland. To do this the relation of temporary ecclesiastical contact, as decided upon by the 1985 Synod (art.74.II), could be implemented. The rules for such contact, as used by our sister- churches in Canada could be adopted.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work done, but registers its disappointment that the deputies did not adhere to their mandate with respect to the marks of the true church.
- 2 Synod decides to reconfirm the decision of the 1983 Synod that The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland are faithful churches of our Lord.
- 3 Synod decides to offer to The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland the relation of temporary conduct with the following rules:
 - a To invite delegates to each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly or synod but no vote.
 - b To exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, and to solicit comments on these documents.

- c To be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching full correspondence (cf. the 1986 Acts of the Canadian Reformed churches, art. 125).
- 4 Synod decides that this temporary relation will be reassessed at the 1989 Synod.
- 5 Synod decides to instruct the deputies to send two delegates to The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland for a visit. This could be done in conjunction with the 1989 ICRC.

A discussion ensues on both the majority and minority proposals. Deputies, Rev. G. van Rongen and Rev. K. Bruning, are also invited to answer questions and to defend their report at the end of the rounds of discussion.

A vote takes place.

The MAJORITY proposal is DEFEATED

The MINORITY proposal is ADOPTED

ARTICLE 80

ADJOURNMENT

Hymn 1B is sung in closing. Rev. W. Huizinga closes the synod for the day with prayer.

SEVENTH SESSION - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1987

MORNING SESSION

ARTICLE 81

REOPENING

Synod is reopened by the singing of Psalm 126:1,2. The chairman reads Psalm 126, and leads in prayer. All the

delegates and guests are welcomed.

ARTICLE 82

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (SCOTLAND)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, (Section J) & 8.22

- 1 The report of deputies
- 2 The letter of br. P.W. Dekker

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod gave Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad the following mandate with respect to the F.C.S.:
 - a "to thoroughly investigate ...the Free Church of Scotland..., and submit comprehensive reports to the churches and to the next synod, paying particular attention to the marks of the true church and the question of church government."
 - b "to maintain contact with these churches at the present level." (Acts of the 1985 Synod, Art. 43).
- 2 Deputies served synod with an extensive report. This report mentions o.a.:
 - a Two delegates from the FRCA have spoken extensively with delegates of the FCS during their stay in Edinburgh, while attending ICRC. During their stay in Edinburgh the two delegates also attended two worship services of the FCS.
 - b The FCS, in its history, has demonstrated a desire to remain faithful to the Word of the Lord.
 - c The FCS maintains close relations with the EPCI and the RPCI in Ireland, and also with the PCEA in Australia. It also has one synod in North America and Canada.
 - d The FCS maintains their Theological College in Edinburgh.
 - e The subordinate standards of the FCS are the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as well as the Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560.
 - f concerning the marks of the true church, deputies report:
 - 1 Though the preaching displays a "subjectivistic tendency", the preaching in the FCS "is still scriptural and reformed."
 - 2 Holy Supper is celebrated very infrequently, though with extensive preparation. Meanwhile, there are voices demanding that Holy Supper should be celebrated more often. With regards to attendance at Lord's supper, deputies report that:

"No one can be admitted to the privilege of baptism or the Lord's supper, without satisfying the Kirk-Session that he or she possesses these qualifications, viz.:

 - a a confession of faith in accordance with the Word of God and the standards of the church;
 - b a life and conversation becoming the gospel, insofar as can be outwardly seen;

- c a competent knowledge of religious truth, and of the nature and meaning of christian ordinances."
- 3 Despite the restrictions in the quote mentioned above, deputies report that adherents who faithfully attend the worship service are allowed to let their children be baptized. Deputies inform us that this anomaly has the attention of the churches.
- 4 Re church discipline, the FCS is known for its strictness to Biblical norms. This discipline is extended also to "the adult children of adherents."
- g The FCS adheres to the traditional presbyterian church polity. Deputies report too that the FCS has a provincial synod.
- h To prevent hierarchy, the FCS has adopted the "Barrier Act."
- i The deputies conclude that between FRCA and FCS there is "fundamental unity of faith." Deputies are convinced that "according to Art.29 BC the FCS can be called a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ."
- j On this basis, deputies recommend to the 1987 Synod "to reconfirm that the FCS is a faithful church of the Lord." They further "propose to them to enter into a relationship of sister churches, on the basis of mutually accepted rules." Deputies report that the existing rules for sister church relations is inadequate for a relation with the FCS because the FCS has reservations about how such rules work in practice. Furthermore, the FCS knows "different levels of relationship."
- 3 Br. P.W. Dekker in his submission to synod,
 - a wonders what the scriptural foundation for baptising the children of adherents is. Br. Dekker notes that because the catechism of the FCS excludes this practice, the FCS is not adhering to its own confession.
 - b expresses his conviction that children being separated from the preaching of the Word in church is a serious matter.
 - c queries why adherents are allowed to partake in the Lord's supper seeing that they are not members of the church.
 - d sees dangerous hierarchy in the fact that
 - 1 the pastor is subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the presbytery.
 - 2 Approbating the Acts of the General Assembly is not done by the Kirk-session but by the presbyteries.

Consequently br. P.W. Dekker concludes that "these churches haven't been shown to have the marks of the true church," and therefore disagrees with the deputies' recommendations to reaffirm the FCS as true and faithful, and so establish a sister church relationship.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The 1983 Synod "confirmed" that the FCS "is a faithful church of the Lord" (Art.75).
- 2 The 1985 Synod determined "The decisions recorded in Article 75 of the Acts of the 1983 Synod were taken with undue haste and without due consideration." Despite this judgment, the 1985 Synod did not feel that the decision of 1983 should be undone, since:

"Synod can only rescind a decision of a previous synod when that decision is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order (Article 31 of the Church Order)."

Instead, the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad were instructed as per mandate quoted in observation 1 above.
- 3 In the well-written report submitted by deputies, there is much information that gives reason for great thankfulness for the faithfulness found in these Scottish churches. These churches adhere to the infallible Scriptures as their supreme standard and to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Scottish Confession of Faith of 1560 as their subordinate standards. Our churches have implicitly accepted these confessions as reformed.

- 4 The FCS have given a good testimony in withdrawing from the RES and in joining the ICRC instead. They also enjoy ecclesiastical contact with the GKN.

5 MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH

a Preaching of the True Gospel

By evaluating the training for the ministry, the pure doctrine maintained and the preaching itself the conclusion can be made that this mark is present.

b Administration of the Sacraments

Only the sacraments as instituted by Christ are administered. From their DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP it is clear that the FCS administers them in a biblical manner.

The matter of adherents remains a matter of concern to them, even as the anomaly of communicant members not attending the Lord's supper concerned our reformed churches in the past. These adherents are mainly from the highlands where the conventicles and mysticism promoted an unhealthy antagonism towards church membership. These adherents are serious, attend church regularly, but are loathe to become members and to attend the Lord's supper (contrary to br. P.W. Dekker's understanding), though they desire baptism for their children. We conclude that there is a good movement to correct this anomaly by good instruction and sound preaching.

c Discipline

We conclude that a good, even strict, discipline is maintained in these churches in which the directives of Scripture, especially Matthew 18, are followed.

- 6 Concerning church polity one can gladly conclude that these covenanters have staunchly defended and practised the essential principle of church government, i.e. that Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church. In addition to the usual presbyterian assemblies they include the provincial synods which approximate our regional/provincial synods.

The pastor's position (they are members of the kirk-session) does not demonstrate hierarchy. The local elders supervise them and report periodically to the presbytery. Also, local elders would initiate discipline against a minister by going to the presbytery. Though this system therefore does not equate ours it does not involve hierarchy.

- 7 We can conclude that the FCS is a faithful church of our Lord, according to Arts. 27-32, B.C.

- 8 Since the FCS has troubles accepting the rules for correspondence, we cannot expect them to accept a sister-church relationship on the basis of these rules. It is thus best to offer a temporary ecclesiastical relationship which shows them our sincerity in recognizing them, which requires official correspondence and discussion of items of mutual concern such as the rules for correspondence and the position of adherents and which demonstrates unity of like faith and practice.

Art. 67 of the 1985 Acts stipulated that recognition of another church as true and faithful means that an offer to them to become sister-churches can be made.

This same decision acknowledges that there may be historical developments which form an obstacle to becoming sister-churches immediately. Art.74 of the 1985 Acts allows for a formal relation of ecclesiastical contact as long as this relation does not become permanent and as long as it is actively used to come to relations as sister-churches.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work done.
- 2 Synod reaffirms the statement made by the 1983 Synod that the Free Church of Scotland is a faithful church of the Lord (Art.75).
- 3 Synod instructs Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to move in the direction of becoming sister-churches with the FCS.
- 4 Synod instructs its deputies not to implement sister-church relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon.

- 5 In the meantime, Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact is to be established with the FCS, with the following rules:
 - a To invite delegates to each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly or synod but no vote.
 - b To exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, specifically, the problem about the adherents, and to solicit comments on these documents.
 - c To be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching a relation as sister churches, specifically, to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations as sister churches.
- 6 Synod authorizes the deputies to send delegates to visit the FCS to help implement the above mentioned decisions.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 83

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Committee 2 presents its proposal concerning the matter of Bible translations. Two rounds of discussion take place. Rev. K. Bruning, as a deputy, is invited to join the discussion at the end of the rounds.

The committee thanks the delegates for their comments and suggestions, and takes the proposal back for further consideration.

ARTICLE 84

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.11

- 1 Report of deputies

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Deputies report that the churches have provided funds for the financial support of one theological student.
- 2 Deputies, exploring the possibility of the FRCA becoming formally involved in the maintenance of 'Kampen' or 'Hamilton' report:
 - a as regards 'Kampen' the FRCA can commit themselves to a yearly financial contribution for the Theologische Universiteit on the same basis as the GKN. If the FRCA decide to support 'Kampen' with an annual commitment then they would be obliged to give two years notice if they wish to discontinue this support.
 - b as regards 'Hamilton' the possibilities to become formally involved in the maintenance of the college, apart from financial contribution is limited by the 'Canadian Reformed Theological Act 1981' under which the College receives public recognition as a Theological College.
- 3 Deputies, fulfilling this mandate to make the churches as well as individual church-members aware of the duty they have with respect to art. 18 & 19 C.O. report that two articles have been written in "Una Sancta."
- 4 Deputies report that in view of the financial assessment made by the deputies in The Netherlands and Canada the financial support for 'Hamilton' is more urgent than for 'Kampen'.

They recommend:

- a to set our contribution for Hamilton at \$A 30.00 per year per communicant member and to give two years notice if this support will be discontinued.
 - b to encourage churches to hold regular collections for the Theologische Universiteit at Kampen in the same way as hitherto has been done and expect to receive information and documentation.
- 5 The Church Order, Article 18, instructs the churches to support or, if possible, maintain a theological seminary for the Ministry of the Word.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 As regards exploring the possibility of the FRCA becoming formally involved in the maintenance of 'Kampen' or 'Hamilton' deputies have fulfilled their mandate properly.
- 2 In providing an increased level of awareness in relation to training for the ministry of the Word deputies could have written more than the two articles referred to in the report.
- 3 The deputies have established the need for financial support for 'Hamilton', and have advanced a proposal to levy the churches an amount similar to that contributed by the sister churches overseas.
- 4 It is noted that CRC express their appreciation to the FRCA for their desire to become formally involved in the maintenance of the Theological College at Hamilton. However, they claim it would be desirable that our Australian sister churches in the future are able to establish an Australian training for the ministry.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 to thank deputies for their work and to discharge them.
- 2 to appoint new deputies with the following instructions:
 - a assess the churches \$30.00 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton.
 - b that deputies be charged with the collection of these funds from the churches and with forwarding the same to the college.
 - c encourage the churches to continue to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theologische Universiteit at Kampen.
 - d to charge deputies to continue correspondence with Kampen to obtain necessary information and documentation.
 - e instruct deputies to continue publishing all relevant news about the training for the ministry so that our church members may receive a good understanding of the need to support those colleges and the training of the students.
 - f instruct deputies to continue their efforts to support theological students and to ask the churches to provide funds for financial support.
- 3 That deputies be instructed to investigate the possibilities of working towards our own theological training and the facilities required for such an undertaking;
- 4 That deputies report their findings to next synod.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 85

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman thanks the delegates for the brotherly atmosphere in which the discussions took place in the past week.

It is decided that there will be no afternoon session, in order to allow the delegates to return on Monday morning fully refreshed after a vigorous week of meetings. The chairman wishes all a blessed Sunday.

Psalm 116:1,6,10 are sung in conclusion. Br. P.O. Posthuma closes synod for the day with prayer.

EIGHTH SESSION - MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1987

MORNING AND AFTERNOON

ARTICLE 86

REOPENING

Synod is reopened by the singing of Psalm 119:1. The chairman reads John 15:1-11 and leads in prayer. He extends a hearty welcome to the brothers, and hopes that they have returned refreshed after enjoying some relaxation and after a good Sunday.

ARTICLE 87

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourns the meeting in order to let the advisory committees finish the items assigned to them. There will be an open, full session in the evening.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 88

REOPENING

Psalm 96:1,2 & 8 are sung in reopening synod. The chairman welcomes the delegates and the many visitors.

ARTICLE 89

ADOPTION OF ACTS

Articles 68-85 of the Acts are adopted.

ARTICLE 90

HYMNS

Committee 3 presents its amended proposal. During the first round of discussion br. J. VanderRos tables a counter-proposal which is duly seconded. One more round is given for the benefit of the committee and delegates, and then the matter is deferred so that the delegates can also study the counter-proposal.

ARTICLE 91

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (TAIWAN)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b (TAIWAN)

- 1 The report of deputies - Section K

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod gave Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad the following mandate with respect to "The Second Presbytery of the Reformed Church in Taiwan".
 - a "to thoroughly investigate ... The Second Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan..., and submit comprehensive reports to the churches and to the next synod, paying particular attention to the marks of the true church and the question of church government."

b "to maintain contact with these churches at the present level". (Acts 1985, Art. 43).

2 Deputies served synod with a report. This report mentions:

a The RPCT decided in 1978 to enter sister relations with the FRCA. A similar decision was made re the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Lib.) The RPCT awaits a reply.

b Communication between our deputies and the RPCT has been hindered by language-barriers. A sister from the Kelmscott congregation went to Taiwan in May 1985 and assisted in translating the letters from our deputies.

c The RPCT has conveyed to our deputies that they accept our rules for sister relations completely.

d In February, 1987, Rev. S.G. Hur visited the Taiwanese churches. He conversed with three deputies of the RPCT for two and a half hours. From this visit, the following is reported:

1 The RPCT evolved out of the missionary activities of a number of reformed churches, including the Korean Presbyterian Church.

2 Because of the various backgrounds of the missionaries and their converts, organized church life was difficult. Consequently, some ministers organized a second presbytery, in the hope that one day they can come together as one ecclesiastical body.

3 The RPCT has adopted as their confessional standards the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Deputies report that the RPCT "faithfully adheres to their confessional standards."

4 Re the marks of the true church, deputies write:

a "it is difficult to evaluate the preaching of the Word because of language-barriers." Missionaries from Korea gave to deputies their opinion that the Word is faithfully preached according to the Scriptures."

b Open table is not accepted in the RPCT. Baptism is administered at the celebration of Lord's supper whenever there are eligible infants or adults.

c Re church discipline: the RPCT strive to follow the Lord's command in Matthew 18.

5 The Second Presbytery accepted a church government fundamentally similar to the government of the Korean Presbyterian Church.

6 It is difficult for outsiders to evaluate the cause and nature of the division between the original group and the Second Presbytery. It was clear to Rev. Hur that "no doctrinal matter was involved in the division."

7 This small group of churches needs much spiritual encouragement.

e Deputies recommend that the 1987 Synod of Albany reconfirm that the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan is a faithful church of the Lord, because they display the marks of the true church as set out in Art. 29 of Belgic Confession. They further propose to enter into a relationship of sister churches, on the basis of mutually accepted rules.

3 Br. P.W. Dekker, in his submission to synod, expresses his sentiment that the information available on this church is too sparse to be able to conclude that the RPCT displays the marks of the true church.

C CONSIDERATIONS

1 The 1983 Synod recognized the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan as a true and faithful church. (Art. 72).

2 The 1985 Synod determined "The decisions recorded in Article 72 of the Acts of Synod 1983 were taken with undue haste and without due consideration." Despite this judgment, the 1985 Synod did not feel that the decision of 1983 should be undone, since:

"Synod can only rescind a decision of a previous synod when that decision is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order (Article 31)."

Instead, the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad were instructed as per mandate quoted in Observation 1 above.

- 3 Deputies present a report based on a two and a half hour conversation of one of our deputies with delegates of the RPCT.
- 4 Despite the mandate given this report is very brief both on the point of marks of the true church and church government.
- 5 Deputies' report presents a confusing picture concerning the situation in the presbyteries. If there are no doctrinal differences between the two groups, it would be consistent to have similar relations with both groups.
- 6 The language obstacle should be removed as much as possible by establishing a good base of communication.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 to thank deputies for their work.
- 2 not to be able at this time to accede to the proposal of the deputies to reconfirm the decision of the 1983 Synod, Art. 72 and to offer sister relations.
- 3 to instruct deputies:
 - a to carry out a more detailed investigation of the RPCT with regard to the marks of the true church and church polity;
 - b to establish a good base for correspondence in English with the RPCT and so improve the contacts with them.
 - c to investigate and evaluate the division in the presbyteries there.

A counter-proposal to delete Recommendation 3 is duly moved and seconded.

The committee proposal is voted upon first. It is ADOPTED.

The counter-proposal is therefore not voted upon.

ARTICLE 92

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (SRI LANKA, UGANDA, JAPAN)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, Section L, M & N.

- 1 The report of the deputies, sections L, M & N.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The deputies received the mandate
 - a to investigate whether or not the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ), the Presbyterian Church in Uganda (PCU) and the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (DRCSL) can be recognized as true and faithful churches according to Art.29, BC with a view to the possible establishment of relations as sister-churches.
 - b to urge the RCJ to break the ties with the RES.
- 2 The deputies have written to the RCJ for information about their attitude toward the RES, but no response has been received thus far.
- 3 As in the report to the 1985 Synod, the deputies lament that no communication has been received from the DRCSL, though they have tried twice. The deputies therefore recommend that attempts to initiate contact with them cease.

4 No further contact has occurred with the PCU since the last synod.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Since it seems impossible to initiate contact with the DRCSL, it is best to follow the deputies' proposal to cease this contact.
- 2 Seeing that more contact with the RCJ and PCU is needed, the mandates with respect to these churches should be renewed.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work done for this part of their mandate.
- 2 Synod decides to cease attempts to initiate contact with the DRCSL.
- 3 Synod decides to renew the mandate (see Obs. 1a & b) with respect to the RCJ and the PCU.

A counter-proposal to delete Recommendation 3 and to read Recommendation 2 as:

"Synod decides not to renew the mandate of deputies to continue or initiate contact with the DRCSL, RCJ & PCU."

is duly moved and seconded.

Two rounds of discussion ensue. Rev. A. Veldman as deputy gives some information at the end of rounds.

The proposal of committee 1 re the DRCSL is UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED.

The proposal of committee 1 re the RCJ and the PCU is ADOPTED.

The counter-proposal is therefore not voted upon.

ARTICLE 93

PROPOSED ART.26 ON EVANGELISM

The proposal of committee 3 on the proposed article 26, C.O. on evangelism receives one round of discussion. Rev. K. Jonker speaks as deputy. Since time runs out, this proposal is deferred.

ARTICLE 94

ADJOURNMENT

Psalm 81, stanzas 1 to 4, are sung. Br. J. VanderRos closes synod for the day with prayer.

NINTH SESSION - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1987

MORNING SESSION

ARTICLE 95

REOPENING

Hymn 10:1,10 are sung in reopening synod. The chairman reads John 16:4b-15 and leads in prayer. He welcomes the brothers.

ARTICLE 96

ADJOURNMENT

Before adjournment the chairman outlines the schedule of full, open sessions for the next days. He then adjourns synod so that the advisory committees can finish the items assigned to them.

AFTERNOON SESSION

ARTICLE 97

REOPENING

Psalms 145:1,2 are sung to reopen synod. All delegates are present.

ARTICLE 98

PROPOSED ART.26, C.O. ON EVANGELISM

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.12

- 1 Report from deputies

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1975 Synod appointed deputies with the instruction to revise and translate the Church Order. (Art.97 item 14).
- 2 For the revision of the C.O. deputies used the Dutch C.O. as adopted by Synod Groningen-Zuid, as recommended by the 1980 Synod of Armadale.
- 3 The 1983 Synod accepted the revised C.O. However, it could not come to a decision of the proposed article on evangelism - art.26.
- 4 Deputies indicated to synod that this was a new article inserted into the Dutch C.O. The Australian deputies were not unanimous as to whether this article should be included, and whether it is the duty of the consistory to "see to it that the work is done in accordance with this aim."
- 5 The 1983 Synod (Art.19) appointed new deputies because the proposed article gave rise to a division of opinions.
- 6 These deputies were charged to study this matter and to determine:
 - a the aim of this article
 - b the Scriptural basis for this article
 - c the use to which this article is put by our sister-churches

- 7 In their report to the 1987 Synod deputies observed that the difficulty at the 1983 Synod seemed to be the uncertainty as to whether the matter of evangelism as such should be given a place in the C.O. However, deputies concede that they did not receive a very clear picture of the real problems with this article.
- 8 Deputies devote much time to sketching the Dutch background to the proposed article as this is considered important in understanding the article itself.
- 9 Numerous references in the report reveal that individual church members have long given evidence of their commitment to the service of the Lord by witnessing to others. When this work developed into a 'collective approach' activity, the involvement of the consistories was acknowledged, albeit predominantly in a supervisory capacity.
- 10 The 1923 Synod of Utrecht drew up guidelines for reformed evangelism placing the onus for this work upon the consistories. With this type of control the active involvement of the congregation was greatly diminished.
- 11 The new reflection on evangelism at the 1975 Synod of Kampen caused a shift in the responsibility for this work. The guidelines no longer placed this work in the hands of the office-bearers, but regard it as the responsibility of the whole congregation as it exists under the government and supervision of the office bearers.
- 12 It is the view of the deputies that in the future evangelism work will more and more be organised and carried out (completely) by congregational members under their own responsibility, with full support from the consistory.
- 13 Against this backdrop deputies conclude that the insertion of the proposed art. 26 is fully warranted.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Deputies have provided the churches and synod with a comprehensive report, particularly in relation to tracing the historical background to the proposed article, and in their endeavour to detail a scriptural basis for evangelism.
- 2 The acknowledgement by deputies that they failed to receive a clear picture of the real problems with this article is evident from the relatively little attention given to the question as to whether the matter of evangelism as such should be given a place in the C.O. One of the references to this point may be found in the section titled 'Kampen 1975 and after' of the report where it is justified on the basis of the church-political element as regards the supervisory task of the consistory towards evangelism.
- 3 The report catalogues numerous instances where individual church members have demonstrated their commitment to the service of the Lord by and through a godly lifestyle of witnessing to others. Such a lifestyle is an integral part of a Christian's life as confessed in Lord's Day's 12 & 32.
- 4 The supervision of that lifestyle is charged to the office bearers, as set out in arts. 16, 21, & 36 C.O. and the respective forms for ordination. Indeed, the consistory, by virtue of the authority delegated to it by the Head of the church, has a supervisory roll both in the personal and collective lives of the church members it has been appointed to serve.
- 5 It follows, then, that the consistory has been given a supervisory mandate both over the individual's life and the collective activities of all church members and thus its responsibilities already include that which the proposed art.26 wishes to draw to our attention.
- 6 To include the proposed art.26 is to duplicate what has already been specified elsewhere. Moreover, the circumstances which saw the insertion of this proposed article in the Dutch C.O. are not evident in our Australian situation.
- 7 The expressed desire for as much uniformity as possible between our English speaking sister-churches and ourselves would not be facilitated by its inclusion in the C.O.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides not to accede to the recommendation of deputies.

Three rounds of discussion ensue about this proposal. Rev. K. Jonker, as deputy, defends the report of the deputies. He voices grave disappointment that the report of the deputies is not accurately reflected in the proposal of committee 3.

The proposal of committee 3 is ADOPTED.

ARTICLE 99

APPEAL & REQUESTS RE DELETED HYMNS

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda Item 8.10

- 1 Appeal and requests re hymns from Rev. Huizinga

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The submission in question seeks a revision of the decisions of the 1985 Synod (Acts art.59) and the repeal of the decision of the 1983 Synod (Acts Art.30,31). It does so by focussing particular attention on the 'points raised' which are recorded in Art.30, Acts of the 1983 Synod.
- 2 While the appellant himself is aware of the dubious status of the "points raised," the problems encountered with the recording of the Acts and the associated omissions of grounds supporting decisions, the points referred to are considered to be the major argumentation for the defeat of Albany's proposal.
- 3 It is alleged that the decision not to accede to the requests made by the Church of Albany to accept the complete Hymn section for use in the worship services - as recorded in Acts of the 1985 Synod, Art. 59. A.2 - because the number of hymns to be used in our churches should be kept to a minimum, is open to subjectiveness;
- 4 The fear that the churches will move in the direction of a 'hymn-book' has no validity in confirming the decision to delete certain hymns;
- 5 The preference for the psalms is based on a false dilemma as though the psalms come from the inspired Word and the hymns from man's interpretation of it;
- 6 To prefer the OT psalms above NT hymns is to drive a wedge between Scripture. It is a neglect of the great salvation which fulfilled the OT Scriptures. Throughout history the church has aimed for the WHOLE Scriptures echoed in a book of (O.T. & N.T.) psalms. Quotations are made to provide the Scriptural basis for a reformed "hymn-book";
- 7 The deputies were of the opinion that the proposed hymns were not unscriptural. Yet the reason for their deletion for use in the church services has not been given;
- 8 No detailed report evaluating the hymns is given in Acts of the 1985 Synod;
- 9 The use of the hymns by the CRC and the decision by the FRC to delete most hymns, does little to promote uniformity and concord among English-speaking, reformed churches.
- 10 To limit the number of 'psalms' outside the Book of Psalms as though they were dangerous is contrary to the reformed character of the Book of Praise;
- 11 The insistence that the music should be based on Anglo-Genevan tunes cannot be advanced as an argument to delete hymns as this would be adding norms not adopted by Scripture;
- 12 The reason that hymns repeat the contents of the psalms must be rejected because the hymns show the fulfilment of the messianic expectation;

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 In referring to the 'points raised' it must be understood that these do not have the same status as have the 'grounds', quoted elsewhere to support decisions in the Acts of the 1983 Synod. Hence 'points raised' may only be used to indicate the personal contributions of individual synodical delegates in a discussion and, as such, may be interpreted only to point to a particular direction of the discussion in question, or the adoption or defeat of a specific proposal.
- 2 Even though the submission in question appeals against the 'points raised', as recorded in Art.30, Acts of the 1983 Synod - and which have no official status - the submission, in dealing with these points, provides principled argumentation and advances grounds which have not been recorded in previous Acts of synods which have dealt with this matter.
- 3 The observation that "hymns should be kept to a minimum" is indeed subjective as the word "minimum" does not specify a certain number; (refer report B.1)
- 4 The adoption of the Book of Praise by the Australian Churches shows their commitment to a psalm-conscious prominence as opposed to the hymn-book approach;
- 5 Both psalms and hymns are rhymings, composed by sinful and uninspired men, of certain poetic sections of the OT and NT;
- 6 It should indeed be the desire of Christ's congregation to sing of the "magnalia Dei" (the great deeds of God) from the whole Scripture, hence the virtually exclusive preference for OT Psalms is based on a false distinction;
- 7 In the absence of any adopted reports evaluating the hymns and the reason for their unsuitability for use in the worship services, and, in contrast, their acceptance by the CRC - after years of testing - the assertion of deputies appears indeed vague and general;
- 8 The FRC have always expressed a strong desire for as much uniformity as possible between churches in English-speaking countries;
- 9 The preference for Anglo-Genevan tunes, while understandable, cannot be advanced as a reason for deleting certain hymns as this would also necessitate the deletion of some already adopted hymns.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides:

- 1 to accede to Rev. Huizinga's request to introduce the probationary use of the deleted hymns by the churches till the next synod.
- 2 to appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a to solicit submissions from the churches
 - b to compile a report evaluating the received submissions and prepare a recommendation whether to accept the complete hymn-section for use in the worship services
 - c to maintain contact with the CRC concerning the matter of any revision or changes to the Psalms or Hymns in the Book of Praise
 - d to report to the following synod.

COUNTER-PROPOSAL RE DELETED HYMNS

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 8.10

B OBSERVATIONS - from Report 8.10

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Revision of the decisions of the 1985 Synod (art.59) and repeal of the decision of 1983 Synod (art.30,31) will have to prove that (C.O. art.31) "it is in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order."

- 2 Any fixation of a number of hymns, be it "a minimum" or otherwise, is open to "subjectiveness."
- 3 When the churches in their major assemblies since 1959 expressed the dangers of moves in the direction of a "hymn book", they acted in pastoral wisdom to limit the number of "free hymns."
- 4 The guidelines adopted by the FRCA in 1959 (Art.36) show that the "false dilemma" referred to in Observation 4 has never been accepted by our churches. The dilemma presents a caricature of the situation, for the unrhymed psalms were indeed inspired, but so were "the other songs from Scripture."
- 5 Our churches have not driven "a wedge between Scripture" by simply making a distinction between the psalms and the "free" hymns. If this indeed were "a neglect of the great salvation which fulfilled the OT Scriptures", one should be consistent and propose to sing NT hymns only.
- 6 The deputies have consistently provided the churches with reasons in their reports, lastly the Interim Report in June 1982, and these reports have served as basis for synodical decisions.
- 7 The 1985 Synod did not give a detailed report evaluating the hymns as this had been done and decided on by the 1983 Synod. Our churches maintain art.31 C.O.
- 8 The FRC did not delete "most hymns". They adopted 34 out of 65. Though the FRC had done everything in their power to have a say in the compilation of the Hymn Section of Book of Praise, they received virtually no response to the submissions by their deputies to the Canadian committee.
- 9 The FRC have consistently promoted the rhyming and adoption of songs from Scripture in the line of Calvin's "Formes et Prières." However, any selection of such songs will prove that their number is limited.
- 10 Our churches have, lastly in the Interim Report of 1982, advocated (not insisted on) "a hymn book which musically displays reasonably homogeneous style or styles." This is a matter of good taste and good order. However, it has never been formulated as "a norm".
- 11 The general statement that "hymns repeat the contents of the psalms" has not been made by our synods or by deputies. Wherever the word "repeat" has been mentioned, it referred not to the songs from Scripture, but to "free" hymns.
- 12 As the "points raised" printed in between Acts of the 1983 Synod have no official status, they merely reflect personal contributions to the discussion. They cannot be used as a basis for considerations by synod.
- 13 The principled argumentation raised in the submission by Rev. W. Huizinga has been adequately covered by decisions of the 1959 Synod based on the comprehensive report of deputies.
- 14 The synods of the FRCA have consistently adopted an emphasis in favour of psalms plus scriptural songs, alerting the churches against subjectivistic hymns and hymn book.
- 15 Most "free" hymns are not rhymings of Scripture passages.
- 16 Our churches have fully embraced the desire to sing of the "Magnalia Dei". There is no evidence to support the claim that they have given "virtually exclusive preference" to OT Psalms.
- 17 Our churches have followed the practice that deputies' reports form the basis for any synod's decisions. This practice has been in place for three decades.
- 18 Uniformity with Canada has been a laudable aim, but it has not been given.
- 19 The fact that certain non-Anglo-Genevan tunes were adopted by our churches shows that they had adopted no "dogmatic" stance over this issue (ref.Obs.11).
- 20 No ground from Scripture or the C.O. has been adduced to support the appeal and requests by Rev. W. Huizinga.
- 21 Many of the "facts" related are either ungrounded or strongly overstated, not doing justice to the FRCA and their history.

D RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide not to accede to the appeal and requests of Rev. W. Huizinga.

The proposal of committee 3 and the counter-proposal, moved by br. J. VanderRos and seconded by Rev. K. Jonker, are tabled. Two rounds of discussion are given.

The committee proposal is ADOPTED.

The counter-proposal is thus not voted upon.

ARTICLE 100

CHURCH BOOK (ECUMENICAL CREEDS AND LITURGICAL FORMS)

Committee 3 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.9

- 1 Report of deputies.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod decided to instruct deputies
 - a to invite comment and to collect material on the Ecumenical Creeds, The Three Forms of Unity, and the Liturgical Forms, which were provisionally adopted (Acts, art.59D)
 - b to examine the word 'Christian' in the Apostles' Creed, and to make a suitable recommendation to synod. (Acts, art.59b2).

- 2 Deputies convey the following information from the Acts of the 1986 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

The 1986 Synod of Burlington decided:

- a to re-introduce the terms 'co-eternal' and 'co-essential' into the text of B.C.art.8 (Acts, art.91).
- b not to accede to a request by dr. J. Faber and five churches to delete the word 'Christian' from the Apostles' Creed. (Acts, art.101).

to have the term 'only begotten Son' restored to the text of B.C. art 18, the prayer of thanksgiving, the Forms for Adult and Infant Baptism, and the Canons of Dort I art 2 and II art.4 (Acts, art. 159).

- 3 As regards a further study about the word 'Christian' in art IX of the Apostles' Creed deputies come to the following conclusions:
 - a The received text (textus receptus) of the Apostles' Creed does not contain the equivalent of the word "Christian".
 - b The words 'a catholic Christian church' are a translation from the Dutch text, which was based on Martin Luther's double translation of the word 'catholicam', which in the late Middle Ages sometimes would be translated by 'christliche' ('Christian').
 - c Neither the English translation - over a thousand years old - nor the French (John Calvin and others) have a double translation of the word 'catholicam'.
 - d Correctly the Apostles' Creed is, in the new Book of Praise, printed under the heading 'The Ecumenical Creeds'. Therefore its text should stand in the ecumenical tradition, the community with believers of all ages.
 - e The word 'Christian' as used by Luther appears to express 'of the christian' rather than 'of Christ', and in this sense provides a duplication of the term 'communion of saints' in the next line of the creed.
 - f Scripture speaks of 'the church(es) of God', not of 'the Christian Church'. The creeds should follow the language of Scripture consistently.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Deputies have fulfilled their mandate properly.
- 2 Although the expressions 'co-eternal' and 'co-essential' are somewhat archaic they do excellently express the eternal unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Acts of the 1985 Synod of Burlington, art.91c).
- 3 Following a tradition that originates from the European continent, the Book of Praise has inserted the word 'Christian' in the article on the church. This is a rather old tradition. However, the tradition of maintaining the received text is much older.
- 4 The text of the creeds is usually printed under the heading 'Ecumenical Creeds' - as is done in the Book of Praise (1984). This 'ecumene' is not only a matter of 'all places' but also of 'all ages'.
- 5 In the text which is recommended by the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds, appointed by the ICRC held at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1985, to the member churches, the word 'Christian' will be absent.
@INDENT 1 TAG = 6

There should be consistency between the creeds and confessions, therefore in the places mentioned under observations 2c the words 'only begotten Son' should be re-inserted.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 to adopt the text of the Three Forms of Unity and of those Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted by the 1985 Synod (Acts, art.59 c 2);
- 2 to adopt the text of the Ecumenical Creeds with the exception of the word 'Christian' in art. IX of the Apostles' Creed, in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and wherever the text of the Creed is quoted in the Liturgical Forms and Prayers;
- 3 to reinsert the words "only-begotten Son" in the places mentioned sub obs.2.c;
- 4 to thank deputies for the work done and discharge them.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 101

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourns the meeting to allow the delegates time to study the items to be tabled for the full session in the evening.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 102

REOPENING

To reopen synod Psalm 93, all stanzas, are sung. The chairman welcomes the delegates and the many visitors.

ARTICLE 103

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The Articles 86-94 of the Acts are adopted.

ARTICLE 104

BIBLE TRANSLATION

The amended proposal of Committee 2 is tabled. During the first round a counter-proposal, duly moved by Rev. W. Huizinga and seconded by br. J. DeVos, is tabled. Three rounds of discussion take place. No deputies are present.

Further amendments are duly moved and seconded. Discussion is stopped.

It is decided that the committee proposal, the counter-proposal and the further amendments be printed in final and clear form before a decision is taken. This matter will be tabled again and voted upon without further discussion at the next full session in the following order:

- 1 the proposal of Committee 2
- 2 the counter-proposal (if necessary)
- 3 the further amendments (if necessary)

ARTICLE 105

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (NEW ZEALAND)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b, Section O (New Zealand)

- 1 The report of deputies and their supplementary report.

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The mandate of the deputies was:
 - a to write to the next synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to point out to these churches that their sister-church relationship with, for instance, the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA), as well as their second level correspondence with the GKN (Syn.) are impediments to continue the existing contact.
 - b to inform the deputies of our sister-churches in The Netherlands about this decision.
- 2 The deputies have informed the Reformed Churches of New Zealand of the decisions of the 1985 Synod of Launceston, and they have also exchanged correspondence with the sister-churches in The Netherlands about this decision.
- 3 The 1986 General Synod of The Reformed Churches of New Zealand has adopted a strong stance against membership of the GKN (Syn.) in the RES. If these latter churches remain in the RES after the next RES in 1988, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand will withdraw immediately.
- 4 The second level of relations with the GKN (Syn.) as "correspondence churches" has been terminated in 1986, so that the tie with these deformative churches has ceased.
- 5 Contacts with the GKN (Lib.) have been opened. Good understanding exists in the RCNZ on what must happen before a relation as sister-churches would occur.
- 6 Contacts with the NRC (formerly 'buitenverbanders') has been established. These latter churches received a proposal in 1985 that the RCNZ be accepted as a sister-church. No confirmation of this proposal had been received. The RCNZ has not acted to reciprocate such a proposal.
- 7 The deputies of our Dutch sister-churches registered their surprise and disappointment at the decisions of the 1985 Synod with respect to the RCNZ (see our deputies' report, p.17, 1.2).
- 8 The deputies come with no recommendation(s) concerning the RCNZ.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Obs. 3 attests to a positive stance of the RCNZ in the RES and should be considered as cause for thanks and optimism for future contacts.

- 2 Obs. 4 removes a serious obstacle in the path of our contacts and possible relations as sister-churches.
- 3 Obs. 5 indicates that the RCNZ desires to open contacts with faithful churches.
- 4 The contacts with the NRC gives cause for concern.
- 5 That the deputies for our sister-churches in The Netherlands registered surprise at the decision of the 1985 Synod is due to their misreading of the decision as though we had decided to terminate all contact with the RCNZ. Our Dutch sister-churches intensify their contacts with the RCNZ.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work done.
- 2 Synod decides to convey its thanks to the RCNZ that it has terminated all ties with the GKN (Syn.) and that it has decided to oppose very strongly the membership of the GKN (Syn.) in the RES as well as to withdraw from the RES if the GKN (Syn.) is not expelled.
- 3 Synod decides to instruct deputies to continue the contact with the RCNZ and specifically to call their attention to relations with other churches with which we have broken all ties.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 106

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (SINGAPORE)

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL- Agenda item 10.7a & b

- 1 The report of deputies - Section P (The Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore)

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Visitors from the FRCA came into contact with the ERCS. These visitors during two visits, attended four worship services, were guests at a wedding, visited congregational meetings, had many discussions with the two ministers, and enjoyed good fellowship with several members of the congregation.
- 2 The congregation is made up of people who came to conversion from Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism. This environment is saturated with eastern religions, with the result that the members of this church suffer because of enmity, friction and rejection.
- 3 The Constitution of the ERCS records the following as "The Statement of Faith of the Church."
"The faith of the church shall be in accordance with the doctrine as contained in the Old Testament and New Testament of the Bible and in harmony with the historic reformed and presbyterian faith which is set forth in the Three Forms of Unity, namely, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort."
- 4 This constitution further details the need to observe the sacraments and maintain church discipline.
- 5 The governing body of the church is the session, made up of the elders and the deacons.
- 6 During their stay, the visitors noted that the preaching was "very scriptural and practical." Holy supper table was kept pure with only confessing members being allowed to attend. The same form as is used in the FRCA for the celebration of holy supper was used in the ERCS. In the wedding ceremony, parts of the same Form we use was read to the bridal couple.
- 7 The ERCS has a sister-relationship with the Protestant Reformed Church of the USA. In its short history, the ERCS has received much help from the PRC.
- 8 Deputies advise synod:

- a To instruct the deputies to make contact with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, and to stimulate nearer acquaintance with this congregation as much as possible; to exchange information, and to use all the possibilities to investigate whether this church can be recognized as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b To inform the churches about this congregation in Singapore, and to advise members who are planning to visit Singapore, to seek contact with this church, especially when a Sunday is included in their stopover.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 It is the duty of the church of Jesus Christ to seek unity with other true and faithful churches.
- 2 The initial evidence available on the ERCS is encouraging and gives reason for gratitude.
- 3 In the early 1950's some members in the Canadian Reformed churches separated from the Protestant Reformed Church of the USA because of the doctrinal position of the PRC. Since the ERCS has (had) close contact with the PRC, it would be advisable to investigate whether the doctrinal distinctives of the PRC have been adopted by the ERCS.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

- 1 to thank the deputies for the report received on the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore.
- 2 to instruct the deputies to investigate thoroughly this church to discern whether or not this church is a true church according to Art.29 of the Belgic Confession. Special attention is to be given to the distinctives of Protestant Reformed doctrines (viz.covenant and free offer of the gospel) and to report to next Synod.
- 3 to investigate and evaluate the influence of the Protestant Reformed Church in the ERCS.
- 4 to inform the church membership about this congregation in Singapore.
- 5 to authorize the deputies to send delegates to visit these churches en route to the EPCI and the FCS.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 107

ADJOURNMENT

Psalm 56:4 is sung and br. J. VanDyk closes synod for the day.

TENTH SESSION - WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1987

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 108

REOPENING

To reopen synod Hymn 58:1,2 are sung. The chairman reads 1 Peter 2:1-10 and leads in prayer. He extends a hearty welcome to all the delegates and to the many visitors.

ARTICLE 109

BIBLE TRANSLATION

Committee 2 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda items 10.10, 8.12, 8.13, 8.14

- 1 Reports from deputies for Bible Translation
- 2 Letters from br. & sr. L. Woonings, br. & sr. R. Evans
- 3 Overture from the Church of Armadale

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod instructed deputies with the mandate (Acts of 1985, Art.73):
 - a to undertake a thorough study of the issue making use of the material placed before this synod and that produced by synods of our Canadian sister-churches;
 - b to maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translation;
 - c to invite submissions from within the congregations on this issue and to evaluate the validity of the arguments presented;
 - d to monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the R.S.V.;
 - e to submit an Interim Report to the churches by June 30, 1986;
 - f to report to the next synod and send copies of these reports to the churches three months before next synod.
- 2 Deputies submitted their Interim Report in June 1986 reporting that they have commenced their studies; that they invited submissions from within the congregations, so far with disappointing results; that objections received to date concerned the claim that some of the translators were influenced by Arminian errors and the fact that the N.T. translation of the R.S.V. is generally based on the Westcott-Hort Greek N.Testament.
- 3 Deputies submitted their final report to synod in May 1987:
 - a Deputies draw synod's attention to the naming of documents received as "appeals" which properly might be named "requests for revision."
 - b Deputies also feel that the invitation re submissions by church members is out of place, as a decision concerning the Bible translation had properly been taken by the 1983 Synod, which according to art.31 C.O. should be accepted as settled and binding.
 - c The letters by br. M. Berkelaar and br. & sr. B. Postmus were received.
 - d
 - 1 Deputies report that H.G. Bosveld "left the churches in an unworthy way", and consequently they "leave it to synod to decide whether this appeal ought still to be dealt with".
 - 2 Deputies advise that the "appeal" by H.G. Bosveld is unsubstantiated.

- e Deputies admit that the question of the choice of manuscripts (mms) demands specialized knowledge. They state that "without more data coming to light, no ecclesiastical assembly will be able responsibly to take a decision in this respect." At the same time deputies caution that a decision might not be that necessary since "the differences between the various manuscripts only involve 3% of the N.T. text."
- f Deputies insist that "the suggestion that in the matter of mss the division is simply on the basis of 'liberal vs conservative' is not supported by the facts."
- g Deputies report that the eclectic method of translating is built on a specialized science. The making of choices in the use of different mss material does not take place at random. Distinction should be made between external evidence (e.g. date and character of witnesses, their geographical distribution) and internal evidence (e.g. the scribes' habits, transcriptional probabilities, paleographical features in the manuscripts).
- h Deputies contend that the 1983 Synod has not made a choice in favour of the Westcott- Hort text against the Textus Receptus. Deputies find evidence for this contention in the fact that synod left open the option that the KJV could be used in the churches.
- i Deputies, consequently are of the conviction that none of the material brought to its attention demonstrated that the decision of the 1983 Synod was unscriptural.
- j Deputies further report that a new edition of the RSV, expected in 1990, will "reduce the number of masculine references in the Scripture."
- k Deputies are of the opinion that "our churches must remain diligent in this respect." Further, "the monitoring of the further work of the Translation Committee of the RSV requires continuation."
- l Deputies consequently intend
 - 1 to request a copy of the new R.S.V. edition, 1990, as soon as it becomes available
 - 2 to remain in contact with the Deputies of the Canadian sister- churches.
- m Deputies report that Premier Printing in Winnipeg has "secured the printing rights to the 1971 edition of the RSV." This would ensure that an ample supply of the 1971 edition of the RSV should be available into the foreseeable future.
- n Deputies recommend that synod decide:
 - 1 To accept the deputies' conclusion that in the "appeal" submitted to the 1985 Synod, and in other material submitted to that synod and to the deputies, no proof or substantial evidence has been given that the 1983 Synod took an unscriptural decision.
 - 2 To appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a to maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translations
 - b To monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the R.S.V.
 - c To report to the next synod, and send copies of their report to the churches three months before the next synod.
- 4 Br. & sr. L. Woonings, in their submission, doubt the faithfulness of the manuscripts on which the R.S.V. is based. They are convinced that the Textus Receptus is the only "original text" which the Lord has preserved for his church. If the church makes use of other manuscripts it denies the confession of "God's special care" for us (art.3 BCF).

They propose:

- a That a recommendation go out to the churches to cease the use of the R.S.V. and return to the Bible, the underlying text of which has been God's Word to the church for centuries and on which the Great Reformation was based;
- b That an intensive study be undertaken to establish if the New King James Version is true to the above mentioned text for consideration to recommending this version in the worship services;

- c That as soon as possible we return to the use of the "Old" Book of Praise in which the psalms, creeds and liturgical forms have not been "watered down" to agree with the R.S.V. That any financial cost factor be disregarded, and ways and means be found to reprint this Book of Praise, no matter how expensive or difficult. So again the creeds may be read like the fathers passed them on to us;
 - d That a call go out to the Canadian sister churches to unite with us in this endeavour to return to the text which for centuries has been God's Word to his church.
- 5 Br. & sr. R. Evans write that the R.S.V. "can no longer be called God's Word". Therefore they request synod to return to the K.J.V., "even look into the New King James Bible providing it comes from the same manuscripts as the K.J.V."
- 6 a The Church of Armadale, in its overture of 21.7.1987, reports that it encountered difficulties when it read the report by deputies re Bible translations and the submission by the Woonings, difficulties not primarily related to the text underlying the translations of Scripture. It acknowledges that there is ongoing discussion in the area of assessing the manuscript evidence which is a responsible and legitimate task in the churches. However, a stand should be taken which does justice to all the underlying texts concerned in a faithful and unbiased manner.
- b Armadale reports that church members are distressed over the use of scholarly footnotes in the R.S.V. in which various readings, corrections and emendations are accounted for. Apart from this aspect of choice of text, the faithfulness of the translation is in question where this choice is not at stake. These statements are supported by ten examples of translations.
- c Armadale claims that much more could be presented and it notes, in view of the facts, evidence of unscriptural influence.
- It queries seriously "the wisdom of committing ourselves for good" to the use of the RSV.
- Armadale believes that an investigation of other translations is both "warranted and desirable for the benefit and peace of the congregations."
- d Armadale recommends to synod that the mandate of deputies be broadened to include the investigation of other modern translations, i.e. the New International Version, the New King James Version and the New American Standard Bible, with a view to examine
- 1 "faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek texts;
 - 2 Readability of the translation and use for church services, for instruction and memorization;
 - 3 Consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures,"along with the R.S.V., to see if they are better.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 Submissions to deputies or to synods should not be mistaken as appeals to synod. To desire the repeal or revision of a decision the route of either arts. 31 or 33, C.O. should be followed.
- 2 The invitation to make submissions to deputies should be read in the context of the mandate "to undertake a thorough study of the issue making use of the material placed before this synod and that produced by synods of our Canadian sister-churches" and "to invite submissions from within the congregations on this issue and to evaluate the validity of the arguments presented" (Art. 73. V.1,3; see also Art.73.I.d, Acts of the 1985 Synod).
- 3 By leaving the churches in an unworthy manner, H.G. Bosveld has forfeited his privileges as a church member, including access to any appeal procedures.
- 4 The churches have always accepted text criticism, but not Bible criticism. Text criticism is a theological science and its results are not necessarily a yardstick for deciding the question whether a translation is "good" or "bad".
- 5 The RSV is not a translation arranged by the churches. Neither are all other translations, not excluding the KJV which counted people with Arminian influences among its translators.

- 6 The choice by the 1956 Synod (Acts, Art.36) was not a choice in favour of the Textus Receptus, but for a faithful Bible translation. Also the 1983 Synod, decided in favour of a translation, not the underlying mss.
- 7 The reduced occurrence of "masculine references" in Scripture will not affect the 1971 edition of the RSV which the 1983 Synod recommended.
- 8 The 1971 edition of the RSV will continue to be available through the printing rights secured by Premier Printing, Winnipeg.
- 9 Br. & sr. L. Woonings made a comprehensive submission, dated 3 June 1987, although it is regrettable that they failed to respond to the invitation by deputies to invite submissions (ref. Observations 1.3) inserted in the local Church Bulletins in 1985.
- 10 The submission by br. & sr. L. Woonings was addressed to the churches. The deputies did not receive a copy and it was impossible for them to study it and in their report serve the churches with comment before the 1987 Synod convened. The deputies' report to the 1987 Synod is dated 26 May 1987.
- 11 Br. & sr. R. Evans correctly support the reasoning of art.3 BCF that the church receives God's Word from His own hand, and that the church still possesses it by His special care. Their concern over changes and deletions in the RSV is related to the general problem about the manuscripts addressed in the deputies' report and in our considerations under items 4, 5 and 6. The 1983 Synod considered that (Acts, Art.35) "the use of the KJV in the churches is becoming increasingly problematic because of its outdated language".
- 12 The Church of Armadale, in its overture, mentions its difficulties arising from reading of the deputies' report and the Woonings submission, without explaining the broader context of those difficulties in the congregation(s).
- 13 Apparently, the use of the RSV in Armadale has caused problems, and it is regrettable that, in view of the monitoring task of the deputies, those problems were not communicated to the deputies. This has particular application to the areas of footnotes and faithfulness of the translation (Obs. 6b).
- 14 a Synod is unable to adequately evaluate the examples supplied by Armadale. At the same time, it is not claimed by Armadale that the RSV as a whole is unscriptural.
b The use of footnotes is not typical of the RSV but occurs also in the New KJV, NASB and NIV.
- 15 In the light of the decision by the 1983 Synod (Acts, Art.35) it cannot be said that the churches have committed themselves "for good" to the use of the RSV. (cf. Instructions to deputies appointed, Acts, Art. 112/8).
- 16 a The 1975 Synod (Acts, Art.52) rejected the NIV after consideration of the deputies' report. It decided: "to reject the NIV on the ground that the dynamic equivalent method of translation does not do full justice to the inscripturated, inspired Word of God."
b The 1980 Synod (Acts, Art.36) issued a broad mandate to deputies, with the result that the NIV was evaluated again.
c The 1983 Synod (Report, p.115/116) considered the NIV once more, on the basis of the report's conclusion that (p.121) "the NIV has strong appeal because of its clarity and readability, but is less suitable for worship and study purposes because of its method of translation."
- 17 a Concerning the NASB, the 1978 Synod decided (Acts, Art.42) "to abandon evaluation of NASB" on the basis of the deputies' report.
b Due to the broad mandate from the 1980 Synod, deputies reported to the 1983 Synod that "NASB is a similar translation to the RSV, but falls short in clarity and readability. It is therefore less suited for worship, instructional or worship use."
c The 1983 Synod followed deputies' recommendations and decided to "recommend to the churches the RSV (1971 edition)..."

- 18 The 1983 Synod took due note, with its deputies, of the work and results of studies by the Canadian sister churches. The RSV was chosen on the basis of its formal-equivalent method; it is "a reliable, accurate and acceptable translation of the Holy Scriptures, presented in clear, dignified, contemporary English, and suitable for use in public worship, instructional and family use" (Art.35 of the Acts).
- 19 The New King James Bible (British, 1982) is a new translation and has not as yet been evaluated by the churches.
- 20 The material presented to the 1987 Synod fails to show sufficient grounds why the decisions of the 1983 Synod (Acts,Art.35) should be amended or rescinded.
- 21 The overture by the church of Armadale, whilst warranting careful study of its contents, does not provide the 1987 Synod with sufficient grounds to reconsider evaluation of the NIV and the NASB at this stage, taking into account the amount of time and personnel involved.
- 22 Any change to another Bible translation has serious implications for the text of the confessional standards and the liturgical writings in the Book of Praise.
- 23 Involvement of the ICRC would be commendable.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 to thank the deputies for their report and to discharge them:
- 2 to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a make careful study of the overture by the church of Armadale dated 21 July 1987, and report their findings to the 1989 Synod as to reconsideration of the NIV and the NASB.
 - b continue to monitor developments regarding the use of the RSV within the churches, in co-operation with similar committees in the sister churches.
 - c monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the RSV.
 - d maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translations.
 - e consider the New KJV with a view to examine its suitability for use in the churches.
 - f report to next synod.
 - g to come to the 1989 Synod with a clear recommendation re a proposal on Bible translations to the ICRC.
- 3 to accept the deputies' conclusion that in the appeal submitted to the 1985 Synod and in other material submitted to that synod and to the deputies, no proof or substantial evidence has been given that the 1983 Synod took an unscriptural decision.
- 4 not to accede to the proposal made by br. & sr. L. Woonings, referring their submission to the new deputies.
- 5 not to accede to the request by br. & sr. R.Evans to return to the KJV.
- 6 not to accede to the request by the Church of Armadale to investigate the NIV and the NASB at this time.
- 7 to request Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to enquire whether the matter of Bible translations can be tabled at the ICRC.

COUNTER-PROPOSAL - W. Huizinga and J. De Vos

A MATERIAL - SAME

B OBSERVATIONS - SAME

C CONSIDERATIONS - SAME except for the following:

- 12 The church at Armadale has difficulties in that the RSV often deviates from the Hebrew text of the OT (cf. the footnotes about the frequent use of the versions and especially the corrections of the Hebrew text by conjectural emendations). Also, some translations (as mentioned in their submission) of undisputed texts in which a liberal tendency of the RSV becomes apparent troubles Armadale.
- 14 The 10 examples given by Armadale show that the RSV at times displays a liberal tendency.
- 15 Seeing the frequent and unsound tendency unnecessarily to use the versions or conjectural emendations in the OT, and re some translations which reflect a liberal theology, it would be unwise to commit ourselves for good to the RSV.
- 16 a Add "This took place even though the deputies had reported and concluded about the NIV 'We can fully recommend this Bible Version to our people. For the rest we must wait in any case for the appearance of the OT portion'" (p.5).
- 21 The overture of Armadale presents sufficient evidence that it is wise to review, according to Art.33 C.O., the decision of the 1985 Synod.

D RECOMMENDATIONS - SAME except for the following:

- 2 a. and g. and e. DELETE
- 2 a to investigate once more the NIV & NASB and to investigate the New KJV to see if any one of these translations would be better than the RSV. The reports of previous deputies and the reports of deputies of our Canadian sister-churches can be consulted and used for this investigation.
 - b to use as criteria
 - 1 faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.
 - 2 Readability and suitability for worship services, for instruction and for memorization.
 - 3 Consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures

(re-number Recommendations 2.b to f as 2.c to f)
- 3 meanwhile to uphold and maintain the decision of the 1983 Synod to recommend the RSV for use in the churches.
- 6 DELETE

Rev. A. Veldman states that the further amendments which he moved are now withdrawn.

As decided upon previously, the proposal of Committee 2 is voted on first. It is DEFEATED.

The counter-proposal is voted on and ADOPTED.

ARTICLE 110

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Committee 1 presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.7a & b (Section Q)

- 1 Regarding proceedings at the first meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. (ICRC)

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Deputies received the following mandate:

"To inform the Interim Committee of the ICRC of synod's decision as recorded in the 1985 Acts, Art.88 point 3.2.

Synod deputizes Rev. G. van Rongen and Rev. A. Veldman (Alternate: Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur) to attend the Conference in 1985 at Edinburgh with the instructions as recorded in the 1983 Acts, Art.112.5.j and the 1985 Acts, Art.88 point 3.2.)"
- 2 The first meeting of the ICRC took place during September 1985 in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 3 The following churches participated as members of the ICRC:
 - The Canadian Reformed Churches
 - The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
 - The Free Church of Scotland
 - The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
 - The Presbyterian Church in Korea
 - The Reformed Churches on East-Sumba/Savu
 - The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
 - The Free Church in South Africa
 - The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
 - The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

of which the last three churches were admitted as member by the conference after a sub-committee had scrutinized the documents presented by these churches and had also interviewed the representatives of these churches at length about the history and the faithfulness of their churches and determined that each of them is striving for unity with churches which are already members of the conference.
- 4 The next meeting of the conference is to be held on June 19-23, 1989 at Cloverdale, British Columbia, Canada.
- 5 Proposed amendments to the Constitution and Regulations were not dealt with as the member churches had insufficient time to study them.
- 6 The amendments already submitted will be placed on the agenda at the next meeting.
- 7 This 1987 Synod (Acts of the 1985 Synod, Art.87.4) was to make a decision regarding our continued membership of the ICRC on the basis of the reports of conference delegates and on the report of deputies.
- 8 The Acts of the 1985 Synod do not mention the amendment to the constitution of the ICRC already proposed during the 1983 Synod (the 1983 Acts, Art.84).
- 9 A decision relating to cost-sharing was adopted by the conference. Deputies consider that travelling expenses ought also to be shared on a pro-rata basis by the churches involved in the ICRC.
- 10 A committee was appointed to gather information from member-churches regarding their missionary activities and to study possibilities to co-ordinate such activities.
- 11 A committee was appointed to deal with the text of the Ecumenical Creeds.
- 12 Various papers were delivered on:
 - "The Doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions";
 - "Piety in the Book of Psalms";
 - "The Relationship of the Sacraments to New Life in the Spirit";
 - "The Doctrine of the Covenant and the Reformed Confessions";
 - "The Exercise of Inter-Church Relations".

No conclusions on these papers are reported.
- 13 Deputies report that this first meeting of the ICRC demonstrated "that although there is difference in tradition between the reformed and presbyterian churches there is still unity in faith."

- 14 The matter of interchurch relations did not receive quite the attention that had been hoped for and deputies conclude that it would be wise to include this issue once again on the agenda of the next meeting of the conference. This is particularly important because of the difference in approach taken by the reformed and presbyterian churches respectively.
- 15 In their Supplementary Report deputies report that the Free Church of Scotland, though having a great deal of sympathy with the view that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership of the ICRC, would support such proposal only while the RES remained tolerant to breaches of reformed belief and practice.
- 16 Though not recorded in the report of deputies, it is noted that the Acts of the Canadian sister churches make mention of a considerable number of other churches present at the meeting of the ICRC as observers. Deputies inform us that the many observers and visitors present at the 1985 ICRC occasioned concern.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 As deputies were unable to have the proposals as outlined in art.88 of the Acts of the 1985 Synod dealt with in the meeting of the ICRC these matters should again be tabled at the next meeting of the conference.
- 2 The proposal recorded in art.84, Acts of the 1983 Synod should also be incorporated in the proposals to be made to the conference.
- 3 So as to make the conference more meaningful it will be preferable if not essential that definite conclusions be reached by the conference on the items on the agenda e.g. on the doctrine of the church, covenant ...
- 4 As a conclusion was not reached in the matter of rules for relation with other churches this matter should receive urgent attention at the next conference.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides

- 1 To continue the membership in the ICRC Churches.
- 2 To instruct deputies to submit to the secretary of the ICRC the following proposals for amendment of the Constitution.
 - a to add to Art.IV after (d)
 - (e) show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country; (Art.84 the Acts of the 1983 Synod)
 - b a stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members;
 - c that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the IRCR;
 - d that 'CONSTITUTION Art. V - Authority' be amended to read "The conclusion of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation."
 - e that "REGULATIONS Art. II" be amended to read: "Each conference shall elect the following officers: a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary." (amendment underlined)
 - f that "REGULATIONS Art. II, 4.b, iv" be amended to read: "to forward to the churches materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference." (amendments underlined)
- 3 to ask the next meeting of the conference:
 - a to give matters related to the constitution priority.
 - b to place on the agenda once again the issue of inter-church relations and if possible to come with recommendations to the member churches;

- c to make a clear statement about the position of the observers and advisers, and furthermore which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church;
 - d to reconsider the decision taken by the previous conference regarding travelling expenses of delegates in line with the following proposal: "Travelling expenses should be borne by the member churches on the same basis as the ordinary costs of the conference." GROUND: Without accepting this proposal the member churches which are bigger in number are privileged compared to member churches smaller in number;
 - e to place the matter of Bible translations on the agenda of the next conference.
 - f to draw conclusions on matters discussed.
- 4 To send two members of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad as delegates to the next meeting of the conference to be held on June 19-23, 1989 in Vancouver (Cloverdale), Canada.
 - 5 That the 1989 Synod make a decision regarding our continuing membership in the ICRC on the basis of the reports of conference-delegates and of the report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, giving due consideration to the stated grounds for this and the above decisions.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 111

CLOSED SESSION

The chairman informs the audience that synod will go into closed session for the remainder of the evening. In closed session agenda-items 8.24 (The Appeal of Rev. G. van Rongen) and 9 (The Instruction of Launceston) are dealt with. Acts of synod on these matters will be sent under separate cover to the consistories. Closed session comes to an end and the chairman declares synod 'open' once more.

ARTICLE 112

ADJOURNMENT

Psalm 84:1 is sung. Br. L. 't Hart closes synod for the day with prayer.

ELEVENTH SESSION - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1987

MORNING AND AFTERNOON SESSIONS

ARTICLE 113

REOPENING

Psalm 122:1,3 are sung. The chairman opens synod with the reading of Psalm 122 and prayer. A hearty welcome is extended to all delegates and visitors.

ARTICLE 114

ADOPTION OF ACTS

Article 95-107 of the Acts are adopted

ARTICLE 115

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Committee 1 (majority report) presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda item 10.8 and 8.21,23

- 1 The report of the deputies.
- 2 A letter from br. P.W. Dekker
- 3 A letter from br. J. Numan

B OBSERVATIONS

- 1 The 1985 Synod gave deputies the following instructions:
 - a to convey our joy and gratitude with the mutual recognition of the need to seek unity of faith on the basis of God's Word;
 - b to investigate further whether the PCEA can be acknowledged as a true church according to Articles 27-29,BC;
 - c to pay particular attention to the point of "three types of communicants" as mentioned in deputies' report; and
 - d to submit their report to the churches at least three months prior to the next synod.

It was also decided (art.95.8) that "minutes of meetings with representatives of the PCEA have to be sent to the churches."

- 2 The first (point "a") was done by the 1985 Synod itself.
- 3 The last part of the above mandate was completed by a letter, dated 07/03/87, to the churches.
- 4 The deputies have submitted their report well in time before this synod.
- 5 The deputies' report gives a valuable review of the history of the PCEA, as this is interwoven with that of The Free Church of Scotland.
- 6 Important data about the PCEA, such as their supreme and subordinate standards, the amendment of their standards, the subscription to their confessions, the listing of their presbyteries, and the Barrier Act of 1697, are presented (cf. the report of deputies which is included in the Acts as an appendix).

- 7 The meeting with delegates of the PCEA at Melbourne on March 3- 4, 1987 is amply reported. Papers prepared and studied in advance of the meeting allowed fruitful and good discussions on the following topics:
- 1 What is implied in a sister-church relationship - J. VanderRos
 - 2 The invisible church - W.P. Gadsby
 - 3 A few aspects of our reformed liturgy- G. van Rongen.
 - 4 Called children in the Covenant - K. Jonker
 - 5 The concept of an adherent - J.M. Cromarty
 - 6 Term eldership - R.S. Ward
 - 7 The status of a minister in the presbytery - R.S. Ward.

Conclusions made from these discussions by the deputies (cf. the report) can be summarized as follows:

- a Re paper #1. The PCEA has suffered in the past from church unions and needs to relearn fruitful fellowship with other faithful churches. They adhere to the wellknown three marks of the true church for the evaluation of other churches.
- b Re paper #2. Whereas in the Dutch situation controversy in the 20th Century made the distinction more suspect, the English-speaking presbyterians have only recently expressed cautions concerning the use of this distinction (e.g. J. Murray's article). The PCEA agrees that care and wisdom are needed to avoid misunderstanding with respect to this distinction so that the 'visible church' is not denigrated.
- c Re paper #3. The main area of concern was the "Regulative Principle" which is the same as our explanation in L.D. 35 of the second commandment. However, this principle is applied to advocate "Purity of Worship" (no hymns, no instruments, no festive days besides Sundays, and a very simple liturgy). Our deputies saw an inconsistency in this. Meanwhile, the PCEA does not condemn others who do not adhere to "The Purity of Worship."
- d Re paper #4. There is good unity on the matters of catechetical instruction and discipline over baptized members, but some formulations of their confession and Directory for Worship are not as good as in the reformed confessions and liturgical forms.
- e Re paper #5. The PCEA distinguishes three types of adherents:
 - 1 baptized young people who do not profess the faith but remain under the supervision of the session;
 - 2 'outsiders' who are not baptized but who attend church regularly and who welcome further contact by the elders;
 - 3 those who have evidently made a credible profession of faith, who attend church regularly, but who, for a variety of reasons, have scruples about joining the church.

The session, in a responsible and wise manner, can admit certain adherents in above category 3 to the Lord's supper as long as this does not become an indefinite arrangement and so long as there is a commitment to remove the obstacles to church- membership.
- f Re paper #6. A good understanding of the different historical and biblical reasons for practicing term - or life - eldership by the respective federations was reached.
- g Re paper #7. Concerning the position of the minister in the presbytery it was stated that according to the Books of Discipline, 1560 and 1578, the elders have to take heed to the preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline including the life and work of their minister even to the point of having to admonish and discipline him. The reason why the presbytery handles judicial action against a minister is that he should be judged by his peers. Also, that the presbytery has equal numbers of ministers and elders offsets hierarchy by ministers.

- 8 The deputies evaluated the PCEA in the light of articles 27-29, BC (the marks of the church). Their report can be summarized as follows:
 - a The PREACHING of the Word is good. The sermons are plain teachings of Scripture. Since these churches are small and composed of many who came from outside, the sermons have an evangelistic character.
 - b Only the SACRAMENTS instituted by Christ are administered. Baptism is administered in a scriptural manner. No adopted form is used for the administration of the Lord's supper. Their form of government (Practice and Procedure, 1983) states that "the session is responsible to see that no person openly known to be delinquent in doctrine or life be permitted at the table." As was mentioned above, one category of adherents are sometimes allowed to partake of the Lord's supper, though they are not communicant members of the church.
 - c CHURCH DISCIPLINE is exercised in order to correct and punish sins. Six means of discipline are used. Concerning discipline and the fencing of the Lord's table the deputies took note of the report of the Canadian deputies for contact with the OPC. They conclude that while we cannot say that welcoming members in good standing of evangelical churches at the Lord's table is contrary to the Bible, the confessions or the Church Order, we should recognize that this matter requires further attention.
- 9 The deputies also took it upon themselves to investigate and evaluate the presbyterian form of government of the PCEA. The PCEA has the full constitution of the Church of Scotland as it was reformed in 1560. Its basis is undeniably reformed in character. The deputies draw attention to the fact that ministers are allowed to preach in other pulpits since they are licensed to preach the Gospel wherever the opportunity presents itself. But the minister remains accountable to the presbytery.
- 10 The deputies recommend:
 - a Synod decide to recognize the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a true church according to Articles 27 & 29 of the Belgic Confession.
 - b Synod discharge deputies appointed by the 1985 Synod.
 - c Synod appoint new deputies with instructions to give practical effect to the recognition of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to study the longer term implications.
- 11 Br. P.W. Dekker registers his reservations about the deputies' recommendation to recognize the PCEA as a true church. He humbly submits that the marks of the true church are not found in the PCEA because:
 - a weaknesses in their administration of baptism (especially the prayer after baptism).
 - b the preaching is subject to the oversight by the presbytery.
 - c adherents are allowed at the Lord's table
 - d members do not subscribe to the confessions.
- 12 Br. J. Numan implores the synod not to acknowledge the PCEA as a true church, but to investigate further matters of grave concern. He contends that such further discussion will have the result that the PCEA must adopt the Three Forms of Unity. His grave concerns with the PCEA are:
 - a The PCEA admits members of evangelical churches and adherents to the Lord's table.
 - b Pulpit exchanges between the PCEA and other churches.
 - c The subscription to the 'whole doctrine' of the confessions by the office bearers is not clear.
 - d A variety of issues such as evangelical rather than covenantal preaching, training of ministers at Geelong. He mentions that other presbyterian churches have different practices re membership in trade unions, denunciation of christian schools, and he questions the effects of sister relations on our own churches.

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 The 1983 Synod already considered (Acts of the 1983 Synod art.96)

- "A 1 that the catholic church of Christ is spread and dispersed over the whole world and yet is joined and united in one and the same Spirit and in the unity of the true faith by means of preserving the true doctrine and administration of the sacraments and the discipline in accordance to the ordinances of Jesus Christ as the only Head. This is so according to the Word of God (John 17:11, 20, 21; Ephesians 3: 14-4:16; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16) and the confessional documents based on the Word of God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21 and Belgic Confession, Art. 27-29);
- 2 that it is the calling of the true believers and of the true churches to strive for unity in every place and every country with those who profess the same faith and maintain the pure preaching of the Word, the pure administration of the sacraments and the pure exercise of church discipline;
- 3 that true believers and true churches ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church so as to practise unity of faith and ecclesiastical fellowship, and reject unity of faith and ecclesiastical fellowship with churches which publicly and continuously despise the Word of God and the true faith;
- 4 that churches ought to consider that the Lord Jesus congregates his church in other countries along other roads of historical progress so that differences become manifest in the way other churches profess their faith and practise ecclesiastical fellowship, e.g. as to liturgy and church government whereas they do not deviate from the Word of God and maintain the true doctrine;
- B 3 that the PCEA are based on the Westminster Standards as is the Free Church of Scotland;
- 4 that the PCEA have separated themselves from the apostate Presbyterian Church in 1846 whereby they did not adopt the authority of the government over the churches.
- 5 that those churches have terminated their membership of the R.E.S. some months before the Free Church of Scotland so acted in 1981 because of the membership of the Synodical Reformed Churches in the Netherlands." (Art.96)
- 2 The PCEA has joined the ICRC in 1985. This obligates the FRCA, according to the purpose of the ICRC, to seek for unity with the PCEA.
- 3 Employing the biblical directives as confessed in Articles 27- 29, BC, the deputies have amply shown that the PCEA demonstrates a strong desire to adhere to the three marks of a faithful church.
- 4 In its form of government the PCEA strongly acknowledges Jesus Christ as the only Head of the churches. The PCEA also practises a presbyterian form of government, which is not identical to ours in all respects but which nevertheless uses biblical norms and rejects hierarchy.
- 5 The report of the deputies demonstrates that there is a oneness in desire to serve the Lord according to his Word between the FRCA and the PCEA.
- 6 Though the concept of and rules for entering sister-relations with the PCEA have been discussed at the Melbourne meeting, the deputies had no mandate to make recommendations on this matter. This will have to be done by new deputies.
- 7 As the letters of brs. Dekker and Numan show, there remain differences between the PCEA and the FRCA. As a number of their remarks touch on the essential marks of the church, ongoing discussion is needed. Br. J. Numan is incorrect in some of his concerns. The preaching was stated as being evangelistic, not evangelical. The use of the seminary at Geelong for training their ministers was minimal in the past, and the PCEA has now withdrawn from this institution.
- 8 Since contacts should be mutually beneficial to both bonds of churches, areas of concern, while not constituting impediments in acknowledging that there is a oneness in desire to serve the Lord according to his Word, should remain topics of mutual discussion. Such topics are, e.g.,
- The fencing of the Lord's table.
 - Pulpit exchanges.
 - Children in the covenant.

d The problem of adherents.

Discussions on these matters should go hand in hand with further developments towards sister church relationship.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Synod thanks the deputies for their work well done.
- 2 Synod expresses its joy that between the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia there is indeed a mutual desire to serve God according to His Word.
- 3 Synod instructs new deputies to work further towards reaching sister relations with the PCEA. Rules for such sister relations should be mutually discussed and accepted before the establishment of sister relations.
- 4 Synod instructs deputies to continue, for the mutual benefit of both federations of churches, the discussion about areas of concern mentioned in Consideration 8, e.g.,
 - a The fencing of the Lord's table
 - b Pulpit exchanges
 - c Children in the covenant
 - d The problem of adherents
- 5 Synod instructs deputies to issue press releases for the benefit of the churches concerning progress made.
- 6 Synod instructs deputies to report to the churches three months before the convening of the next synod as well as to report to the next synod.

Committee 1 (minority report) presents:

A MATERIAL - SAME

B OBSERVATIONS - SAME

C CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 SAME
- 2 SAME
- 3 Employing the biblical directives as confessed in Articles 27- 29, BC, the deputies have shown that the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia demonstrates the marks of a faithful church and governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it.
- 4 SAME
- 5 The report of the deputies has demonstrated that there is a unity of true faith between the PCEA & FRCA on essentials, i.e. the marks of the true church.
- 6 SAME
- 7 Br. J. Numan is incorrect in some of his concerns. The preaching was stated as being evangelistic, not evangelical. The use of the seminary at Geelong for training their ministers was minimal in the past and the PCEA has now withdrawn from this institution. Christian schools are promoted and not denounced. Also the concern about our own churches is not reflected in submissions to synod, since only two individual brothers addressed synod on this report, and since the truth and not the counsel of fear should be followed. Also, there is no evidence that trade unionism is justified in the PCEA.
- 8 Since contacts should be mutually beneficial to both bonds of churches, areas of concern, while not constituting impediments in acknowledging the unity in true faith, should remain topics of mutual discussion. Such topics are, e.g.,

- a The admission of communicant members of evangelical churches and of adherents to the Lord's table.
- b Pulpit exchanges.
- c Children in the covenant.

D RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 SAME
- 2 Synod expresses its joy that there is indeed unity of true faith between the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.
- 3 SAME
- 4 Synod instructs deputies to continue, for the mutual benefit of both federations of churches, the discussion about areas of concern mentioned in Consideration 8, e.g.
 - a The admission of communicant members of evangelical churches and of adherents to the Lord's table.
 - b Pulpit exchanges.
 - c Children in the covenant.
- 5 SAME
- 6 SAME

Three rounds of discussion take place on both the majority report and minority report. Rev. K. Jonker and br. J. VanderRos speak as deputies at the end of rounds.

The majority report is voted on first and it is ADOPTED.

The minority report is thus not voted on.

ARTICLE 116

CLOSED SESSION

Synod goes into closed session. In closed session the church visits to Albany in 1985 and 1986, to Byford in 1985 and 1986, to Armadale in 1985 and 1986, to Kelmscott in 1985 and 1986, and to Launceston in 1986 are reported and dealt with.

Question period ad Art. 41, C.O. is held.

Appointments by synod, as decided upon earlier, are discussed and approved in closed session, but will be recorded in the regular Acts of synod.

The budget of synod up to the next synod and the cost-sharing schedule are adopted. They too will be recorded in the regular Acts of synod.

Deputies ad Arts. 48, 75, C.O. report that they gave concurring advice for the retirement of the Rev. K. Bruning.

Closed session ceases.

ARTICLE 117

BUDGET OF SYNOD

- 1 COSTS INCURRED BY PREVIOUS DEPUTIES
 - a printing of reports \$800
 - b travelling costs to meetings \$250
- 2 COSTS INCURRED FOR THE 1987 SYNOD

a	food and drink	\$700
b	hire of microphone system	\$200
c	paper and repairs for photocopier	\$550
d	travelling costs to and from synod	\$2000
e	printing of the Acts of the 1987 Synod	\$2500
f	loss of income by delegates (3)	\$1700
3 ESTIMATED COSTS DEPUTIES WILL INCUR OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS		
a	administration and miscellaneous	\$400
b	reports to the next synod	\$800
c	travelling to meetings	\$1000
d	travelling to other churches	\$8200
e	pulpit exchanges and church visits	\$3600
	TOTAL COSTS =	\$21,700

Deputies and delegates are asked to claim their expenses from the treasurers of synods in the future. Synod also takes note of the letter, dated December 29, 1986, by brs. J. Kroeze and A.M. Hidding to the churches about financial matters.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 118

COST-SHARING SCHEME

To calculate this the number of communicant members of each congregation was totalled. The percentage which each congregation had of the total number of communicant members was used to arrive at the percentage each congregation pays of the budget of synod.

-	Albany	20%
-	Armadale	25%
-	Byford	10%
-	Kelmscott	25%
-	Launceston	20%

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED

ARTICLE 119

APPOINTMENTS

Agenda item 12

Synod makes the following appointments:

- 1 Publishing of the Acts**
The church of Armadale
- 2 Archives and Library of Synod**
The church of Kelmscott
- 3 Supervision of Archives and Library**

The church of Byford

4 a Treasurers of Synod

Brs. John de Man and Ad. Hordyk

b Auditors for Synods' Treasury

The church of Kelmscott

5 Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

Rev. A. Veldman (convener), Rev. W. Huizinga, Rev. K. Bruning, br. J. Eikelboom and br. J.A. Swarts, br. L. VanBurgel. Alternates: Rev. C. Bouwman and br. M. Eikelboom

6 Deputies for Contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

Rev. C. Bouwman(convener), br. M. Eikelboom, br. P.O. Posthuma and br. John Bruning. Alternates: br. K.A. Wieske and br. W. Geurts

7 Deputies re Bible Translations

Rev. W. Huizinga (convener), Rev. C. Bouwman, br. P. 't Hart and br. A. Plug. Alternate: br. J. Numan

8 Deputies for Training for the Ministry (Art.18,19.C.O.)

Rev. K. Jonker, br. A.M. Hidding and br. J. VanderRos. Alternate: br. R. Groenewold

9 Pulpit Exchanges

The church of Albany

10 Deputies for the Linguistic Revision of the C.O.

Br. K.A. Wieske (convener) and br. S.H. Terpstra. Alternate: br. M. Eikelboom

11 Deputies for Examining the Linguistic aspects of Ecclesiastical Ordinances

Br. K.A. Wieske (convener) and Br. S.H. Terpstra. Alternate: Br. M. Eikelboom

12 a Classis-Churches:

- For the Church of Albany	Armadale
- For the Church of Armadale	Kelmscott
- For the Church of Kelmscott	Launceston
- For the Church of Launceston	'Bedfordale'
- For the Church of Byford	Albany
- For the Church of 'Bedfordale'	Byford

b Second Appeal Churches

- For all the churches (except Armadale)	Armadale
- For the Church of Armadale	Byford

13 Deputies for Church Visits

The active serving Ministers: Rev. A. Veldman (convener). Alternates: br. A. Van Leeuwen, br. K.A. Wieske

14 Deputies for Art. 48 & 76, C.O.

Rev. A. Veldman, Rev. C. Bouwman and br. L. 't Hart

15 Deputies for Art.66, C.O.

The church of Launceston

16 Deputies for Auditing of the Books of Deputies ad Art. 18 & 19, C.O.

The church of Launceston

17 Church Book (Hymns)

Br. John Plug sr. (Albany), br. Len Schoof and br. J. Diek. Alternate: br. L. 't Hart

18 Counsellor for Kelmscott

Rev. W. Huizinga

19 Convening Church for Next Synod

- Church - Armadale
- Place - Armadale
- Time - End of October, 1989

ARTICLE 120

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman declares synod adjourned to enjoy the last of the delicious meals which fattened the delegates during the last eleven days.

EVENING SESSION

ARTICLE 121

REOPENING

Hymn 5, all stanzas, are sung in reopening synod. The chairman bids all the delegates and the many visitors a hearty welcome.

The letter of greetings to the 1987 Synod of our sister-churches in South Africa is read and approved.

ARTICLE 122

PERSONAL QUESTION PERIOD

A personal question period is held.

ARTICLE 123

CENSURE AD ART. 47, C.O.

Censure ad art. 47, C.O. is held. No censure is needed

ARTICLE 124

ADOPTION OF ACTS

Articles 108-124 of the Acts are adopted.

ARTICLE 125

APPROVAL OF PRESS RELEASE

The press release is read by the vice-chairman and it is approved.

ARTICLE 126

CLOSING

On behalf of the synod the chairman thanks the kitchen staff, Mrs. J. VanDuyn and Mrs. J. Dekker, and our typist, Mrs. B. Vermeulen for their excellent services. The chairman hands to them tokens of appreciation.

On behalf of the delegates the vice-chairman expresses thanks to the chairman for his excellent leadership. This is all the more so since this has become the longest synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Also, he had to contend with new rules and a new method of reporting and making decisions. He is commended for his able chairmanship.

The chairman then makes the following closing remarks:

Brother-delegates,

The 1987 Synod of Albany is about to become a thing of the past. We have arrived at the point at which we can say the task has been completed. It was certainly not an easy task. As delegates we have struggled with the many items which the churches placed on the agenda of this synod. And sometimes it was a struggle indeed to come to the most responsible decision. Unfortunately we could not always convince one another with the result that as regards certain issues we had to deal with a majority and minority report or with some counter proposals. Yet, together we have tried - and I now say it with the words of Psalm 122 - to seek the good for Jerusalem.

I think that I speak on behalf of all of you when I say that we have done so with many shortcomings. Our work was defiled with sin. Yet, we are thankful to the LORD who, by way of his churches, has called us to this special task and has enabled us to perform our duties. We pray that He may bless the work which has been done, sanctify it and use it for the upbuilding of His church and the glory of His Name.

Brother-delegates, your task has come to an end. At the beginning of this synod some predictions were made as far as its duration is concerned. It has turned out to be the longest synod in the history of the FRCA. Brothers, I don't blame you for it. After all, the churches have made up the agenda of this synod. It was our task to deal with all items properly.

We have tried to do so by first observing the material, thereafter to consider it, in order to be able to give proper recommendations. I hope that when reading the Acts the churches will appreciate this way of formulating decisions. They will realize that there is Canadian influence. But that is something for which we can be thankful. We may indeed learn from one another.

As we have almost reached the close of the synod it is appropriate to speak some words of thanks in various directions.

I will start with expressing my thankfulness towards my fellow delegates. Brothers, I thank you for your co-operation. You haven't made it hard for me to chair this meeting. If at any time I have done anyone injustice, I apologize for it.

I will thank the committees for their advisory work. It was not always easy to come with proper advice. Sometimes we had to do our homework again. Especially committee 3 had some troubles in this respect.

On behalf of all delegates I will express a special word of thanks to sr. Vermeulen who did a marvelous job in the computer room. At the time that this synod was about to start you were wondering whether it indeed was a full time job. Well, it was even more than that. Thank you ever so much.

We will also express a word of thanks to the kitchen staff, in particular to the sisters Van Duyn and Dekker. You have looked after us very well. I can assure you that we as delegates will not easily forget the good meals we have enjoyed here in Albany. A restaurant could not have served us any better.

And now we are going to say 'farewell' to one another. Brothers, may the LORD be with you all. May he bring you safely home and strengthen you for your tasks of your respective offices. May He also strengthen those who have been appointed as deputies and enable them to do their work faithfully.

We pray that the LORD will bless and keep his churches, lead and guide them on the way to the eternal glory.

Thank you.

Psalm 100, all stanzas, are sung. Rev. K. Jonker closes the synod with prayer of thanksgiving.

For the Fifteenth Synod of the FRCA,

Rev. W. Huizinga, first clerk, e.t.

APPENDIX A(a)

REPORT TO THE 1987 SYNOD OF ALBANY

of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

from the DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD¹

Esteemed Brethren,

The 1985 Synod of The Free Reformed Churches of Launceston appointed the above mentioned deputies and instructed them to report to the 1987 Synod.

The deputies hereby submit the report of their activities. As the work of deputies will continue after the completion of this report and since we expect to receive some preliminary information from the General Synod of The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands which commenced April 22, 1987, a short supplementary report will be issued, D.V., just before the the synod of of Albany commences.

A. MANDATE

The Synod of Launceston in 1985 appointed Rev. K. Bruning (convenor), Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur, Rev. G. van Rongen, Rev. A. Veldman and br. J.L. van Burgel as deputies and instructed them as follows:

- a. to continue the sister-church relationships with:
 - i) The Canadian Reformed Churches
 - ii) De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
 - iii) Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
 - iv) The Presbyterian Church in Korea
 - v) The Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timor-Sabu
(See Acts, Article 74)
- b. to visit the first synod meeting of the churches mentioned in a(v) above in November 1985, by Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur; Alternate: Br. J.L. van Burgel.
- c.
 - i) to thoroughly investigate the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Free Church of Scotland and submit comprehensive reports to the churches and to the next synod, paying particular attention to the marks of the true church and the question of church government.
 - ii) to maintain contact with these churches at the present level (Acts of 1985, Art. 43).
- d.
 - i) to write to the next synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to point out to these churches that their sister-church relationship with, for instance, the Reformed Churches of Australia, as well as their second level correspondence with the GKN (Synodical) are impediments to continue the existing contact.
 - ii) to inform the deputies of our sister churches in The Netherlands about this decision.
(Acts of 1985, Article 75)
- e.
 - i) to investigate whether or not the Reformed Church of Japan, the Presbyterian Church in Uganda and the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka can be recognized as true and faithful churches according to Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession with a view to the possible establishment of sister-church relations.
(See Acts of 1983, Art. 112.5e; Acts of 1985, Art. 76)
 - ii) to urge the Reformed Church of Japan to break the ties with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES).
(Acts of 1985, Art. 76)
- f. to investigate the possibilities to seek new contacts with other churches, in close contact with deputies from our sister churches, especially with those of The Netherlands.
(Acts of 1983, Art. 112.5f)
- g. to inform the Interim Committee of the ICRC of synod's decision as recorded in the Acts of 1985, Art. 88 point 3.2. Synod deputizes Rev. G. van Rongen and Rev. A. Veldman (Alternate: Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur) to attend the 1985 ICRC at Edinburgh with the instructions as recorded in the Acts of 1983, Art. 112.5j and Acts of 1985, Art. 88 point 3.2.
- h. to bring to the attention of the churches those items from the correspondence with sister churches abroad which are of importance to the churches.
- i. to forward copies of the Acts of the 1985 Synod to the sister churches abroad.
- j. to inform the sister churches abroad of the place and time of the next synod, and to send the preliminary agenda to them at least six weeks prior to the commencement of that synod.
- k. to inform the churches as soon as an invitation or announcement of a coming synod of one of the sister churches comes in, so that the churches may determine if one of the office-bearers is able to represent our churches there.
- l. to supply the churches with Acts of synods of sister churches abroad.

1 see Table of Contents at the front of the Acts for the contents of this report - editor

- m. to report to the churches three months before the next synod and also the synod itself.

B. MEETINGS OF DEPUTIES

Deputies have met on six occasions since the Synod of Launceston. All deputies were present at each meeting except for Rev. K. Bruning who was absent on two occasions overseas. Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur was appointed acting chairman during Rev. Bruning's absence.

Br. J. Eikelboom, who was appointed as alternate delegate, attended the first two deputies' meetings.

C. GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. RULES FOR CORRESPONDENCE

- 1.1 The 1983 Synod of Kelmscott requested deputies to draft rules for correspondence with sister churches. These were printed in the Acts of the Synod of Launceston in 1970, Art. 26 as follows:
- a. to take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline do not deviate from the reformed confession;
 - b. to send each other the agenda and decisions (Acts) of the general synods and the receiving of subsequent delegates from these other churches as advisors;
 - c. to consult each other previous to making any amendments or additions to confessional standards, church orders or liturgical forms;
 - d. to accept each other's attestations and admit each other's ministers of the Word to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, applying what was determined at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1983, in Article 165, which was further detailed at the Synod of Groningen in 1927 in Article 161 (which includes the closer definition made in Amsterdam in 1936, Article 122, decision I, 4);
 - e. to be responsible to each other concerning correspondence with third parties.
- 1.2 Deputies of the sister churches in The Netherlands recommended to the General Synod of Heemse in 1984 that it appoint deputies to study the rules for correspondence and the rules for temporary contact. The deputies had indicated in their report to synod that the rules in their present form presented practical difficulties when applied to various presbyterian churches with which the GKN (Lib) had sought contact. In response to this the Synod of Heemse decided:
- i) to instruct new deputies to study the whole field of inter-church relations and
 - a) to base themselves on the considerations on this matter of the 1978 General Synod of Groningen-Zuid (see below);
 - b) to take into account those difficulties which made former deputies decide to suggest changes, as proposed in their report, especially as to the question of so-called 'double correspondence';
 - c) to reformulate, if necessary and possible, the names for the different forms of relations and the rules that hold for them;
 - d) to discuss these issues with (deputies of) churches with which relations exist, especially (of) those that have approached this synod about these issues;
 - e) to serve the next general synod with proposals.
 - ii) To allow deputies to apply the present rules in a flexible way, in accordance with the considerations mentioned under 1 (a), until the next general synod.
As to the 'temporary relation of ecclesiastical contact', synod decided not to drop the word 'temporary' but to add the rule that 'letters of testimony will be accepted'. Another decision asked for the translation (into English) of the most important articles in the synod's Acts.
- 1.3 The Dutch deputies formed a separate section (VI) to study these issues, taking the starting-point that the new formulation should lead to rules which were both completely responsible in the eyes of the Lord and profitable to all parties concerned. They report to the 1987 General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord as follows:
"After having taken a survey of inter-church relations as practised until now in the reformed churches, and also of the practice in other churches at home and abroad, the section moved on to a discussion of the character and the aims of new rules.
Matters discussed included:
- the extent to which these relations should be practised, and the measure of readiness to enter into them;
- the need for a period of getting acquainted with a church with regards to preaching, sacraments and discipline;
- the influence of history and background and how these should be taken into account;
- the background to and grounds for 'double correspondence';
- the need to keep in mind that we should serve our sister churches and where necessary be prepared to learn from them;
- and finally the fact that rules can only function satisfactorily if there is a mutual trust and love, so that it may well be a good thing, in certain cases, to make certain arrangements with a certain church which do not hold for another church in order for both churches to benefit most from the relationship."
Next came a draft for new rules for inter-church relations, copies of which were taken to the 1985 ICRC in Edinburgh as a contribution from the Dutch churches to the discussion to be held on inter-church relations.
A translation of this draft was provided to the Australian deputies and can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.4 The proposals by the Dutch deputies to the General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord were studied by us and following their request a preliminary response was sent. In our letter we pointed out e.g.:
- i) that the lack of uniformity in rules for ecclesiastical relations may lead to practical difficulties;
 - ii) the proposal to withdraw the 'temporary relation of ecclesiastical contact' and the suggested consequences of a decision by synod to declare a church true and faithful appears to be in line with the decision of the Synod of Launceston in 1985 (Art. 67);

- iii) that several parts of the proposed rules need clarification;
 - iv) that we are concerned that in the proposals the so-called 'double correspondence' cannot be ruled out;
 - v) it is clear whether the same rules will be shared by both corresponding churches.
- 1.5 Canadian deputies to the General Synod of Cloverdale 1983 also requested a mandate to "initiate a discussion with the sister churches regarding the application of the rules for correspondence with various churches."
The General Synod of Cloverdale responded to this by instructing the Committee on Correspondence:
- i) "that whenever a discussion with the sister churches on rules to cover ecclesiastical relationships is initiated, to urge the sister churches to maintain correspondence according to the adopted rules as the only form of permanent ecclesiastical relationship.
 - ii) to inform the sister churches that the Canadian Reformed Churches have not made it a common practice to formalize ecclesiastical contacts with churches with which correspondence cannot yet be established."
(Acts of 1983, Art. 110)
- The Canadian deputies in their report to the General Synod of Burlington of 1986 did not come with any proposals but requested (and were granted) a new mandate to consult with sister churches on this matter.
- 1.6 The 1985 Synod of Launceston decided:
"as there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of sister church relationship (Article 74.ii)."
- 1.7 Deputies request synod to renew its mandate to consult with the sister churches regarding the rules for ecclesiastical contact.
2. **DECLARATIONS**
Deputies received declaration from deputies of our Dutch sister churches that Rev. C. Kleyn and Rev. D. van Houdt were ministers in good standing.
Declarations for Rev. K. Bruning, Rev. K. Jonker, Rev. G. van Rongen and Rev. A. Veldman were issued by deputies prior to their visits overseas.
Contrary to the adopted rules no such declarations were received by deputies regarding other ministers from foreign sister churches who visited our country, and who by some of our consistories were invited to conduct church services.
3. **INTRODUCTORY BOOKLET**
Deputies reported to the Synod of Launceston that they proposed to authorize a booklet which introduce the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to recent and future contacts abroad.
The local churches also showed interest in such a booklet which could be used by church members to introduce our churches to outside contacts.
Rev. van Rongen willingly prepared the booklet which has now been duly printed. Most of the cost of producing the booklet has been recouped by sales to the local churches. Several hundred copies remain for future use.
The updating of some data, e.g. by means of a supplementary sheet, may become necessary in the near future. **CONTACT WITH SISTER CHURCHES**

D. CANADA

1. **CORRESPONDENCE**
- 1.1 The Canadian Reformed Churches informed deputies of their impending synod to be held at Burlington, Ontario on April 15th, 1986. Local churches were informed and there being no office bearer travelling to Canada, deputies sent fraternal greetings by letter.
- 1.2 Canadian deputies have responded to our request for a copy of their translated material on the Presbyterian Church in Korea's form of government.
2. **ACTS OF THE GENERAL SYNOD OF BURLINGTON OF 1986**
This general synod was held from April 15 to May 7, 1986.
From the acts we pass on the following pieces of information:
- 2.1 **Theological College**
- 2.1.1 Professor L. Selles reached retirement age. As professor of New Testament he is succeeded by the Rev. J. Geertsema of Surrey, B.C.
Synod expressed its gratitude for the work done by Professor Selles, as well as for that of the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene as lecturer in Ecclesiology and the Rev. G. VanDooren as temporary instructor in Diaconology.
- 2.1.2 Since the previous general synod, seven students have completed their studies, the enrolment now standing at ten - among them being one student from our churches.
- 2.1.3 Synod dealt with some correspondence between the Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the Word appointed by our churches and the Board of Governors regarding the possibilities that our Free Reformed Churches of Australia would become formally involved in the maintenance of the Theological College at Hamilton.
Since the above mentioned deputies undoubtedly will report to synod we will not give any quotations from the acts on this matter.
- 2.1.4 Further decisions taken by synod are:
- 1. to express gratitude that the work at the Theological College continues without interruption and that all instruction is given in harmony with the Word of God and in agreement with the confessions of the churches;
 - 2. to express gratitude that a more suitable building for the college could be acquired and that this was possible due to the generous donation of the Women's Saving Action and the building-fund drive held among the churches and the Australian sister churches;
 - 5. to approve the establishing of a two-year program leading to a diploma in theological studies;
 - 6. to thank the faculty for making available to the churches a special missionary training at the college.
- 2.2 **The Book of Praise**
- 2.2.1 **The Apostles' Creed**

- a. Synod, accepting a majority report of one of its committees, decided not to accede to requests to restore the text in accordance with the 'received text' by deleting the word "christian" in section III of this creed.
 - b. The Standing Committee for the Book of Praise has been instructed to insert the word "christian" in the hymn version of the Apostles' Creed, if this is possible.
 - c. A melody, proposed as an alternative for Hymn 1, was passed on to the Standing Committee for possible adaptation to the 'new text' of the creed. If adaptation is not possible, the committee is instructed to see whether a new melody can be found for this 'new text'.
- 2.2.2 The Nicene and Athanasian Creeds
The text of these creeds has not been linguistically revised. Therefore the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise has been instructed "to see to the linguistic revision of the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed and to present a draft of this revision to the churches no later than one (1) year before the next general synod and to include this revision in the report to the next general synod for the final edition of the Book of Praise".
- 2.2.3 The Belgic Confession of Faith and The Canons of Dort
- a. Synod decided to return to the old reading of Article 8 Belgic Confession of Faith, "for they are all three co-eternal and co-essential" instead of the present revised reading "For these three, in one and the same essence, are equal in eternity".
 - b. The headings of Articles 3 and 4 in Chapter II of the Canons of Dort in the Book of Praise are almost identical. Therefore synod decided to change the heading of Article 4 into "Why his death had infinite value".
- 2.2.4 The Church Order
- a. The text of Article 13 has been amended and now reads:
"If a minister of the Word is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office because of age, illness, physical or mental disability, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and/or dependents.
Retirement of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and of deputies of regional synod."
 - b. Article 44 has also been amended, and now reads:
"The president shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is continued, the decisions of the major assemblies are honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church."
 - c. In Article 72 the adjective "habitual" in "habitual drunkenness" has been deleted.
- 2.3 Contact with other Churches
- 2.3.1 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
A report of a committee for contact with the OPC, appointed by the previous general synod, was received. It contains a "detailed evaluation of the divergencies which the General Synod of 1977 neglected to give for its decision to recognize the OPC as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was decided to continue the committee and charge it "to continue the discussion on divergencies, which are an issue of mutual concern"; and "to express the hope that this continued discussion will remove obstacles to full correspondence." The doctrinal divergencies under discussion regard the matters of visible and invisible church, the covenant, assurance of faith, the observance of the law, and the matter of fencing the Lord's Supper. There are also church-political divergencies. Other impediments are: the OPC's contact with the Christian Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, and its membership of the RES.
Delegates of The Canadian Reformed Churches attended respectively the 51st and 52nd General Assemblies of the OPC, while the 1986 General Synod of Burlington was attended by a delegate of the OPC.
- 2.3.2 The Covenant Orthodox Reformed Church, Sackville
This church asked for a sister-church relationship. Synod, however decided:
1. To express gratitude for the contacts which the Classis Ontario North, and especially the Church at Ottawa has with the CORC of Lower Sackville, and to express the hope that these contacts may continue fruitfully towards full unity of faith.
 2. Not to accede to the request of the CORC to establish with them a sister-church relationship but to urge the CORC and the Church at Ottawa along with Classis Ontario North to work at removing any obstacles preventing admission of the CORC into the Federation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- 2.4 Correspondence with churches abroad
- 2.4.1 From now on we can expect to be addressed from Canada by a committee that is working under a new name. Synod decided to call their deputies for contact with i.e. our churches "The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad".
- 2.4.2 As for the ICRC, synod decided:
1. To instruct the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad to prepare the next meeting of the ICRC as they have outlined in their report by:
 - a. requesting the Canadian Reformed Church at Cloverdale to organize a prayer service before the commencement of the 1989 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches;
 - b. consulting the sister churches on suitable topics for the 1989 meeting of the ICRC;
 - c. by assuming all reasonable costs related to their role as host on behalf of The Canadian Reformed Churches;
 - d. depending on the nature of the matters to be discussed to invite either one or both of the professors of the Theological College recommended by the committee as advisors to the conference.
 - e. designating two members of the committee as delegates.
 2. To advise the executive of the ICRC that the amendments as proposed by the General Synod of Burlington West of 1986 be placed on the agenda instead of those proposed by Synod of Cloverdale of 1983, to wit:
 - a. that a stipulation be included in the "Basis" of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are a member;
 - b. that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership of the ICRC;
 - c. that "Constitution Art. V. - Authority" be amended to read: "The conclusions of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation."

It may be clear that these decisions were taken before the name of the committee was changed into "The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad."

The Committee recommended that the Professors J. Faber and C. Van Dam be appointed as advisors.

- 2.4.3 Up till today the Canadian Reformed Churches have been unable to establish a correspondence-relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea, due to language and communication difficulties. The committee was therefore charged with the mandate:
- to explain to the PCK this decision of the General Synod of Burlington West of 1986;
 - to respond to any reaction, inquiries, and information the PCK may direct to our churches;
 - to be diligent in the endeavour to improve communications with the PCK so that the "entering into and the maintaining of a correspondence-relationship" become possible.
- 2.4.4 Regarding the Free Church of Scotland, it was decided:
- to charge the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad to open contacts with the FCS to investigate and evaluate their history, background, doctrinal standards and their maintenance, church government, and their practices in order to ascertain whether we should recognize them as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and should enter into a sister-church relationship with them;
 - to instruct the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad to continue to inform the churches about the history, background, doctrinal standards and their maintenance, church government, and practices of the other churches which participate in the ICRC and with whom we have no sister-church relationship;
 - to keep the current sister-churches informed of all progress made in this regard and to work in co-operation with them.
- 2.4.5 As far as the current sister churches of The Canadian Reformed Churches are concerned, synod decided:
- To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, and Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in accordance with the adopted rules.
 - To charge the committee to send an invitation to sister churches abroad to least one year prior to the date the next general synod is to convene and to have our churches represented by a delegate to general synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible.
- 2.4.6 A special point in this respect is the matter of the rules for correspondence with sister churches abroad and other relations.
The committee has been charged with the following mandate:
- to continue to address the sister-churches on the matter of church-relations, setting forth the decisions and concerns of the Canadian Reformed Churches, as outlined by the General Synods of Smithville (Acts, Art. 154, D,1,2) and Cloverdale (Acts, Art. 110, D,1).
 - to evaluate the reactions of the sister-churches in these matters with respect to a possible common approach. A special section of this report deals with this matter, so that at this stage we will not go into any details.
- 2.4.7 Article 191 of the Acts of synod reads as follows:
Rev. J. Mulder, in his capacity as convenor of the Committee on contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, expresses the gratitude and appreciation for work done by the Rev. W. Huizinga in his capacity as member of this committee. The chairman adds some well-chosen words as a farewell to Rev. W. Huizinga, who accepted as call to the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, Western Australia.
- 2.5 Miscellaneous
Various appeals were dealt with, e.g. on the matter of women's voting rights.
- 2.6 Next General Synod
The next general synod will be convened by the Church at Winnipeg, to be held, the Lord willing, in the (Canadian) fall of 1989.
3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
We can declare that in the Acts concerned we have not found anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and consequently to the Three Forms of Unity and reformed church policy.
Deputies, thankfully concluded that the Canadian Reformed Churches have remained faithful to God's Word, recommend to the Synod of Albany to continue the sister relationship with these churches in accordance with the adopted rules.

E. KOREA

- The Presbyterian Church in Korea has advised deputies on General Assemblies held at Pusan on 19th September, 1985 and Seoul on 25th September, 1986. The Australian sister churches were invited to send delegates. Deputies have responded with written fraternal greetings.
- Minutes of the General Assembly held at Pusan were received. Whereas in the past English summaries of the main decisions were provided, those for the 1985 and 1986 Assemblies have not been received. Deputies have written to the PCK requesting these be made available.
- Rev. S.G. Hur was able to study the minutes of the 1985 Assembly and could report to deputies that they contained nothing contrary to God's Word and the reformed confessions.
- Recommendation
Deputies propose that the Synod of Albany decide to continue the sister-church relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea under the established rules.

F. THE NETHERLANDS

- CORRESPONDENCE
 - 1.1. Since the Synod of Launceston, deputies received copies of the Acts of Synod of De Gereformeerde Kerken, in Nederland held at Heemse (1984/1985).

- 1.2 The deputies of our sister churches in The Netherlands expressed some surprise at the decision taken by the Synod of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. We have been able to provide some background information.
The Dutch deputies at the same time requested some information about the Reformed Churches of Australia to enable them to better understand the relationship between the RCNZ and the RCA. This information has been supplied.
- 1.3 Deputies were advised that the General Synod of De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland would convene DV, on 22nd April, 1987 at Spakenburg. Local churches have been advised and there being no office bearer travelling to The Netherlands who would represent our churches, deputies have sent fraternal greetings by mail.
- 1.4 The report by the Dutch deputies to the General Synod of Spakenburg was received by us in January, accompanied by a letter which explained some of the proposals made regarding the RCNZ.

2. ACTS OF THE GENERAL SYNOD OF HEEMSE 1984/85

This synod was opened on April 25, 1984 and closed on June 5, 1985.

The Acts were published in two volumes, including sixteen appendices. This novum was caused by the large number of items on the synod's agenda, in particular by the synod's mandate to formulate and adopt the definite text of the churches' service book with its various sections.

Summarizing the synod's decisions we follow the order of the acts.

2.1 Church-Political Matters

Synod appointed deputies for advising local churches with regard to the work of deacons.

It adopted some rules for conducting catechism classes by theological students.

It confirmed a decision taken by previous general synods that children adopted from foreign countries can only be baptised when the Dutch government has acknowledged their adoption.

2.2 Liturgical Matters

The permission, granted on certain conditions, to theological students, to speak an 'edifying word' in the churches, has been maintained.

No decision was taken on the question whether elders who conduct 'reading services' are entitled to use the unchanged salutation and benediction.

2.3 Evangelism and Mission-Work

Candidates to the ministry of the Word who have accepted a call as missionaries will from now on be ordained before they begin their study for the special missionary exam, and not - as before - when they have passed this examination.

2.4 Training for the Ministry of the Word

The special preparatory study to be undertaken before students are admitted to the Theological Seminary at Kampen, will be extended. The organising of such a study became urgent since the study of the classical languages at grammar school and similar institutes is no longer as intensive as it used to be.

2.5 Foreign Churches

2.5.1 General

- a. 'Lux Mundi', the magazine published by the Committee for the Relations with Churches Abroad, will be issued more frequently.
- b. The rules for 'ecclesiastical fellowship' and 'provisional ecclesiastical contact' will be studied by the committee, in consultation with the foreign sister churches, and if necessary be amended by the next general synod.
- c. The non-English sister churches will be requested to translate the essential parts of their acts into English and publish them. The Dutch churches have decided to do the same and to have their revised Church Order translated into English.

2.5.2 Sister Churches

- a. Regarding the Free Reformed Churches of Australia synod decided:

- i) to continue the ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia according to the accepted rules for ecclesiastical correspondence.
- ii) to mandate the deputies to be appointed to inform the Australian sister churches on the contacts with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

GROUNDS:

- i) The Free Reformed Churches of Australia have, in doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline, remained faithful to the reformed confession.
 - ii) Regarding the contacts with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands have their own responsibilities. However, there is a necessity to inform the Australian sister churches about these contacts.
- b. The sister church relationship with The Canadian Reformed Churches will also be continued. These churches were granted permission to translate the Dutch Form for the Ordination or Installation of Missionary ministers of God's Word into English and to include it in the 'Book of Praise'.
 - c. The same relationship will be continued with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.
 - d. The same was decided concerning The Reformed Churches of East Sumba/Savu. A second lecturer for the training of ministers has been appointed (the Rev. J. Klamer, a former missionary). His special mandate is: on behalf of the Dutch churches to assist the churches of East Sumba/Savu by conducting refresher courses for ministers, evangelists, elders and deacons.
 - e. The same relationship will be continued with The Presbyterian Church in Korea. Deputies have been mandated to assist the two missionaries/ professors Batteau and Gootjes and their families. They must study the changes in the confession and Church Order of the Korean sister churches. The Korean Presbyterian Church (Reformed), a group within the so-called Hapdong-Church, requested the establishing of 'fraternal relations'. Deputies have been commissioned to seek further information.
 - f. The relationship of sister churches will be continued with The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. Ground for this decision is that it has been confirmed that this church shows the marks of the true church. This church has some difficulties with the current rules for ecclesiastical fellowship.

2.5.3 Contact Churches

- a. Provisional ecclesiastical contact will be continued with The Free Church of Scotland, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (Second Presbytery).
- b. The offer of provisional ecclesiastical contact made to the Reformed Church of Japan, the Dutch Reformed church of Sri Lanka, and - on certain conditions - to Die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, is maintained.
- c. A less formal form of contact will be sought or continued with Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, with churches in Sudan, Spain, Germany and France, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and The Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

2.5.4 I.C.R.C.

General synod decided to join the International Conference of Reformed Churches, and appointed delegates to the conference held in the month of September 1985 at Edinburgh in Scotland.

It also decided to propose a number of amendments to the constitution and rules, and it proposed the appointment of a study committee that shall inform the member churches on missionary literature, courses for training of missionaries, and serve them with a draft of a Scriptural missionology. It further would like the ICRC to establish a consultative council that would make an inventory of the missionary activities of the member churches, and advise them in their selection of territories for mission work and similar things.

2.6 Civil Government

The government of The Netherlands is in the process of reimbursing all the churches that originate from the former 'national church' as it existed in the days of the occupation of the country by the French under Napoleon Bonaparte, when the church was robbed of certain material possessions and prerogatives. The General Synod Arnhem 1971 appointed deputies who must participate in the negotiations. The General Synod of Heemse confirmed this decision. The proceeds are intended to support the retirement funds of the churches concerned.

2.7 Synodalia

Synod reappointed deputies for Bible translation. Their mandate is to represent the churches in the contact with organisations that occupy themselves with Bible translation activities; they shall act as observers and try to follow the developments in this field.

2.8 Particularia

The teaching of the Rev. Joh. Hoorn of Grootegast regarding Article 28 of the Belgic Confession of Faith - in particular concerning the believers' duty to join the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ - were investigated and rejected.

2.9 Varia

A letter was sent to the General Synod of De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, complaining about the fact that contact with these churches is becoming more and more difficult seeing the developments in these churches.

2.10 Doctrine

This and the next section regard the - mainly linguistic - renewal of the official service book of the Dutch churches.

- a. The definite revised text of the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed was adopted.
- b. The same happened to the text of the non-official "Kort Begrip der Christelijke Religie" - a summary of the Heidelberg Catechism - which will be included in the church service book.
- c. In Article 9 of the Belgic Confession of Faith the so-called Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7b-8a) has been deleted as a proof-text.
- d. Proof-texts for the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism have been adopted.
- e. The revised text of the Canons of Dort has been adopted.

2.11 Liturgy

- a. The text of some more liturgical forms and prayers has been adopted.
 - b. In the provisional church service book (Proefbundel) the liturgy of 'Middelburg 1933' was incorrectly printed. This will be rectified in the new service book.
 - c. The revised text of the metrical version of the 150 Psalms was adopted.
 - d. The same happened to a hymnal consisting of 35 hymns.
- With all this the work of renewing the church service book, undertaken some 30 years ago, was completed.

3. REPORT DEPUTIES

Deputies received the report of the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad to be dealt with by General Synod Spakenburg-Noord 1987.

From this report we pass on the following information.

3.1 Sumba/Savu

There has been an intensive contact with the sister churches of East Sumba/Savu, in particular through both missionaries-lecturers, the Rev. J. Boersema and Rev. J. Klamer. There are nine congregations meeting in two classes and annually in a synod, with a total membership of more than 3500. From 12 to 15 November, 1985 their first synod was held, which decided to try to intensify contact with The Free Reformed Churches of Australia. If possible they would like to send a brother to Australia for one year with the main purpose of studying the English language, this in view of the international contacts.

3.2 The Far East

3.2.1 The danger that the Korean government would stimulate the Shinto worship by building temples for Tandun, seems, for the time being, to be over. The prayers and actions, also from the side of our sister churches, have been answered and blessed.

Two missionaries-professors from the Dutch sister churches, J.M. Batteau and N.H. Gootjes, are still teaching at the Korean Theological Seminary in Pusan, the enrolment of this seminary stands at 200.

3.2.2 In September 1986 two deputies visited Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. A special report on this journey will follow.

Earlier, in August/September 1985 Professor Gootjes, on behalf of the Dutch churches, visited the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. Professor Batteau visited the Reformed Church of Japan in the year 1984. Early 1986 the Rev. J. Klamer visited the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. As for this church, deputies propose that contact with it will be continued. Further information on the above mentioned churches will be supplied in an additional report to the General Synod of Spakenburg Noord of 1987.

3.3 English Speaking Countries

3.3.1 Deputies propose to continue sister church relations with The Canadian Reformed Churches, The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

3.3.2 Deputies are of the opinion that they could continue to recognise the Free Church of Scotland as a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. They propose to offer to this church the sister churches relationship.

3.3.3 The contact with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was disappointing. It seems as if this church is not interested in the GKN. Deputies therefore propose to discontinue this contact.

3.3.4 The contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA is also disappointing. However, there are contacts between the OPC and The Canadian Reformed churches; therefore deputies would not like to completely discontinue their contact with the OPC and will wait for the decisions to be taken by the OPC and the PCA regarding a possible amalgamation.

3.3.5 Contacts with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) have been intensive. From the topics under discussion between the GKN and the RCNZ we mention: the relationship of the latter with other churches, e.g. with the synodal churches in The Netherlands - which in the opinion of the Dutch deputies will automatically be terminated as soon as the RCNZ will decide to leave the RES. The report further refers to the correspondence between the deputies of the GKN and our own churches on the RCNZ and that the fact that the Reformed Churches of Australia and the RCNZ are living in a sister church relationship has led to The Free Reformed Churches of Australia to discontinue their official contact with the RCNZ. The deputies of the Dutch churches would like to continue the discussion with the RCNZ on these matters, although they cannot yet see any perspective of a closer relationship.

3.3.6 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand - a minister of which attended the Edinburgh ICRC meeting in 1985 as an observer - informed the Dutch deputies of being unable to establish an official relationship because these four small congregations have, on purpose, not organised themselves in a confederation of churches. Deputies therefore propose to discontinue their contact with this church.

3.3.7 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI) is a member of the ICRC. In the month of April 1986 a delegation visited our Dutch sister churches. Some particulars on this church are supplied in the deputies' report, e.g. that the RPCI does not struggle with the problem of the "adherents". It is known as "The Covenanter Church", maintaining "The National Covenant of Scotland" of 1638 and "The Solemn League and Covenant" of 1643 for the promotion of presbyterianism. They have a sister church relationship with i.e. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia. They adhere to the principle of "purity of worship". Deputies would like to continue contacts with this church.

3.3.8 Seeing the contact which our churches have the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA), and this church's membership of the ICRC, the Dutch deputies have sent a letter to the PCEA in which they introduced their churches. They propose to synod to open contact with the PCEA, in co-operation with the deputies of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

3.4 Africa and Europe

3.4.1 As for Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, deputies propose to continue the sister church relationship.

3.4.2 Since die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA, the 'Dopper-kerken') have entered into a sister church relationship with De Nederlandse Gereformeerde kerken (formerly the 'buiten-verbanders'), the GKN have withdrawn their offer to enter into a provisional relation of ecclesiastical contact. Further contacts with delegates of the GKSA led to the proposed writing by the Dutch deputies of a memorandum, which would be discussed prior to the GKSA Synod to be held January 1988, this in co-operation with deputies of the VGKSA. Deputies request synod's approval of this plan.

3.4.3 There have been some good contacts with representatives of Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. Deputies would like to continue these contacts.

3.4.4 Certain developments in Nigeria, Zaire, France, Spain, Greece and Germany are having the deputies' attention.

3.5 I.C.R.C.

The deputies' report includes a section on the ICRC. We would like to pass on the following points:

3.5.1 The minutes of the next conference should be more detailed, in deputies' opinion.

3.5.2 The papers to be delivered at the conference should be in the hands of the delegates, in time.

3.5.3 The next conference should strictly honour the Constitution in admitting delegates of churches only.

3.5.4 The published communique was too short. It must be possible, on the ground of the papers delivered and discussed, to issue a reformed testimony on a large number of issues. It will also be necessary to give more publication to the conference itself and to its communique.

3.5.5 Deputies are of the opinion that if all members of the conference consider certain matters, which could not be put on the agenda, to be urgent, it shall be authorised to issue statements on them.

3.6 Lux Mundi

From the beginning of 1986 this magazine is published four times a year.

3.7 Rules for Ecclesiastical Relationships

At this stage we will not deal with the report's section on "Rules for Ecclesiastical Relations", since this is done separately elsewhere in our report.

3.8 Proposals

In a final section the proposals made by deputies to the forthcoming general synod are repeated. One of them has not been mentioned yet, the proposal to charge deputies with the mandate to issue a revised version of the English information booklet on the GKN, and to authorise them to issue a similar publication in German and French.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

We can declare that in the acts concerned we have not found anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and consequently to the Three Forms of Unity and reformed church polity.

We therefore, with thankfulness conclude that De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland have remained faithful to God's Word and recommend to synod to continue the relationship of sister churches with De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the adopted rules.

G. INDONESIA

1. 1.1 The Synod of Launceston instructed deputies to visit the first Synod of the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia Di Sumba Timor- Savu to be held in November 1985.
Rev. S.G. Hur was appointed by synod to attend with br. J.L. van Burgel as alternate.
Regrettably Rev. Hur was unable to undertake the visit because the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott consistory could not accede to his release. The alternate delegate appointed by synod, br. J.L. van Burgel, was also unable to attend for personal reasons.
Consequently deputies were forced to decline the invitation from the Sumba/Savu churches.
- 1.2 A provisional synod agenda was received which included the following items:
 - a. Legalization of the (revised) church-order of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba/Savu.
 - b. Correspondence/relation with the (local) government on the occasion of the opening of classes (and synods).
 - c. Appointment of deputies.
 - d. Degree of the 'self-supporting' of the churches of East Sumba/Savu in connection with the policy of the Dutch sister churches concerning reducing the annual support.
 - e. Correspondence/cooperation with the Australian sister churches.
 - f. The membership of the ICRC for the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (East Sumba/Savu).
 - g. Whether office-bearers in the church are allowed to receive other offices too (for instance in the regional parliament) or not.
 - h. We are expecting other issues from the classes and local churches.
- 1.3 Deputies have requested information from the Indonesian sister churches about their decisions of synod but to date we have not received a reply.
- 1.4 Recommendations
Deputies propose that synod authorise deputies to visit the Sumba/Savu churches at the next synod to be held late 1987. Because of the language difficulties and unfamiliarity with the Indonesian country and its customs, deputies recommend two delegates be sent. The cost per delegate is approximately \$800.00.
- 1.5 Deputies propose that correspondence with the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia Di Sumba Timor-Savu be continued under the established rules.

H. SOUTH AFRICA

1. CORRESPONDENCE

- 1.1 Deputies received copies of the Acts of Synod of Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika held at Cape Town in 1984 and Pretoria in 1986.
An invitation to attend the Synod of Pretoria commencing 31st March, 1986 was received and forwarded to the local churches. Subsequently deputies sent written greetings on behalf of the FRCA.
- 1.2 The South African deputies passed on to us a request to supply information to their deputies for the revision of the Church Book regarding the FRCA policy on the solemnization of marriages. Deputies were able to assist with a detailed response.

2. REPORT ON THE SYNOD OF PRETORIA OF 1986

The synod was opened on 31st March, 1986 and closed on 4th April.
From the acts we summarize the following decisions:

2.1 Church Service Book

The South-African sister churches are in the process of renewing their Church Service Book by adapting its language to present day usage, a process similar to that in our Dutch and Canadian/American sister churches and in our own churches as well.

2.1.1 This first of all regards the Bible version to be used.

A previous synod appointed deputies with the mandate to examine a new Bible translation in the African language, the Nuwe Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling 1983 (NAB 1983). Synod decided to continue the use of the 1933/53 translation for all church work. The NAB 1983 was considered to be too 'free' and to cause a break in the relation between the Scriptures and the doctrinal standards of the churches. New deputies have been appointed with the mandate to investigate the possibility of suggesting improvements in the NAB 1983, and to contact other churches with the aim of joining forces in making objections against the NAB and considering the undertaking of efforts to come to a reliable Bible translation.

2.1.2 As for the liturgical forms, synod decided to ask the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika - the so-called Dooperkerken - for permission to make use of the recently linguistically renewed Form for Infant Baptism. Provisional texts - to be tested by the churches - have been adopted for other liturgical forms, an exception being the Form for Confirmation of Marriages. As for this matter the South-African sister churches decided to contact the Canadian Reformed Churches and our own churches and consult them on the question whether solemnization of marriages - in South-Africa called Confirmation - should take place either in an official church service or in a private ceremony (a request for information was received and has been answered by deputies in the meantime).

- 2.1.3 Synod decided to adopt a proposal of deputies concerning the adoption of a number 'Skribberymings' (metrical versions of Scripture texts), written by the Reformed theologian and poet Totius.
- 2.1.4 Deputies have been mandated to look for an appropriate tune for the singing of the Apostles' Creed.
- 2.1.5 At the next synod a report will be discussed on the question whether the order of service adopted by the 1875 General Synod of Kampen can be recommended to the churches.

2.2 Other Internal Matters

- 2.2.1 Church life in the South-African sister churches has much in common with that of our own churches. Since their number is small - there are three congregations, at Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria - and there are no classes, church visitation reports are dealt with at their synods, which are held every other year. This was also done at the 1986 synod.
- 2.2.2 Some problems are similar to ours, e.g. the question in how far the local church is able to maintain supervision over people who are living far from the local church. One of the churches decided to restrict this to a certain area. Synod was of the opinion that the consistory concerned should be very careful in adopting fixed church borders: some members could easily be excluded from pastoral care and church communion.
- 2.2.3 The church of Cape Town is undertaking mission work at Belhar. Synod gratefully took notice of the good progress made in this respect. As for the ordination of missionary elders synod advised the church of Cape Town to use the normal Form for the Ordination of Elders.
- 2.2.4 As for the mission work undertaken at Mamelodi, the South-African sister churches are in the process of taking this over from the church of Drachten-Zuid-Oost in The Netherlands. Deputies have been instructed in this respect.

2.3 Contact with other Churches in South-Africa

- 2.3.1 Synod had some difficulty in formulating a decision regarding the contacts with the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (the 'Dopperkerken'). Ultimately synod was of the conviction that there is a biblically-founded calling to seek church unity. However, at the moment there are a number of impediments, e.g. the GKSA's membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES), their correspondence with The Netherlands Reformed Churches (formerly the 'buitenverbanders') and problems regarding the execution of church discipline in the GKSA. Deputies have been given the mandate to write a draft-appeal to the GKSA, which will be sent for comment to the consistories and also to the Dutch committee for relations with foreign churches, after which it will be finalised at the next synod, which for this particular purpose will be convened at an earlier date, in October 1987, so as to be able to send this appeal in time to the next synod of the GKSA, which will be held in January 1988.
- 2.3.2 The same deputies have been mandated to seek contact with the Free Church in Southern Africa, and show the churches' interest and sympathy with this church.

2.4 Foreign Churches

The last mentioned item leads us to the matter of the VGKSA's relationship with other churches.

- 2.4.1 The above mentioned contact with the Free Church of Southern Africa originates from the latter's membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Delegates from this church and the VGKSA met at the 1985 ICRC in Edinburgh. As for this organisation, synod discussed the report of the observers who attended this conference. Synod was unanimous in deciding to apply for membership of the ICRC. Funds are available for a delegation of one or two persons to the next conference to be held in Canada. Synod accepted the basis of the ICRC in this sense that the VGKSA within the ICRC wants to co-operate with churches that adhere to the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards as their confessions and taken them seriously in their church life.
- 2.4.2 Prior to this decision synod unanimously expressed itself on the contents of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. It considered the the Westminster Standards to have beneficially contributed to the maintaining of the reformed character of the presbyterian churches. Certain formulations create a number of questions, e.g. concerning the confession regarding the church, the covenant of grace, the relation to the civil government and the system of church government. Synod decided to acknowledge - in the line of the history of the church - the Westminster Standards as a reformed confession, and to mandate the deputies for contact with foreign churches, in their eventually contact with churches that have adopted this confession, with due deference to raise these matters so that in the light of God's Word we can jointly make progress in confessing the truth.
- 2.4.3 Unlike the action undertaken by a previous synod, no special deputies-delegates to the ICRC will be appointed, but deputies for contact with foreign churches will be mandated in this respect.
- 2.4.4 The correspondence will be continued with The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, The Canadian Reformed churches, and De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, and the contact with the Reformed Churches of East Sumba/Savu and the Korean Presbyterian Church will be continued.
- 2.4.5 The Dutch sister churches had sent two delegates, in particular with the aim that the proposed new rules for correspondence would be discussed; these churches would like all the sister churches to adopt rules of the same tenor. During the synod a discussion on this matter was held. Deputies will continue it in their contact with their Dutch colleagues.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We can declare that in the acts concerned we have not found anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and consequently to the Three Forms of Unity and reformed church policy.

We therefore, thankfully concluding that Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika have remained faithful to God's Word, recommend to synod to continue the relationship of sister churches with these churches in accordance with the adopted rules.

OTHER FOREIGN CHURCHES

I. THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

1. INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.1 The 1985 Synod of Launceston instructed our deputies (Acts Art. 95, 7 III):

- a. to thoroughly investigate the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Free Church of Scotland and submit comprehensive reports to the churches and to the next synod, paying particular attention to the marks of the true church and the question of church government.
 - b. to maintain contact with these churches at the present level (Acts 1985, Art. 43).
- 1.2 These instructions find their origin in the decision taken by the Synod of 1985 regarding a number of objections raised against the decision taken by the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott, whereby it was confirmed that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Free Church of Scotland "are faithful churches of the Lord", and the "Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Sister churches" - now the "Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad" - were instructed:
- a. to inform these churches of this decision;
 - b. to intensify the correspondence with those churches with the aim to establish full sister church relationships with them.

(Acts 1983, Art. 75)

One of the considerations of synod may reveal in which way our churches came to deal with this matter when it says that "the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland has already established full sister church relationships with our sister churches in The Netherlands". Another consideration states that this church has "given full support to and co-operation with our sister churches in the constituent Assembly, Groningen 1982" of the International Conference of Reformed Church (ICRC).

The 1985 Synod (Acts, Art. 43) decided:

- 1. that the decisions recorded in Articles 72 and 75 of the Acts of the Synod of 1983 were taken with undue haste and without due consideration...
 - 3. that the Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Sister Churches appointed by the Synod of 1985 be instructed ... (as above).
- 1.3 Since both our own churches and the EPCI have joined the ICRC, and since one of the purpose of this organisation is "to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches" (Constitution, Article III2), the execution of our deputies' mandate is the more urgent.

2. History

- 2.1 All through the ages there has been a close church-historical relation between Scotland and Ireland. Although there existed a Celtic Church in Ireland before the time of Patrick, this Scots-born man is commonly known as 'the apostle of the Irish' (5th century). In the next century the monastic church of Ireland saw its missionaries return to Scotland, e.g. in the person of Columba. Danish invaders from the end of the 8th century brought the Irish church under the jurisdiction of Rome. However, King Henry VIII, who for personal reasons rejected the pope's authority, compelled the Irish to do the same (1537) - although in doctrinal and liturgical respect this church did not change. King Edward VI tried to introduce a reformed liturgy. Queen Mary, however, brought the Irish church back into the Roman fold. Her successor, Elizabeth I, officially re-introduced the Anglican rites, but they were not readily accepted by the people. In the year 1560 - the same year in which the church of Scotland was organised and the Scottish Confession written - the Irish parliament again repudiated the pope's authority. Anglicanism became the national religion. During the 18th century the Anglican Church became the established church. This situation lasted until 1869. For a time the membership of this church mainly consisted of landlords, while the majority of the population remained Roman Catholic. This led to a struggle for emancipation because Roman Catholics were excluded from land tenure and public offices. This struggle ended with the Emancipation Bill of 1829, when equality was obtained.
- 2.2 In the meantime another sea-crossing between Scotland and Ireland had taken place. During the reign of King James I many Scots had fled their country and settled in the northern part of Ireland. These hard-working presbyterians were granted land tenure by William of Orange as soon as he had conquered Ireland. They established their own congregations, which were supported and influenced by the Church of Scotland. In the 18th century Ulster - Northern Ireland - had a mainly protestant population. However, soon afterwards the Presbyterian Church of Ireland fell into decay, in spite of the efforts undertaken by the 'covenanters' to keep their church pure and undefiled. There was a revival during the 19th century, but at its end liberalism had again gained the upper hand.
- 2.3 A very important event took place late in the 'twenties' of the 20th century. In the year 1926 the Rev. James Hunter, minister of Knox Presbyterian Church and a leader in the Bible Standards League, supported by a group of other ministers and church members, brought charges against the teachings of Professor J.E. Davey of the Presbyterian College in Belfast. An informative brochure published by the EPCI mentions the following charges:
- 1) a denial of the doctrine of imputation of our guilt to Christ and his righteousness to us.
 - 2) a denial of the impeccable character of Christ.
 - 3) a denial of the infallibility of the Bible.
 - 4) the view that, in some way, God was responsible for man's sin.
 - 5) that the doctrine of the trinity was not taught in the Word of God.
- The Belfast Presbytery, dealing with this matter in closed session, acquitted that professor. Appealing to the assembly, the Rev. Hunter was again put in the wrong. Besides, the presbytery had banned all discussion of the subject, but the Rev. Hunter did not keep the matter secret; therefore the assembly appointed a committee, armed with assembly powers, so that the Rev. Hunter could expect disciplinary action to would be taken. Therefore, and also because the church could not be expected to return to the Scriptures as long as the training for the ministry was in the hands of liberal theologians, the Rev. Hunter in July 1927 seceded from the Irish Presbyterian Church. On October 15, 1927 it was decided to re-institute the church, which initially called itself 'The Irish Evangelical Church', but in the year 1964 adopted the name "The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland". The above mentioned brochure ends it own brief summary of the history of the church as follows:

Events since 1927 have fully vindicated the decision of such men as James Hunter and W.J. Grier. The last fifty years have seen further development within Irish presbyterianism that give cause for deep concern. We have seen involvement in unbiblical ecumenism, the increase of critical theology in the theological college and the ordination of women. It is little wonder that voices within Irish presbyterian circles have begun to sound a timely alarm. Whilst we welcome such concern, we are more than ever convinced that our present existence is required by our commitment to what the Bible teaches.

3. SITUATION

- 3.1 At this time there are 10 congregations with 9 ministers and a total membership of approximately 1000. Most of the ministers were trained at the College of the Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. The EPCI co-operates with this church in the mission work undertaken in India, Peru and South Africa. Up till today there are no formal rules for the relationship with the Free Church of Scotland. The rules under which our own churches and the Dutch sister churches maintain their relationship, have been accepted by the EPCI for its relation with The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, although they are somewhat 'strange' to them. The Dutch churches, therefore, are in the process of amending them. A sister church relationship with the Dutch churches was established in the year 1981. The EPCI was "a founder member of the British Evangelical Council, a body that seeks to promote biblical church-unity amongst those of a conservative evangelical outlook" (Brochure). At the end of 1979 the EPCI terminated its membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES), because of this organisation's tolerant attitude towards liberal ideas and practices in e.g. the 'synodical' churches in the Netherlands, and seeing the 'dual membership' - of the RES and the World Council of Churches - of some of its member-churches. Close relations are maintained with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (the old 'covenanters'). As a result of the new and intensive contact with, e.g., the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, the EPCI has recently contacted the RPCI about the two churches' separate existence in the same country. Unlike the RPCI - and the Free Church of Scotland - the EPCI does not adhere to the so-called 'Purity of Worship' (e.g. unaccompanied Psalm singing only). This church publishes a monthly, called "The Evangelical Presbyterian". It has also established the Evangelical Bookshop in the centre of Belfast.
- 3.2 The EPCI's position in the political situation of Northern- Ireland is a very difficult one. It may be known that the IRA is seeking amalgamation with the Roman Catholic Republic of Ireland in the South. The protestants, being the majority of the population of Northern- Ireland, offer strong resistance against this. Most of them are supporters of the well-known Rev. In Paisley and his movement. This movement also attracts some of the younger members of the EPCI. However, the church itself does not support the movement of these "defenders of the true faith", not only because in the other presbyterian churches the true faith is not preserved at all, but also because of the worldly, rebellious and violent means used by this movement. Consequently the EPCI is in an isolated position, and its members are sometimes considered and treated as betraying 'the national cause'!

4. DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- 4.1 The EPCI has adopted, and is in the process of revising, a document called 'The Code'. This can be considered as a kind of elaborate Church Order. The first paragraph of Section 2, "The Standards of the Church", has under the heading, "Our Creed" the following sentence:
The Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the supreme standard of the church.
- 4.2 The second paragraph begins with the following lines:
The subordinate standards of our church are the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; we believe these subordinate standards, as amended in this sub-section, accurately summarise, interpret and apply the teaching of the Scriptures on important points of doctrine and worship.
- 4.3 The same sub-section sums up the amendments to the Westminster Confession, when it says:
We do not receive the passages in the Confession relating to the Civil Magistrate (chapter 23) in any such sense as to mean that the Civil Magistrate has a controlling power over synods or councils with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority, or power to persecute any for their religion. We accept all the statements of chapter 24 except the last sentence of paragraph 4, which we omit entirely. The omitted words are: "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred, nearer in blood than he may of his own: nor the woman of her husband's kindred, nearer in blood than of her own."
We omit from paragraph 6 in chapter 25 the following words: "But is that Anti-Christ, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God" and the revised paragraph now reads, "There is no other head of the church, but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be the head thereof. The claim of any man to be the Vicar of Christ, the Head of the church, is unscriptural, without warrant in fact, and is a usurpation, dishonouring to the Lord Jesus Christ".

5. CHURCH POLITY

5.1 OFFICE BEARERS

5.1.1 The above mentioned brochure states:

Being presbyterian we adhere to the traditional presbyterian church polity, having deacons and elders. While within the office of elder we distinguish between ruling and teaching, our ruling elders are equal with our teaching elders (or ministers). Each local congregation elects its own office bearers and calls its own ministers. the local kirk session nominates representatives to the denomination's central body or 'presbytery'.

5.1.2 As for these office bearers the brochure says:

In seeking to maintain a position of confessional integrity we believe in the necessity of church discipline and therefore require all holding office to subscribe without reservation to the confession and catechisms. Members of our presbytery are called upon to renew their subscription annually.

Standard questions are put at all ordinations, installations, censures, missionary commissions and annually to members of Presbytery. According to "The Code" they are:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- (2) Do you make the following affirmation:
"I believe the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism as accepted by this church, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God and as such I subscribe them as the confession of my faith, and this I do without any reservations"?
- (3) Do you believe the Form of Government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and do you promise to adhere to and support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the courts of this church?

Additional questions are put respectively to Ministers-Elect, Elders-Elect, Deacons-Elect, Licentiates (in our ecclesiastical vernacular: Candidates to the Ministry), and Missionaries.

- 5.1.3 As quoted earlier, every congregation has the right to call its own minister. The 'Code' adds to this rule: "subject to the approval of presbytery".

Ruling elders are elected for life, though only in the congregation appointing to them.

Elections for deacons are held any time after 3 years, but in no case beyond 5 years following the previous election.

- 5.1.4 The responsibilities of the minister are the same as in our churches, with the addition of some administrative duties, as may be seen from the following:

The minister has particular responsibility to:

- 1) faithfully minister the Word both publicly and privately.
- 2) conduct public worship and made arrangements for the pulpit supply and essential ministerial services of the the congregation or congregations of which he has the oversight during his absence therefrom.
- 3) administer the sacraments.
- 4) care, as a pastor, for his people.
- 5) visit the people, especially the sick.
- 6) instruct the young.
- 7) conduct marriages and funerals.
- 8) aid in the government of the church.
- 9) provide a christian example at all times.

The minister shall present annually a report to the congregation and to the January meeting of presbytery; this report shall include:

the number of baptised members; that of communicant members 1st January/31st December, of deaths and disjunctions; the average number of members at communion services; the average attendance of morning, evening and mid-week services; the number of Sabbath School and Bible Class Rolls at the end of the year; the number of baptisms and of marriages.

- 5.1.5 The responsibilities of the ruling elders are described as follows:

The ruling elders shall join with the minister in the government, nurture and discipline of the congregation. Upon them, equally with the minister, devolve the responsibility of caring for the spiritual welfare of the people and the superintendence of all meetings and organisations within the congregation. It is the responsibility of ruling elders to pray with, and or, the congregation and to seek fruit among them. They are to visit the people, paying special attention to the sick, and to irregular attenders, and also to instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, warn the careless and nourish and guard the children of the church.

- 5.1.6 As for the deacons, together they form a deacons Board, the duties of which are:

to assist the session by administering the affairs of the congregation, e.g. ministrations to the poor, the needy, the sick, the lonely and any who may be in distress; the management of the graces of liberality and concern for the needy among the people;

but also:

the collection and disbursement of the finances; the preparation of audited accounts; the maintenance, improvement, insurances and use of the property; giving assistance in organising projects in, or by, the congregation and any other task which the session may assign them.

- 5.1.7 The EPCI has adopted some common rules for the election of office bearers, so that this is not left to the discretion of each congregation.

We mention some of them:

- a. On the eligibility as qualified voters the 'Code' says:
All members of the congregation in full communion, and only such, shall be eligible as qualified voters for the purpose of electing ministers, ruling elders and deacons.
- b. As for the election and call of ministers it includes the following rules:
 - 1) Any member in full communion may propose a candidate; if the proposal be seconded the nomination goes to the meeting.
 - 2) Should more than one candidate be proposed and seconded a vote shall be taken of the qualified voters and repeated until only one candidate remains.
 - 3) A vote shall be taken on this candidate, for and against, and if he be approved by no less than a 2/3 majority, the call shall be drawn up and signed by the communicant members of the congregation concurring.
- c. Election of ruling elders and deacons takes place with the help of the issuing of voting papers identifying male members to qualified voters who shall place a mark opposite the names of those - up to the number required - whom they wish to choose.
No person can be admitted as a ruling elder or deacon if:
 - 1) he does not receive 60% of the votes cast;
 - 2) the session is dissatisfied with his qualifications notwithstanding the votes received.

5.2 The Congregation

5.2.1 The 'Code' states:

Membership of this church is open - through the session - to all such persons as have made a credible profession of faith in Christ as God the Son, their Saviour and Lord, have been baptised and exhibit a teachable spirit.

- 5.2.2 As for the children of the congregation it says:
Children of such members - though not yet admitted to full communion - are, because of God's covenantal promise, received as infant members of the congregation in the sacrament of baptism.
- 5.2.3 The responsibilities of the members of the congregation have been set out as follows:
Members have a responsibility to faithfully attend the means of grace, submit to the authority of the session, respect and encourage their minister, promote the peace and prosperity of the congregation, give of their substance as the Lord may prosper them, pray for the work of the Gospel at home and abroad and exhibit a christian spirit at all times.
- 5.2.4 Regarding converted Roman Catholics there is a special rules, which reads thus:
It is recommended that, in general, converted Roman Catholics be baptised and their previous baptism be considered invalid. However, recognising the historical complexity of and division upon this matter, the session of each congregation shall have discretion to act in each case as it so determines.

5.3 ASSEMBLIES

- 5.3.1 What we are used to calling a consistory or church council is called the session (in the presbyterian world).
Somewhere the 'Code' states:
The session consists of the teaching and ruling elders of the congregation.
In the EPCI, then, there is no problem regarding the question whether or not the deacons belong to the consistory!
- 5.3.2 The duties of the session are set out in following lines:
The elders - including the minister or interim-moderator (in our Church Order: the counsellor appointed to assist a vacant church) comprise the session, which has to do with the whole spiritual oversight of the congregation, including the admission to, or exclusion, from, the sacraments of the church, and church discipline (in necessary cases in conjunction with the presbytery).
- 5.3.3 The session meets at least bi-monthly
for the transaction of ordinary business, public intimation having been given on a previous sabbath.
- 5.3.4 Business meetings of the congregation shall be called from the pulpit.
An annual business meeting must be held at which there shall be presented reports (including inter alia, session, pastoral and financial reports) assessing the preceding year and indicating improvements, plans and objectives for the ensuing year; such information and explanation of the reports as may be asked for shall be given.
As for the agenda the following rule has been adopted:
Announcement shall be made of the meeting on the two preceding sabbaths. Such announcements shall specify the business to be transacted and no business other than that specified may be brought before the meeting.
- 5.3.5 The deacons meet at least six times annually
for transacting of ordinary business, with not more than three calendar months between meetings.
These meetings are also called from the pulpit or by notice given to every member.
- 5.3.6 The "central body" - as the above quoted brochure calls it - of the EPCI is the presbytery. This church is too small and the number of congregations inadequate for a general assembly, consisting of delegates sent by the respective presbyteries as is the case in larger groups of presbyterian churches.
It consists of:
(1) all ministers, including retired ministers.
(2) representative ruling (including assessor) elders commissioned from each Session.
Each congregation may have one commissioner for the first twenty members and another commissioner for every additional twenty or part of twenty, provided that no congregation send more than three commissioners to presbytery.
- 5.3.7 At the February meeting the presbytery elects a moderator who will remain in office until in the next year his successor is appointed and installed. He presides the meetings (a minimum of nine meetings each moderatorial year as has been agreed to), and is invited to each congregation during his year of office.
- 5.3.8 The presbytery appoints a number of standing committees, respectively for Training of Ministry and Admissions; Inter-Church Relations; Church Extension and Home Missions; Public Morals; and a Presbytery Arrangements Committee.
- 5.3.9 The responsibilities of the presbytery are e.g.:
- 1) Superintend generally the spiritual and temporal affairs of its congregations, give advice in cases of difficulty and receive and determine petitions, complaints and appeals.
 - 4) See that ordinances are duly administered and discipline upheld in any congregation that may become vacant; appoint a Minister as Interim-Moderator of its session, and carry out the laws of the church as to filling the vacancy.
 - 5) Approve students for the ministry, receive them under its care, direct their theological training and after due trial, license them to preach the Gospel.
 - 6) Examine, approve, ordain and/or install ruling elders.
 - 9) Ordain to the Gospel ministry and watch over all that pertains to the call, ordination and/or installation of ministers and to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.
 - 10) Try charges against ministers, ruling elders, deacons, licentiates and missionaries and, if necessary, administer censure.
- 5.3.10 The position and authority of the presbytery is described as follows:
The presbytery is the supreme court of the church in legislative, administrative and judicial matters.

5.4 TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

- 5.4.1 The EPCI is not in a position to maintain its own theological college. Therefore the standing committee's business at their meetings includes e.g. "an evaluation of theological colleges".
- 5.4.2 Students who have been admitted to one of the theological colleges approved by the presbytery at the last evaluation of the committee, must sit three presbytery examinations, one in each year of their theological training.

5.4.3 Each student shall gain a minimum of 6 months practical experience under the supervision of a serving minister of the E.P.C. before becoming eligible for ordination.

6. EVALUATION

- 6.1 Since the acknowledging of the Presbyterian Church in Korea as a sister church by the 1975 Synod of Albany, and since the decision taken by the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott whereby it was confirmed that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Free Church of Scotland "are faithful Churches of the Lord" - which churches adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism as their subordinates standards, it is not necessary to make an evaluation of the confessional standards of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland.
- 6.2 As for the question of church government, the many quotations from and references to the above mentioned 'Code' may have made clear that, in spite of a number of details which are unfamiliar to us, the government of this church is in the hands of those who, as gifts from the glorified Head of the church (Ephesians 4:11ff) have been appointed by Him. The above quoted 'Code' proves that the EPCI, elaborating on the presbyterian church polity, has tried to safeguard itself against the danger of hierarchy, which threatens any church, whatever 'system' the church government it may have adopted. Many of the detailed rules, though formulated in words different from ours, are similar to those in our own church order and practical church life.
- 6.3 Our Committee was not in the position to extend their investigations to the 'local scene'. Therefore we cannot report on e.g. the church services and in particular on the preaching of God's Word. However, more than once deputies of the Dutch sister churches visited the EPCI and reported favourably.
- 6.4 As for literature published by or from within the EPCI we hereby testify that we have not found anything that is not in harmony with God's Word; on the contrary, their official magazine, "Evangelical Presbyterian", includes many an edifying contribution.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 On the ground of the above evaluation we come to the conclusion that the statement made by the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland is a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ, is confirmed by our deputies' investigations. This church indeed shows the marks of the true church as set out in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith, while in their church government there is nothing that could be an impediment to the establishing of a sister church relationship with them.
- 7.2 The only difficulty arises when we would propose this relationship to be maintained in accordance with the existing rules. As said before, these rules are strange to the EPCI. On the other hand, this church has decided to accept them as far as they are practicable for their relationship with the Dutch sister churches. We could make the same suggestion, in the meantime waiting for the result of the special study on the existing rules undertaken by our Dutch sister churches, and, if possible, adopting the result of this study.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Our deputies herewith recommend to the 1987 Synod of Albany to reconfirm that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland is a faithful church of the Lord, showing the marks of the true church as set out in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith and to propose to them to enter into a relationship of sister churches, on the basis of mutually accepted rules.

9. CONTACT

There has been no other contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland than that - on a personal, informal basis - between our churches' delegates to the ICRC at Edinburgh 1985 (at the same time members of our Committee) and the Rev. Derek Thomas, delegate of the EPCI to that conference. Besides, there was some correspondence with the Standing Committee for Inter-Church Relations when we requested them to provide us with the latest data.

J. THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

1. INTRODUCTION

The contact with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) came into being especially via the Constituent Assembly for the International Conference of Reformed Churches, held in Groningen, The Netherlands, from October 26 to November 4, 1982. As a result of this contact the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott took the decision "to confirm that the FCS is a faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts of Synod, Art. 75). The same synod instructed deputies "to intensify the correspondence with this church with the aim to establish full sister church relationship with her."

The 1985 Synod of Launceston had to face several appeals against the above mentioned decision. It decided that the decision of the Synod of Kelmscott of 1983 was taken "with undue haste and without due consideration." It instructed Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Sister-Churches - now the "Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad" - "to thoroughly investigate the FCS, paying particular attention to the marks of the true church and the question of the church government" (Acts of Synod, Art. 43).

At the International Conference of Reformed Churches, held in Edinburgh, Scotland, from September 2 - 10, 1985, two delegates of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have used the opportunity to speak extensively with delegates of the FCS. During their stay in Edinburgh they also attended two worship services of the FCS.

2. HISTORY

The roots of the FCS are to be found in the reformation of the 16th and 17th century by John Knox and Andrew Melville. Its constant foe has been episcopacy and the unrelenting attempts of the state to gain dominance over the church. Its authentic voice had been in the National Covenant of 1638. This document clearly states that the church is not a department of the state and its spiritual jurisdiction must never be usurped by the state.

The battle regarding this issue, however, was not only to be fought during the 16th and 17th century, but the relationship between the church and the state was also the main issue of the secessions during the 18th century, namely in 1733 and 1761. In both cases the church refused to appoint a certain Erskine as minister. This resulted in the institution of a separate presbytery, called the 'Secession Church'. In 1761 the same issue was concerned, but now especially with respect to the authority of the general assembly. One Gillespie was dismissed as minister and instituted a 'Presbytery for Relief for Christians oppressed in their Church privileges.' The church originating from this secession was called 'Relief Church'.

Together with other seceded groups the 'Secession Church' and 'Relief Church' united in the 'United Presbyterian Church' which in 1900 united with the majority of the Free Church into the 'United Free Church'. In 1929 this 'United Free Church' merged with the Church of Scotland.

In the meantime the Church of Scotland was confronted with a polarization between 'moderates' who were influenced by rationalism and 'evangelicals' who were influenced by the Reveil. This polarization resulted in the Disruption of 1843 under the leadership of Thomas Chalmers. Those who signed the 'Act of Separation and Deed of Demission' called themselves 'Church of Scotland, Free'. This addition 'Free' later on became the proper name of this church: Free Church. The issue at stake was once again the relationship between church and state. Keeping the establishment-principle, the Free Church also defended a principle of 'non-intrusion' of the state in matters of the church.

This Disruption of 1843 is seen as the third reformation in Scotland.

1. The great Reformation of the 16th century.
2. The adoption of Presbyterianism in 1638 (The National Covenant).
3. The disruption of 1843 (free from intrusion by government).

In 1846 the FCS built a theological college in Edinburgh. At present this is still the college for the training for the ministry of the Word within the Free Church. 474 out of 1226 ministers joined the Disruption, as well as 93 theological students. With the Disruption the FCS lost all church property.

In 1863 the FCS started her first discussion with the 'United Presbyterian Church' which ultimately resulted in a union of both churches, called the 'United Free Church'. With this ecclesiastical reunion some were so fervent that they compromised on vital principles. Furthermore, within the United Free Church liberalism in the form of the higher critical school made its impact felt, whilst also revivalism under the leadership of Moody and Sanky with its arminian stance gained a large following. Anti-confessionalism surfaced in its various forms.

All of these developments and others came to a head in the controversy surrounding the Declaratory Act. Properly understood a Declaratory Act, as its name suggests, was an act whereby a general assembly would declare what it understood to be the true meaning, or meanings, of passages in the Westminster Standards whose importance might be uncertain. These acts then functioned as explanatory acts. However, in the movement for union between the FCS and the United Presbyterian Church which took place in the 1890's the Declaratory Act began to be used as a means of introducing doctrinal changes. Modifications were made in the doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature by the fall, and in the matter of the civil magistrate. Allowances were made for "diversity of opinion" when it came to the confession. The result was that the changes proposed and made were unacceptable to a minority of the members of the FCS. They voted against the union decided on in May 1900. Once again a minority found itself claiming to be the true continuation of the Church of Scotland. This church claimed name and property with the authorities. In 1904 resulted in a fair division of church property. The free church continued was once again called the Free Church of Scotland and it is this Church with which we have contact.

(The above mentioned information is mostly derived from the Report of Deputies on Correspondence with Foreign Churches of the GKN to the 1978 General Synod of Groningen Zuid, and from the Report of the Committee on Correspondence with Churches Abroad of the CRC to the 1986 General Synod of Burlington-West. Furthermore, the book, The Heritage of our Fathers, written by Prof. G.N.M. Collins, is also used as reference.)

3. SITUATION

The Free Church of Scotland consists of about 140 congregations. These congregations are divided over 9 presbyteries (classes) which are under the jurisdiction of 3 regional synods. There is also a Synod of North America divided in two presbyteries, namely Ontario/Western Canada and Prince Edward Island. The FCS had mission fields in south-Africa, Peru and India with respectively 5, 2 and 1 missionaries. Furthermore, the FCS also supports the work of the Christian Witness to Israel. Close relations are maintained with the EPCI and the RPCI in Ireland and also with the PCEA in Australia.

The FCS maintains a theological college which has its seat in Edinburgh. It is acknowledged by university statute to train students for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. It is supervised by the general assembly via the Training for the Ministry Committee. This committee also deals with the admission of students. Amongst others, the requirements for admission are a Bachelor of Arts degree as well as an attestation of the consistory (session) which has to testify that one is a communicant member. The training for the ministry consists of a four year theological course. Five professors teach the following subjects:

- Apologetics and Practical Theology
- Greek and New Testament Literature
- Systematic Theology
- Church History and Church Principles
- Hebrew and Old Testament Literature

4. CONFSSIONAL STANDARDS

The subordinate standards of the FCS are the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as well as the Scottish Confession of Faith, 1560.

5. MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH

5.1 The pure preaching of the Gospel

In the above mentioned report of Deputies on Correspondence with Foreign churches of the GKN to the 1978 General Synod of Groningen-Zuid it reads: "There is surely a subjectivistic tendency within the FCS, nevertheless this subjectivistic element does not dilute the pure preaching of the Gospel." This subjectivistic tendency differs locally. The set up of the sermons is different from the ones we are used to in Australia. Some are topical in approach, and some have an experimental aspect. Nevertheless it is still scriptural and reformed. This conclusion can be drawn from the reports of several people who attended worship services of the FCS. Homiletical approaches aside, the preaching is very sound.

5.2 The pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them.

Holy Supper is celebrated only once or twice a year. Usually the actual preparations begin already at mid-week and it is customary for two or three preparatory services to be held during that week. In those services the nature of the supper is extensively dealt with, as well as the matter of admission to the supper and the consequences of partaking with an unregenerate heart. Finally, on the Lord's day itself the actual supper is administered. There are voices demanding that Holy Supper should be celebrated more often. In this context a paper of Rev. J.D. Heenan may be mentioned in which he pleads for a celebration even once every Sunday. He bases this on the term 'breaking of bread' in the Acts of the Apostles.

As far as the administration of Holy Baptism is concerned the practice of infant baptism is an integral part of the confession of the FCS. Adherents who faithfully attend the worship service are allowed to let their children be baptised. However, voices are heard from within the Free Church which express unhappiness with this situation, and refer to their catechism which excludes this practice. There are no regular catechism instructions. During the worship service in the morning the children go to Sunday School. They leave just before the sermon a special course. It is recognised by many a minister that the children ought to be present during the whole worship service. In this context the contact with the reformed tradition will hopefully be very beneficial.

5.3 The exercise of church discipline for correcting and punishing sins.

On the matter of discipline the FCS is known for its strictness to biblical norms. It defends and promotes very strongly the holiness of the Lord in the lives of its churches and members. In this context it is worthwhile to quote some passages of "The practice of the Free Church of Scotland in her several courts". Chapter V of this book deals with discipline. The first paragraph of this chapter reads:

"Church discipline is held to be of great use and necessity in our ecclesiastical system. It is regarded as belonging to that government which Christ has instituted in the visible order of his kingdom, and which, by his institution, is essentially distinct from the government of civil magistrates."

Paragraph 2 answers the question with whom church discipline deals.

"It deals chiefly with church members. But the adult children of adherents, are also amenable to it, when they fall into gross sin."

Furthermore it is stated the "Church discipline admits of nothing as ground for its action but what has been declared censurable by the Word of God, or by some act of universal custom of the church agreeable thereto." Distinction is also made between secret and public sins, whilst reference is made to the rule of Matthew 18 as well.

6. CHURCH POLITY

The information given in this paragraph is mainly derived from the above-mentioned book "The practice of the Free Church of Scotland in her several courts", which deals with the constitution, powers, and functions of:

- 1) The Kirk-Session
- 2) The Deacons' Court
- 3) The Presbytery
- 4) The Provincial Synod
- 5) The General Assembly

6.1 THE KIRK-SESSION

Constitution

- The pastor or pastors of each congregation, along with a suitable number of elders, who are not pastors, constitute the kirk-session.
- Those elders who do not exercise the pastoral office are called ruling elders. These elders are elected for life, or until they cease to be members of the congregation, or their resignation be accepted of, or they be held and declared to have resigned through long absence from sessional meetings, or they be deposed.
- The election of ruling elders belongs, in the Free Church of Scotland, to the members of the congregation in full communion.
- The qualifications required of ruling elders are the following:
 - a) they must be in full communion with the congregation;
 - b) each of them must have attained the age of twenty-one years;
 - c) they must possess more or less of all the qualifications described in the New Testament, as needful for persons exercising spiritual oversight in the church, whether such persons be designated in our translation by the term 'bishop' or by the term 'elder'.
- An ordained minister who, from any cause not involving church censure, is without a pastoral charge, is eligible as a ruling elder in the congregation to which he belongs.

Powers and functions

- No one can be admitted to the privilege of baptism or the Lord's supper, without satisfying the kirk-session that he or she possesses these qualifications, viz.:
 - a) a confession of faith in accordance with the Word of God and the standards of the church;
 - b) a life and conversation becoming the gospel, in so far as can be outwardly seen;
 - c) a competent knowledge of religious truth, and of the nature and meaning of christian ordinances.
- A specially important function of the kirk-session is the exercise of discipline. This function belongs to the kirk-session exclusively in the first instance, with respect to all members and adherents of their congregation, except the pastor, who is specially subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the presbytery.
- Every kirk-session has a right and is bound to elect one of the ruling elders belonging to their number, as a representative to the presbytery and provincial synod of the bounds.

6.2 THE DEACONS' COURT

Constitution

- The pastor or pastors of each congregation, along with the ruling elders and the deacons, constitute the deacons' court.
- The deacon's function is the administering of the temporal affairs of a congregation. The higher office scripturally includes the lower. The pastor and ruling elders are, therefore, not excluded from the exercise of the deacon's function. The number of deacons in each congregation ought to be in proportion to the size and position of the congregation. Deacons are also elected for life in the same way as the ruling elders (see above.)
- The election of deacons belongs to the members of the congregation in full communion.

Powers and functions

- The deacons' court has charge of the whole property belonging to the congregation, or held for the congregation's use by trustees appointed in terms of deeds which the general assembly has sanctioned; also of all the congregation's secular affairs. They arrange for the assembly's collections being taken and disposed of as instructed by the assembly. The distribution of all the congregational funds is subject to the regulation of the deacon's court, in the exercise of their allowed discretion, or in obedience to the presbytery, synod, or general assembly. They also attend to the temporal wants of the poor connected with the congregation.

6.3 THE PRESBYTERY

Constitution

- A presbytery consists:

- a. of all the pastors of the congregation within the bounds;
- b. of the professors of theology, whose appointed sphere of labour is within the bounds;
- c. of representative elders.

Powers and functions

- It is an important function of the presbytery to consider carefully appeals and complaints affecting discipline, and to dispose of them in accordance with the Word of God and the laws of the church.

- The presbytery possesses inherently the function of deciding whether young men are qualified or not to be received into the number of enrolled students of theology, with a view to the pastoral office. It also has the function of examining them as to their qualifications at any stage of their progress; of determining, in due time after examination, whether they may be licensed to preach the gospel or not, and of licensing them if they be found qualified. In the Free Church of Scotland, the exercise of these functions by the presbytery is regulated by acts of the general assembly.

- It is the duty of the presbytery to see that the ordinances are duly administered and discipline upheld in any congregation that may be vacant; to appoint one of their number of interim moderator of its kirk-session; and to carry out the laws of the church as to filling up the vacancy.

6.4 THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD

Constitution

- A provincial synod consists:

- a. of all the pastors of the congregations within the province;
- b. of the professors of theology, whose appointed sphere of labour is within the province;
- c. of the same representative elder from each kirk-session in the province, who represents it in the presbytery to which it belongs;
- d. of corresponding members, both ministers and elders, commissioned as such by neighbouring synods.

Powers and functions

- A provincial synod is mainly a court of review especially regarding matters of discipline.

6.5 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Constitution

- The general assembly differs from the interior church courts in the circumstance that, as a body, it has no permanent existence. Whatever powers of function belong to the general assembly, belong to it entirely as a representative and temporary body.

- The general assembly consists of an equal number of ministers and elders, commissioned annually by each recognised presbytery of the church. The exact number to be elected and commissioned by each presbytery is fixed from time to time, by act of assembly, with consent of a majority of presbyteries.

Powers and functions

- The general assembly is also a court of review regarding complaints, appeals and petitions forwarded by presbyteries and synods.

- It has the authority to establish new synods and presbyteries.

- It may also dispose collections to be held in the churches.

- Although the general assembly is invested with the power of regulating the whole action of the church in its synods, presbyteries, and kirk-sessions, it is still not regarded as having any lordly or absolutely binding authority. It is expected to act ministerially under Christ, and to carry out such rules as appear to harmonize with his own instructions in his Word. Consistent with the principles of presbyterian government, all reasonable means ought to be taken for keeping the action of the assembly in accordance with the general mind of the church, in as much as all the ministers and ruling elders are entitled and called upon to judge for themselves as to the mind of the great Head of the church. Still it is held that, as Christ requires good order to be maintained in his church, it is needful for the assembly to act legislatively as well as judicially. But a particular course for procedure has been devised for preventing any innovation, and for securing due deliberation and harmony in the enactment of new laws, and in the alteration of old ones. An act (commonly called the Barrier Act) was passed in 1697 through which the course of procedure referred to has arisen. As to this Barrier Act, it is more or less in line with approbating the acts as it happens in our churches, except that in the Free Church of Scotland this is not done by the kirk-session but by the presbyteries.

- It is competent for the assembly to pass declaratory acts. These are acts which declare what the assembly understands the law of the church to be. Such an act may be passed, without transmission to presbyteries in terms of the Barrier Act, when it is generally agreed that the declaration is in accordance with old law. But if there be much difference of opinion on the subject, and if the point enforced be new, in any considerable measure, to the existing ministers and ruling elders, it has been held that, before passing of such an act, an overture on the subject ought to be transmitted to presbyteries, in terms of the Barrier Act.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- A. Although the Free Church of Scotland originates from another tradition than the FRCA, there is still fundamental unity in faith. As regards their confessional standards, although they differ in emphasis and formulation with our Confessions, they do give faithful expression to the biblical truth.
- B. As regards the marks of the true church it is evident that according to Art. 29 of the Belgic Confession, the Free Church of Scotland can be called a true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It governs itself according to the pure Word of God, whilst it really tries to reject all things contrary to it. The FCS takes resisting false doctrine seriously, whilst the preaching of the pure gospel is strongly emphasized.
- C. As regards church polity, although the FCS adheres to the presbyterian system, many of the rules are similar to what is set out in our own Church Order.

D. There is only one thing that might be considered as an impediment for maintaining sister church relationship, namely that the FCS differs from us in interpreting such a relationship. In the Acts of the General Assembly of the FCS, 1982, it reads that such a full ecclesiastical relationship can hardly be practised. As such they have no difficulties to give heed to one another that there is no deviation of the reformed confessions as far as doctrine, worship and church government is concerned, but they wonder how this actually is to be maintained. Moreover, courteous as they are, they doubt if it is really their right when necessary to warn other churches in this respect. Furthermore their rules regarding ecclesiastical relationship with other presbyterian churches differ from the rules we have. They have different levels of relationship, namely sister church relationship, brotherly contacts, and other contacts. The sister church relationship is only maintained with those churches which are more or less daughters of the FCS, e.g. the EPCI and PCEA.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our deputies herewith recommend to the 1987 Synod of Albany to reconfirm that the Free Church of Scotland is a faithful church of the Lord, showing the marks of the True Church as set out in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith and to propose to them to enter into a relationship of sister churches on the basis of mutually accepted rules.

APPENDIX

Subscription Form to be subscribed by all office bearers at the time of their admission.

I, _____ do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the confessions of faith, approved by former general assemblies of this church to be the truths of God; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith; as likewise I do own the purity of worship presently authorized and practised in the Free Church of Scotland, and also the presbyterian government and discipline thereof; which doctrine, worship and church government, I am persuaded, are founded on the Word of God, and agreeable thereto; I also approve of the general principles respecting the jurisdiction of the church, and her subjection to Christ as her only Head, which are contained in the Claim of Right and in the Protest referred to in the questions already put to me; and I promise that, through the grace of God, I shall firmly and constantly adhere to the same, and to the utmost of my power shall, in my station, assert, maintain, and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this church, by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, together with the liberty and exclusive jurisdiction thereof; and that I shall, in my practice conform myself to the said worship, and submit to the said discipline, government, and exclusive jurisdiction, and not endeavour, directly or indirectly, to the prejudice or subversion of the same; and I promise that I shall follow no divisive course from the doctrine, worship, discipline, government, and exclusive jurisdiction of this church, renouncing all doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said doctrine, worship, discipline, government, or jurisdiction of the same.

K. TAIWAN

1. CONTACT

1.1 Deputies were informed officially in November 1981 by the moderator of the Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Taiwan that it was the wish of the RPCT to establish sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The 1983 Synod of Kelmscott declared the RPCT to be a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Deputies, in advising the RPCT of that decision had also advised them of the rules which must be agreed to before sister relations could be considered.

1.2 In our report to the 1985 Synod of Launceston, it was stated that a reply had not been received. Consequently in May 1985 a member of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, Mrs. J. Scholz, was able to visit Taiwan and experience life there, also in the Reformed Presbyterian Churches. Mrs. Scholz was able to deliver a copy of our letters and assist in their translation.

1.3 Subsequently deputies received a response from the RPCT indicating that they accepted our rules completely. Mrs. Scholz reported to us on her return that our earlier letters had been misunderstood because of their difficulties with the English language.

2. CONTACT

In February 1987 deputies requested Rev. S.G. Hur to visit the Taiwanese churches during his visit overseas to the USA and Korea. Rev. Hur acceded to this request and following his visit submitted the following report.

2.1 A visit was made to THE SECOND PRESBYTERY OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TAIWAN on behalf of the Deputies for Relations with Church Abroad on February 21 - 23, 1987. Because of the lack of time a meeting was arranged at a restaurant in the airport. Deputies of the church were: Rev. Jeng-Hong Chen (vice chairman of the presbytery), Rev. Hwan-Joon Lyoo, and Rev. Byung-Chul Lee. The meeting lasted from 3 to 5.30 p.m.

2.2 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

These churches are no more than thirty years old, but they have a complicated history. they originated from mission work by the missionaries of various backgrounds. In 1950 some missionaries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA established their mission stations in various places in Taiwan. Initially they gave support to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and one of the missionaries gave lectures at one of two presbyterian seminaries. Soon the lecturer was dismissed from the teaching position, because he criticised the doctrine of Karl Barth.

In those days (in 1958) a Korean missionary (Rev. Young-Jin Kim) arrived in Taiwan and opened a mission station. The missionaries of the two above mentioned churches cooperated well for their mission works, and consequently they opened "The Reformed Theological Hall" for the training of the ministry of the Word in 1962. In the meantime missionaries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America came to Taiwan; one female missionary in 1953 and two missionaries in 1959. They also opened a theological school in 1961 which was called "Calvin Theological Hall" for the same purpose. Further, some other missionaries came to the country from Presbyterian and Reformed backgrounds from the Reformed Churches in New Zealand and from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in America (World Presbyterian Mission). In 1963 these five mission groups formed "Presbyterian and Reformed Mission society." Their intention of forming this society was to make a preparation for establishing one church confederation consisting of the churches which they have respectively established by their mission works.

In 1966 the Reformed Theological Hall and the Calvin Theological Hall were united, and it was called "Calvin Union Theological Hall." In 1970 six Chinese students who were trained at these Theological Institutes were ordained as Ministers of the Word.

The Presbyterian and Reformed Mission Society had made efforts to organise one church federation of the churches which they have respectively established. But it was not easy, because the churches had grown from different backgrounds, and they had established different practices in their ecclesiastical life. Nevertheless, the aim was finally achieved, and on March 1st, 1971 delegates of five churches came together and organised a confederation of the churches which was called, "The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan". At the meeting they accepted the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith as the confessional standards of the churches.

However, very soon after the confederation was organised, the churches were confronted with many difficulties to put the confederative life into effect. There were many causes: different backgrounds of the churches, lack of training of ministers for the reformed life, some barriers between people from the mainland China and the people of Taiwan, some friction between missionaries and the people of the mission field, etc. Three years later (1974) the confederative life of the churches was practically paralysed. Some people have made all efforts to restore the confederative life by organising meetings for discussions, yet all efforts failed. In the meantime some ministers came to the agreement to organise the Second Presbytery, because the existing ecclesiastical body was not functioning. Hereby they did not intend to withdraw themselves from the confederation. They named their presbytery "The Second Presbytery", because they hoped (they are still hoping) that the original presbytery (remaining churches) may be restored and that they may come together as the general synod, when a third presbytery is organised. For the institution of this second presbytery the missionaries of the K.P.C. and the O.P.C. gave some advice and support in compliance with the request of the concerned churches. At present three Korean missionaries are members of the presbytery, and the missionaries of the O.P.C. are attending the presbytery as observers.

The Calvin Theological Hall was closed years ago, because there were only a few students. The second presbytery is preparing to reopen a theological hall in the near future for the training of the Ministry for the Word.

2.3 CONFSSIONAL STANDARDS

The churches have accepted the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith as their confession standards.

These confessional standards are printed in their hymnal book. They do not have a tradition of preaching the catechism on Sundays, but they use it for the instruction of the congregation. The churches faithfully adhere to their confessional standards.

2.4 MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH

PREACHING OF THE WORD:

It is difficult to evaluate the preaching of the Word because of language barriers. Korean missionaries gave the visitor their opinion that the Word is faithfully preached according to the Scriptures.

SACRAMENTS:

Holy Supper -

The frequency of the celebration varies from congregation to congregation. Once in two or three months is a general practice. Open table is not accepted. Every consistory is responsible for keeping the table holy.

Baptism -

Whenever the Holy Supper is celebrated, baptism is also administered, when there are eligible infants or adults for baptism.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE:

They believe the sanctity of the church of Christ. Effort is being made to exercise church discipline according to the words of Matthew 18.

2.5 CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The second presbytery accepted the church government which is fundamentally similar to the government of the Korean Presbyterian Church.

2.6 RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

These churches have a close relationship with our sister churches in Korea. They consider themselves as their daughter churches. Delegates of both churches in various levels (ecclesiastical body, youth association etc.) frequently make mutual visits. Further, they do not have any official relationships with other churches abroad. The second presbytery made a decision to enter sister relations with The Free Reformed Churches of Australia in 1978 and also with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Vrijgemaakt). They are waiting for positive replies from both these churches.

2.7 STATISTICS

The Second Presbytery -

6 organised churches and 7 non-organised churches.

Number of communicant members - about 300

Number of regular hearers - about 200

Number of ministers - 5 (Chinese)

The Original (remaining) Presbytery -

5 organised churches and 5 non-organised churches.

Number of communicant members and regular hearers altogether - about 350.

2.8 CONCLUSION

1. The second presbytery, in actual fact, is functioning as a confederative body, since it was organised in 1975. The visitor received an impression that the remaining presbytery is not properly functioning as an ecclesiastical body. The people of the second presbytery are hoping and waiting patiently for a time when they can come together as one ecclesiastical body.
2. It is very difficult for outsiders to evaluate the divided situation of the churches, because in the matter many elements which we are hardly able to comprehend are involved. It was clear to the visitor that no doctrinal matter was involved in the division. One should not evaluate the situation according to the norms of one church which has long historical heritage and firm functions.
3. The people of the Second Presbytery are making efforts to live ecclesiastically according to the Word and the accepted norms of the government.
4. These young small churches need a lot of spiritual encouragement and support to build reformed life in the country. It is very desirable to have a close contact with them and to assist them in every possible way, although the language barrier remains a big problem.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our deputies herewith recommend to the 1987 Synod of Albany to reconfirm that the Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Taiwan are faithful churches of the Lord, showing the marks of the true church as set out in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith and to propose to them to enter into a relationship as sister churches, on the basis of mutually accepted rules.

L. JAPAN

In order to implement the Synod of Launceston's decision regarding the Reformed Church in Japan, deputies wrote to the secretary of the Liaison Committee to ascertain the latest information regarding their church's attitude to the RES. Deputies have to date received no response.

M. SRI LANKA

Deputies wrote to the Dutch Reformed Churches in Sri Lanka in February, 1984 requesting information. A reply was not received so a follow up letter was sent in August, 1986. This also failed to elicit a response. Deputies propose not to initiate further correspondence.

N. UGANDA

There has been no further contact with the Presbyterian Church in Uganda since our last report.

O. NEW ZEALAND

1. CORRESPONDENCE

- 1.1 The Reformed Churches of New Zealand have been advised of the Synod of Launceston's decision regarding official contact between the FRCA and the RCNZ.
- 1.2 Deputies of our sister churches in The Netherlands continue their contact with the RCNZ per instruction from their synod, also keeping us informed and seeking our advice. Consequently deputies continue to seek information regarding the developments within the RCNZ.

2. ACTS OF THEIR 1986 SYNOD

From the Acts of the 18th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand held at Mangere in August, 1986 we read:

- 2.1 Regarding the RES Synod decided (Acts, Art. 81):
 - a. to render its strongest pastoral protest against the non-compliance by the GKN to the RES decisions 1980 - 84.
 - b. to convey to the RES Interim Committee, the member churches, and the GKN that the latter's non-compliance indicates its stubbornness against the Word of God and that it therefore ought to be expelled from the RES. We therefore request the Interim Committee to take the steps as mentioned under the requirements of Art. 5 of the RES Constitution, Section 2.
 - c. to mandate the delegates to RES 1988 to use every constitutional means to ensure the expulsion of the GKN.
 - d. that if RES 1988 should not expel the GKN, though they show non-repentance, our membership should be withdrawn immediately.
 - e. to convey to the RES in a clear way our reasons for the above decisions/actions.
 - f. that point d. not be communicated to the RES.
- 2.2 Regarding the synodal churches in The Netherlands sSynod decided (Acts, Art. 104):
That our relationship with the GKN no longer be regarded as a 'correspondence' church.
- 2.3 As for the Dutch sister churches (in Art. 104 of the Acts they are called the RCN (Liberated)) it was decided:
 - f. that we continue with the initial approach and seek to further explore the possibilities of establishing a meaningful relationship with the RCN (liberated).

The section concerned in the report of the Synodical and Correspondence Committee reads as follows:

5.1 RCN (Liberated)

There has been a regular correspondence between both churches. Helpful in gaining better understanding and appreciation for each other has also been a meeting with the RCN Committee on Ecumenism by the Stated Clerk when he was in Europe in 1983. Acts of Synods, church magazines and booklets have been exchanged and these have helped to get to know each other much better. The RCN also publishes a half yearly magazine in the English language, Lux Mundi, which contains excellent topical study material.

For the RCN the criteria for determining sister relations is for them to apply the tests for a true and faithful church (Belgic Confession of Faith, Art. 29) and to investigate each other's faithfulness to God's Word and the reformed confessions in the areas of doctrine, worship, church government and church discipline as marks of a true church of God.

Although in the exploration of possibilities of establishing a relationship, it had been stipulated by us that no preconditions must be part and parcel of our terms for a dialogue with one another, it has become obvious from a reading of the acts of the RCN that for a proper, future inter-church relationship, the following could and would become stumbling blocks: our membership in the RES, our sister church relationship with the RCA and the CRC/Neth., our correspondence relationship with the CRC/NA and the one with the GKN by way of the RES.

In the event that there would be a mutual willingness for a close inter-church relationship, we would need to test each other whether we are in reality true and faithful churches. And relationships must be true in all dimensions, i.e. that Free Reformed Church of Australia which is a sister church of the RCN (Liberated) would need to be consulted by the RCN (Liberated) before they could agree to a proper relationship with us. This is being consistent with the principle of a true and faithful church and consequential thinking, as otherwise there would be a triangular problem where A and B establish close relationship while C who already has an intimate relationship with A still has principal objections to B.

It will thus be quite obvious that the journey towards this goal for a mutually acceptable close relationship is going to be a long one where much patience and understanding is required.

RECOMMENDATION:

That we continue with the initial approach and seek to further explore the possibilities of establishing a meaningful relationship with the RCN (Liberated).

2.4 Further it was decided:

g. that we continue with the initial approach and seek to further explore the possibilities of establishing a meaningful relationship with the NRC (unaffiliated).

The section concerned in the report about the above mentioned committee reads:

5.2 Netherlands Reformed Churches (Unaffiliated) NRC

These are the unaffiliated reformed churches which broke away from the RCN (Liberated) in 1967. We were asked to enter into a dialogue with them on the same basis as with the RCN (Liberated). (Acts of 1983, Art. 87).

A meeting was arranged with their committee in September 1983. This meeting was also attended by the Rev. P.G. Van Dam who represented the RCA. An exchange of acts of synods, yearbooks and church magazines have been helpful in getting acquainted with one another. In May 1984 we were advised by the Inter-church Relations Committee that 'they had no problem at all with our ruling that "no preconditions must be attached to a mutual correspondence in seeking the establishment of a meaningful relationship." In the beginning of 1985 we received a copy of a report by the Inter-church Committee to their national assembly. This report included a paragraph on our Reformed Churches of NZ which had a recommendation to their synod to propose to the RCA and RCNZ to accept each other as sister churches. The suggestion was made that this relationship would have to be on the same footing and basis as we already have with the Christian Reformed Church in The Netherlands (Chr. Geref. Kerken).

We must mention here in this report that the CRC/NA and the RCA have accepted the NRC as "Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship".

We have not received an official confirmation of their proposal. The lean correspondence between the NRC and us does not give us sufficient assurance of a fruitful relationship as yet.

RECOMMENDATION:

To advise our committee to continue its mandate of the Synod of 1983, Art. 87.

2.5 From the sub 2.4 mentioned report we learn that the RCA (Reformed Churches of Australia) have accepted the NRC as "Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship".

P. THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE

1. VISIT

During his journey from Western Australia to Europe Rev. K. Bruning and his wife came in close contact with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. They attended four church services, were the guests at a wedding feast, visited congregational meetings and had many discussions with the two ministers, Pastor De Hartog from the United States, and Pastor Lau Chin Kwee, a Chinese minister, who has studied in America. They enjoyed good fellowship with several members of the congregation. The following information is based on the experiences during the two visits which took place in July and October 1986. This congregation in Singapore is a reformed church based on the holy Scriptures as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (see the official constitution of this church). The true reformed character of this church was immediately manifest in the worship services on the Sundays. A sermon was held on the 7th commandment in accordance with Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism. It was a very Scriptural and practical preaching with references to demoralising influence of our days. In the afternoon service Pastor Lau preached from the letter to the Galatians. It was an excellent administering of the gospel of salvation by grace only. References were made to the Confession, especially the Canons of Dort. The church-going people were obviously fascinated by the clear and practical message. Young people made notes, which were discussed by them in groups after the service.

On the second Sunday the Holy Supper was celebrated. There is no open table, and only confessing members can attend this sacrament. It was a fine experience to hear the same form for the celebration as happens in our own congregations. A full sermon was held before the celebration, which occurred without a table. Lack of space in the small hall was one of the reasons. In the afternoon service, it was Pastor Lau again with another sermon from the Galatians. The Sundays were real days of rest because of the sound preaching of the gospel.

The congregation has no old members. Young families and young to very young male and female members filled the chairs of the small room, where a piano accompanied the songs of the congregation. All the members are people who came to conversion from Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism. Several of them have studied or are still studying at the university. They usually are Christians who came to conversion as individuals; one out of a family. It means that their lives and struggle went through a most difficult crisis; and still they often suffer because of enmity, friction and rejection from their original relatives.

A serious problem e.g. is that the young christians cannot and will not partake in the heathen rites and ceremonies anymore. The other party, however, interprets this as betrayal of the old religion, and above all as betrayal of the ancestors, which is the same as a crime. It is very encouraging to witness that the believers assist each other in the often painful circumstances.

The wedding ceremony does not differ from our practice. Parts of the same form are read as teaching to the bridal couple. One point of difference was that the bride and bridegroom had to stand during the long ceremony; and that in a very sultry climate. The advice was to give such couples a chair in future, which was received with appreciation.

It is not necessary to go into all the details of personal impressions. One thing is certain: i.e. travellers with a stop-over in Singapore can be recommended to contact this interesting congregation, especially if a weekend is included in their stay.

The Evangelical Reformed church has a sister-relationship with the Protestant Reformed Church of the USA. Much help came from there during the short period in which this congregation came into existence and made its first years of history in Singapore. It is a land of many Eastern religions, but with little knowledge of the true gospel of salvation. It is surprising to be in that place and to hear an up-to-date sermon from the old Heidelberg Catechism with the support of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. God's work for salvation is wonderful.

2. INFORMATION

After these more or less personal impressions, some official information should be given. The Evangelical Reformed Church has a contact committee which gave us its constitution, to get more acquainted with each other. We quote some essential paragraphs and Articles:

PREAMBLE

The Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, in obedience to Scripture as interpreted in our Three Forms of Unity, confess that there is one holy, catholic Church (Eph. 4:4-6, Rev. 7:9). We believe that it is our sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth by establishing sisterly relationships with all churches which have obtained the precious faith with us (2 Peter 1:1).

ARTICLE IV - PRINCIPLES

In negotiating and arriving at any official relationships with other churches, the following principles shall be determinative for the committee.

1. In general, holy Scripture, together with the Constitution of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession of Faith and the Canons of Dort.
2. Specifically, the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 54, the Belgic Confession of Faith, Articles 27-29.

ARTICLE V - GENERAL MANDATE

In seeking to establish sisterly relationships with other denominations, the following guidelines shall be observed:

1. A full, official relationship with other domestic churches would imply organic union. Less complete ties may be established circumstances may require and indicated.
2. A full sister church relationship with foreign churches implies:
 - A. Mutual acknowledgement of offices, so that ministers of sister churches are allowed preaching privileges in one another's congregations and are eligible to be called by congregations in sister churches.
 - B. Mutual acknowledgement of membership attests.
 - C. The delegation and reception of delegates to sister churches.
 - D. Taking heed to one another's life as churches, constantly acquainting one another with the decisions of their broadest assemblies and giving counsel when there are decisions to be made on difficult issues.
 - E. Mutual recognition be based on acceptance of the reformed standards (examples: The Three Forms of Unity, The Westminster Confession of Faith, The Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms) and the consistent maintenance of these standards in the churches' ecclesiastical life.
3. Less complete fraternal relationships with foreign churches may be arranged provided that the stipulations be laid down clearly.
4. No relationship shall be considered as established until it has been approved by the broadest assemblies of the churches concerned.

The Constitution of the church itself also contains important information. We quote some parts of it.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE (ERCS)

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of the church shall be the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (ERCS) hereinafter referred to as the church.

ARTICLE II - THE ADDRESS

The place of business of the church shall be at 356-J, River Valley road, Singapore 0923, or at any other place as decided by the session from time to time subject to the approval of the Registrar of Societies.

ARTICLE III - OBJECTS

The objects of the church shall be:

- A. To promote and maintain the true worship of the only true, righteous and holy God of heaven and earth (Exodus 20:1-5, Matthew 4:10, John 4:23-24).
- B. To preach the gospel of Christ Jesus for the gathering and perfecting of the saints (Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 24:46-47, Romans 10:11-15, I Corinthians 1:17-31, Ephesians 4:11-16, II Timothy 4:1-2).
- C. To observe the sacraments of holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper according to the ordinance of Christ Jesus (Matthew 26:26-29, 28:19-20, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, I Corinthians 11:23-26).
- D. To promote and maintain the fellowship in the Church of Jesus Christ (John 17:21-24, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:1-16, Hebrews 10:23-25, I John 1:7).
- E. To exercise christian discipline in the church of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:16-19, 18:15-20, I Corinthians 5:1-5, II Thessalonians 3:6, I Timothy 1:20, Titus 3:10).
- F. To minister the mercies of Christ unto the needy within and without the fellowship of the church (Matthew 25:31-46, Acts 6:1-6, Galatians 6:10).
- G. To defend the faith once delivered to the saints (Philippians 1:27, II Timothy 1:13, Jude 1:3).

ARTICLE IV - THE STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE CHURCH

The faith of the church shall be in accordance with the doctrine as contained in the Old Testament and New Testament of the Bible and in harmony with the historic reformed and presbyterian faith which is set forth in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordrecht.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

A. TYPES

This shall be of two categories:

1. Communicant members

They are persons baptised in obedience to Christ's command, who have made a credible profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose conduct is holy and worthy of the Gospel of Christ and who adhere to the constitution of the church. They are added to the church by knowledgeable profession of faith in holy Baptism, reaffirmation of faith, or letter of transfer from a sister church of like precious faith.

2. Non-communicant members
They are baptised children of communicant members and are all other baptised persons who have not made profession of faith and are under the care of the congregation.

D. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Our Lord Jesus Christ has given to the church the keys of the kingdom which includes the authority of church discipline. Thus the church through the Board of Elders shall have the right to excommunicate a member from the church whose confession or life is not in accord with the teachings of the Word of God as held by the church. Excommunication is an extreme measure which shall be performed only after a member who has been repeatedly pastorally admonished refuses to repent. Any person so cut off from the church shall be received again into the church by the Board of Elders upon evidence of repentance and confession of sin.

ARTICLE VI - CHURCH GOVERNMENT

- A. The church shall be governed according to the reformed and presbyterian form of church government recognising:
 1. The supreme and lordly authority and power of Jesus Christ of over the church.
 2. Christ rules his church by his Word and Spirit.
 3. Christ rules his church through the special offices of elders and deacons.
 4. The office of all believers in the church.
 5. The autonomy of the local church.
 6. The principle of church federation according to the principle of the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
- B. The special offices in the church shall be the elders and deacons.
- C. The governing body of the church shall be the Session comprising the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons.

ARTICLE XX - PROHIBITIONS

- A. Gambling of any kind and the playing paikow or mahjong, whether for stakes or not, is forbidden on the society's premises. The introduction of materials for gambling or drug taking and of bad characters into the premises is prohibited.
- B. The funds of the society shall not be used to pay fines of members who have been convicted in court.
- C. The society shall not attempt to restrict or in any other manner interfere with trade or prices or engage in any trade union activity as defined in any written law relating to trade unions for the time being in force in Singapore.
- D. The society shall not hold any lottery, whether confined to its members or not, in the name of the society or its office-bearers, committee or members.
- E. The society shall not indulge in any political activity or allow its funds and/or premises to be used for political purposes.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 4.1 To instruct the deputies to make contact with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, and to stimulate nearer acquaintance with this congregation as much as possible; to exchange information and to use all the possibilities to investigate whether this church can be recognised as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4.2 To inform the churches about this congregation in Singapore, and to advise members who are planning to visit Singapore, to seek contact with this church, especially when a Sunday is included in their stop-over.

Q. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

1. INTRODUCTION

In November 1985 a report on the first International Conference of Reformed Church, held from September 2-10, 1985, in Edinburgh, Scotland, was sent to the consistories of the local churches to inform them about the results of this meeting. With this report the churches also received a copy of the papers which were delivered, except the paper delivered by the Rev. Prof. D. Macleod, of which only a summary was available.

Furthermore, one of the deputies has extensively written about the ICRC in *Una Sancta*, Volume 33, nos. 4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11. Nevertheless, your deputies would like to bring to your attention the main points regarding this conference.

2. ICRC - EDINBURGH 1985

2.1 MEMBER CHURCHES

- 2.1.1 After constituting the conference, credentials were scrutinized from which it appeared that the following member churches were represented:

- The Canadian Reformed Churches
- The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
- The Free Church of Scotland
- The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- The Presbyterian Church in Korea
- The Reformed Churches on East-Sumba/Savu
- The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

- 2.1.2. The conference admitted as new members:

- The Free Reformed Church in South Africa
- The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australian
- The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

The admissions were granted after a sub-committee had scrutinized the documents presented and had interviewed the representatives of these churches at length about the history and the faithfulness of their churches and determined that each of them is striving for unity with churches which are already members of the conference.

2.2. PROPOSALS

2.2.1. Proposed amendments to the Constitution and Regulations could not be dealt with due to the fact that although some of the proposals were brought forward within the time-limit of two years as required by ART. IV, the number of member churches at that time was only one or two of the seven which are member churches now. That means that most of the member churches have had the opportunity to deal with these proposed amendments in a proper manner. The amendments already submitted will be placed on the agenda of the next meeting. Member churches are requested to react to these amendments, if they deem this necessary, 12 months before the next meeting by sending their replies to the corresponding secretary.

- i) Regarding conference expenses the following proposal from one of the committees was moved:
 - a. to establish a general fund to cover the expenses incurred by the ICRC;
 - b. to bear the costs of the conference as member churches on the basis of the number of baptised members taking into account the estimated average per capita income of the baptised members in each member church;
 - c. to have the member churches pay for the travelling expenses of their own delegates, and those member churches unable to pay such expenses may request assistance from the general fund;
 - d. to declare that the churches sending observers or churches applying for membership will be expected to bear their own travel costs, as well as other costs which may be incurred, while attending the meeting of the conference.
- ii) The delegates of the FRCA amended this proposal as follows: to add to the above mentioned point (b) "including travelling expenses" after the words "costs of the Conference", and to delete the above mentioned point (c). However this amendment was defeated.

2.3 APPOINTMENTS

2.3.1. It was furthermore decided to appoint a treasurer, with the following charge:

- a. to draw up a budget for the conference with assistance of the Interim Committee;
- b. to request each member church to submit to him the number of its baptised members, as well as the estimated average per capita income of its members;
- c. to assess each church on this basis;
- d. to collect the instalments needed on a yearly basis (June 1);
- e. to reimburse all costs incurred by the conference;
- f. to submit his financial report to the next meeting of the conference.

2.3.2. Mr. H.A. Berends, 14572-60 Ave., Surrey, B.C., Canada, was appointed treasurer.

2.3.3. The conference appointed a committee to deal with matters relating to missions. This committee received the following mandate:

- a. to gather information from the member churches regarding their missionary activities and training programs;
- b. to study the possibilities of co-ordinating the missionary activities of the member churches when it comes to training, mission fields and exchanging missionaries;
- c. to examine the need to produce listings of relevant missionary literature on an ongoing basis, and to promote the publication of an introduction to reformed missions;
- d. to report to the next meeting of the conference.

2.3.4. The conference appointed the following persons to become members of this committee:

Rev. M.K. Drost - The Netherlands
Prof. K. Deddens - Canada
Prof. C. Graham - Scotland
Prof. A.C. Boyd - Scotland (Chairman)

2.3.5. This committee is only a study committee whose task is to gather information. Its findings are not binding on the members but are of an advisory character.

2.4.6. A committee to deal with the text of the ecumenical creeds was also appointed. This committee arose as the result of comments made by Prof. J. Faber about the International Consultation Text drafted by an organisation based on the World Council of Churches. A duly seconded motion made by the Rev. G. Van Rongen was adopted. This motion gave the following ground for studying the ecumenical creeds:

- 1) In the respective member churches various texts of these creeds are used;
- 2) It is desirable that the International Consultation Text of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed be scrutinized to ascertain whether this text is faithful to the received text of the creeds.

2.3.2. The conference agreed that the above mentioned committee be comprised of the following membership:

Prof. J.L. Mackay - Scotland
Prof. J. Faber - Canada
Prof. N.H. Gootjes - Korea/Netherlands
Rev. G. Van Rongen - Australia

2.4 PAPERS

The following persons addressed the conference on paper:

- 1) Prof. Dr. J. Faber delivered "The Doctrine of the Church in the Reformed Confessions";
- 2) Prof. H.M. Ohmann on "Piety in the Book of Psalms";
- 3) Rev. Prof. D. Macleod on "The Relationship of the Sacraments to New Life in the Spirit";
- 4) Rev. J.N. Macleod on "The Doctrine of the Covenant and the Reformed Confessions";
- 5) Rev. J. Visscher on "The Exercise of Inter-Church Relations".

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 This first meeting of the ICRC has made clear once again that although there is difference in tradition between the reformed and the presbyterian churches, there is still fundamental unity in faith. During the conference there was favourable opportunity to speak frankly with each other about this difference in tradition, especially with respect to such questions as: covenant, church and church government. The representatives of the respective churches were able to affirm that the reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries give faithful expression to the biblical faith and that while they differ in emphasis and formulation, they are united in their professions and promotion of the truth.

3.2. Unfortunately, the matter of inter-church relations did not receive quite the attention that had been hoped for. Because of the fact that in Edinburgh the discussion of this issue more or less concluded as an open ended matter it would be wise to include this issue once again on the agenda of the next meeting of the conference. Hopefully the meeting in Vancouver will take time to discuss this issue properly. This is very important because of the difference in approach to inter-church relations between churches of the reformed tradition and churches of the presbyterian tradition.

3.3 The speaker on the topic of the sacraments and new life in the Spirit made quite a number of statements, not all of which it seemed were representatives of the thinking in the Free Church of Scotland, nor of scottish presbyterian theology.

4. EVALUATION

4.1 The 1985 Synod of Launceston made the following decision regarding the ICRC:

- a. to send two delegates to the first meeting of the ICRC to be held in Edinburgh in 1985, with a specific instruction.
- b. that the Synod of 1987 is to make a decision regarding our continuing membership on the basis of the reports of conference delegates and on the report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, giving due consideration to the stated grounds for the decisions taken by the 1985 Synod of Launceston. In these grounds amongst others the purpose of the conference as set out in Art. III of the Constitution of the conference is duly evaluated and agreed upon. In this context reference may be made to the following ground of this decision;
 - (7) Churches who have, and faithfully adhere to, a reformed confession have an obligation to promote their unity of faith and thereby also present a reformed testimony to the world.
 - (8) The promotion of this unity in faith implies the exercise of ecclesiastical fellowship among each other, with the expectation that such fellowship leads to sister church relations;
 - (9) On reaching sister church relations, inter-church cooperation in mission and other matters is possible;
 - (10) Within sister church relations the study and resolution of common problems and issues also is possible;
 - (11) Sister churches have a duty to encourage each other to present a reformed testimony to the world.

4.2 HISTORY

4.2.1 The original idea for an ecumenical synod or conference started within the FRCA.

In the Acts of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches of Groningen-Zuid (1978) a letter from the deputies of the FRCA, d.d. 11/03/1977, is mentioned, requesting the convening of an ecumenical synod. The Acts of Synod Albany (1975), however, do not mention any proposal regarding such a synod. This shows that the idea started within the circle of deputies, with which the 1978 Synod of Launceston agreed. Art. 38 of the Acts of this Synod reads: "Synod agrees with the principle for an ecumenical synod as mentioned in the report of deputies." The idea was to convene an international synod of sister churches to speak about common issues.

4.2.2 The General Synod of Arnhem (1981) of the Dutch Reformed Churches changed this original idea by instructing their Deputies for Churches Abroad to convene a constituent assembly for a reformed international conference and to invite deputies of sister churches abroad as well as deputies from those churches with which they had only temporary contact (Acts, Art. 148, B I 4).

As a result of this the delegates of the CRCA, attending the Constituent Assembly in Groningen (1982), met representatives of churches which the FRCA had not as yet acknowledged as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. This acknowledgement came during the Synod of Kelmscott (1983).

N.B. This means that as such there is no difference between Groningen (1982) and Edinburgh (1985).

4.2.3 Although the original intent of the conference had changed, the Synod of Kelmscott (1983) still took the decision to join the ICRC. Synod did not touch on the difficulties which could be raised by being a member of a conference in which the FRCA would also meet churches which they had not as yet acknowledged as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4.2.4 The Synod of Launceston (1985) had to deal with several appeals against the above mentioned decision. Appellants were requesting synod to revoke the decision of the Synod of Kelmscott (1983) pertaining to the ICRC. Although synod did not accede to this request, it reviewed the decision in the light of the material presented by the appellants. This means on the one hand synod was able to understand some of the objections forwarded by the appellants; on the other hand, however, synod could not see any reason to withdraw from the ICRC. Therefore synod decided to support the proposed constitutional amendments of the Canadian sister churches (Acts of the 1985 Synod of Launceston, Art. 88, Point 3.2).

2.4.5 As has already been mentioned, because of formal reasons the conference in Edinburgh could not deal with these amendments to the constitution. It placed them on the agenda of the next meeting of the conference.

4.2.6 As a consequence of the fact that the ICRC of Edinburgh, 1985 did not deal with the proposed amendments to the constitution and seeing the decision taken by the 1985 Synod, the FRCA must continue to join the ICRC at least until the results of the discussions about these amendments are known, and have been scrutinised.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 To continue the membership in the ICRC.

5.2 To submit to the next meeting of the conference the following amendments to the Constitution:

- a. a stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members;
- b. that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC;
- c. that "Constitution Art. V - Authority" be amended to read "The conclusion of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation." (Amendment underlined.)
- d. that "Regulations Art. II" be amended to read "Each conference shall elect the following officers: a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary." (Amendment underlined.)
- e. that "Regulations Art. II, 4, b, iv" be amended to read "to forward to the churches materials, reports or other publications as authorised by the conference." (Amendments underlined.)

5.3 To ask the next meeting of the conference:

- a. to give matters related to the constitution priority.

- b. to place on the agenda once again the issue of inter-church relations and if possible to come with recommendations to the member church;
 - c. to make a clear statement about the position of the observers and advisers, and furthermore which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church.
 - d. to reconsider the decision taken by the previous conference regarding travelling expenses of delegates in line with the following proposal: "Travelling expenses should be borne by the member churches on the basis as the ordinary costs of the conference." Ground: without accepting this proposal the member churches which are bigger in number are privileged to compared to member churches which are smaller in number.
 - e. whether it is possible to finish the discussion about a specific issue and drawing some conclusions for recommendations to the member churches.
- 5.4 To send two deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad as delegates to the next meeting of the conference to be held in summer/autumn 1989 in Vancouver.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Deputies request synod to renew its mandate to consult with the sister churches regarding the rules for ecclesiastical contact. (C 1.7, page A-3)
2. Deputies recommend to the Synod of Albany to continue the sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the adopted rules. (D 3, page A-5)
3. Deputies propose that the Synod of Albany decide to continue the sister church relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea in accordance with adopted rules. (E 4, page A-5)
4. Deputies recommend to synod to continue the relationship as sister churches with De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the adopted rules. (F 4, page A-9)
5. Deputies propose that synod authorise deputies to visit the Sumba/Savu Churches at the next synod to be held late 1987. Because of the language difficulties and unfamiliarity with the Indonesian country and its custom, deputies recommend two delegates be sent. The cost per delegate is approximately \$800.00. (G 1.4, page A-9)
6. Deputies propose that correspondence with the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia Di Sumba Timor-Savu be continued under the established rules. (g 1.5, page A-9)
7. Deputies recommend to synod to continue the relationship as sister churches with Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika in accordance with the adopted rules. (H 3, page A-10)
8. Deputies herewith recommend to the 1987 Synod of Albany to re-confirm that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland is a faithful church of the Lord, showing the marks of the true church as set out in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith and to propose to them to enter into a relationship as sister churches, on the basis of mutually accepted rules. (I 8, page A-15)
9. Deputies recommend to the 1987 Synod of Albany to re-confirm that the Free Church of Scotland is a faithful church of the Lord, showing the marks of the true church as set out in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith and to propose to them to enter into a relationship as sister churches, on the basis of mutually accepted rules. (J 8, page A-19)
10. Deputies recommend to synod:
 1. To continue the membership in the ICRC. (Q 5.1, page A-26)
 2. To submit to the next conference the following amendments to the Constitution:
 - a. a stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegate subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members;
 - b. that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership of the ICRC;
 - c. the "Constitution Art. V - Authority" be amended to read "The conclusions of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation." (Amendment underlined.)
 - d. that "Regulations Art II" be amended to read "Each conference shall elect the following officers: a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary." (Amendment underlined.)
 - e. that "Regulations Art II, 4, b, iv" be amended to read "to forward to the churches materials, reports or other publications as authorised by the conference." (Amendments underlined.) (Q 5.2, page A-26)
 3. To ask the next conference:
 - a. to give matters related to the constitution priority;
 - b. to place on the agenda once again the issue of inter-church relations and if possible to come with recommendations to the member churches;
 - c. to make a clear statement about the position of the observers and advisers, and furthermore which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church;

- d. to reconsider the decision taken by the previous conference regarding travelling expenses of delegates in line with the following proposal: "Travelling expenses should be borne by the member churches on the same basis as the ordinary costs of the conference." GROUND: Without accepting this proposal the member churches which are bigger in number are privileged compared to member churches smaller in number;
 - e. to see whether it is possible to finish the discussion about a specific issue and to draw some conclusions for recommendation to the member churches.
(Q 5.3, page A-27)
4. To send two of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad as delegates to the next conference to be held in summer/autumn 1989 in Vancouver.
(Q 5.4, page A-27)

APPENDIX (1)

RULES FOR THE ENTERING INTO AND MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (as proposed by Deputies of the Dutch sister church to the General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord)

1. **Character of the relations**
According to Article 47 of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (see below 1) and the considerations on these matters by the 1978 Synod of Groningen-South (see below 2), a relationship with a church abroad should result in of recognising one another as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ (as defined in the Reformed Confessions) and in practising ecclesiastical fellowship accordingly.
2. **Entering into relations**
Relations with churches abroad will only be entered into when, after a period of getting acquainted, primarily through the work of deputies, the general synod has not only made sure that these churches have officially accepted the reformed confession of the Word of God, but also that they live up to their standards in doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline.
Three things will have to be taken into account:
 - a. Our Lord Jesus Christ gathers his church among many different peoples, which have their own special geographical situation, their own history and culture;
the entering into relations, therefore, should not be rejected because of minor differences in the way churches abroad have expressed themselves in their confessions, or discrepancies in liturgy, church order or ecclesiastical practice.
 - b. If a church abroad maintains relations with a third party, careful attention will have to be given to the question as to what these relations mean to the church concerned, so that the value of entering into relations may be assessed.
 - c. Due to the power of sin still among us, the possibility of a relationship with more than one group of churches in a certain country cannot be ruled out. In the light of Christ's commandment of unity among his people, such a situation of 'double correspondence' may not be acquiesced in, but should remain a point of discussion.
3. **The practice of relations**
If a relationship has been entered, the exercising of this relationship must be governed by a set of rules; these rules should serve to help one another to adhere to the true confession of the Word of God and to be true witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world.
The following rules shall be agreed on as a minimum:
 - a. The churches will pay heed to each other's doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline.
 - b. The churches will receive one another's representatives at their general synods and invite them to serve as advisers (to the extent to which this is practicable). They will inform one another of the decision taken at these assemblies, if possible by exchanging the agenda and Acts or at least by forwarding those decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned (if necessary in translation).
 - c. In case of changes in or additions to liturgical forms or church order, if these are of a doctrinal nature, the church concerned will lay these changes before the corresponding churches and draw their special attention to them, so that consultations can take place before final decisions are made.
 - d. If an un hoped for deviation from the reformed standards should become apparent, in doctrine, liturgy or discipline, the church concerned will have to be spoken to. If error is allowed or even sanctioned, the church concerned must be warned of the consequences of this for itself as well as for the relationship with other churches, which relationship would have to be suspended or, ultimately, brought to an end.
4. **Further arrangements**
 - a. The relationship between churches, as described above, includes the acceptance of letters of testimony and the admission to the sacraments on presentation of such letters. It also includes, in principle, the admission of one another's ministers to the pulpit, taking into account rules which have already been agreed upon in the several churches.
 - b. This does not rule out the possibility that special rules can be agreed upon between churches, if necessary or desirable. This will surely be necessary in cases of 'double correspondence'.
 - c. General synods will decide, as far as possible on the advice of deputies, in each separate case what action should be taken and which special rules should be agreed upon.
The above draft did not play a large role in the discussions at the ICRC, where Rev. J. Visscher spoke on "The Exercise of Inter-Church Relations", yet the general tendency of the contribution of Rev. Visscher as well as the remarks made during the discussion gave deputies the impression that the churches represented at the ICRC have come to a better understanding on these issue.

In the opinion of deputies the rules as formulated above can make clear to those churches with which relations have been or are to be entered to:

1. what, according to the reformed churches in The Netherlands, is or should be essential in maintaining these relations;
2. that the reformed churches can be held to these rules and that they intend them to be the basis for establishing relations with other churches;
3. that these rules express an expectation as to these churches' preparedness to discuss these matters and agree upon them as far as possible.

As to this last point, deputies are of the opinion that these rules cannot be prescribed in such a way that inter-church relations will only be established if the rules have been accepted completely. If this point of view were to be taken by the reformed churches, much of the work that has been done in the past ten years, and which was according to the deputies, acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, would prove to have been useless and would have been broken off before it has even begun.

All this has its consequences for the terminology used hitherto in discussing inter-church relations, for instance where a distinction was made between true churches with which we are in complete agreement does not exist.

Deputies have come to this conclusion on the basis of their experience, acquired in discussions with presbyterian churches, that these churches have rather different views on the matter of inter-church relations; they have never put such an amount of thought into these questions as we have, and they are not likely to start laying down rules like these in the near future. Growing towards a consensus will prove to be a process of years.

Deputies, therefore, are of the opinion that a relationship as 'sister church' can be entered into whenever:

- a. the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands have clearly laid down their own rules, their background and their aims;
- b. the rules adhered to by the 'sister church' are not in conflict with the above-mentioned rules;
- c. there is a clear prospect of a fruitful discussion on these matters.

Decisions will have to be made, however, for each separate case. Deputies think that this is the only way in which our churches will be able to fulfil their ecumenical task.

If synod accepts the deputies' proposals, the 'temporary relations of ecclesiastical contact' will have to be withdrawn, without, however, changing the agreements entered into as the basis of that relationship.

PROPOSALS:

Deputies propose that new deputies:

- be allowed, pending the opportunity offered to sister churches to give their opinion on these new rules, to do their work on the basis of and in the spirit of the rules proposed in this report;
- be instructed (1) to discuss the new situation with those churches with which a 'temporary relation of ecclesiastical contact' has been established or to which this relationship has been offered; (2) to report on their experience in working with these rules, so that this experience may serve to improve the practice of ecclesiastical contacts between churches all over the world, under God's indispensable blessing.

NOTES

1. Article 47b of the Church Order reads:
General synod decides on relations with churches abroad. As far as possible fellowship will be maintained with churches of a Reformed Confession in other parts of the world. Relations with foreign churches will not be rejected because of minor differences in church order or church practice.
2. The considerations on inter-church relations by the 1978 Synod of Groningen-South read as follows:
 - a. According to the Word of God (John 17:11,17,20,21; Eph. 3:14 - 4:6; II Timothy 3:15,16) and the confession (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21; Belgic Confession, Articles 27-29) the church of Christ is scattered all over the world, yet it is united in one Spirit, in the unity of the true faith, by adhering to the true doctrine, liturgy and discipline according to the ordinances of Jesus Christ as its only Head;
 - b. According to the Word of God and the confession, true believers and true churches in every place and in every country are called to establish ecclesiastical unity with those who confess the same faith and adhere to it in preaching, service, church government and discipline, by living together as a church at a certain place or as churches in a certain country; and if geographical distance, language barriers or other causes makes this impossible, by correspondence.
 - c. True believers and churches are called to distinguish from the Word of God which is the true church, in order to have fellowship with that church, while rejecting fellowship with churches which depart from the doctrine and ordinances of the Word of God, or which have separated themselves schismatically from the true church.
 - d. In fulfilling this call the churches should take into account that our Lord Jesus Christ gathers his church among many different nations, and that his churches among these nations have their own history of persecution, of fighting against error, and of reformation.
These different histories may have led to differences in the way in which these churches confess God's truth, as well as in the way in which church government and liturgy have been arranged. Yet they are one in confessing the Word of God, adhering to true doctrine and in the administration of the sacraments, and keeping to the ordinances of Jesus Christ as the only Head of His church (cf. Belgic Confession, Article 32; Church Order, Article 86).
 - e. In considering a relationship with churches abroad, which themselves have a fellowship with churches with which The Reformed Churches of The Netherlands do not have fellowship, both c. and d. above should be taken into account.

APPENDIX A(b)

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF THE DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD to the 1987 SYNOD of ALBANY

- 1 The International Conference of Reformed Churches.
 - 1.1 The general secretary has advised that the next conference will be held D.V. from Monday June 19th to June 23rd, 1989. The conference is to be held at Cloverdale, British Columbia, Canada.
 - 1.2 The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia has submitted the following proposals to be placed on the agenda of the ICRC 1989:
 - a That it be made a regular matter for member churches to report to the conference upon steps they have taken since the previous conference to proceed to greater unity in the faith.
 - b That the conference aim to develop an agreed statement on what is a 'true church', together with the implications of such for issues such as inter-communion, acceptance of attestations, etc., and that such a statement relate the centrality of Jesus Christ to these issues.
 - c That the conference aim to develop an agreed statement on the position of covenant children in the church.
 - 1.3 Deputies have earlier advised all churches of decisions regarding the ICRC made by the 1986 General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland and by the 1986 General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Although the churches have been advised the details were omitted from our main report and so are repeated here:
The General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, "hopeful of improving the usefulness of the ICRC" approved of the proposals made by the Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations by way of addition to the Constitution and amendments to the Regulations as follows:
 - a The Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognise the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches.
 - b The Regulations should be altered so as to require reports of committees to be in the hands of the corresponding secretary one year in advance of the conference and to be by him circulated to all member churches for referral to their delegates in due course. Amendments to committee proposals should be receivable by the corresponding secretary/recording secretary up to the opening session of the conference.
 - c Correspondence seeking approval of recommendation should also be in the hands of the corresponding secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter.
 - d The regulations and procedures should also make possible discussion of important issues not included in the pre-set agenda provided a proposal to this effect is tabled by at least five voting delegates.The General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches decided:
 - 1 to instruct the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad to prepare the next meeting of the ICRC as they have outline in their report by:
 - a requesting the Canadian Reformed Church at Cloverdale to organise a prayer service before the commencement of the 1989 meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches;
 - b consulting the sister churches on suitable topics for the 1989 meeting of the ICRC;
 - c by assuming all reasonable cost related to their role as host on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
 - d depending on the nature of the matters to be discussed to invite either one or both of the professors of the Theological College recommended by the committee as advisors to the conference;
 - e designating two members of the committee as delegates.
 - 2 to advise the executive of the ICRC that the amendments as proposed by the General Synod of Burlington West of 1986 be placed on the agenda instead of those proposed by the 1983 Synod of Cloverdale, to wit:
 - a that a stipulation be included in the 'Basis' of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are a member;
 - b that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership of the ICRC;
 - c that 'CONSTITUTION Art.V - Authority' be amended to read: "The conclusions of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation."
 - 1.4 The Free Church of Scotland has responded to the proposals of the Canadian Reformed Churches as follows:
 - a Re the 'Basis': The committee agreed to resist this proposal on the ground that it rests on a mistaken interpretation of the 'subscription' involved. The 'Basis' at present recognises the reformed character of the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession. To prejudice that position would be to prejudice the whole conference.
 - b Re membership of RES: The second proposal was 'that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership of the ICRC'. The committee had a good measure of sympathy with this proposal especially in the light of past relations with the RES. They would agree to the proposal if the RES continued to tolerate breaches of reformed belief and practice - but would not be hostile to an RES which honoured a reformed constitution.
 - c Re Authority: It was agreed to support this proposal.
 - 1.5 Professor A.C. Boyd, chairman of the Committee on Missions appointed by the ICRC of 1985 requested information regarding the missionary activities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. This information has been supplied.
 - 1.6 Enclosed with this report is a draft report on the text of the Ecumenical Creeds submitted by Rev. G. van Rongen on behalf of the ICRC Committee.
- 2 Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika
 - 2.1 Advice has been received that the next synod of the VGKSA will be held D.V. from 9 to 13 October, 1987 at Johannesburg. Our churches have been invited to send a representative. Deputies have sent greetings on behalf of the FRCA.

- 2.2 The VGKSA has provided deputies with two copies of the report from the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to the Synod of Johannesburg. A summary of the main items is given in Appendix (a).
- 3 Deputies have been advised that the General Synod of the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia will meet D.V. from 3 to 6 November, 1987 at Mau-Moru, Melolo, East Sumba. One or more representatives of the FRCA have been invited to attend.
- 4 Korea
The Fraternal Relations Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Korea has advised that the 37th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea will meet, D.V., from 21 to 26 September, 1987. Delegates from the FRCA have been invited.
- 5 Greetings from Sister Churches
To date deputies have received fraternal greetings to the 1987 Synod of Albany from the sister churches in the Netherlands and South Africa. Copies are attached to this report.

APPENDIX a

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad received two copies of the report written by the Deputies for Correspondence with Churches Abroad of Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika to be discussed at the 1987 Synod of Johannesburg.

The report makes mention of the correspondence between South-Africa and Australia, e.g. on the matter of the solemnization of marriages. They pay attention to the information booklet, written and published by our deputies, and even propose to their synod to follow the example set by the Dutch Churches and our Free Reformed Churches of Australia. They further summarize our report to the 1987 Synod of Albany.

As for the ICRC, they report the findings of the observers who attended the 1985 conference held at Edinburgh, and summarize the proposals made to the next conference by our churches.

They propose to continue the correspondence with our churches as sister-churches according to the adopted rules. The same proposal is made regarding the Canadian Reformed Churches and The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

As for the Reformed Churches of East Sumba/Savu, deputies propose to continue the brotherly contacts with these churches.

The same is proposed regarding The Presbyterian Church of Korea. The report sums up a number of points of interest in the Korean Church Order.

Concerning the ICRC the report concentrates on the information received regarding those member-churches of this organisation which are not sister-churches of Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke.

The history of The Free Church of Scotland, The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia respectively is briefly summarized.

The final conclusion is that from the information received it is clear that these member churches of the ICRC are all faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A special section in the report deals with the matter of the Rules for Correspondence. An evaluation of the new rules proposed by the Dutch deputies, and under discussion at the General Synod of Spakenburg-Noord, is given.

The South-African deputies are of the opinion:

- a that it is not necessary that sister-churches have adopted the same rules;
- b that it is not always a matter of sin's bad fruits when in one and the same country there are two true churches; deeply rooted cultural divergencies may hinder - anyhow provisionally - the establishing of church unity the report refers here to the possibility that this may be the case between the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and The Free Reformed Churches of Australia).
- c that it is not necessary to include a rule regarding supervising each other's liturgy, because this usually is a historically developed mark; even details in the government of the church are sometimes a result of historical development; so that we should concentrate on supervising each other's doctrine (in the administration of the Word of God and of the sacraments), and church discipline, as marks of the true church.
- d that the details of the privileges of delegates to each other's synods should not be included into the rules.
- e that the rule shall be maintained that the sister-churches give account of their correspondence with other churches.
- f the rules must be given a more logical structure. They therefore add an appendix, containing these rules (even in the English language.)

They are the following:

ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

1 Basis

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church (Eph.5:23), which is his body (Eph.1:22-23). He has prayed for the unity of the church (John 17), as the assembly of those believing in Him.

Because the Lord Jesus Christ gathers his church out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev.5:9), diversities in church practice in the various countries can be expected. These diversities should not prevent the churches from endeavouring to demonstrate their unity in Christ.

The Belgic Confession Art.27-29 and the Westminster Confession Art.25 summarize the reformed confession with regard to the church.

- 2 **Calling**
Churches shall be alert in recognizing those churches that have the distinguishing marks of the true church, in that they preach the pure doctrine of the Gospel, maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ and exercise church discipline in punishing sin (Belgic Confession Art.29). Furthermore, in their church government these churches should recognize Christ as the head of the local churches and not allow a hierarchical structure between churches.
In the light of this call for unity the body of Christ should not be kept unnecessarily divided by minor differences between the churches. Churches should constantly remind one another of this calling, also in the ecumenical contacts.
- 3 **Action**
After mutual recognition of one another as true churches, between which unity of church federation cannot as yet be realized, a sister-church relationship should be established. Such a decision should be taken by their general church assemblies and should be realized only after careful scrutiny of the characteristics of the proposed sister church.
- 4 **Consequences**
Recognition of a sister church also implies responsibility for the other's spiritual wellbeing. Such responsibility should be agreed upon by mutual acceptance of the same set of rules for ecclesiastical contact. These rules should be the same for all sister churches to avoid variation in levels of relationship.
- 5 **Rules for sister-church relationships**
The churches shall:
 - 5.1 take heed that the sister churches do not deviate from the christian doctrine and discipline, as required in the Holy Scripture and recorded in the reformed confessions;
 - 5.2 inform one another of intended changes in their confessional documents;
 - 5.3 forward the agenda of their General Synods or Assemblies to their sister churches with an invitation to send delegates;
 - 5.4 forward the Acts or Minutes of their General Synods or Assemblies to their sister churches, with a summary in the language used in correspondence;
 - 5.5 accept one another's attestations or certificates of membership;
 - 5.6 allow one another's ministers to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments, when invited by a local church council;
 - 5.7 inform one another of existing and intended official ecclesiastical relationships with other churches or ecumenical organizations.

APPENDIX B
REPORT OF DEPUTIES FOR CONTACT WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF
EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Dear brothers in the Lord,

1 INSTRUCTIONS.

1.1 Synod 1985 instructed us (Acts, art. 68-3) to:

- a convey our joy and gratitude with the mutual recognition of the need to seek unity of faith on the basis of God's Word;
- b further investigate whether the P.C.E.A. can be acknowledged as a true church according to Article 27 - 29 Belgic Confession of Faith;
- c pay particular attention to the point of "three types of communicants" as mentioned in deputies' report;
- d submit their report to the churches at least three months prior to the next synod.

It also decided, according to Acts art. 95-8, that "Minutes of meetings with representatives of the P.C.E.A. have to be sent to the churches."

1.2 Item a) was dealt with by synod itself (ref. 2.4 in this report). Instructions mentioned under b) and c) will be dealt with in sections 4 to 8 of this report.

1.3 Concerning the last-mentioned part of the instructions, deputies despatched the following letter to the churches on 7-3-1987:

"Dear brothers in the Lord,

In pursuance of our mandate given to us by the 1985 Synod (Acts, art.68) we have - over the past eighteen months - had some exchanges of correspondence with the relevant committee of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

Our primary aims have been to identify areas of difference between their churches and ours, and to have such areas discussed during a meeting. It finally appeared possible to arrange a meeting in Melbourne for 3 and 4 March last. We had requested Rev. Veldman and Rev. Bruning to assist by their attendance and by contributing papers, but regrettably both had to withdraw in February due to pressures of work. We were indeed fortunate that we found Rev. van Rongen willing to step into the breach.

Synod's instructions mention (art. 95-8) the word "minutes". However, we found that a meeting of this informative nature does not lend itself to the making of minutes. We therefore decided to submit a brief report which follows below:

Venue: Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Wantirna, Victoria.

Participants: Rev. K. Jonker, Rev. G. van Rongen, A.M. Hidding, J. VanderRos, Rev. John M. Cromarty, Rev. Peter Gadsby, Rev. Rowland S. Ward.

Rev. E.R. Lee of Taree, N.S.W. was present on 3 March only.

Chairman: Rev. Peter Gadsby

Papers presented:

- 1 What is implied in a sister church relationship - J. VanderRos
- 2 The invisible church - W.P. Gadsby
- 3 A few aspects of our reformed liturgy - G. van Rongen
- 4 Called children of the Covenant - K. Jonker
- 5 The concept of an adherent - J.M. Cromarty
- 6 Term eldership - R.S. Ward
- 7 The status of a minister in the Presbytery - R.S. Ward

During two days of extensive and intensive discussions, which were at all times frank and informative, we were given a considerable body of knowledge and background information which will assist us materially in the compiling of our Report to the 1987 Synod.

In the report - it should be produced within a few weeks - we intend to elaborate on the items discussed and to evaluate them in the light of our mandate.

May our gracious Lord bless your labours and ours to the glory of His Name.

With brotherly greetings,

for deputies

J. VanderRos, clerk"

2 Development of contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

2.1 The 1978 Synod decided to establish contact with the P.C.E.A. after it received a letter from its Inter Church Relations Committee (Acts of 1978, art.69). Our synod to the committee: "We thank you for your christian greetings and are indeed pleased to hear of your desire to have relationship with our churches. Synod has decided to appoint deputies for the initial contact and investigation. It is the wish of synod that in this way we may come to know each other better."

2.2 There was no report at the 1980 Synod, which appointed new deputies. A first meeting with a representative of the P.C.E.A. occurred in May 1981. Deputies reported to the 1983 Synod that items clarified at the meeting included purity of worship, preaching by elders, Bible translations, membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and the contents of interchurch relations. The P.C.E.A. withdrew from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod during 1981.

2.3 The 1983 Synod appointed new deputies with the mandate "to further investigate whether those churches can be acknowledged as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, and report their findings to the next synod so that this contact can be clarified, if possible, before the establishing of the International Conference in 1985."
The deputies arranged meetings with the P.C.E.A. delegates on 3- 4-1984 and 1-3-1985.

These meetings produced further clarification on the points at issue. Subjects discussed included the Barrier Act of 1697, church discipline, the sacraments, worship and music in church, adherents.

In their report to the 1985 Synod, deputies concluded:

"We acknowledge the presbyterian system and the standards of the P.C.E.A. as valid and calvinistic.... Deputies recommend to synod:

- a to acknowledge the P.C.E.A. as true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b to enter into co-operation to foster understanding and fellowship
- c to intensify relationship in the years ahead as the Lord leads us.

- 2.4 The 1985 Synod received a letter from the Synod of Eastern Australia held during May 1985, advising of that synod's decision to acknowledge our churches as "true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.... at the same time recognizing our mutual responsibility to exhort one another to continued obedience to the Word of God, and the doctrine and practice which is according to godliness."

In its reply, our synod expressed its "joy and gratitude with the resolution of the Synod of Eastern Australia. It is a reason for thankfulness that there is mutual recognition of the need to seek unity of faith on the basis of God's Word."

However, synod advised also that the available information was not sufficient to come to a final decision in the matter of recognising the P.C.E.A. as a true and faithful church.

"Synod wants to express the desire that further contacts by our deputies may lead to mutual recognition on the above-mentioned basis."

This basis is "what the Free Reformed Churches confess in art. 29 of the Belgic Confession concerning the true church."

New deputies were charged to "further investigate whether the P.C.E.A. can be acknowledged as a true church according to articles 27 - 29; pay particular attention to the point "three types of communicants" as mentioned in the report of Deputies."

- 2.5 Deputies appointed by the 1985 Synod acted on the observation that in our churches there was a considerable lack of knowledge of the P.C.E.A. by writing to the consistories, and suggesting that they might take out subscriptions to The Presbyterian Banner, and encourage church members to do likewise.

Deputies concentrated their efforts on studying the history and practice of the P.C.E.A. and on arranging a meeting with members of the P.C.E.A. Inter-Church Relations Committee.

Eight meetings by deputies were held prior to March 1987. Seven letters were sent to the committee leading up to the meeting held in Melbourne early March 1987.

The meeting itself is covered by section 5 of this report.

3 History of the P.C.E.A. in a nutshell.

On December 14, 1832 the Presbytery of New South Wales was established in connection with the Church of Scotland. Almost five years later, in December 1837, another body, "the Synod of New South Wales", was formed. Since October 1840, both groups formed the "Synod of Australia in connection with the Established Church of Scotland", albeit independent from the Scottish church.

In 1843 the Disruption took place in Scotland because of the intrusion of the civil government into the affairs of the church. On October 10, 1846 the Australian Synod decided not to change its name, keeping its bond with the established church of Scotland intact, and refusing to enter into fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland, the Disruption-church.

Three ministers and one elder protested against this. Their stance resulted in the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in N.S.W. and Queensland, and of the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia, Felix (afterwards: Victoria).

When in 1865 a majority of the much enlarged membership of the P.C.E.A. joined in a union which resulted in the establishing of the Presbyterian Church of N.S.W., a minority, with seven ministers, continued.

A schism in 1884 further reduced its membership, so that by 1908 there were only three ministers left. Indeed, the P.C.E.A. considers itself 'a remnant church', tracing its roots right back to the Scottish Reformation.

In Scotland, a minority of the Free Church, also considering itself 'a remnant', remained out of the union in 1900. This continuing church recognized the tiny P.C.E.A. Co-operation with the above-mentioned Free Presbyterian Church of Victoria led to the amalgamation of this church's three congregations with the P.C.E.A. in 1953.

At this moment there are congregations in Sydney and its western districts, the coastal towns of N.S.W., Armidale, Brisbane, Ulverstone in N.W. Tasmania and the eastern suburbs of Melbourne - altogether 14 charges with 14 ministers.

As per December 1986, the total number of communicant members was 638.

The P.C.E.A. publishes a magazine, The Presbyterian Banner.

The ministers of the P.C.E.A. have been trained at the Free Church College, Edinburgh, or the Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Victoria.

In 1981 the P.C.E.A. broke with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, becoming a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches in 1985. There is a sister-church relationship with the Free Church of Scotland. The P.C.E.A. co-operates with its mission work in Peru, India and South Africa. It supports the Christian Witness to Israel and undertakes its own mission work in Fiji since 1983.

Note on the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia:

In 1690 a minority withdrew from the church of Scotland because of an alliance between church and state which they could not accept. Wishing to maintain the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, they have since been known as 'the Covenanters'. Their majority joined the Free Church of Scotland in 1876. However, a remnant carried on as a separate church, and meanwhile other Reformed Presbyterian Churches had been established in Ireland and in North America. The first Australian congregation was founded at Geelong in 1858, to be followed by McKinnon (Vic) in 1946.

In 1959 they were organized in a presbytery, independent of the Irish church by 1974.

New congregations were established at Frankston and Sunbury in Victoria.

Training for the ministry occurs mostly through the Reformed Theological College at Geelong, which has staff members belonging to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia.

There is no formal allegiance to the Scottish covenants above-mentioned. Worship and practice are similar to those in the P.C.E.A.

There are approximately 100 communicant members in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia.

4 Some data:

For the sake of clarity we will repeat some data occurring in a previous report. Others will be added to fill in the picture.

4.1 The supreme standard of the P.C.E.A. is the scripture of the Old and New Testaments.

The chief Subordinate Standard is the Westminster Confession of Faith as explained by Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647 and of the Synod of Eastern Australia in 1952, together with the Questions and Formula set out by the latter.

Other standards are, according to the P.C.E.A.'s Constitution: the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of 1648 - for instruction purposes, the Directory for Public Worship of 1645 - for Worship, as also the Directory for Family Worship of 1647; for church government the Westminster Form of Presbyterial Church Government of 1645;

All of these documents are understood in the light of the Acts passed by the church when adopted.

As for practice and procedure, the P.C.E.A. makes use of the Free Church of Scotland's Book of Practice 1964, together with "Practice and Procedure of the P.C.E.A. 1983."

Other documents of real import are the Barrier Act of 1697 and the Acts against Innovations in the Worship of God of 1707.

4.2 In practice, actual amendment of the confession is not an option, nor can one contemplate amendment of the text of the standards of worship and government. The catechisms could be amended in a manner consistent with the doctrine of the confession, although considerable care would be required. Other decisions of the church within the framework of the subordinate standards may be amended or repealed.

Another point worth noting is that subscription to the confession is to its 'whole doctrine', not to its fundamental or chief doctrines, as is the case in other churches.

Subscription is to the doctrine of the confession, not to the document itself or to its mere words, as if it were a perfect and infallible expression of faith. This means, for instance, that no one is bound to the distinction between the invisible and the visible church, ch. 25, 1 - 3; or to consider the pope to be 'that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition', as in ch. 25, 6, the context relates to the church.

The terms of subscription, which are binding upon office-bearers, commit one to acknowledge the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the church as founded upon the Word of God and agreeable thereto.

Acceptance of the basic thrust and the principles in other standards of the church is required, though subscription does not apply there.

4.3 Follows the text of the vows taken by elders and deacons in the P.C.E.A.

a Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?

b Do you sincerely own and declare the Confession of Faith approved by General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland to be the confession of your faith; and do you own the doctrine therein confessed to be the true doctrine, which you will constantly adhere to?

c Do you own and acknowledge the Presbyterian Church Government of this church, by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies to be the only government of this Church; and do you engage to submit thereto, concur therewith, and not to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof?

d Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of the church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to civil government, and that the civil magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's church, and do you approve of the general principles embodied in the Claim, Declaration and Protest, adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of Ministers and Elders, Commissioners from Presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in the presence of the Royal Commissioner of 18th May 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the Word of God, and the standards of this church with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only Head and to his Word as her only standard?

e Do you promise to observe uniformity of worship and of the administration of all public ordinances within this church, as the same are at present performed and allowed?

f Do you accept the office of an elder (deacon) of this congregation and promise, through grace, faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge all the duties thereof?

4.4 In the P.C.E.A. there are three Presbyteries - Northern, Central and Southern.

Ministers are answerable to the presbytery, being members of it. A presbytery consists of the minister(s) plus one elder of each congregation.

Synod is convened each year. It acts as the supreme court of the church and consists of all the members of the presbyteries.

4.5 The Barrier Act of 1697 ensures that a synod cannot pass any act in doctrine, worship, discipline or government - binding the church - without the consent of the majority of the presbyteries.

The act reads as follows:

"The General Assembly, taking into consideration the Overture and Act made in the Last Assembly concerning innovations, and having heard the report of the several commissioners from presbyteries to whom the consideration of the same was recommended, in order to its being more ripely advised and determined in this assembly: and considering the frequent practice of former assemblies of this church, and that it will mightily conduce to the exact obedience of the Acts of assemblies, that general assemblies be very deliberate in making of the same, and that the whole church have a previous knowledge thereof, and their opinion be had therein, and for preventing any sudden alteration or innovation, or other prejudice to the church, in either doctrine or worship, or discipline, or government thereof, now happily established; do, therefore, appoint, enact, and declare, that before any general assembly of this church shall pass any acts, which are to be binding rules and constitutions to the church, the same acts be first proposed as overtures to the assembly, and being passed by them as such, be remitted to the consideration of the several presbyteries of this church, and their opinions and consent reported by their commissioners to the next general assembly following, who may then pass the same in acts, if the more general opinion of the church thus had agreed thereunto.

5 The Melbourne meeting of 3 - 4 March 1987

5.1 As mentioned in 1.3 of this report, delegates of the P.C.E.A. and our own churches met in the new Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in Wantirna, Victoria.
On the side of the P.C.E.A. those present were the Revs. J.M. Cromarty of Geelong, Vic., W.P. Gadsby of Armidale, N.S.W., and R.S. Ward of Melbourne, Vic. Rev. E.R. Lee of Taree, N.S.W. attended on the first day.
Our churches were represented by deputies appointed by the 1985 Synod, i.e. Rev. K. Jonker, Br. A.M. Hidding and Br. J. VanderRos of Launceston. Br. S. Reitsema was unable to attend. The original plan was that another two ministers of our churches, who had been appointed by the 1985 Synod as advisors of the deputies, would take part also. Neither of them, however, was in a position to do so.
Deputies therefore invited Rev. G. van Rongen to attend.

5.2 After personal introduction, goals of the meeting were briefly clarified, the main one being expressed as 'mutual understanding and exploration of our responsibilities in Christ' and 'identification of points of significant disagreement and or misunderstanding'.
Deputies found this to be completely in line with the mandate given them by the 1985 Synod.

5.3 The first paper was on the question 'What is implied in a sister-church relationship?' Like most of the meeting papers, it had been sent to the delegates in advance.

It was prepared by Br. J. VanderRos, who outlined the 'rules for correspondence' with the help of two articles: one by T. Jagersma of 'Relationships and Contacts' in Lux Mundi, March 1982; and one by the Rev. J. Visscher of Canada on 'The exercise of inter- church relations', for the 1985 I.C.R.C. gathering.

Attention was paid also to the newly drafted rules submitted by the Dutch 'Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad' to the sister churches, and also to the Free Church of Scotland, for their comment. The reason for this consultation lies in the fact that, until now, most presbyterian churches have not adopted a set of formal rules governing their inter-church relationships.

Discussion of this paper by the Melbourne meeting involved comparison of Articles 27 - 29 Belgic Confession and the Westminster Confession, Chapter 25. While the former speaks on the church in terms of true and false, making a clear distinction between them, the latter speaks in terms of more or less pure.

However, while the Westminster Confession does not use the terms true and false, it does state that some churches 'have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan' (ch. 25-5).

On the other hand, the Belgic Confession does not exclude the possibility that one false church is in more serious decay than another. Decay is usually a growth process. Prior to the final decisions taken by the Dutch general synods in the 1940's, 'De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland' were not considered to be a false church; only after those decisions had been taken and imposed and all avenues of appeal used, the situation changed: no longer could they be counted as faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was pointed out from the side of our delegates that the Scottish Confession of 1560 does speak in terms of true and false. Though it was superseded by the Westminster Confession, its contents have never been condemned or rejected. Moreover, we learned after the meeting that in 'The Practical Use and Saving Knowledge or a Brief Sum of Christian Doctrine' and in the National Covenant of 1638 - documents held in high esteem in the Free Church of Scotland and the P.C.E.A. - reference is made to 'the true Kirk', 'the true church of God', 'the true and holy Kirk of Christ Jesus' and 'the true Kirk of God'.

The brothers of the P.C.E.A. stressed the fact that their church has been a sufferer from church union, and needs to learn again what fellowship with other churches means.

Their experience with the R.E.S. was far from happy. Moreover, their situation as 'remnant churches' caused lack of interest in this respect. However, the P.C.E.A. has no difficulty acknowledging other churches to be true churches of the Lord, without at once following through to full ecclesiastical fellowship.

The P.C.E.A. does not see the need to establish formal relationships with all kinds of churches. Up till now she has a sister-church relationship with the Free Church of Scotland, and in the past she had a relation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Tasmania.

It was clearly stated by P.C.E.A. delegates, meanwhile, that they stick to the wellknown three marks of the true church for the evaluation of other churches.

Our conclusion was that at this point there are no fundamental differences between both churches, though the moment at which we adjudge the 'impurity' to make a church a false church may vary.

5.4 The second paper, delivered by Rev. W.P. Gadsby, dealt with the distinction 'visible/invisible church'.

The paper firstly referred to John Calvin, who in his Institutes did use the distinction, but was careful at the same time to stress that there is only one holy universal church.

It went on to say that the Belgic Confession, though not employing the distinction in those terms, makes mention of 'hypocrites who are mixed in the church with the good, yet are not of the church, though externally in it. In this way it makes an analogous distinction.

In the Westminster Confession we find the strong reassertion of divine election, which emerged from the Synod of Dordrecht, reflected in Chapter 25. The Westminster Larger Catechism speaks similarly in nos. 64-65. At the same time, the Westminster Confession (25-2) recognized that there is but one church of God. Consequently, commentators on the Westminster Confession stress the fact that the distinction should not be understood as though it would speak of two churches, or as though one part of the church were visible and another invisible. The paper continued by stating "the distinction is, of course, confirmed by experience; there are those who are accounted members of the (visible) church who turn away from Christ, and are never restored. The Lord speaks of those who, on the day of judgement will say 'Lord, Lord'. And Paul states that they are not all of Israel.'..."

It referred also to a contribution by Prof. John Murray, published in volume I of his Collective Writings and entitled "The Church: Its Definition in terms of 'visible' and 'invisible' invalid," which was attached to the paper as an appendix.

Some of its most striking sentences read thus: "As noted earlier, there are those aspects pertaining to the church that may be characterized as invisible. But it is to 'the church' that those aspects pertain, and 'the church' in the New Testament never appears as an invisible entity and therefore may never be defined in terms of invisibility.

This is why, at an earlier point, the advisability of the use of the actual term 'invisible' had been questioned."

Rev. Gadsby appeared to agree with this, for he concluded: "we must avoid letting the invisible/visible distinction control our definition of the church, for then we will either fall into the 'pure church' error, or we will begin to depreciate the importance of the 'visible' church. There can be no question that what Jesus founded upon earth, in continuity with God's Old Testament Church, is a visible entity. Indeed, if we accept Professor Murray's argument, to say 'visible church' is a tautology. Nevertheless, the (visible) church does have its invisible attributes, and basic to the church's existence is the fact of the unseen election and regeneration of God.

Remembering this fact will keep us from nominalism and carelessness about the means of grace."

From their side deputies were able to refer to a newspaper report on a conference recently held in London, where Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, referred to the role of the local church as it appears in the New Testament. He stressed the fact that more emphasis is given to the visible local church as the assembly of confessing believers.

The P.C.E.A. delegates were very interested in the objections raised against the distinction over the years. They were given a copy of this brief list:

- a the distinction finds its origin in Plato's philosophy, and from there found its way into theology through the teachings of e.g. Augustine;
- b it easily leads one to the idea that there are two different churches;
- c the 'invisible' church can readily be regarded as a platonic ideal whilst the 'visible' then has minor importance;
- d it promoted the idea of pluriformity in the church;
- e it tends to distinguish two different groups within the church, and to support the distinction 'external/internal' in e.g. the doctrine of the covenant;
- f even the use of the term 'aspects' is debatable as 'aspects' suggest visibility;
- g similar distinctions could be advocated for other matters, e.g. marriage; does not 'true love' in married life lie in the hidden corners of the heart?;
- h it easily promotes the idea of 'being concerned' within an apostate church, thus hindering genuine reformation.
The discussion showed that -
 - 1 the description of the church under the aspects of visibility and invisibility has a long history in the reformed churches of the 16th and 17th centuries. In the Dutch situation, controversy in the 20th century made the distinction more suspect. In the English-speaking world, cautions were expressed, such as by J. Murray, rejecting the definition of the church in such a manner. Murray's article was regarded as quite representative of the P.C.E.A.'s viewpoint.
 - 2 because of the difficulties in the use of the terms, care and wisdom are needed to avoid misunderstanding such as conveying the suggestion that the 'visible church is of minor importance'.

- 5.5 The third paper was produced by the Rev. G. van Rongen. It dealt with a few aspects of our reformed liturgy on which the P.C.E.A. delegates had requested some information, in particular in the Scriptural underpinning.
- 5.5.1 Its first section dealt with the covenantal character of our church services as a 'sacred discourse' between the LORD and his church, the 'Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16), the continuance of ancient Israel.
- 5.5.2 The second part referred to the New Testament background of catechism-preaching. The apostle commands to have the 'sacred deposit' passed on to the generations that follow (2 Tim. 2:2).
After an exposition of some historical aspects of catechism-preaching it was pointed out that catechism-preaching is administration of God's Word in the full sense. Dealing with the whole of the revealed counsel of God concerning our redemption, it has been a rich blessing to our churches, contributing to keeping the members by the faith once for all delivered to the saints.
The P.C.E.A. delegates stated that their church, too, is committed to preach the whole counsel of God. It does not object to catechism preaching as the means of covering the doctrines of faith properly, but does not require it, and cautions that the catechism not be placed above the Word.
- 5.5.3 Congregational singing was the next item in the paper.
Reference was made to 'the commandment of David' (2 Chr. 8: 14; Neh.12:45-46) regulating the musical part of temple worship and being added to 'the commandment of Moses (2 Chr. 8:13). When the temple was built and dedicated, salvation in Christ Jesus and God's world-wide redemption work progressed strongly. No wonder that at that time it pleased the LORD to institute the musical 'sacrifice of praise'.
In the New Testament era, there is the more reason for us to offer it because the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice was offered at Calvary (Heb. 13, 15). This may be done by the singing of the 150 Psalms as 'songs of the covenant', but also with 'a new song' (Ps.33:3; 96:1; Is.42:10; Rev.5:9) which means: a song with new contents, regarding the progress made in the history of salvation. And since God loves 'whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, gracious' (Phil.4:8) our churches have the congregational singing accompanied by an organ, aiming to make it more acceptable in His ears.
- 5.5.4 This paper finally dealt with the day of rest and the festival days. It referred to Lord's Day 38 H.C. and art.62 C.O. for the calling together of the congregation.
As for the festive days, mention was made of the fact that the New Testament pays special attention to the great events commemorated on the festive days mentioned in art. 65 C.O. These events are also confessed in credal songs (Phil. 2:6-11, Titus 3: 4-7 et al.) and in the ecumenical creeds. Admittedly, the magistrates had a strong hand in re-introducing these christian festivals. Our churches, however, limit themselves to the commemoration of the great events stressed in the New Testament.
The P.C.E.A. does not observe such days, being of the conviction that they have not been commanded by the LORD (ref. under 5.5.5).
- 5.5.5 On 4 March the meeting continued with further discussions of the issue mentioned under 5.5.3 and of the booklet written by Rev. P.J. Bloomfield, one of the P.C.E.A. ministers, entitled 'Instrumental Music in Public Worship'. Its initial sentences explain the author's stand:
'It is the argument of this paper that instrumental music in the public worship of God is not allowed because it was part of the Old Testament ceremonial worship. Since that Old Testament ceremonial/cultic worship has been done away with, then so has the instrumental music'.
The author refers to what is called the 'Regulative Principle', as stated in the Westminster Confession, chapter 21-1:

"the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in holy scripture".

He states further:

"Especially important is the biblical teaching that God is to be worshipped ONLY as he himself declares and wills. He is not to be worshipped as we will".

The P.C.E.A. does not only apply this principle to the use of instrumental music but to other aspects of worship as well. Only the 150 Psalms are sung; no festive days are observed besides the Sunday; they have a very simple 'order of worship service'.

One of the main points in our discussions around this Regulative Principle was the context in which the Westminster Confession makes its statement about the second commandment over against Rome and, indeed, the Church of England. Lord's Day 35 H.C. has the same context.

Your deputies stated that, in accordance with Lord's Day 35, they could agree with the principle in this sense that what the Westminster Confession puts in Chapter 1 - 6 is incalculated (there it refers to what 'by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture').

The principle itself and its application to the musical part of the worship in the P.C.E.A. is a matter of deduction. So, when those who advocate 'Purity of Worship' in their application of the principle contend that deduction in matters such as the singing of songs other than the 150 Psalms, or the use of musical instruments, is not allowed, they are inconsistent.

The booklet by Rev. Bloomfield was not amply discussed, although deputies had the opportunity to point out that its thesis was based on an incorrect reading of 2 Chr. 29:25-30 and on other weaknesses in exegesis. P.C.E.A. delegates gladly accepted a written exposition of these weaknesses when this was offered.

'Purity of Worship' was a condition at the union of the Free Presbyterian Church and the P.C.E.A. in 1953. P.C.E.A. delegates explained that it is not a matter of doctrine which would bind the consciences, but of practice. The application of the principle should be seen against its historical background: the struggle against Anglicanism, parallel to John Calvin's struggle against the church of Rome and its liturgy.

The P.C.E.A. does not condemn others who do not adhere to the concept of 'Purity of Worship'.

In its aversion to a fixed liturgy, the P.C.E.A. - so it was put by the delegates - has perhaps given inadequate attention to the structure of worship in its nature as dialogue with the God of the covenant.

The P.C.E.A. also is not happy to require things which are not mandated by the Scripture, though they be good and useful. It gives a rather wide discretion to the minister, and though there is a fairly regular pattern, there is far less form and structure than in our churches.

- 5.6 Then the Rev. K. Jonker's paper on "Called children in the Covenant; the position of the children within the church" was discussed.

This paper dealt with the structure of the covenant of grace, and explained the position of the children of believers by using a translation of the 'Declaration of Opinion' (Verklaring van Gevoelen) submitted to the Dutch General Synod in the early 1940's by a number of concerned brothers. Rev. Jonker had added his own notes.

The Scriptural doctrine of the covenant, and the position of our children in the covenant, may be deemed to be familiar as they are confessed and taught in our churches.

From the conclusion of Rev. Jonker's paper we quote:

"By the Lord they are called to be saints. They ARE covenant children. And so we work with them, not questioning God's call. But their position as God's children gives a great responsibility to parents and office-bearers with respect to the instruction in the fear of the LORD".

"In this we are not hindered by theological systems on presumptive regeneration or on inward/outward covenant and the other distinctions belonging to it.... The history which God goes with each one of His children cannot be explained in our systems! Let us simply listen to his Word".

During the discussion of this paper it became obvious that the preaching in the P.C.E.A. shows a different emphasis because this church has few members born in it; largely its membership consists of people who have come 'from outside'. It is understandable that, unlike our own churches, the emphasis is not so much on Christ's work of gathering the church in the line of the generations. And there is a fear of the danger of 'nominal membership'.

In both churches, the responsibility of the parents is stressed. In the P.C.E.A. this is not done in so structured and ordered a way as in our churches. Both churches accept responsibility for the catechetical instruction of the covenant youth, and in both churches baptized members are subject to discipline.

During the discussion it became clear that some of the expressions used in our churches are capable of misunderstanding in the P.C.E.A. However, there is basic agreement on the place of the children in the covenant.

It also came out that the doctrine of election received its place in the Westminster confession since, and due to the Synod of Dordrecht. Chapter 10-3 of the confession speaks of "elect infants, dying in infancy." Your deputies drew attention to the fact that the Canons of Dordt, ch. 1:17, give more comfort to the parents and remind them of their responsibility.

A similar difference in approach is apparent in the baptismal prayers as quoted in the Westminster Directory for Public Worship and the Baptismal Form used in our churches.

Quote from prayer in Westminster Directory of Public Worship:

"...that the Lord ... Would graciously vouchsafe to sanctify and bless his own ordinance of baptism at this time ... that he make this baptism to the infant a seal of adoption, remission of sin, regeneration and eternal life, and all other promises of the covenant of grace ..."

Quote from prayer in Baptismal Form:

"... we thank and praise thee that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ. Thou hast received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thy only Son, and so adopted us to be Thy children. Thou hast sealed and confirmed this to us by holy baptism ..."

- 5.7 The paper on 'The concept of an adherent' was delivered by the Rev. J.M. Cromarty. A clear distinction is to be made - he said - between those whom the session admits to the full privileges of communicant membership and those who are not admitted and yet are regular hearers of the Word. An adherent is a person who, though attending the worship services regularly, has not been admitted into the communicant membership of the local congregation.

Whilst sometimes baptized children who decline to profess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but who continue to associate with the congregation and have a general sympathy with its work, are counted among the adherents, they remain under the oversight of the elders, and are warned against ultimately becoming covenant breakers.

Others, from 'outside', who have not been baptized but regularly associate with the congregation, welcoming the prayers and the visits of the elders, are also counted as adherents.

A third group consists of persons who evidence a credible christian profession and attend the services regularly, but who for various reasons have not been received into full membership, e.g. because they have diverging views on baptism, on church government, or are recent converts and desire a competent knowledge of christian truth before deciding upon joining a local church.

The paper went on to say:

"The Session at its discretion and in the responsible exercise of its role of oversight may admit certain adherents in the above-mentioned category (3) to the Lord's table, although they are not as yet on the Roll of Members of the congregation.

However, this must not be an indefinite arrangement. Session should work toward the resolution of all those matters which constitute a barrier to full communicant membership. All adherents are under the oversight and discipline of the session". This quotation would make it clear why the concept of adherents has been omitted altogether from the second draft of the booklet on the Practice and Procedure of the P.C.E.A.

The discussion brought out that adherents are a more serious problem in the Scottish highlands - with people querying their 'worthiness' to participate in the Lord's supper.

Our delegates explained that our church services, too, are attended by regular hearers who are not members, though their percentage is low.

Some adherents in the P.C.E.A. are allowed to partake in the Lord's supper. It was stated by the P.C.E.A. delegates that this is related to the unique historical situation (the Scottish background, effects of evangelism, small membership). It is not a regular provision in the constitution of the church, nor is such a situation accepted as indefinite.

This led to a discussion on the supervision of the elders over the administration of the Lord's supper.

In our churches, only communicant members of the local congregation and guests from sister churches - with testimony from their consistory - are admitted.

The P.C.E.A. also admits members in good standing of other christian churches. This does not mean that the P.C.E.A. has an 'open table'. There is a fencing of the table, commonly delegated to the minister.

The P.C.E.A. delegates were of the opinion that a more careful discipline is spreading in their church.

5.8 A paper on 'Term Eldership' was delivered by the Rev. R.S. Ward.

Whilst the first Book of Discipline of 1560 made provision for the annual election of elders and deacons, the second Book of Discipline of 1578 states that the office of elder is a perpetual one. However, 'such a number of elders may be chosen in certain congregations, that one part of them may relieve another for a reasonable space, as was among the Levites under the law in serving of the temple'.

The basic idea of this rule is that when God has given certain men the gifts required for the eldership, these gifts must be acknowledged.

The paper referred to an article by Prof. John Murray, Collected Writings, vol.2, entitled 'Arguments against Term Eldership', which was added to it as an appendix.

It was explained in the discussion that in this respect our churches follow John Calvin, who supported a 'term eldership' because of the danger of hierarchy - conspicuous in the church in the Middle Ages.

From the very beginning of their existence the reformed churches (Wesel Convent of 1568, Synod of Dordrecht of 1578) deemed it wise to use the system of term eldership, lest family-life too should suffer under the persecutions and other tensions of the Reformation.

5.9 The final paper was on the status of the minister in the presbytery. It was delivered by Rev. R.S. Ward.

It stated that the early position of the Scottish church is similar to the position prevailing today in our churches.

Both Books of Discipline, 1560 and 1578, ruled that the elders have to take heed to the preaching of God's Word, the right administration of the sacraments and the right maintenance of discipline. The same applies to the life, manners, diligence and study of their minister. The elders should, if necessary, admonish and discipline him.

The presbytery is the youngest body in the Scottish church government. It was not established as such until 1581 and was given the force of law in 1592, confirmed with the Revolution Settlement of William and Mary in 1690. The presbytery has an equal number of elders and ministers.

The local congregation is responsible for the honorarium of the minister. He is answerable to the session as regards pastoral visits, sermons, etc. However, in matters of discipline he is answerable to the presbytery of which he is a member.

The presbytery handles any judicial action which may affect the minister's standing (compare art. 14 C.O.).

The historical background of this arrangement is that in matters of discipline the minister is to be judged by his peers. The danger of hierarchy is offset by the composition of the Presbytery: equal numbers.

5.10 Deputies came away from the Melbourne meeting with the conviction that, on both sides, there was willingness to listen to each other on the basis of the Scriptures.

One immediate benefit of the discussion was that our churches are, time and again, confronted with the question how various aspects of our ecclesiastical life are based on the Word of God.

The P.C.E.A. delegates stressed this repeatedly. "What saith the Word of God?", It is a question which is typical of their church life.

Where both sides in the discussions on divergencies strongly held the conviction that Scripture is our final authority, they urged each other to submit to that authority, accepting in gratitude that the meeting took place in a christian, informative and edifying manner.

6.1 The P.C.E.A. in the light of Arts.27 to 29, BELGIC CONFESSION.

a Preaching

The sermons we have heard were plain teachings of Scriptural truth. The Word of God, not man's opinion or experience, is preached. Emphasised are the sovereignty of God and the redemption of man through Christ, who is the Head of the church. It is man's duty to accept the Gospel and to apply it in life in order to be saved. He can do this only by God's grace.

So the three solas - sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura - are adamantly maintained by the P.C.E.A.

Taking into consideration the situation of these churches - only a small remnant church, tracing its roots back to the Reformation, with strong emphasis on outreach - it is not strange that the sermons have an evangelistic character. The ministers will often end their sermon with a strong urging to accept the evangel and to live in the Christian hope. In relation to this, some ministers view their audience as a meeting of believers and unbelievers, while others will not make this distinction but address them as the people of the Lord who need daily repentance.

The children's address, which is often given before the sermon, has a catechetical character. There is no formal requirement to preach from the catechism (ref. 5.5.2).

In some congregations the session is encouraged to occasionally discuss the preaching of the Word.

The preaching is subject to the oversight of the presbytery. Complaints about the preaching have to be lodged there.

Preaching is examined during church visitation - usually once in five years, due to the vast distances between congregations. Then the minister is asked, among other things:

- do you prepare carefully for your pulpit work?
- is it your chief concern to bring sinners to Christ and to build up believers in faith and holiness?
- do you preach mainly on extended portions of Scripture, or on particular topics? Describe.

b Sacraments

The sacrament of baptism is administered in the Scriptural tradition. This may be illustrated with the questions to parents as mentioned in Practice and Procedure of the P.C.E.A. (1983):

- 1 do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the true and complete Word of God, and do you believe the interpretation of the Scriptures taught in this church to set forth the true message of salvation?
- 2 do you affirm in the presence of God and these witnesses that you are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour; and that you are saved, not by any works or merits of your own, but only through faith in Jesus Christ?
- 3 do you acknowledge that baptism is not a saving ordinance, but the instituted sign and seal of God's covenant for the redemption of your life through Jesus Christ, and that your child has a responsibility to believe in Christ for salvation as he/she reaches the age of understanding?
- 4 do you promise, with God's help, to nurture your child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, instructing him/her in the truths of God's Word, praying with him/her and for him/her; and to live before him/her as Christian parents who are yourselves subject to the will of God?
- 5 do you promise to avail yourselves of all the means of grace, and to do your utmost to lead your child into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Baptism causes the following question to be asked of the congregation:

"Do you, the members of the congregation, receive this child of the covenant; and will you endeavour, under God, so to order your life and witness that he/she may grow up in the knowledge and love of God and be continually surrounded by Christian example and influence?"

There is no commonly adopted 'form' for the celebration of the Lord's supper. The frequency of this celebration is left to the discretion of the session, but is usually on a three monthly basis. Practice and Procedure (1983) states that "the session is responsible to see that no person openly known to be ignorant or delinquent in doctrine or life be permitted at the Table."

Communicant members are "baptized persons professing saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who satisfy the session as to their knowledge of the Word of God, whose life and outward conduct appears consistent with a Christian profession." Members are not required to subscribe the Confession of Faith as are office bearers (ref.4.3).

c Discipline

Church discipline in the P.C.E.A is a matter of correcting and punishing sins.

According to the nature and gravity of the offence it is exercised by means of:

- 1 admonition - solemnly addressing the person found guilty, placing his sin before him, warning him of his danger, exhorting him to greater circumspection;
- 2 rebuke - expressing reproof and censure in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and administered when a person is charged with a scandalous offence is either convicted, or has made confession of guilt;
- 3 suspension of privileges or office - when the gravity of the offence demands it; also when, after a profession of repentance, the profession is not borne out;
- 4 deposition of an office bearer - on conviction or confession of gross immorality, heresy, serious inconsistency of conduct or departure from ordination vows;
- 5 lesser excommunication - declaring the offender to be no longer a member of the church; this 'purging of the roll' does not necessarily imply censurable conduct; someone may have left the district without asking for a disjunction certificate, or failed to attend the church services for a year;
- 6 greater excommunication - pronouncing the sentence of excommunication for grave and flagrant sins, after due public intimation and public prayer for his repentance; after this sentence, the people are to be warned that they hold him to be cast out of the communion of the church.

Confession and a sincere profession of repentance, when found satisfactory, form sufficient ground for removing a sentence of suspension or excommunication and restoring the person to the full communion of the church.

Inevitably, the matter of church discipline is closely linked with the Lord's supper practice and the fencing of the table (ref.5.7).

The unity we enjoy with our Canadian sister churches gives us occasion to draw on the resources gathered in the report to the 1986 Synod of Burlington by the Committee for Contact with the O.P.C.

This report, in its study of 'The Hofford Case', made ample study not only of the local circumstances which led to the schism at Burtonsville, Maryland, but also of the background to the controversy around the 'fencing of the table' in that congregation.

Pertinent to our investigation is firstly the committee's finding that, where the Hofford complaint focused on the supervision of visitors at the Lord's table, "apparently, this matter of supervision is not explicitly covered in the standards. The session, who has the task to supervise the Lord's table, must thus use the principles of its standards. One principle that is mentioned more than once in the reply of the general assembly concerns the matter of recognizing 'evangelical' churches'.

...when the general assembly answers that the session had the full right to administer the Lord's supper as they do, this answer seems to agree with their Form of Government.

The General Assembly, in our view, could have made a reference to the fact that the O.P.C. has inter-church relations with a number of churches in the U.S.A., and that these churches could have been listed, instead of using the vaguer concept of 'evangelical churches', as the Burtonsville Session does."

After an overview of the session's task re the admission of visitors, the committee discusses the Church Order of Dordt and concludes that "our Churches never adopted a general rule (in the Church Order) for admission of guests to the Lord's supper, and that we therefore cannot ask this from the O.P.C. either."

Bouwman and Rutgers are quoted on the question what should be done when there is no attestation from a sister church, and then the committee sums up as follows:

"...indeed the local session should not leave it solely to the individual (guest) to determine to partake or not of the Lord's supper. This decision must be made by the overseers. It is our impression from the answer of the general assembly to the complaint that in the O.P.C. individual responsibility is stressed.

Corporate responsibility for the sins of others as it relates to the celebration of the Lord's supper is either denied or diminished in scope..."

The committee refers to Q. and A. 82 of the Heidelberg Catechism, which confession "makes it more urgent for us to fence the Lord's table closely, i.e. also in deciding which guests may attend the table."

"On the other hand, we should not take too rigoristic an approach, as though the admission to the Lord's table of someone who does not have an attestation from a sister church is against the Bible, Confession, and the Church Order. Our study of our standards and the quotes from H. Bouwman and F.L. Rutgers as well as actual practices in the reformed churches should caution us against this. Accepting guests from other churches under certain conditions is not disallowed in our Church Order, and should be decided by the local church council. That the general assembly approved of this same procedure in the Burtonsville Session cannot thus be outrightly condemned. At the same time we mention that more direct measures should be taken by the overseers to ensure that their guidelines are kept. We thus conclude that this is 'a matter of mutual concern' and should be a subject of our ongoing ecclesiastical contact with the O.P.C."

All this information from the Canadian churches (found in the Appendices, Acts of 1986, pages 131-137) is of great import as we find ourselves confronted with similar circumstances in Australia.

To be sure, there is no 'Hofford Case'.

But as deputies we feel strong rapport with the conclusions reached by the Canadian committee. Practice in the P.C.E.A. is that 'members in good standing of other evangelical churches are welcome at the Lord's table'. Whilst we cannot condemn this practice as being against the Bible, the confessions or the Church Order, we should recognize the matter as one requiring further attention.

6.2 Church Government in the P.C.E.A.

- 1 The P.C.E.A. has the full constitution of the Church of Scotland, reformed in 1560. This constitution is derived from the principles and practices set out in the two Books of Discipline and the Form of Presbyterian Church Government (1645). Its basis is undeniably Reformed in character.

To quote from Practice and Procedure of 1983:

- 1.1 The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head and Lord of the church. He alone in his wisdom and by his authority has appointed offices, instituted ordinances of worship, and enacted the principles and laws of fellowship in His church.

- 1.2 The Lord Jesus Christ has appointed in His church a government vested in church officers - a government distinct from civil government and, in all things spiritual, independent of it. The principles of church government, its institutions and offices, are made known in the word of God. In Christ's name and by His authority, officers are ordained in the church, church courts are constituted, and judicial and authoritative decisions are pronounced and enforced'.
On the subject of presbyterian government, we again quote:

1.9 in accordance with the presbyterian form of government set forth in the standard of the church, the church is governed by ministers and elders acting in orderly association in a gradation of Courts of the church by which its organic unity is expressed and maintained, and which, in ascending order, are the session, the presbytery and the synod.

1.10 The authority of the courts of the church is a delegated authority received from Christ, the only Head and Lord of the church; it is therefore an authority to declare and apply the mind of Christ revealed in Scriptures'.

The importance of these statements is such that - although our mandate does not specifically mention church government - they merit the full attention of our churches in the context of our evaluation.

- 2 This applies equally to the place of the presbytery in the government of the P.C.E.A.
Persecution and the almost total absence of ordained ministers in the Reformation loom large in the Scottish presbytery's background. After 1592 it became a permanent feature in church government. The present position of the P.C.E.A. is that the presbytery plays a prominent part in church life. It has 'a general responsibility and duty relative to the well-being of the church and its work, and of the congregations, and all congregational property, organizations and activities within its jurisdiction'. (Practice and Procedure, 4.33).

It also has a duty to erect 'new charges or preaching stations' in developing areas. The presbytery furthermore has the duty to visit each congregation within its bounds at least once in every five years. The congregation will be given two week's notice of this visit, and the visitors will use questions which have been prepared in advance. The aim is "to acquaint itself with the state of affairs... to strengthen the hands of the minister, session, office bearers and members of the congregation, to advise them should anything appear to be unsatisfactory - and in general to give counsel and encouragement as may be suitable."

Comparing the Presbytery with the classis in our Church Order, the first impression is that of the presbytery's greater authority. It should be born in mind, however, that our classis has been given considerable involvement in e.g. discipline procedure, as evinced by art.73, 74, 76 and 79 C.O. Although we reject the 'ascending order' in principle, the difference in practice appears to be one of degree.

In practice, our churches adopt the 'ascending order' e.g. in appeal matters.

- 3 Ministers of the P.C.E.A. are allowed to preach in other pulpits. They are licensed by the P.C.E.A. to preach the gospel wherever the opportunity presents itself.
They are not bound to the place of their own congregation. This does not imply, however, that they can do as they see fit. They remain accountable to the presbytery in this regard.

The ministers are bound by their promise at ordination.
Before they are licensed to preach, these questions are asked:

(Q. a. to d. are virtually identical to those quoted in 4.3)

- e Do you promise that, through the grace of God, you will firmly and constantly adhere to, and in your station, to the utmost of your power, assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship and discipline, and the government of this church by kirk sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods and general assemblies?
- f Do you promise that, in your practice you will conform yourself to the said worship, and submit yourself to the said discipline and government of this church, and not to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of same?
- g Do you promise that you will follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this church?
- h Do you renounce all doctrine, tenet, or opinions whatsoever contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this church?
- i Do you promise that you will subject yourself to the several judicatories of this church?

6.3 The marks of Christians (art. 29 Belgic Confession)

'Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks of christians' - this we confess in article 29 Belgic confession. In their contacts with P.C.E.A. members, deputies have consistently experienced that these people trust Jesus Christ as their only Saviour; flee from sin and pursue righteousness; love God in a total commitment, and love their neighbour unselfishly. The Lordship of the Head of the church is reflected in their words and in their actions. There is constant concern, not only with the sheep of Christ's flock, but also with those as yet unreached by the Word of God. There is Scriptural piety, a humble demeanour.

The recognition of these marks caused considerable joy and thankfulness to deputies during investigation.

7 Conclusions

- a Employing the Scriptural yardstick, formulated in articles 27 to 29 of the Belgic Confession, deputies have found that the P.C.E.A. is a true Church; it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head.
- b In comparison with our churches, the P.C.E.A. knows fewer formal structures in its ecclesiastical life. This report has related some of them (5.3, 5.7, 6.1b, 6.1c, 6.2.3). Such lack of organization does not preclude recognition of the P.C.E.A. as a true Church according to our Confession.
- c In the 19th century our fathers sought the unity of the reformed faith with faithful presbyterian churches, as true churches of the Lord. Maintaining this faith, the P.C.E.A. should be seen as the continuation of the churches of the Reformation of the 16th century, like the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- d Contacts already existing with the Free Church of Scotland, via the International Conference of Reformed Churches and via our sister churches overseas, confirm that the unity recognized in history is also today an important given. It enhances our responsibility, as the P.C.E.A. is a daughter of the Free Church of Scotland and since 1985 a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (refer Acts of Synod of 1983, art. 84).
- e Continued fellowship in the unity of the true, catholic faith, and continued study and discussion of existing divergences should show that as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ in Australia we may be a hand and a foot to each other, enriching the upbuilding of the body of Christ under His gracious blessing.

8 Recommendations

Deputies thus recommend to synod that

- a Synod decide to recognize the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a true church according to articles 27 to 29 of the Belgic Confession.
- b Synod discharge deputies appointed by the 1985 Synod.
- c Synod appoint new deputies with instructions to give practical effect to the recognition of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to study the long-term implications.

We pray that the Lord will grant you His indispensable grace and wisdom.

With brotherly love,

the deputies

A.M. Hidding

Rev. K. Jonker

S. Reitsema

J. VanderRos

Launceston, May 1987

APPENDIX C

RULES FOR SYNOD

To the consistories of The Free Reformed Churches of Albany, Armadale, Byford, Kelmscott and Launceston

Dear brothers,

In accordance with instructions of Synod Launceston 1985 we submit to you a revised set of 'Rules for Synods'. It was Synods expectation that these Rules should be accepted by the Churches, if possible, before the 1987 Synod.

The new Rules are basically the same as the old Rules with the exception of parts of Articles 3 and 5, and related matters in Article 10; these contain new provisions aiming to ensure that the Churches will have sufficient time to consider any item which is placed on Synod's agenda.

A number of minor additions, mostly reflecting current practice were made, for instance:

Article 2 second paragraph, several details of Article 3(b), Article 4(b), Article 7(c) second paragraph, Article 8(b) and Appendix 1, Article 16 point 5.

Old Article (7b) was deleted as this has proved to be impractical. Any Synod wishing to do so can make it a Rule under Article 16.7

The change in Article 1 (where it refers to extra-ordinary Synods) reflects the decision relating to Article 45 C.O. by Synod 1985, see Acts Art 81.

The change in Article 4(d) from old Article 4(b) is proposed, as Synod 1985 (see Acts Article 81) in dealing with the task of the Classis left the reading of Article 42 C.O. unchanged.

Any Synod can of course still make the decision if so desired under new Article 4(d).

Concerning new Articles 11, 12 and 13 we refer to Synod 1985 decisions relating to Articles 44, 43 and 6 respectively of the Church Order, see Acts 1985 Article 81.

2. May we as Deputies request that consistories advise us by the end of September 1986 as to the outcome of their evaluation of these new Rules?

With brotherly greetings,

J. Eikelboom

S H Terpstra

Synod Deputies for revision of 'Rules for Synods'

February 1986

RULES FOR SYNODS

of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of AUSTRALIA

Article 1. FREQUENCY OF SYNODS

Synods shall be convened once in every three years - in accordance with Article 45 of the Church Order, - provided that as long as classes have not been formed synods shall be convened once in every two years.

An extra-ordinary synod shall be convened at the request of at least two classes - in accordance with Article 45 of the Church Order, - provided that as long as classes have not been formed it shall be done only at the request of at least two churches.

Article 2 SYNOD DELEGATES

- a Every classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to synod, provided that as long as there are only two classes, every classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. Delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as is possible.

As long as classes have not been formed, every church shall delegate its minister and one elder to synod.

If no minister is available, an elder may be appointed in his place; if no elder is available, a deacon may be appointed in his place.

- b The churches shall provide their delegates with proper credentials, confirming therein their adherence to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order.

Article 3 CONVENING THE SYNOD

- a The synod shall appoint, in alphabetic order, the church which is to convene the next synod.

- b This convening church shall:

1 give six months written notice to the churches of the synod's meeting place and time.

2 Invite the churches to submit items for inclusion on the draft agenda.

3 request synod's deputies to submit their reports for inclusion on the draft agenda.

4 prepare the draft agenda in accordance with the provisions of Article 3(c) of the rules

5 forward to the churches - in triplicate, and at least three months prior to the convening of synod - the draft agenda together with any documentation on the items received for inclusion on the draft agenda.

6 ensure that all items required at synod are tabled.

- c The following items shall be placed on the draft agenda:

- 1 all those listed in Article 13 of these rules.
- 2 all those received from the churches by at least four months prior to the synod date.
- 3 all deputies' reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of Article 10(b) of these rules.
- 4 all correspondence received.

d In the case of an extra-ordinary synod, the times and conditions specified in this article shall be adhered to as much as possible.

Article 4 CONDUCT OF SYNODS

- a When synod deals with general business it shall be conducted in open sessions. Business of a personal nature will be dealt with only in closed sessions.
- b Separate synodical acts shall be written for the open and closed sessions.
- c Members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have the right of admission to the open sessions.
- d Synod delegates only may participate in the discussions unless synod decides otherwise.
- e After having adopted the agenda, synod shall accept no further correspondence.

Article 5 OFFICERS OF SYNOD

- a Synod shall appoint the following officers:
 - 1 a chairman
 - 2 a vice-chairman
 - 3 a first clerk
 - 4 a second clerk
- b the vice-chairman assists the other synodical officers where needed in the execution of their duties; he prepares the Press Release of synod.
- c the first clerk prepares the acts of the synod.
- d the second clerk conducts all synod's correspondence. This includes written advice to all parties concerned of synod's decisions and appointments.
A copy of every item of outgoing correspondence shall be placed in synod's archives.

Article 6 VOTING

- a Wherever possible, decisions should be taken unanimously.
- b In the case of a vote being necessary, any question in a matter of general business shall be voted on orally. In the case of a tied vote, the question shall be deemed to have been rejected.
- c Questions concerning persons shall be voted on by secret ballot.
Ballot papers incorrectly filled in and blank ballot papers shall be invalid.
Those who receive the largest number of votes shall be deemed to have been elected, provided that this number be not less than half the number of valid votes cast.
If a decision cannot be made by way of two free ballots, any subsequent ballot shall decide between those who received most votes in the previous ballot.
If the vote is tied, another ballot shall be held. Should a tied vote occur for a second time, the decision shall be made by calling upon the name of the Lord and by the drawing of lots.

Article 7 PROPOSALS AND DECISIONS

- a The chairman may direct that a proposal be submitted in writing.
- b Decisions shall be formulated and recorded in the acts after the model in the appendix to these rules.

Article 8 EXECUTION OF DECISIONS

Synod's decisions shall be carried out either by its officers or by deputies appointed for that purpose.

Article 9 DEPUTIES

- a The appointment of deputies with their alternates shall be done in accordance with Article 48 of the Church Order. In particular, synod may appoint deputies with their alternates for:
 - 1 relations with other churches
 - 2 the exercise of discipline over office bearers (Art.76 of the Church Order)
 - 3 the synods' treasury
 - 4 the synods' archives
 - 5 the audit of the archives
- b All deputies' reports must be made in writing. Unless otherwise instructed, such reports must reach the convening church in time for inclusion with the draft agenda to be sent to the churches three months before synod - see Article 3(b). Supplementary reports and late reports dealing with matters which took place after the reports' due date shall also be submitted to the convening church in writing for inclusion on the draft agenda.
- c Deputies shall present their financial statement (if any) to synod, to be audited before they are discharged.
- d Synod shall give deputies proper and written instructions.

Article 10 APPROBATION OF CALLS

As long as classes have not been formed, the approbation of calls shall be done by classis churches which shall report to the next synod.

The following documents are required for the approbation of a call of a minister:

- 1 the letter of call
- 2 the letter of acceptance of the call
- 3 the certificate of dismissal from the church last served by the minister
- 4 the certificate of dismissal from the classis to which the church last served by the minister belongs
- 5 a certificate from the calling church that the necessary public announcements were made

Article 11 COSTS OF SYNODS

- a Itemised accounts of properly authorized synodical expenses incurred by either the convening church, synodical deputies or delegates, must be presented to the synodical treasurer for payment.
- b The several deputies appointed for one specific purpose must submit a joint statement of expenses.
- c The share of each church in synod costs shall be in proportion to its number of confessing members as at the 1st January of the year of synod.

Article 12 SYNODICAL TREASURER

- a The synod treasurer shall inform the churches of their share of synod costs
- b He shall pay all properly authorized and documented synodical expenditures
- c The books of the treasurer shall be audited by synodical deputies, following which the treasurer will be discharged

Article 13 STANDARD PROCEEDINGS

The following proceedings shall be standard at every synod:

- 1 Opening by the convening church
- 2 Signing of the attendance list and examination of credentials
- 3 Election of officers
- 4 Constitution of synod
- 5 Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
- 6 Adoption of the agenda
- 7 Adoption of meeting procedures
- 8 Incoming correspondence
- 9 Instructions
- 10 Report by classis churches
- 11 Deputies' reports, and discharge of deputies
- 12 Audit of the treasurer's books, and discharge of treasurer
- 13 Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synodical costs
- 14 Appointment of deputies
- 15 Appointment of convening church, and the place and time of the next synod
- 16 Questions after Article 41 of the Church Order
- 17 Personal questions
- 18 Adoption of acts
- 19 Adoption of press release
- 20 Censure ad Article 47 of the Church Order
- 21 Closing of synod

Article 14 AMENDMENT OF THESE RULES

Amendment of these rules shall be sought only by means of a proposal from one or more churches.

APPENDIX: MODEL FOR COMMITTEE PROPOSALS

CAPTION STATING AGENDA-ITEM

Committee () presents:

A MATERIAL - Agenda-item(s)

1

2

B OBSERVATIONS

1

2

3

C CONSIDERATIONS

1

2

3

D RECOMMENDATIONS

1

2

APPENDIX D
DEPUTIES FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION
REPORT TO THE 1987 SYNOD

To the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to be convened in Albany, Western Australia September, 1987.

Dear Brothers,

The Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, held in Launceston, Tasmania, 1985, instructed the deputies as follows (Acts of 1985, Art. 73):

MANDATE:

- 1 To undertake a thorough study of the issue, making use of the material placed before this synod and that produced by synods of the Canadian sister-churches;
- 2 to maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translation;
- 3 to invite submissions from within the congregations on this issue, and to evaluate the arguments presented;
- 4 to monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the R.S.V.
- 5 to submit an interim report to the churches by June 30, 1986.
- 6 to report to the next synod and send copies of these reports to the churches three months before the next synod.

Deputies herewith submit their report.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

- 1 The material placed before the 1985 Synod consisted of:
 - a booklet, called "an appeal"
 - two letters

As to the first mentioned document, the 1985 Synod (Acts, Art. 73) also called it "an appeal".

Of each of the letters it is stated, it "is not an appeal". This, however, is incorrect. According to Article 31 of the Church Order an appeal is made to a major assembly against a decision taken by a minor assembly.

When serious objections are lodged against a decision taken e.g. by a synod, and the objector would like to see this decision rescinded or amended, one can submit a request for revision.

This incorrect naming of the document(s) did not withhold the deputies from dealing with their contents.

Deputies are, however of the opinion that synod's attention should be drawn to this incorrect usage, also with a view to the future.

- 2 In the opinion of the deputies, it was also incorrect that the 1985 Synod gave deputies the mandate "to invite submissions from within the congregations ..."

The same can be said concerning the first part of our mandate, namely, "to undertake a thorough study of the issue making use of the material placed before this synod and that produced by synods of our Canadian sister-churches."

The 1983 Synod had taken a decision, which according to Article 31 of the Church Order "shall be accepted as binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order."

The only mandate which in this respect should have been given to the deputies was to investigate whether the request for revision proved that there was, in fact, such a conflict. Giving a broader mandate as described in point 1 and 3 of our instructions, is, in our opinion, not in conformity with the good order as it has been adopted by our churches.

Nevertheless, deputies have acted in accordance with their mandate, although - again - they would like to point out this irregularity, also with a view to the future.

The above does not exclude a synod's right or obligation to appoint deputies as for points 2 and 4 of the 1985 mandate, provided the matter has been placed on the agenda of the synod in the correct manner.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

- 1 Acts of the 1985 Synod (Art. 73) state that the letters from br. M. Berkelaar and br and sr. B. Postmus are not appeals, and that the contents of these letters would be passed on to the deputies. These were received.
- 2 An interim report was sent to the churches in 1986. This report must be seen as part of the whole.
- 3 The Church of Kelmscott forwarded to us a copy of an item of correspondence it received from one of its members. Other than that, no submissions were received from any churches. One brief submission was received from a church member.

THE APPEAL OF H.G. BOSVELD

- 1 The appellant has since left the churches in an unworthy way. The deputies leave it to synod to decide whether this appeal ought still to be dealt with.
- 2 The appeal is based mainly on the contention that unbelieving men have been involved in the translation of the R.S.V. (Appeal, pp. 1, 2). The appeal supports the view of those critics who allege that the R.S.V. is unreliable, and therefore already worthy of condemnation, because the translators are guided by a number of unscriptural intentions which aim at the introduction and propagation of teachings which belong to a modernistic, liberal, heretic philosophy. The appeal speaks of "modernistic infidelity", "corruptive attitude", etc. But no attempt is made to substantiate these statements.

3 The appeal criticises the manuscripts on which the translation of the R.S.V. is based. This criticism, however, completely ignores the difficult and complex questions which surround the evaluation of available manuscript material. The appeal makes no study, or even mention, of the eclectic method of translation used in the R.S.V., just to mention one of these matters.

4 The appeal raises several objections against certain texts. Most of these objections, however, are not based on the translations of the original texts, irrespective of which text the translation was taken from, but on what, in the appellant's opinion, the translation should, or should not be.

The following examples are given as illustration (Appeal, pp. 4 - 6);

Genesis 11 : 1 - "Now the whole earth had one language and few words" Gispén, in his Commentary on Genesis, renders this text: "... en van dezelfde woorden", (and of the same words).

1 Kings 22 : 38b - "... and the harlots washed themselves in it," Van Gelderen, in his Korte Verklaring, gives the same translation.

2 Timothy 4 : 8 - "... will award..." is from the Greek word apodidoomi which means: To pay what one owes to someone else.

2 Peter 1 : 1b - "... of equal standard..." is from the Greek word isotimos which means: of the same honour, the same position.

The appeal rejects all these translations on the basis of certain doctrinal or (quasi) dogmatic ideas and opinions. The objections are not against the translation itself, but against the fact that the R.S.V., in the opinion of the appellant, does not say what it should say, and says what it should not say.

SOME GENERAL REMARKS IN RELATION TO BIBLE TRANSLATION:

1 One of the crucial matters is the use of certain manuscripts by the translators of the R.S.V. In our interim report we already stated that the proper evaluation of manuscript demands specialized knowledge, and the deputies readily admit that they do not possess such knowledge.

It may be useful to seek the opinion of experts in the field - as the deputies, according to their interim report, already intended to do. However, we may know beforehand that their conclusions will not be identical.

Without more data coming to light, no ecclesiastical assembly will be able to responsibly take a decision in this respect; if, indeed, such a decision were necessary, for experts assure us that the differences between the various manuscripts only involve 3% of the New Testament text.

It is therefore no wonder that conservative scholars can be found on both sides of the issue as supporters of the various texts. This is also true among scholars within the circles of our sister-churches. The suggestion that in the matter of manuscripts the division is simply on the basis of "liberal versus conservative" is not supported by the facts.

2 As for the eclectic method of translation (i.e. the making of choices in the use of different manuscript material in arriving at a final translation) we must realise that selection does not take place at random, or merely according to the whim of certain translators, but according to certain criteria. Scholars in this respect distinguish between ITALICSexternal evidenceITALCS, e.g. the date and character of the witnesses, their geographical distribution, and ITALICSinternal evidenceITALICS, e.g. transcriptional probabilities, the habits of the scribes, paleographical features in the manuscripts, and intrinsic probabilities, such as the immediate context, and harmony with the usage of the author elsewhere.

3 A misunderstanding that comes to the fore in some of the material submitted to the deputies is that the 1983 Synod would have chosen for the Westcott-Hort text of the New Testament. Even apart from what is said under point 2 above and elsewhere in this report, it must be taken into account that the 1983 Synod not only decided "to recommend to the churches the Revised Standard Version (1971 edition) for public worship, instruction and family use" (decision 2), but also: "That the use of the K.J.V. be left in the freedom of the churches if acceptance of the R.S.V. meets with insurmountable objections, since the use of the one translation, while desirable, should not be compulsory" (decision 3).

If synod would have made a choice against the text and manuscripts on which the K.J.V. is based, this assembly could never have taken decision 3. Synod's decision did not include or imply an endorsement of the choice of certain manuscripts.

4 The conclusion of the deputies is that the above-mentioned appeal and the other material submitted to the 1985 Synod, as well as to the deputies, did not render proof or substantial evidence that the 1983 Synod took an unscriptural decision.

5 From our interim report we may repeat that the deputies have perused a number of articles that give some insight regarding future editions of the R.S.V.

Deputies took note of news item quoted in "Clarion" (Volume 36. no. 3 February 6, 1987), which reads:

"The new Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which is expected to be out in the spring of 1990, will make full use of inclusive language to reduce the number of masculine references in the Scriptures, a Vanderbilt University professor said recently.

"Dr Walter Harrison, a distinguished professor of Old Testament at Vanderbilt University, and a member of the review committee of the new Bible, said the number of masculine references will be reduced 'where they ought to be reduced and where they can be reduced.'"

Deputies are of the opinion that our churches must remain diligent in this respect, and that the monitoring of the further work of the Translation Committee of the R.S.V. requires continuation.

The deputies have the intention:

a to request a copy of the new R.S.V. edition, 1990, as soon as it becomes available;

b to remain in contact with the deputies of the Canadian sister-churches.

(A recent development is that Premier Printing in Canada have secured the printing rights to the 1971 edition of the R.S.V. with a view to publishing a complete Church Book (i.e. Bible and Book of Praise). If this plan should go ahead, it would mean that ample supplies of the 1971 edition of the R.S.V. should be available into the foreseeable future).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide:

1 To accept the deputies' conclusion that in the appeal submitted to 1985, and in other material submitted to that synod and to the deputies, no proof or substantial evidence has been given that the 1983 Synod took an unscriptural decision.

2 To appoint new deputies with the mandate:

a to maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translations

- b to monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the R.S.V.
- c to report to the next synod, and send copies of their report to the churches three months before the next synod.

With brotherly greetings

The deputies:

Rev. K. Bruning (Convenor)

Rev. G. Van Rongen

J. Swarts

A. Plug

26 May, 1987

APPENDIX E
REPORT OF THE
DEPUTIES RE CHURCH BOOK

To the 1987 Synod of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Esteemed Brothers,

- 1 The 1985 Synod decided
 - a 1 to instruct deputies to invite comment and collect material on
 - a the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, and
 - b the Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted;
 - 2 to evaluate these and report to next synod. (Acts, art. 59 D)
 - b to instruct new deputies to examine this matter (the word 'christian' in the Apostles' Creed) further, and to make a suitable recommendation to next synod. (Acts, art. 59 B 2b)
- 2 Since their appointment your Deputies have met five times. Early September 1986 they sent letters to the consistories of the churches with the request to comment on the material. They received a letter with positive remarks and evaluations from the Church of Armadale; and a letter from the Church of Byford advising of committees which were appointed to study the same material. The other consistories sent no response.
- 3 Deputies were able to get hold of a copy of the Acts of the 1986 Synod of The Canadian Reformed Churches, from which they convey the following information to synod:
 - 3.1 The General Synod of Burlington decided to re-introduce the terms 'co- eternal' and 'co-essential' into the text of Belgic Confession art. 8. "Though archaic, these words express in an excellent way the eternal unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The expressions in the present revised version are ambiguous" (Acts, art. 91).
 - 3.2 Concerning the word 'christian' in the Apostles' Creed, synod decided not to accede to a request by Dr. J. Faber and five churches to have it removed. The Standing Committee for the Book of Praise was instructed to insert the word in the hymn version of the Apostles' Creed. The word will also be inserted in the text of Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 21 and the Canons of Dort II (R.of E. par.1) (art.101).
 - 3.3 Target date for the final edition of the Book of Praise is the Synod of 1989, by which date the revisions of the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds will have to be finalised and all amendments implemented (art. 118).
 - 3.4 A request to have the term 'only begotten' restored to the text of Belgic Confession, art.18; to the prayers of thanksgiving; to the Forms for Adult and Infant Baptism; and to the Canons of Dort I art. 2 and II art. 4 was granted by synod (art. 159).
 - 3.5 An alternate melody for the new text of Hymn 1 is being looked at. Eventually this may replace the present Hymn 1A tune which, according to some, is 'too gregorian'. Hymn 1B is considered not to be a suitable replacement. (art. 189)
- 4 Further study was made of the word 'christian' in art. IX of the Apostles' Creed. Luther's aversion of the word 'catholicam' is understandable against the background of his struggle. In his Larger and Shorter Catechism (1529) we read "Ich glaube eine heilige Christliche Kirche."
The inevitable side-effect of this aversion was that the Roman Church monopolized the word 'catholic' for centuries on end. The Heidelberg Catechism follows Luther's terminology in Lord's Day 7: "eine heilige allgemeine Christliche Kirche," although the Latin version bounces back with "Credo sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam."
John Calvin returned to the received text, in his consistent endeavours to lead the reformed churches back to the doctrine and practice of the ancient church. In his Genevan Catechism (1542) we find "le croy la sainte Eglise catholique."
Remarkably, the Schilders edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (1611) - the edition most likely used by the famous Synod of Dort - renders "Ick gheloove een heylighe alghemeyne Kercke."
The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England also mentions "the holy catholick Church," as does the appendix to the Westminster Shorter Catechism.
Considering these few historical data, it is important that our ecumenical creeds reflect what the church of all ages and places has confessed. Our formulation of those creeds should not deviate from the Scriptural confession of the ancient church. Moreover, further study shows that the word 'christian' as employed by Luther appears to refer to the christians, not to Christ. Medieval use of the word 'Christliche' corresponds with Luther's term 'ein heilige Christenheit' in his Larger Catechism. If this is correct, the tautology compounds itself where the creed, in the very next line, employs its synonym, 'saints'. Finally, the term 'christian church' cannot be found in Scripture. The Bible mostly refers to 'the church of God'. The apostolic fathers used this expression consistently (cf. I Cor. 1:2, 10:32, 15:9, Gal. 1:13, 1 Tim.3:15; also for the plural 'the churches of God' 1 Cor.11:16, I Thess.2:14).
The grounds adduced by Deputies for the Church Book in their proposal 1 to the 1985 Synod are upheld by your Deputies. These grounds read as follows:
 - a The received text (textus receptus) of the Apostles' Creed does not contain the equivalent of the word 'christian'.
 - b The words "a catholic christian church" are a translation from the Dutch text, which was based on Martin Luther's double translation of the word 'catholicam', which in the late Middle Ages sometimes would be translated by 'christliche' ('christian').
 - c Neither the English translation - over a thousand years old - nor the French (John Calvin and others) have a double translation of the word 'catholicam'.
 - d Correctly the Apostles' Creed is, in the new Book of Praise, printed under the heading 'The Ecumenical Creeds'. Therefore its text should stand in the ecumenical tradition, the community with believers of all ages.
Upon their further consideration of the matter, Deputies wish to add the following grounds:

- e The word 'christian' as used by Luther appears to express 'of the christian' rather than 'of Christ', and in this sense provides a duplication of the term 'communion of saints' in the next line of the creed.
 - f Scripture speaks of 'the church(es) of God', not of 'the christian church'. The creeds should follow the language of Scripture consistently.
- 5 Deputies propose to synod to
- a adopt the text of the Three Forms of Unity and of those Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted by the 1985 Synod (Acts, art.59 C 2);
 - b adopt the text of the Ecumenical Creeds with the exception of the word 'christian' in art. IX of the Apostles' Creed, in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and wherever the text of the creed is quoted in the Liturgical Forms and prayers;
 - c discharge deputies appointed by the 1985 Synod.

With brotherly greetings,

Your deputies:

G. Brouwer

G. Groenewold

J. VanderRos

Launceston, 18 April 1987

APPENDIX F
REPORT ON THE
PROPOSED ART. 26, CHURCH ORDER,
ON EVANGELISM

Esteemed brethren,

A INSTRUCTION

The Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia meeting in Kelmscott, 1983 accepted the revised Church Order. However, synod could not come to a decision on one article, the proposed article on Evangelism (Art. 26). Deputies for the 1983 Synod proposed this article to read as follows:

"The aim of evangelization shall be to call those who do not know the Lord or who have become alienated from Him and His service to join the congregation of Christ by confessing their faith according to the reformed doctrine. The consistories shall see to it that the work is done in accordance with this aim."

Deputies made the following remarks:

"This is a new article inserted into the Dutch C.O. The (Australian) deputies were not unanimous as to whether or not this article should be included, and whether it is the duty of the consistory to 'see to it that the work is done in accordance with this aim.'"

The 1983 Synod of Kelmscott decided (Acts Art. 19):

"As the wording of the article gave rise to a division of opinion it is proposed that:

- a a decision as to its inclusion in the C.O. is postponed until the next synod;
- b deputies be charged to study this matter to determine:
 - 1 the aim of this article;
 - 2 the Scriptural basis for this article;
 - 3 the use to which this article is put by our sister churches;
- c these deputies report to the next synod."

Points b) and c) became the instruction for the deputies (Acts, Art.52). Noted is that from the appointed deputies (Acts, Art. 112:19) br. J. Alberts left the Free Reformed Church of Launceston by his departure to the Netherlands.

B INTRODUCTION

The difficulty at the 1983 Synod of Kelmscott seemed to be the uncertainty as to whether the matter of evangelism as such should be given a place in the C.O. It seemed to bring a new element into the duty of the consistory (acts read 'church council'). Delegates at the 1983 Synod were uncertain of the interpretation of the proposed article. Did it regulate the instruction and supervisory task of the consistory in respect to evangelism work, or did it prescribe the work of evangelism to the consistory? Your deputies do not receive a very clear picture of the real problems with this article.

As recommended by the 1980 Synod of Armadale, the deputies for the revision of the C.O. used the C.O. as adopted by the General Synod of Groningen-Zuid as basis for the revised Church Order for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. In their covering letter (dated 10th Jan., 1983) with their interim report those deputies noted that they also consulted other Church Orders such as the one of our Canadian sister churches.

The proposed Art. 26 on Evangelism comes from the Dutch revision as adopted in 1978. Therefore, to understand this article, we have to know its Dutch background and the reason why it was inserted into the Church Order. This brings us to the 1975 Synod of Kampen of our sister churches in the Netherlands. This synod was requested by the churches to revise the synodical decisions on evangelism as adopted by the 1923 Synod of Utrecht. So for our purposes it is necessary to go back into the history of the church in order to find out the relationship between evangelism and church polity.

1 Before The 1975 General Synod of Kampen

At the commemoration of the Secession in 1934 Rev. J.G. Feenstra made clear that much work was done in the field of evangelism (see: UNDERLINE Van 'sHeeren Wegen UNRDLN p.181ff). The love of Christ compelled the churches of the Secession in 1834 and following years to testify of God's grace and mercy. Every church was an evangelism-station through the activities of its members. After the establishment of the churches according to the Church Order of Dordt it was discussed at the ecclesiastical meetings. It had its place on the agenda of consistories, classes and synods.

The 1872 Synod of Groningen stated that every church is a missionary-church: every consistory and classis and province has the calling to promote the furtherance of God's kingdom in spreading the gospel. The churches must reach out to those who do not properly know the way of salvation, or who are estranged from it.

Synod of 'sHertogenbosch in 1875 did not see it only as a duty of the consistory. It acknowledged the work of the church members as lawful. Much work was done by church members on their own responsibility e.g. in teaching in Sunday schools from the association 'Jachin'; in providing literature by the association 'Fillippus'. This synod of 1875 then stressed that all this work must be done under the supervision of the consistories. At that time evangelism-work was seen as a task of the WHOLE congregation. Consistories as well as church members started the work, or came with new initiatives. However, when the work was done by church members, the consistory had to exercise its supervision as far as the doctrine and life style of the workers were concerned (Synod of Dordrecht of 1879).

The period from 1860 to 1890 was a blossoming time of evangelism work by the churches, at least of organised evangelism. After the unification of the churches from the Secession and the Doleantie in 1892 the work shows a decline in activities. True, the work was still regarded as an important aspect of the true church, being the pillar of the truth (as H. Bouwman impressed upon the congress of Rotterdam in 1916, referring to Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15 and Eph. 3:10).

But after 1890 the differences of opinion on who must do the work and how it should be done, hampered the work itself. The influence of methodism, the dangers of inter-denominational activities and also Kuyper's teachings on the church (e.g. his distinction between the church as an organism and the church as an institute) caused many to think that evangelism should only be done under full responsibility of the consistories. Now the work was still done incidentally, but the thinking that it should be (more) in the hands of the office-bearers, assisted by gifted church members, took away the enthusiasm for evangelism from the church members.

The opinion that evangelism was foremost the duty of the consistory was finally formalised at the 1923 General Synod of Utrecht. This synod gave a set of guidelines for reformed evangelism. These (translated) guidelines read as follows:

- a Evangelism has as purpose to call to the Lord and also to his church those who are estranged from God's Word and the service of the Lord.
- b According to Scripture this work of calling straying people belongs to the task of the church of Christ.
- c The means of evangelism the bringing of the Word of God, and this must be done in agreement with the confessions of the reformed churches in the Netherlands.
- d The intentional (i.e. organised) evangelism should be done by, or at least should be under the guidance of, the consistory. For the evangelism-work the consistory should make use of the God-given gifts and powers within the congregation, which are particularly suited to this kind of work.

Points 5, 6 and 7 provide guidelines for co-operation in the field of evangelism.

Since these guidelines were in force in the reformed churches, evangelistic activities were more and more controlled by the consistories. In many churches an evangelism committee was appointed by the consistory. This committee had the task to take care of the work of evangelism. This method of organising things took away the active involvement of the congregation herself.

In the reformed churches after the Liberation of 1944 the question still existed whether or not it was really the task of only the consistory to organise evangelism. It was felt that the office bearers should keep themselves busy with the pastoral care of the congregation. They have the task to address the members, guiding, encouraging and admonishing them to a holy life in the Lord. Through such a life in the unity of faith the WHOLE congregation is the salt of the earth, the light of the world and a city on a hill (Matt. 5). The members may then also organise themselves in an association to fulfil their task of witnessing together, as they also have associations for the education of their children, for their social and political callings, etc. But such an organisation would not be in agreement with the guidelines of 1923. Nevertheless, in the establishment of E & R ('Evangelisatie en Recreatie' or Evangelism and Recreation, an association of mainly young church-members), such an organisation became a fact in 1972. The aim of E & R was and is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Netherlands by means of organised projects, especially at camping grounds and on beaches.

That organisation of the youth of the church gave a new stimulus to evangelism in our sister churches and the new activities led to a new reflection on evangelism. In our sister churches the standpoint which has now become more and more taken, is that, if the evangelism is not started by the congregation herself, the consistory must initiate it. The guidelines of Utrecht were regarded as not doing justice anymore to the calling of the congregation because they laid the initiative and the responsibility for this work too much in the hands of the office bearers. The 1923 General Synod neglected the church members' own responsibility too much.

2 After the 1975 General Synod of Kampen

The criticism on 1923 was shared by the committee which reported to the 1975 General Synod of Kampen. This committee had received many requests from the churches to revise the rules of 1923. The committee, however, also pointed out that 1923 wanted to regulate evangelism in a time of methodism and indifference concerning the confession of the true church. The positive side of 1923 was that this synod stressed the reformed confessional character of the work. The committee wished to preserve that aspect completely. Evangelism is not a private matter. The name of the church is at stake. It is not a matter of the congregation only, or of the consistory only. It is a calling of the WHOLE congregation as it exists through the ministering work of Christ's office bearers, who equip the members for their own ministering work in order to build up the body of Christ (Eph.4). Evangelism must be fully church-work. Those who are together busy in spreading the gospel are busy in building the church of Christ. They do not promote their own group. They are not motivated by their own ideals but they come from the Church. They work for the Lord. Reformed evangelism is characterised by the call to the church which is spiritually cared for and governed by the office bearers in Christ's name.

Therefore, the committee was convinced that organised action for publicly calling people to the church cannot be done apart from the consistory. The consistory must see to it that 'the true doctrine everywhere is propagated' and that this work is also done in the church 'with good order and decency' (Art.30, B.C.; Art. 1, C.O.; 1 Cor. 14:40).

The new reflection on evangelism at the General Synod of Kampen in 1975 caused a shift in the responsibility for this work. The new guidelines do not lay this anymore in the hands of the office bearers, but regard it as the responsibility of the WHOLE congregation as it exists under the government and supervision of the office bearers.

The General Synod of Kampen in 1975 formed the following guidelines:

- a It belongs to the nature of the church of Christ, by means of the gospel entrusted to it, to seek those who are strange to or are estranged from God and his service. According to the apostolic command the church prays to God, its Saviour, for all mankind, because He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:1,3,4). The church desires to reach these people with the Word of God and to call them to the communion with God and his people (Canons of Dordt II,5).
- b The office bearers shall make the members of the congregation aware of this calling and shall equip them for this calling by means of the preaching, the catechism instruction and home visits.
- c The consistories shall continue to accompany the work of the congregation members with their supervision and instruction.
- d Public activities may not be undertaken without consultation and approval of the consistory.

Point 5 and 6 deal with the possibility of local churches to co-operate with each other in the field of evangelism and to co-operate with regional and national associations.

It is clear that the General Synod of Kampen in 1975 saw evangelism as the task of the WHOLE congregation. It gave as proof texts 1 Cor.1:5, Eph.6:15, Phil.1:27, 2:15,16, Col.4:5,6, 1 Peter 2:9, 3:15, 4:16. As far as the organisation of this work is concerned, much is possible without the ruling hand of the consistory. However, it should always have the attention of the consistories. They must 'see to it' that it is done in the reformed way. Moreover, the office-bearers as members of the congregation must be actively involved in the work of evangelism itself, and as members of the consistory they must instruct, equip and supervise the members of the congregation in this work, so that this work within the congregation is also 'done decently and in good order'.

Against the background of the guidelines of the 1975 General Synod of Kampen our sister churches in the Netherlands inserted a 'new' article on evangelism. However, the matter of evangelism as such was not new in the Church Order. In the old edition it was referred to in Art. 23, and it was implied in Art. 39. The church-political element in Art.26 on evangelism was seen in the supervisory task of the consistory towards evangelism specifically to safeguard its reformed character in order that it would be done for the upbuilding of the congregation. That is also the reason why it intentionally uses the same words as in Art.57: "professing their faith according to the Reformed doctrine."

3 Conclusion

The aim of this article is not to prescribe evangelism as such or to bring a new element into the duty of the consistory, but to regulate this work, which is already acknowledged in a reformed way to the edification of the churches.

Previous synods of the F.R.C. of Australia have not dealt with evangelism as such. Yet in adopting the rules for church visits the 1978 Synod acknowledges this work also as a task for the local church. Under the heading 'Church life in general', pt.14, these questions are asked: "What does the church do for the work of evangelization? Is there a committee for evangelization? Do the church council and congregation work in such a way that those who are outside join the church?"

In the estimation of your deputies these questions warrant the inclusion of Art. 26 in the edition of our revised Church Order.

C SCRIPTURAL BASIS

From the foregoing it appears quite evident that evangelism is acknowledged by the reformed churches as an injunction from Scriptures. Does God's Word instruct the church to be busy with evangelism? Your deputies do not regard it as their task to consider this question in depth, for the simple reason that they are not instructed to examine thoroughly the scriptural basis for evangelism itself. However, your deputies will endeavour briefly to confirm the view of our churches pertaining to their calling towards outsiders.

Believers must be active with the Word. The gospel must be carried out into the world. The people of the Lord must be prepared to bring the good news everywhere. They must do this with courage, in wisdom and in time, whenever the occasion arises. In their whole life, in word and deed, they must show themselves to be citizens of the new kingdom (see Rom. 13 : 1-7, 1 Cor. 10:24,32, 1 Peter 2:2, 3:15, 1 Tim. 5:25). Also the aspect of the joy of faith is important in testifying of the hope which Christians have (1 Thess. 1:6, 4:13). God's children must show a totally different lifestyle from the people around them, in order that the gospel may be seen and may spread. By a holy walk and talk others have to be called.

From the above mentioned it becomes evident that the New Testament in the apostolic letters regards it as a believer's normal task to present an INTENTIONAL witness to those who are outside. The N.T. believers were enthusiastic promoters of the true doctrine everywhere (Rom. 1:8, Phil. 1: 5,12 and 1 Thess. 1:7). They did not need a special encouragement to do so. Thus one may explain why one does not read many direct commands to the members of the early church to be busy in the missionary task of the church. Living in a world of gentiles and Jews one simply had to evangelise actively. Owing to their God-given faith, they were moved by the mercy of God for a world lost in sin. They were compelled by the love of Christ (see e.g. 2 Cor. 5.14, Rom. 12:1). They acted according to their confession, "Jesus is Lord" (Phil. 2:9-11). They were active in Christ because of their desire for Christ's return, longing for their maturity in Christ. Every member of the congregation in his/her own situation with their own gifts and talents was called to cooperate (!) in order to for attain the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13,16).

In the early N.T. church this missionary work would have been carried out more spontaneously than happens in our time. We are now living in a different age. For us all things are more complicated. In our country we do not have to suffer much because of our faith. We are not persecuted (as yet). Therefore we need to encourage and help each other more to see the calling of the church e.g. to assist each other in coping with the many issues involved in evangelism, in having a good understanding of the teachings of the many sects of today. Our evangelistic work needs more programmed activities it needs to be organised better, so that the whole church CONTINUES to be built upon the firm foundation of apostles and prophets, being obedient to Christ's great commission (Matt. 28:19). Bringing the gospel in our own environment is implied in Christ's great commission. We also find this teaching concerning the missionary task of the church confessed in our doctrinal standards. True believers must be known by the marks of the Christians (Art. 29, B.C.). By the instruction and supervision of the consistory the true religion must be preserved and the true doctrine everywhere propagated (Art. 30, B.C.). Everyone who accepts the gospel is a prophet. He/she is called to confess Christ's name (L.D. 12, see Matt. 10:32,33, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, 1 Pet.3:15, Rom. 10:10, 2 Tim. 2:12). In our whole life we must show ourselves to be thankful to God for all His goodness and grace and mercy, that amongst other things, our fellow men also may be won for Christ (L.D. 32). We must promote our neighbour's good wherever we can and may (L.D. 42). In explaining the second petition, "Thy kingdom come," the catechism says that we also pray to the Lord to "preserve and increase thy church" (L.D. 48). That implies that the church itself is also very active in spreading the Word wherever it can, closeby or faraway. That is the instruction of Canons of Dort II, 5, "the promise together with the command to repent and believe ought to be declared promiscuously and without distinction (!) to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel." And God wants to use all the church members as his ministers (Eph. 4). When they go out to present their testimony in their surroundings, it is scriptural that they do this together (Luke 10).

So it is certainly in conformity with Scripture to distinguish (in the missionary task for the church) between foreign mission - the proclamation of the gospel to the (heathen) nations, and home mission (evangelism) - the spreading of the Word by talk and walk amongst those who do not know Christ or who have become estranged from Him and his service. The latter is rightly acknowledged by the churches as a calling next to mission.

It is one task of the church to bring the good news everywhere. The Lord God grants to all his people the opportunities to be instrumental in gathering and building up his church to the praise of His glory (see the clear teaching of the whole "christian letter" to the Ephesians). Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction. Foreign mission is aimed at planting the church somewhere else. Ordained ministers are sent in Christ's name to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and to institute the offices in order to come to an orderly church-life. The churches are actively involved in giving spiritual support and in providing for all other needs of the missionaries. Home mission (evangelism) is to bring people (back) to the church already instituted. This church is governed by the local office-bearers in the name of Christ. Owing to Christ's command to follow Him and to Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor. 11:1, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," all members are personally involved in bringing the gospel to their fellow men. They must use the gift and talents the Holy Spirit apportioned to them.

The missionary task must also be done decently and in good order (1 Cor. 14:40, see also verse 33) under the supervision of the elders especially (Acts 20:28, 14:23). The church of the living God is the pillar and bulwark of the truth, not only in the defence but also in the offence, especially "with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17b). So all the believers are soldiers in the victorious salvation- army of Christ! In good order we have to follow our Lord and Master.

So, the scriptural basis for this article is that this acknowledged work of the church is also done decently and in good order, according to Scripture and reformed confession. It would be sufficient if there was an article in the C.O. like in the Canadian one: 'that the churches have to be diligent in fulfilling their missionary task', receiving the proper explanation that a local church must be actively involved in foreign and home mission. But considering that there are church political differences it is fully warranted to have an article about home mission or evangelism in the Church Order.

D THE USE TO WHICH THIS ARTICLE IS PUT BY OUR SISTER CHURCHES.

According to information we received from Holland, in most cases the consistory appoints a committee. For the sake of good communication a consistory member is also appointed very often to it, and via him the consistory is involved in this work. It depends on the local circumstances as to how far such a committee works with its own policy.

It seems to your deputies that in the future evangelism will more and more be organised and carried out (completely) by congregational members on their own responsibility. They set up their own action-committees or establish an association for spreading the gospel. They do their activities under the approval of the consistory and from time to time they will consult with the consistory. In this situation the members are responsible for their own actions, but they receive full support from the consistory. In this respect the task of the office-bearers is to encourage all members to contribute to this work according to their capabilities and possibilities, and to equip them for this work by preaching, catechism instruction and home visits. Finally the office-bearers must execute their spiritual supervision.

Your deputies are convinced that, if this work is done in such an ecclesiastical manner, every church member will be (more) aware of his/her calling in the office of all believers, also pertaining to those who are outside. Again, it becomes clear that insertion of the proposed Art. 26 is fully warranted. It certainly gives good direction for the spiritual health of the churches.

E FINAL CONCLUSION

In this report we have consistently used the word 'evangelism' for spreading the gospel to others with the call of faith and repentance and for leading outsiders to the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the report for the synod in 1983 the word 'evangelization' is used. Your deputies have not come across this word very often in English literature on this matter. On the contrary, it seems to appear only in our own press. We propose, therefore, to use as the correct term the word 'evangelism'.

In line with the Dutch revision of the Church Order of 1978 we propose to harmonise this article with Art. 57 C.O. in the words: 'by making public profession of their faith according to the reformed doctrine'.

We conclude with the recommendation to give the proposed Article 26 its place in the Church Order as follows:

"The aim of evangelism shall be to call those who do not know the Lord or who have become estranged from Him and his service, to join the congregation of Christ by making public profession of their faith according to the reformed doctrine. The consistories shall see to it that the work is done in accordance with this aim."

The deputies

Rev. K. Jonker

Br. A.M. Hidding

APPENDIX G

REPORT TO THE 1987 FROM THE DEPUTIES FOR THE TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Esteemed Brethren

In accordance with the instructions of the Acts of the 1985 Synod, Articles 58 and 95(11), we hereby present our report, which contain a summary of our actions since our appointment.

Regarding our instructions we inform you that they have been carried out in the following manner:

- 1.1 Regarding Article 95 (11b): to ask the churches to provide funds when necessary.
 - 1.1.1 we inform you that the support for Br. J. Kroeze and his family has continued uninterrupted. The results of his study up till now have been very satisfactory and it seems that he can enter his fourth and final study year in September 1987.
 - 1.1.2 Because of the uncertainty of the cost of living and the values of the Australian and Canadian dollars we have asked the churches to provide \$A 18,000 for his second year of study year and \$A 19,000 for his third study-year. Our preparedness for unforeseen circumstances which easily could have arisen have given us a better bank balance than anticipated. Because of that our quota for the fourth (1987-88) study-year could be substantially reduced to \$A 7,000.
- 2.1 Regarding Article 58 (a): to explore the possibility of our churches becoming formally involved in the maintenance of Kampen or Hamilton.
 - 2.1.1 We wrote a letter to the 'Deputaten Financieel Theologische Hogeschool' at Kampen concerning this matter and asked whether such involvement was possible. At a meeting of the representatives of 'Deputaten-Curatoren', 'Deputaten-Financieel' and the 'Senaat' on 6 December 1985, at which the Rev. Jonker was also present to explain our questions, the following conclusions resulted as recommendations to the above bodies:
 - 2.1.2 The Australian churches can commit themselves to a yearly financial contribution for the Theological Seminary on the same basis as the churches in the Netherlands. This could lead to receiving the same information concerning the Theological Seminary which is supplied to the sister-churches in the Netherlands.
 - 2.1.3 If the Australian churches decide to support the Theological Seminary with an annual commitment then they would be obliged to give two years notice if they wish to discontinue this support.
 - 2.1.4 Even if no financial commitment is given, the same information referred to above may be available. However this would be at the discretion of the individual departments.
 - 2.1.5 No further information has been received from the Theological Seminary at Kampen and no firm contact has been established.
 - 2.2.1 We also wrote a letter to the Board of Governors of the Theological College in Hamilton regarding possible involvement of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in the affairs of the college. Their response can be summarised as follows:
 - 2.2.2 The decision of the 1985 Synod is much appreciated, especially for the endeavour to promote increased levels of awareness for the duty to give regularly and sufficiently towards the maintaining of the college.
 - 2.2.3 The enrolment of Mr. G. Wieske and Mr. J. Kroeze are thankfully acknowledged. The educational structure in Australia is well suited for their Master of Divinity program, while also the language of the instruction facilitates the transition of the students from Australia and Canada.
 - 2.2.4 The possibilities to become formally involved in the maintenance of the college, apart from financial contribution is limited by the "Canadian Reformed Theological Act 1981" under which the college receives public recognition as a theological college. In this act, section 5-6, it is stated: No person may be a governor unless he is:
 - a a Canadian citizen, and
 - b a member in good standing of the churches.The first qualification makes it impossible that one or more of your deputies would become governor(s) of the college.
 - 2.2.5 The Board of Governors is willing to share with your deputies all relevant information concerning the operation of the college. This includes the handbook; the annual reports of the senate, the principal, the Librarian, the Registrar, and the Finance and Property-Committee; the three yearly reports of the Board of Governors to the general synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches; all relevant communications of the Board of Governors to the churches and all publications which given to the media concerning the college.
 - 2.2.6 Your deputies (not to exceed two in number) would be invited when they visit Canada to attend the lectures and the meeting of the Board of Governors and to participate in discussions at such meetings and to bring forward any suggestions for the improvement of the training. They consider it desirable to send one of your deputies at least once every three years.
 - 2.2.7 With regard to the financial aspects we are informed that to cover the cost of the operation of the college the Canadian churches are assessed according to the number of their communicant members. At present the assessment is \$44 per communicant member per annum. It is suggested that our churches, in order to show our involvement would adopt a similar procedure to support the college, and establish an assessment as we would deem justified.
 - 2.2.8 In a letter dated 20 May 1986 the Board of Governors stated that the 1986 General Synod has approved the contents of their letter which are summarised above.
 - 2.2.9 The Acts of the 1986 General Synod of Burlington in recording the matters of the theological college states in Article 155 under "Recommendations" the following decisions:
 - 2 to express gratitude that a more suitable building for the college could be acquired and that this was possible due to the generous donation of the Women's Savings Action and a building-fund drive held among the churches and the Australian sister-churches;

- 4 to approve the response of the Board of Governors to the Deputies for the Training for the Ministry of the Word of the Australian sister-churches, expressing the hope that these churches will become more involved in the maintenance of the college.
- 2.2.10 Furthermore we have already received minutes of the Board of Governors and relevant information concerning the operation of the college which include the "Canadian Reformed Theological Act 1981", By-laws and Regulations.
- 2.2.11 In an accompanying letter it is also stated: "Needless to say that everyone visiting Canada and in particular southern Ontario will always be a welcome guest at the college and will be given a tour of the facilities".
- 3.1 Regarding Article 58 (b): to promote increased levels of awareness in our churches and among our church members of the duty we have to give regularly and sufficiently towards this cause.
- 3.1.1 This matter has had our due attention. Publishing information about the colleges in Kampen and Hamilton in Una Sancta seemed to us the most effective way. We were unable to do much in respect because of lack of information. Contact with the colleges had first to be established before we could expect sufficient information for publishing. In the meantime two articles have been published in Una Sancta, one about the college in Hamilton and one "What does student support mean".
- 3.1.2 As mentioned above in 2.1.5 no firm contact with Kampen has been established until now, and we were unable to give information about this college.
- 3.1.3 It took a long time before our correspondence with Hamilton resulted in closer contact. After having received some information we have started a special column in Una Sancta about "Training for the Ministry" under which two articles have been written. It is our intention to write in this column everything that is connected with the training for the ministry so that our church members may be informed about this matter from time to time.
- 4.1 Regarding Article 58 (c): which will lead to the situation that the Churches will budget for amounts similar to those contributed by our overseas brothers and sisters.
- 4.1.1 In this respect we have to consider:
- a our contact with the colleges;
 - b the financial need of the colleges and the support which they already receive.
- 4.1.2 Concerning the contact with Kampen at this moment we can hardly say that it exists at all. In contrast with this Hamilton and the Canadian churches have shown their eagerness to accept our support.
- 4.1.3 Concerning the financial need of the colleges: we do not have the accurate figures about numbers of communicant members and the assessments made by the synods of the Netherlands. In 1985 'Deputaten-Financieel' assessed the churches for 16 guilder per member. This may have changed but it is not comparable with the assessment of the college in Hamilton which assessment for 1987 comes to \$44 per communicant member.
- 4.1.4 From these figures we may conclude that financial support for Hamilton is more urgent than for Kampen.
- 4.2.1 Taking into consideration the financial need of those colleges, the variations in funds required which can be expected from year to year and the support which they receive from their respective church members, we consider it advisable to review our commitment at each synod.
- 4.2.2 To budget for amounts similar to those contributed by our overseas brothers and sisters we suggest:
- a to set our contribution for Hamilton to be \$A 30. per year per communicant members and to give two years notice if this support will be discontinued.
 - b to encourage churches to hold regular collections for the Theological Seminary at Kampen in the same way as hitherto has been done and expect to receive information and documentation.
- 4.2.3 This approach means that it is still possible to make a definite commitment to the college in Kampen of the same amount per member as the members of the Dutch sister-churches. Such a commitment would include the amounts derived from collections suggested above.
- 4.2.4 With or without a formal commitment to supporting the college in Kampen, our suggested approach would lead to support for training for the ministry similar to our Canadian brothers and sisters.

FINANCE

The financial transactions of the "Student Support Fund" from 1 July 1983 till 15 April 1987 were as follows:

Opening balance 1983/4		1,687.55
Received from churches		50,500.72
Interest		1,744.24

		53,932.51
Student support	\$36,400.00	
Administration	110.83	

		36,510.83

Balance as per 15 April 1987		17,421.68
Credit churches 1987 (study year 1987/8)		5,222.84

		22,644.52
Student support rest 1986/7		

and 1987/8 approx	16,000.00

Reserve for possible liabilities	\$ 6,644.52

The final amount is a reserve for our commitment towards the Canadian government for a return fare for the family Kroeze in the case that he will not receive a call from a church in the appropriate time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order that our association and involvement with the theological colleges in Kampen and Hamilton may fruitfully continue we recommend that synod:

- a assess the churches \$30 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton.
- b that deputies be charged with collection of these funds from the churches and forwarding same to the College.
- c encourage the churches to continue to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theological Seminary at Kampen.
- d to charge deputies to continue correspondence with Kampen to obtain necessary information and documentation.
- e instruct deputies to continue publishing all relevant news about the training for the ministry so that our church members may receive a good understanding of the need to support these colleges and the training of the students.
- f instruct deputies to continue their efforts to support theological students and to ask the churches to provide funds for financial support.

Your deputies ask to be discharged of their duty and advise Synod to appoint new deputies to continue the work for the Training for the Ministry of the Word.

Your deputies,
R. Groenewold
Rev. K. Jonker (convenor)
K. Salomons (secretary/treasurer)

APPENDIX H

REPORT FROM DEPUTIES (THE CHURCH OF ARMADALE) CONCERNING THE DECISIONS PERTAINING TO THE REFERRAL OF THE TASK OF THE CLASSES TO CLASSIS CHURCH OR SYNOD

.....that the final text of these changes be published in a suitable form for insertion in the printed booklet of the Church Order of Dordrecht (Acts of the Synod 1985, Article 81, The Free Reformed Churches of Australia).

April, 1986

The following articles contain the changes decided by Synod 1985 with respect to the task of the Classis Church until Classes have been formed.

Article 5 C.O.

THE CALLING TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The lawful calling to the Ministry of the Word of those who have not yet occupied the office of minister involves the calling, the examination, the approval of the congregation, and the ordination.

The calling takes place, under invocation of the Lord, by the consistory and the deacons with the cooperation of the congregation and with observance of the regulations in local use.

Only those may be called for the first time who have been examined preparatorily by the synod. Churches which have no minister in office shall extend a call after having received advice from its counsellor.

The examination both of doctrine and life shall be conducted by the classis church to which the call must be submitted for approval.

The approval of the congregation is obtained when the name of the called minister has been announced in the church for two consecutive Sundays and no lawful objection has been brought forward.

The ordination shall take place in the church service.

The form which has been adopted for that purpose, shall be used together with the imposition of hands by the officiating minister.

Article 6 C.O.

CALLING TO ANOTHER CHURCH

Ministers who are called to another church shall be likewise called in the aforesaid manner by the consistory and the deacons with the co-operation of the congregation and the observance of the regulations in local use.

The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in sister churches outside the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, as well as for the repeated calling of the same minister during the same vacancy.

Churches which have no minister in office shall extend a call after having received advice from its counsellor.

All churches are to obtain the approval of the classis church to which ministers, called in accordance with the provisions of this article, shall show good ecclesiastical testimonies of doctrine and life. The approval of the congregation is also required and is obtained when the name of the called minister has been announced in the church for two consecutive Sundays and no lawful objection has been brought forward.

The ordination shall take place in a church service in which the form adopted for that purpose shall be used.

Article 8 C.O.

ADMISSION WITHOUT THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

Those persons who have not received theological training cannot be admitted to the Ministry of the Word unless there is convincing evidence that they have exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, discretion and gifts of public address.

Where such persons present themselves for admission to the Ministry of the Word the classis church shall make some investigations, whereby she shall consult the church of which the person concerned is a member.

The examination shall take place in a synod (extraordinary). This synod shall determine a period of time during which the above persons may, as candidates, officiate in the churches of the classical area.

Thereafter the classis church shall further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations adopted for that purpose by the churches, and with the advise of Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order.

Article 9 C.O.

ADMISSION OF MINISTERS WHO HAVE OF LATE JOINED THE CHURCH

Ministers, who have of late joined themselves to one of the churches and originate from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, shall only be admitted to the Ministry of the Word with great caution.

The appropriate general church stipulations shall thereby be duly observed.

Where the synod (extraordinary) deems it necessary, such persons shall first pass through a trial period.

Article 12 C.O.

APPOINTMENT TO AN EXTRAORDINARY TASK

A minister shall not accept an appointment which will cause him to be completely devoted to an extraordinary task - such as an army or hospital minister - unless he remains bound to a church.

The nature of the relationship between that minister and the church to which he is bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis church.

Article 14 C.O.

DISMISSAL

The consistory shall not dismiss a minister of his bond with the congregation without the prior knowledge and approval of the classis church and the deputies of the synod.

Article 15 C.O.

RELIEF FROM OFFICE

Once a minister of the Word is called to office in accordance with the rule of Article 5, he is bound to the service of the church for life. This means that he may not resign from his office.

He can only be relieved from his office and enter upon another vocation if the consistory and the classis church, in co-operation with the deputies of the synod, determine that there are substantial reasons for so doing.

Article 17 C.O.

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF DUTIES

When two or more ministers are bound to one congregation equality shall be maintained as much as possible, not only regarding their office but also in all other respects, according to the discernment of the consistory and, if necessary, of the synod.

This rule also applies in relation to elders and deacons.

Article 31 C.O.

APPEAL TO A MAJOR ASSEMBLY

For interpretation of this article refer to the 1985 synod's decisions, Article 81.

Article 35 C.O.

JURISDICTION OF THE MAJOR ASSEMBLIES IN RESPECT OF THE MINOR

The classis church has the authority to make judicial pronouncements in respect of the consistory.

The second-appeal church has this authority in respect to the classis church. This applies also to the synod in respect to the second-appeal church or - if the latter is not involved - to the classis church.

Article 38 C.O.

INSTITUTION OF OFFICES

Initial or renewed institution of the offices in a place shall be carried out only with the agreement of the classis church.

Article 39 C.O.

PLACES WITHOUT CONSISTORIES

Places where as yet no consistory can be instituted shall, by the synod, be placed under the care of a neighbouring consistory.

Article 41 C.O.

THE CLASSIS

A classical meeting shall consist of the churches of the classical region which shall respectively delegate a minister and an elder with the required credentials.

Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months.

Every meeting shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. At these meetings the ministers shall preside in turn. The meetings may also choose a chairman.

However, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the offices is proceeding, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being executed, and whether there is any matter about which the consistories require the judgement or the help of the classis for the proper continuation of their congregational life.

At the last meeting prior to a synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend that synod.

The sentence: "The chairman shall...." must be read in the light of the decision taken by the 1985 Synod, Article 81.

Article 43 C.O.

COUNSELLORS

Each vacant church shall request the synod to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such.

He shall, for the sake of good order, serve the consistory with advice, particularly in relation to the calling of a minister.

Letters of call shall be signed also by him.

When a vacancy arises more than two months before a synod, the classis church shall appoint a counsellor according to this article, and report to the next synod.

Article 44 C.O.

CHURCH VISITATION

The synod shall appoint some of its most experienced and capable ministers to carry out church visitations.

Where it is necessary the synod may appoint a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister.

The visitors shall enquire whether the office bearers, individually and collectively, faithfully carry out their offices, adhere to the sound doctrine, whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained and whether they as well as they are able by word and deed, promote the upbuilding of the congregation.

The purpose of the visitation is, to admonish those office bearers who, in some way, are found to be negligent; to advise and assist so that the peace, the edification and the well-being of the churches may be promoted.

The visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the synod.

This report shall cover the two annual visits made to a church and be sent to the consistory concerned.

Article 45 C.O.

THE SYNOD

The synod shall be convened once in every three years unless there are urgent reasons which require an earlier meeting.

Every classical meeting shall delegate to the synod two ministers of the Word and two elders.

Where at least two churches consider that the synod must be convened within the three year period, the church appointed for the purpose of convening the next synod shall, with the approval of the classis church, determine the time and place for it.

At the conclusion of the synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene that meeting.

Article 73 C.O.

PROCEDURE RELATING TO DISCIPLINE

Any person who obstinately rejects church admonition or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be denied admission to the Lord's supper by the consistory.

If, after numerous subsequent admonitions, the person does not show any signs of repentance, the consistory shall as an ultimate remedy proceed to excommunication for which the accepted form is to be used.

No-one may be excommunicated without the consent of the classis church.

Article 74 C.O.

ANNOUNCEMENTS DURING THE PROCEDURE

After someone has been denied admission to the Lord's Supper and following the consequent exhortations, the consistory shall proceed with excommunication only after it has informed the congregation of the obstinacy of the sinner.

His sins and the numerous attempts made to convert him by reprimands, denial of admission to the Lord's supper and many admonitions shall be made known at that time.

The congregation shall be urged to admonish him and to pray for him.

This shall be announced on three occasions. In order to spare the sinner, the name shall not be mentioned the first time. In the second announcement his name shall be mentioned after consent has been given by the classis church.

In the third announcement the consistory shall inform the congregation that he shall be excluded from the communion of the church if he does not repent. In this way the excommunication shall have the silent consent of the congregation.

The consistory shall determine the time lapses between the announcements.

Article 76 C.O.

DISCIPLINE IN RELATION TO OFFICE BEARERS

When ministers of the Word reject the admonitions of the church or when they publicly or otherwise engage in a serious sin, they shall be suspended on the ground of the judgement of their consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation to be appointed by the synod.

The second-appeal church, with the advice of the deputies for Article 49 C.O., appointed by the synod, must judge whether the ministers ought to be deposed.

When elders and deacons are guilty of one of the above mentioned sins, the judgement of their consistory and the consistory of a neighbouring congregation will be sufficient for their suspension or deposition.

Article 79 C.O.

DISCIPLINE IN RELATION TO BAPTISED MEMBERS

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where, in other respects, he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, then, with the consent of the classis church, the matter shall be made known to the congregation.

The consistory shall mention his name in the announcement and shall also set a term. The congregation shall be urged to admonish him and to pray for him. If he does not in the set term, show any real repentance, the Consistory shall, in a church service, exclude him from the communion of the church.

The adopted form shall be used for this.

If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public confession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

APPENDIX I

REGULATIONS FOR THE FINANCIAL AID OF STUDENTS (ART. 19 CHURCH ORDER)

Article 1

Financial aid will be provided only to students who intend to become a minister in one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia or in one of their sister-churches. It will be provided in accordance with these Regulations and the RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS.

Article 2

Financial aid will be provided only for studies at a college or seminary of one of the sister-churches mentioned in Article 1.

Article 3

Financial aid will be provided in the form of interest-free loans for the purpose of meeting study costs and cost-of-living expenses of the student. Any additional aid for a married student will be provided on the same basis.

Article 4

Students proposing to enrol at one of the approved colleges must comply with the pre-requisites of that college before financial aid will be made available. A student who needs to complete additional studies after having obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian University, and before being admitted to a college may be financially supported by deputies for that time of his study.

Article 5

In normal circumstances financial aid will be given only for the duration of a normal-length study course at the college concerned.

Article 6

Payments will be made via the student's parents. In the event that it is considered more expedient to have the payments made directly to the student, a written request to that effect may be made to deputies.

Article 7

Financial aid is normally available only for the needs of the student. In exceptional cases aid may be extended for the needs of the family of a married student.

Article 8

To assist deputies in determining the student's need for financial aid, they may request information concerning his financial situation from the consistory of the church of which he is a member. Similar information may be sought about the student's parents. For this purpose an Application Form For Financial Assistance will be supplied.

Article 9

If a student marries during the course of his studies, payments will continue to be made via his parents. A student who was married prior to the commencement of his theological study will be paid directly.

Article 10

The parents of the student, or - in the case of the student being paid directly - the student himself, shall annually submit a budget of expenditure. Any proposed increase in expenditure must be sufficiently substantiated.

Article 11

The student must keep deputies informed about his study progress. Deputies may also make their own inquiries at the college or seminary. If the student fails to make satisfactory progress and desires to continue with his studies he may request a continuation of financial aid. This request will be given consideration only if the college senate supports his case. After a second failure approval to continue financial aid can be given only if the failure was caused by circumstances beyond the student's control (sickness, accident etc).

Article 12

The maximum amount of financial aid will be determined by deputies, if necessary after consultation with the college or seminary. Deputies will take into account the income of the student (including that of his wife if he is married), and the support from his parents or from any other source.

If a student is not eligible for government support for tertiary education, then financial aid will be given by deputies only in exceptional circumstances.

Article 13

Circumstances which will tend to raise the level of financial aid needed will be considered by deputies on their merit.

Article 14

The financial aid may include an allowance, as determined by deputies, for the purchase of books. This allowance is for the purpose of starting the student's library (dictionaries, commentaries etc). Proof of purchase of these books must be supplied by the student.

Article 15

A student whose financial position changes due to either an increase or decrease in income or of assets must inform deputies accordingly, as this may affect the extent of financial aid received by him from the churches.

Article 16

A student who desires to end his studies in the case he no longer wants to become a minister, or for any other reason, must inform deputies accordingly as soon as possible.

Article 17

The financial aid will end at the time when the student, after having completed his studies and ecclesiastical examinations, becomes the responsibility of a church. If the student does not receive a call from a church the financial aid will end five weeks after his preparatory examination.

Article 18

Subject to the provisions of Article 19, repayment of the provided loans will be waived once the student has been ordained as minister of one of the churches mentioned in Article 1, at the rate of two years of financial aid for every year of ministry, in the same order.

Article 19

The provided loans or any outstanding amounts thereof must be repaid and are instantly claimable when:

- a the student terminates his studies
- b the student decides not to become a minister
- c the student, after having completed the course of studies, does not make himself available for call by one of the churches mentioned in Article 1
- d the student does not accept a call extended to him or, after having accepted a call, withdraws and does not accept another call
- e the student ceases to be a member of the sister-church either by his withdrawal or by excommunication
- f the student, having become a minister, withdraws from or is dismissed by the church or sister-church concerned

In the case of financial hardship when immediate repayment in full would be too difficult, deputies may consider a request for repayment by instalments.

Article 20

If it becomes clear that too high a level of financial aid was given in the past, the total sum of excess money must immediately be repaid in full.

Article 21

The obligation to repay loans may be waived in case of sickness, death or in other exceptional circumstances.

Article 22

In any cases for which these Regulations do not make provision deputies have the authority to decide.

Article 23

Deputies must report to the next synod concerning any special actions which were taken.

Article 24

A copy of these REGULATIONS and of the RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS will be supplied to the student and to all who are directly involved in the financial aid to needy students ad Art.19 of the Church Order.

RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS

- 1 Students who apply for financial aid for their Theological study, on the ground of Article 19 of the Church Order, may be supported by the Fund for the Support of Needy Students (FSNS).
- 2 The FSNS provides financial aid for the following purposes:
 - a Tuition fees
 - b Study books
 - c Living expenses

- d Clothing
 - e Pocket money
 - f Fares
 - g Health insurance
 - h Incidental expenses
 - i Other expenses as detailed
- 3 To become eligible for support from S.S.F. the student must:
- a be a confessing member of one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
 - b be accepted by one of the recognized theological colleges
 - c undertake full-time studies
 - d have made satisfactory progress in the study for an Australian Bachelor of Arts degree and/or in the previous study year of the college
- 4 The FSNS distinguishes two classes of students:
- a Students who are financially dependent on their parents for their studies at a theological college
 - b Independent students who have their own income and/or are supported by their wife; and all students who were married prior to the beginning of their theological study
- 5 In the case of a 'dependent' student the income of his parents must be assessed annually by way of a 'means' test, before the student can be supported by FSNS.
- 6 In the case of an 'independent' student his income and/or that of his wife must be assessed annually by way of a 'means' test, before the student can be supported by FSNS.
- 7 In applying the 'means' test referred to in articles 5 and 6 the standards of the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme of the Commonwealth Department of Education and Youth Affairs are taken as a general guide. Allowance will be made by deputies for the difference between study costs at the theological college concerned and those at an equivalent Australian institution.
- 8 The forms for the 'means' test must be duly completed and signed.
- 9 An agreement between deputies and the parents and/or the student - as the case may be -, must be completed and signed before financial aid can be given by FSNS

APPENDIX J

REPORT TO SYNOD OF

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF LAUNCESTON

RE AUDIT OF SYNODS' TREASURY AND AUDIT OF FUNDS AD ART. 18 AND 19 C.O.

The 1987 Synod of
The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
ALBANY WA 6330
Esteemed brothers,

In the execution of the mandate given by the 1985 Synod (Acts, art.95/17) the Consistory of the Church of Launceston reports to the 1987 Synod that the books and records of the synodical treasurer, as well as those of deputies for Arts. 18 and 19 C.O. have been audited and found in good order, giving a true and faithful record of the affairs of the last synod and of the deputies respectively.

It was found that the financial records of synods are not always well provided with supporting documentation by the treasurers of our churches. In pointing out this weakness, we trust that it will suffice to draw the treasurers' attention to the matter. The work of the synodical treasurer could be facilitated considerably in this way.

As for the 'Account of the 1985 Synod of Launceston', submitted by the synodical treasurer on 14 June 1986, the fact that only one church submitted an account for 'pulpit exchange' deserves attention. This particular item includes the cost of travel by the preacher's wife. Arrangements observed in the past do not appear to have covered any such cost.

A further matter meriting synod's attention is the anticipated need for ongoing cash flow between synods. We think particularly of such items as pulpit exchanges and travel by deputies to overseas destinations. It would be of benefit if a 'general fund' were established - in the care of the synodical treasurer - to eliminate the need for repeated cash requests by the treasurer. A general levy immediately after the 1987 Synod is closed could be instrumental in making such a fund available. We are confident that this method would facilitate forward planning by our Committees of Management as well as by the synodical treasurer. Any interest which might accrue would be credited to the synod account.

Financial planning has not been our strongest feature in the past. We hope that the above suggestions will assist synod's considerations of its funding, so that also in this stewardship our affairs will be arranged 'decently and in order.'

For the consistory,
chairman, Rev. K. Jonker
clerk, J. VanderRos

APPENDIX K

REPORT RE SUBSCRIPTION FORM AND ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCES

FORM 1: SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS*

We, elders and deacons of the Free Reformed Church of () signatories to this subscription-form sincerely, solemnly and with good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that in our respective offices, we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, earnestly reject all errors which conflict with this doctrine, and declare that we will exert ourselves in keeping the church free from all such errors.

Should at anytime in the future reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds, we faithfully promise not to propose, teach or defend them, neither publicly nor privately, but to disclose these reservations to the consistory so that it may examine them. Furthermore we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the consistory. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the consistory or should we persist in our reservations we agree, by that very fact, to be suspended from our respective offices.

Furthermore, should the consistory at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our opinion regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our respective offices; reserving for ourselves the right of appeal. Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will acquiesce in the determination and judgement of the consistory.

* Form proposed by Deputies for Ecclesiastical Ordinances and adopted by the 1985 Synod of Launceston (Article 39).

Final text is subject to an examination for linguistic aspects, to be finalised by the churches by the end of 1985 by mutual agreement (Acts, Synod of 1985, Article 93).

FORM 2: SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR MINISTERS OF THE WORD*

We, ministers of the Word in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, signatories to this subscription form, sincerely, solemnly and with a good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same in our public preaching or writing. We also promise not only to earnestly reject all errors which conflict with the aforesaid doctrine, but that we shall at all times be willing to refute and contradict them doing our utmost in reproving, combatting and helping to resist such errors.

Should at any time in the future reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds we faithfully promise not to propose, teach or defend them, neither in our preaching or in our writing, publicly nor privately, but to first disclose these reservations to the ecclesiastical assemblies in the ecclesiastical way so that they may examine them.

Furthermore we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies or should we persist in our reservations we agree by that very fact to be suspended from our office.

Furthermore should the consistory, the classis church or the synod, at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our office; reserving for ourselves however the right of appeal should we believe ourselves aggrieved by the judgement of the consistory or classis church.

Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will acquiesce in the determination and judgement of the consistory and/or classis church.

* Form proposed by the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Ordinances and adopted by the 1985 Synod of Launceston (Article 39).

Final text is subject to an examination for linguistic aspects, to be finalised by the churches by the end of 1985 by mutual agreement (Acts, Synod of 1985, Article 93).

Form 3: CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL FROM THE CONSISTORY TO A DEPARTING MINISTER (Article 7, Church Order)

The consistory of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ has been advised by the Reverend _____, its Minister of the Word since _____ (date), that he has accepted the call extended to him by _____. At its meeting held on _____ (date), the consistory decided to:

- 1 grant the Reverend _____ an honourable discharge from his duties with the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ effective as from the _____ day of _____ 19____, from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of _____.
- 2 declare that during the period of his ministry within the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and godly in his walk of life within the congregation;

- 3 provide him with two copies of this Certificate of Dismissal for presentation, in accordance with Article 6 and 7 of the Church Order, to the church of _____ and to classis _____, as proof of proper and lawful dismissal from this church, and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine;
- 4 record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his _____ stay in the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ and on his departure commends him to the LORD and His grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour and cause him to be a blessing within the churches which he may now begin to serve.

For the consistory:

_____ (chairman) _____
 name signature
 _____ (clerk) _____
 name signature

Form 4: CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL FROM THE CONSISTORY FOR A DEPARTING MINISTER TO THE CLASSIS CHURCH (Article 7, Church Order)

To the consistory of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, acting as classis church for the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____.

You are hereby advised:

- 1 That the Reverend _____ who has been our Minister of the Word since _____, has accepted the call extended to him by the _____.
- 2 That the consistory has subsequently granted Reverend _____ a most honourable discharge from his duties with the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ commencing from the _____ day of _____ 19____, from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of _____.
- 3 That the consistory declares that during his labour within the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, Reverend _____ has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, and godly in his walk of life, giving offence to no one.

It is therefore proposed that the classis church may likewise, and with a similar declaration, dismiss Reverend _____ from his duties within the bond of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA), so that in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order the church of _____ and the classis of _____ may accept him with lawful Certificates of Dismissal from both the church and bond of churches which he has served, and with a good attestation concerning both his doctrine and life.

For the consistory:

_____ (chairman) _____
 name signature
 _____ (clerk) _____
 name signature

Form 5: CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL FROM THE CLASSIS CHURCH TO A DEPARTING MINISTER (Article 7, Church Order)

The consistory of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, acting as classis church for the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, acknowledges the advice received from the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of that the Reverend _____, who has served that church since _____, has accepted the call extended to him by the _____ and that the church of _____ has, at its meeting held on _____ (date), decided to:

- 1 grant the Reverend _____ an honourable discharge from his duties with the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ effective as from the _____ day of _____, 19____, at which time he shall be deemed engaged in the service of _____.
- 2 declare that during the period of his ministry within the bond of churches, he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and godly in his walk of life;
- 3 provide him with two copies of this (Certificate of Dismissal) for presentation, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order, to the church of _____ and to classis _____ as proof of proper and lawful dismissal from the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ and the bond of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA), and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine;
- 4 record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his _____ year stay in the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, and in the bond of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA), and on his departure commends him to the LORD and his grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour, and cause him to be a blessing within the churches which he may now begin to serve.

For the consistory:

_____ (chairman) _____
 name signature
 _____ (clerk) _____
 name signature

- 3 provide him with two copies of this Certificate of Dismissal for presentation, in accordance with Article 6 and 7 of the Church Order, to the church of _____ and to classis _____, as proof of proper and lawful dismissal from this church, and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine;
- 4 record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his _____ stay in the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ and on his departure commends him to the LORD and His grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour and cause him to be a blessing within the churches which he may now begin to serve.

For the consistory:

_____ (chairman) _____
 name signature
 _____ (clerk) _____
 name signature

Form 4: CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL FROM THE CONSISTORY FOR A DEPARTING MINISTER TO THE CLASSIS CHURCH (Article 7, Church Order)

To the consistory of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, acting as classis church for the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____.

You are hereby advised:

- 1 That the Reverend _____ who has been our Minister of the Word since _____, has accepted the call extended to him by the _____.
- 2 That the consistory has subsequently granted Reverend _____ a most honourable discharge from his duties with the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ commencing from the _____ day of _____ 19____, from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of _____.
- 3 That the consistory declares that during his labour within the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, Reverend _____ has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, and godly in his walk of life, giving offence to no one.

It is therefore proposed that the classis church may likewise, and with a similar declaration, dismiss Reverend _____ from his duties within the bond of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA), so that in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order the church of _____ and the classis of _____ may accept him with lawful Certificates of Dismissal from both the church and bond of churches which he has served, and with a good attestation concerning both his doctrine and life.

For the consistory:

_____ (chairman) _____
 name signature
 _____ (clerk) _____
 name signature

Form 5: CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL FROM THE CLASSIS CHURCH TO A DEPARTING MINISTER (Article 7, Church Order)

The consistory of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, acting as classis church for the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, acknowledges the advice received from the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ that the Reverend _____, who has served that church since _____, has accepted the call extended to him by the _____ and that the church of _____ has, at its meeting held on _____ (date), decided to:

- 1 grant the Reverend _____ an honourable discharge from his duties with the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ effective as from the _____ day of _____, 19____, at which time he shall be deemed engaged in the service of _____.
- 2 declare that during the period of his ministry within the bond of churches, he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and godly in his walk of life;
- 3 provide him with two copies of this (Certificate of Dismissal) for presentation, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order, to the church of _____ and to classis _____ as proof of proper and lawful dismissal from the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ and the bond of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA), and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine;
- 4 record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his _____ year stay in the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____, and in the bond of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA), and on his departure commends him to the LORD and his grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour, and cause him to be a blessing within the churches which he may now begin to serve.

For the consistory:

_____ (chairman) _____
 name signature
 _____ (clerk) _____
 name signature

APPENDIX K

REPORT RE SUBSCRIPTION FORM AND ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCES

FORM 1: SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR ELDERS AND DEACONS*

We, elders and deacons of the Free Reformed Church of () signatories to this subscription-form sincerely, solemnly and with good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that in our respective offices, we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, earnestly reject all errors which conflict with this doctrine, and declare that we will exert ourselves in keeping the church free from all such errors.

Should at anytime in the future reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds, we faithfully promise not to propose, teach or defend them, neither publicly nor privately, but to disclose these reservations to the consistory so that it may examine them. Furthermore we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the consistory. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the consistory or should we persist in our reservations we agree, by that very fact, to be suspended from our respective offices.

Furthermore, should the consistory at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our opinion regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our respective offices; reserving for ourselves the right of appeal. Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will acquiesce in the determination and judgement of the consistory.

* Form proposed by Deputies for Ecclesiastical Ordinances and adopted by the 1985 Synod of Launceston (Article 39).

Final text is subject to an examination for linguistic aspects, to be finalised by the churches by the end of 1985 by mutual agreement (Acts, Synod of 1985, Article 93).

FORM 2: SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR MINISTERS OF THE WORD*

We, ministers of the Word in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, signatories to this subscription form, sincerely, solemnly and with a good conscience before the Lord, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same in our public preaching or writing. We also promise not only to earnestly reject all errors which conflict with the aforesaid doctrine, but that we shall at all times be willing to refute and contradict them doing our utmost in reproving, combatting and helping to resist such errors.

Should at any time in the future reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds we faithfully promise not to propose, teach or defend them, neither in our preaching or in our writing, publicly nor privately, but to first disclose these reservations to the ecclesiastical assemblies in the ecclesiastical way so that they may examine them.

Furthermore we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies or should we persist in our reservations we agree by that very fact to be suspended from our office.

Furthermore should the consistory, the classis church or the synod, at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our office; reserving for ourselves however the right of appeal should we believe ourselves aggrieved by the judgement of the consistory or classis church.

Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will acquiesce in the determination and judgement of the consistory and/or classis church.

* Form proposed by the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Ordinances and adopted by the 1985 Synod of Launceston (Article 39).

Final text is subject to an examination for linguistic aspects, to be finalised by the churches by the end of 1985 by mutual agreement (Acts, Synod of 1985, Article 93).

Form 3: CERTIFICATE OF DISMISSAL FROM THE CONSISTORY TO A DEPARTING MINISTER (Article 7, Church Order)

The consistory of the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ has been advised by the Reverend _____, its Minister of the Word since _____ (date), that he has accepted the call extended to him by _____. At its meeting held on _____ (date), the consistory decided to:

- 1 grant the Reverend _____ an honourable discharge from his duties with the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ effective as from the _____ day of _____ 19____, from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of _____.
- 2 declare that during the period of his ministry within the (FREE REFORMED CHURCH) of _____ he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and godly in his walk of life within the congregation;

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