

ACTS OF THE 1992 SYNOD

OF THE

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA**

Convened at Bedfordale, Western Australia

18 May, 1992

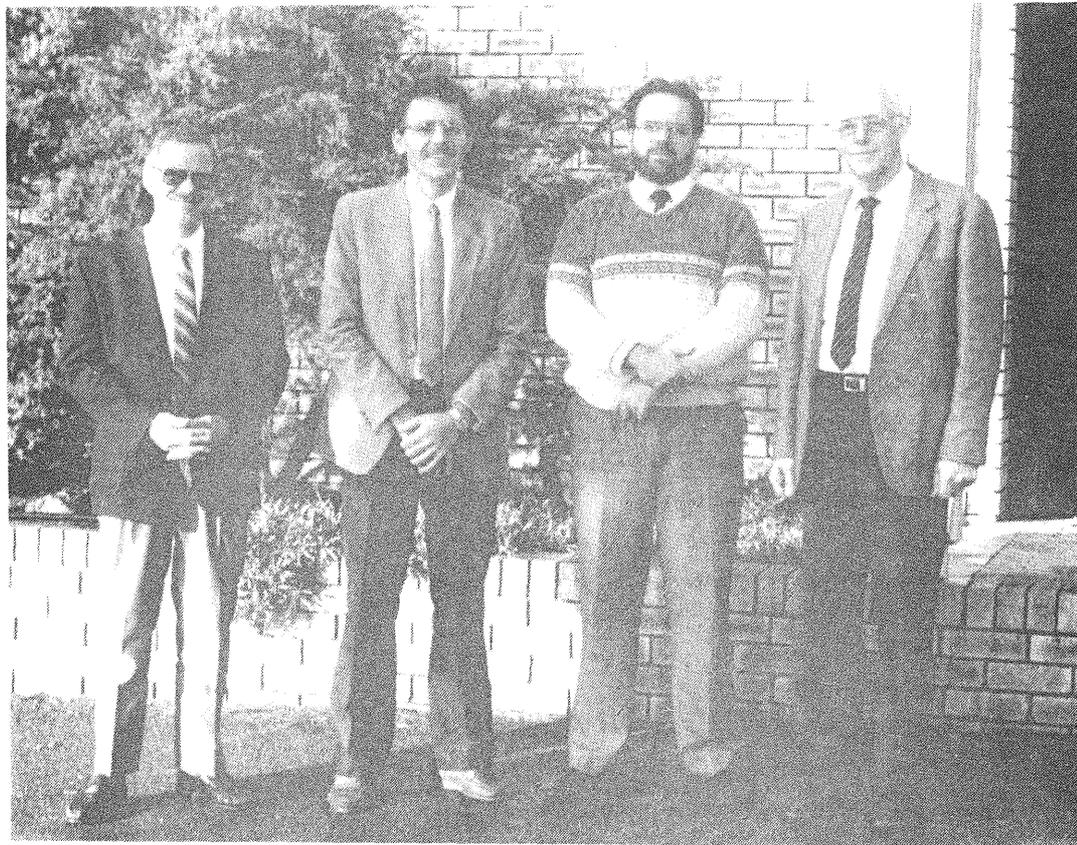


Delegates to Synod 1992

from left to right - back - Elders J Bosveld and H Terpstra, Reverend W Huizinga, Elder J Hidding, Reverend C Kleyn, Elders J Everts, H Heys, JA Swarts, H Olde, Reverend C Bosch
seated - Elder J Eikelboom, Reverends A van Delden, A Veldman, C Bouwman

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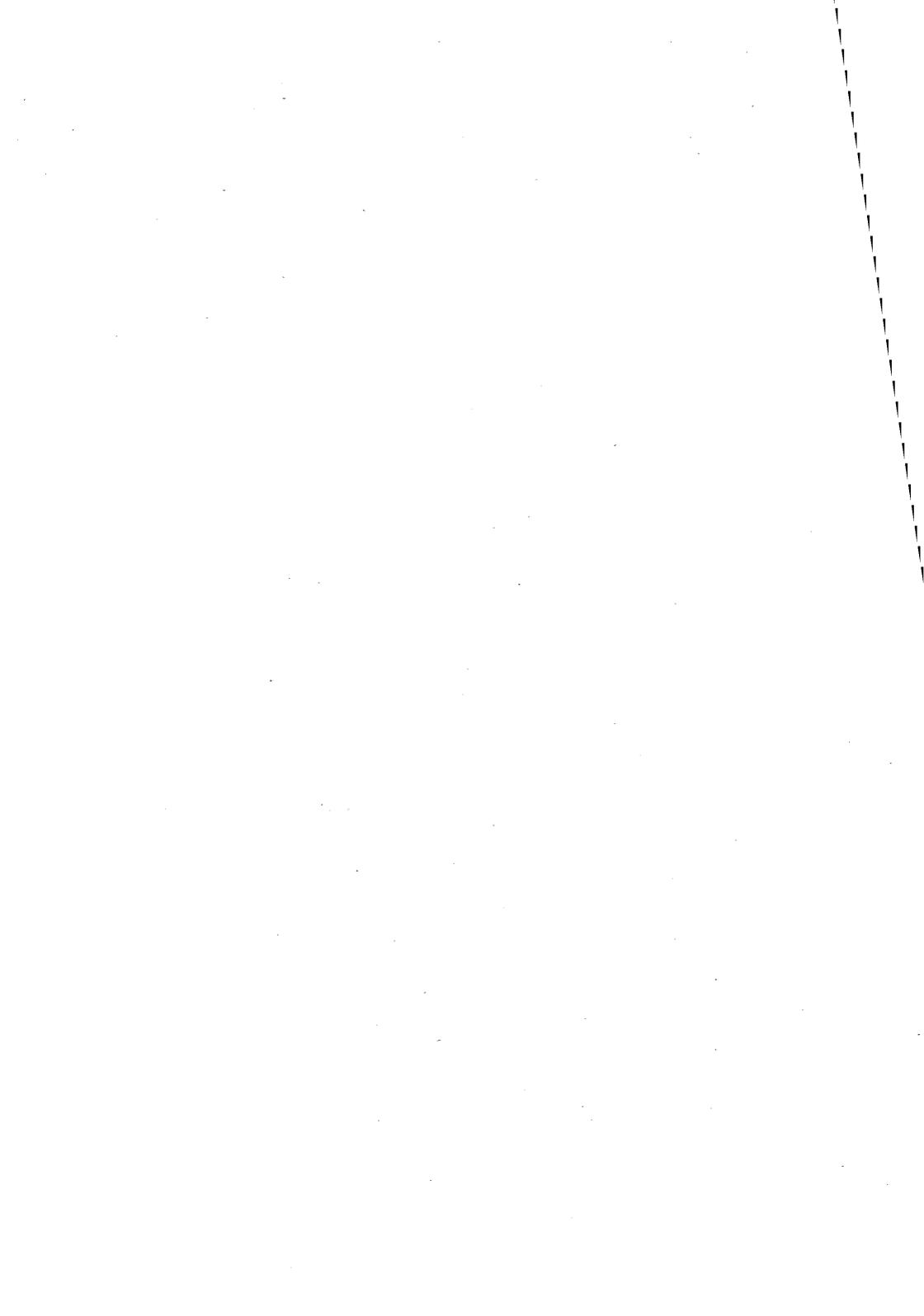


Office bearers for Synod 1992
left to right - Reverends A Veldman, C Bouwman, A van Delden, Elder J Eikelboom

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

listed in alphabetical order of the name

CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CGKN	Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Churches of North America
CO	Church Order
DpRCA	Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad
DpPCEA	Deputies for Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
DRCSL	Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka
EPCA	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia
EPCI	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
ERCS	Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FCS	Free Church of Scotland
FCSA	Free Church of Southern Africa
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa = VGKSA
GKSA	Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika
GGRIS	Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia di Sumba Timor-Savu = RCSTS
GMMT	Gereja Maschi Musyafir di Timur
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
NGKSA	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika
NGK	Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
OPCNZ	Orthodox Presbyterian Church of New Zealand
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
PCK	Presbyterian Church in Korea
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCU	Presbyterian Church of Uganda
PRCA	Protestant Reformed Churches of America
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) = GKN
RCN(S)	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Synodical) = GKN(S)
RCA	Reformed Churches of Australia
RCJ	Reformed Churches of Japan
RCSTS	Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu = GGRIS
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCUS	Reformed Church in the United States
PCPNG	Reformed Church of Papua New-Guinea
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council (was RES)
RPCA	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia
RPCI	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
RPCT	Reformed Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
RPCNA	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
VGKSA	Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika = FRCSA
WCC	World Council of Churches



FIRST DAY - Monday, 18 May, 1992
Evening Session

ARTICLE 1

On behalf of the convening church of Bedforddale Reverend A Van Delden opens Synod 1992. He requests the singing of Psalm 125:1 and 2, leads in prayer and reads Revelation 1:4-20.

WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS

On behalf of the convening church of Bedforddale, it is my pleasure to welcome you here tonight to this unpretentious but comfortable church building. We are thankful that all the delegates and visitors to Synod could arrive safely.

You all look eager to start. Hopefully you are equally eager to finish.

Synod Bedforddale 1992 will go down in history as having many firsts. In the first place, Bedforddale has never hosted a Synod before. This church building has never had a synodical meeting in it. This is the first time that some of us have served as delegates to Synod. It is the first time we had two representatives from our Dutch sister churches. And it is the first Synod to receive visitors from Indonesia. Furthermore, our churches have never had a seventeenth Synod before. So it looks as though this Synod will make history.

We are thankful that in this day and age we are still given the opportunity to meet, not only as church but also as churches. We are thankful that God gives us this freedom, and we pray that God may continue to preserve that freedom so that the gospel may continue to be publicly proclaimed.

As I said before, this is the seventeenth Synod to be convened in Australia. Armadale hosted 6, Albany 5, Launceston 4, and Kelmscott 1. Going through the files one can't help but notice the growth that has occurred over the years. The first Synod, held in Armadale, boasted of 6 delegates from three churches: Armadale, Albany, and Launceston. It represented 300 members in total, about the number of members of the Bedforddale congregation today. Two years later, at the second Synod in Australia, which was also held in Armadale, Reverend P van Gorp mentioned in his opening speech that this number had doubled. Today, there are fourteen delegates representing more than 2800 members. A great responsibility for the delegates.

A few other changes have taken place in our midst since the last Synod. We notice that Reverend Jonker's seat is empty. He left to serve one of our sister churches in Canada, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Since his departure, Launceston has extended two calls, both of which were declined. We hope and pray with Launceston that they may soon receive a minister of the Word. Reverend J Koelewijn, our missionary from Port Moresby also returned to the Netherlands.

Amidst changes some things stay the same, such as the inability of our two retired ministers to sit still. They still have an appetite for hard work and make their presence known through preaching and through the pen. Reverend Bruning has been quite busy with the congregation in Port Moresby, together with his wife. Thus we still reap fruits from the labour of our retired ministers.

I said that this is the first time that we have received two representatives from our sister churches in the Netherlands. Synod Armadale 1980 was able to welcome Reverend P Lok as deputy to an Australian synod for the first time. That was our 12th synod. Now, 5 synods later we can welcome two brothers, Reverend OJ Douma and DJ van Wijnen, deputies for relations with foreign churches. We hope that when you return you will consider that the time spent with us in Australia was time

well spent, upbuilding for us all and beneficial for the church of Jesus Christ here in Australia.

Also a hearty welcome to our visitors from Indonesia, the Reverend Fangidae and Mr Johnson Dethan of the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor. Our deputies have reported that there is growing contact between these churches on Timor and our sister churches of Sumba/Savu. We welcome them in our midst.

For this assembly, seven churches are gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church who is also present at our Synod. We read a portion of Holy Scripture from the Revelation to John. We read the introduction of his letter to the seven churches that are in Asia, not in Australia. But even though the heading is not addressed specifically to us, the content of the letter certainly is. For this letter is not only the letter of John to the seven churches; it is the letter of Christ to His church wherever He gathers it, whether they number seven or seven hundred.

I chose to read part of this letter this evening because it contains so much comfort and encouragement for us, especially vs. 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." This verse overshadows the whole book, yes, even all of Scripture, testifying to the fact that our God is an everlasting God, a God who has always been there, a God who is here now, a God who will always be here. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the "A" and the "Z." He is "The Beginning" and "The End."

Brothers and sisters, that is a comforting thought. He was there in the beginning, making the promise, the first promise, the so-called "mother promise." From the beginning He promised a Saviour who would carry our burden, pay for our sins on the cross, destroy Satan's kingdom and provide everlasting life for His loved ones. Through the thousands of years which followed, God was always there. He who made the promise to Adam later reconfirmed the same with Noah, and again later with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and still later with David and with all Israel. Finally, He fulfilled that promise. He sent His Son, who died on Calvary's cross. He who was, still is. He who was with His people is still with His people. He said, "Lo I am with you always....". He who made rich promises in the past is He who maintains them in the present. He keeps His word, for He cannot lie, nor pretend, nor mislead. And we know it. Every day, every year, every church service, every synod, we notice, we see, we feel His nearness, His love, His care for His church in Australia, in the world. He who was, still is.

The Lord God is He who is to come. He who promised to be with His church "to the close of the age," will come back. He who was always with His church in the past, from the beginning, - He who is still with His church today. And He promises to come again. He who kept all His promises in the past and who keeps them in the present is the one who will bring these promises to complete fulfilment when He returns. God's Son will descend from heaven in the same way He ascended into heaven, a fact which we hope to remember during our Synod.

This is very comforting. We can depend on Him. He is true to His Word and promises, regardless of how long ago He gave them. And John could see it with his own eyes. He saw the Son of man standing in the midst of the lampstands, walking in the midst of His churches - the seven churches for which He died. He wants to be with His people, to care for them, to lead them and to guide them. He has a special bond with them: He bought them with his blood. They are His. In His right hand He holds the seven stars. In his hand, His all-powerful hand, He holds the angels of the seven churches, His servants who must lead His church to the end of

the days. From themselves they are powerless, but in His hand, through His power, they are sustained.

Synod 1992 is about to start. We are comforted with God's promise: "Lo I am with you to the end of days." That includes today and tomorrow, 1992 and the following years. It is then comforting to know that we do not have to work during Synod in our own strength, but in the strength of Him who walks in the midst of the lampstands, in the midst of His churches.

It also means that He who walks amid the lampstands does not miss anything. He is here among us. As He is true to His Word, He also expects us, His children to be true to our word. We have promised to serve Him and not ourselves. We have promised to do His will, and not our will. We must constantly ask Him who walks in our midst during Synod, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me say or write or decide." This means that there is great need to pray that God may grant us insight into His Word through the guidance of His Spirit. Here, both the delegates and the members of the congregations have a very important task, to pray to Him who walks amidst His church, who "by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think," (Ephesians 3:20). He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

With these words I declare this Synod 1992 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened.

Psalm 127:1 and 2 is sung.

ARTICLE 2

EXAMINATION OF CREDENTIALS

The chairman appoints the delegates of the church of Byford to examine the credentials. After these are scrutinised and checked with the attendance list, these delegates report that all churches are properly represented by their primi delegates, and that all the delegates have proper credentials:

Albany	Reverend A Veldman Elder H Olde
Armadale	Reverend W Huizinga Elder J Bosveld
Bedfordale	Reverend A van Delden Elder J Eikelboom
Byford	Reverend C Bouwman Elder J A Swarts
Kelmscott	Reverend C Bosch Elder H Terpstra
Launceston	Elder J Everts Elder H Heys
Legana	Reverend C Kleyn Elder J Hidding

None of the churches have given their delegates an instruction.

ARTICLE 3
ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following officers are elected:

Chairman	Reverend A Veldman
Vice chairman	Reverend A van Delden
First clerk	Elder J Eikelboom
Second clerk	Reverend C Bouwman

ARTICLE 4
CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD

The chairman declares Synod duly constituted.

ARTICLE 5
AGREEMENT WITH THE THREE FORMS OF UNITY

The delegates, including the brothers Reverend OJ Douma and DJ van Wijnen who are at Synod as delegates from our sister churches in the Netherlands, are asked to rise in order to show their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise.

ARTICLE 6
GREETINGS FROM SISTER CHURCHES

The chairman reads parts of letters from the Canadian Reformed Churches, and from the Presbyterian Church in Korea respectively, with greetings to and best wishes for our Synod. These are received with thankfulness.

ARTICLE 7
ADJOURNMENT

After expressing Synod's thanks to the convening church of Bedfordale for its contribution to arrangements for this Synod, the chairman asks us to sing Hymn 46:2. He then leads in prayer and adjourns Synod.

SECOND DAY - Tuesday, 19 May, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 8
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 23:1,2 and 3, reading of Isaiah 40:1-11 and prayer.

ARTICLE 9

DELEGATES FROM REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

The chairman reads the letter from the Committee on relations with churches abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, delegating the brothers Reverend OJ Douma and DJ van Wijnen to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. He again welcomes these brothers.

Synod agrees that Reverend Douma will be given the opportunity to address Synod during this evening's session.

The chairman will respond during next Thursday's evening session.

ARTICLE 10

TIME SCHEDULES AND PROCEDURES

The moderamen proposes:

A TIME SCHEDULES

Monday to Friday	9.00 am to 12.00 noon 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm
Saturday	9.00 am to 12.00 noon

Hours on Thursday 28 May (Ascension Day) will be

9.00 am to 12.00 noon
and 1.30 pm to 3.00 pm

B PROCEDURES

1. Daily closing of Synod will be done by delegates in alphabetical order.
2. Deputies are invited to attend the meetings of the advisory committees as well as the full sessions of Synod when their reports are discussed. Deputies may ask to speak when they deem a clarification to be necessary.
3. All proposals and amendments shall be submitted in writing.
4. The *Acts* of each day will be adopted, as much as possible, in a full session on the following day.
5. Smoking is not permitted on the premises.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 11

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda is adopted as follows:

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 agenda

7. Adoption of meeting procedures
8. Incoming correspondence
 - a Byford - proposal on the rules for correspondence to Synod
 - b Kelmscott - proposal to change *Rules for Synods* regarding frequency of synod meetings
 - c Byford - proposal regarding presence of consistories, via delegates, at meetings of Classis
 - d Bedforddale - proposal on the revision of the *Church Order*
 - e Byford - proposal regarding Article 19 *Church Order*
 - f Bedforddale - proposal on the financial support for needy theological students
 - g P't Hart - Bible translation
 - h Byford - regarding the choice of Bible translation for use in the churches
 - i Launceston - proposal that Hobart be declared a 'house congregation'
 - j Reverend G van Rongen - request to use text of *Acts* of Synod
 - k Reverend G van Rongen - request for permission to use the text of the revised *Church Order*
 - l Reverend G van Rongen - regarding an omission in the text of *Certificate* of release of ministers
Reverend G van Rongen - some notes regarding:
 - m Report B on the ICRC by some of the deputies for contact with churches abroad
 - n Report of deputies for revision of the *Church Order*
 - o Bedforddale - proposal regarding ICRC
 - p Bedforddale - appeal regarding RCA
 - q PW Dekker - submission regarding the recognition of other churches
 - r Byford - proposal regarding Article 25 of the *Church Order*
 - s K. Heerema - regarding relationships/contacts with churches and ICRC
 - t Organ committee/organists of Armadale - singing of Genevan tunes
 - u R Eikelboom - regarding the ICRC
 - v Armadale - proposal regarding adoption of the *Church Order*
 - w W & AC Amoraal - regarding the ICRC
 - x A & M Schiebaan and M & W Eikelboom - contacts with churches and ICRC
 - y Armadale - proposal on Bible translations
 - z KA Wieske - notes responding to Reverend G van Rongen's notes on ICRC Report
 - aa M Vermeulen - request to receive *Acts* of Synod
9. Instructions
10. Reports by classis churches
11. Deputies' reports
 - a Archives and library of Synod
 - b Inspection of archives and library
 - c Treasurer of Synod
 - d Auditors for synodical treasury
 - e Relations with churches abroad
 - f Contact with the PCEA
 - g Bible translations

- h Training for the ministry (ad Articles 18,19 *Church Order*) and possibility for theological library
 - i Pulpit exchanges
 - j Revision of the *Church Order*
 - k Church visits
 - l Ad Articles 48, 76 *Church Order*
 - m Ad Article 66 *Church Order*
 - n Auditing the books ad Articles 18, 19 *Church Order*
 - o Examining sections of the *Book of Praise* (Ecumenical Creeds, Canons of Dort, Revision of Liturgical Forms, Hymn 1A) and ICRC Report on Ecumenical Creeds
 - p Correspondence with the EPCA
 - q Dialogue with the RCA
 - r Supplementary - PCEA
 - s Supplementary - Revision of the *Church Order* (3 pages)
 - t Supplementary - Relations with churches abroad
12. Budget of Synod
 13. Calculation of percentages of the churches' share of Synod costs
 14. Appointment of deputies
 15. Appointment of convening Church, and the place and time of next Synod
 16. Questions according to Article 41 of the *Church Order*
 17. Personal questions
 18. Adoption of *Acts*
 19. Approval of press release
 20. Censure according to Article 47 of the *Church Order*
 21. Closing of Synod

ARTICLE 12

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The moderamen proposes a division of work among four advisory committees. After a brief interval, permitting delegates to peruse the proposed arrangements, and some minor changes, the proposal is adopted as follows:

COMMITTEE 1

Members: Reverend W Huizinga - Convener
 Reverend A van Delden
 Elder H Olde

Agenda Items:

- 8e Byford - proposal regarding Article 19 *Church Order*
- 8f Bedfordale - proposal on the financial support for needy theological students
- 8t Organ Committee/organists of Armadale - singing of Genevan tunes
- 11e Relations with churches abroad - General activities
- 11f Contact with the PCEA
- 11h Training for the ministry (ad Articles 18,19 *Church Order*) and possibility for theological library
- 11n Auditing the books ad Articles 18,19 *Church Order*
- 11o Examining sections of the *Book of Praise* (Ecumenical Creeds, Canons

- of Dort, Revision of Liturgical Forms, Hymn 1A) and ICRC Report on Ecumenical Creeds
- 11p Correspondence with the EPCA
- 11r Supplementary - PCEA
- 11t Supplementary - Relations with churches abroad

COMMITTEE 2

Members: Reverend C Kleyn - Convener
 Reverend C Bosch
 Elder J Eikelboom
 Elder H Heys

Agenda Items:

- 8m Reverend van Rongen - regarding Report B on the ICRC by some of the deputies for contact with churches abroad
- 8o Bedfordale - proposal regarding ICRC
- 8q PW Dekker - submission regarding the recognition of other churches
- 8s K Heerema - regarding relationships/contacts with churches and ICRC
- 8u R Eikelboom - regarding the ICRC
- 8w W & AC Amoraal - regarding the ICRC
- 8x A & M Schiebaan and M & W Eikelboom - contacts with churches and ICRC
- 8z KA Wieske - notes responding to Reverend G van Rongen's notes on ICRC report
- 11e Relations with churches abroad
 - Indonesia
 - South Africa
 - Canada
 - Korea
 - The Netherlands
 - ICRC Report A
 - ICRC Report B
 - proposed amendment to ICRC Constitution
- 11i Pulpit exchanges
- 11l Ad Articles 48,76 *Church Order*
- 11m Ad Article 66 *Church Order*
- 11t Supplementary - Relations with churches abroad

COMMITTEE 3

Members: Reverend A Veldman - Convener
 Elder H Terpstra
 Elder J A Swarts
 Elder J Everts

Agenda Items:

- 8a Byford - proposal on the rules for correspondence to Synod
- 8b Kelmscott - proposal to change *Rules for Synods* regarding frequency of synod meetings
- 8c Byford - proposal regarding presence of consistories, via delegates, at meetings of Classis
- 8d Bedfordale - proposal on the revision of the *Church Order*
- 8i Launceston - proposal that Hobart be declared a 'house congregation'
- 8j Reverend G van Rongen - request for permission to use text of *Acts* of Synod

- 8k Reverend G van Rongen - request for permission to use the text of the revised *Church Order*
- 8l Reverend G van Rongen - regarding an omission in the text of *Certificate* of release of ministers
- 8n Reverend G van Rongen - notes regarding report of deputies for revision of *Church Order*
- 8q PW Dekker - submission regarding the recognition of other churches
- 8r Byford - proposal regarding Article 25 of the *Church Order*
- 8s K Heerema - regarding relationships/contacts with churches and ICRC
- 8v Armadale - proposal regarding adoption of the *Church Order*
- 8aa M Vermeulen - request to receive *Acts*
- 11a Archives and library of Synods
- 11b Inspection of archives and library
- 11c Treasurers of Synod
- 11d Auditors for synodical treasury
- 11e Relations with churches abroad - New Zealand
- 11j Revision of the *Church Order*
- 11s Supplementary - Revision of the *Church Order* (3 pages)
- 11t Supplementary - Relations with churches abroad
- 12 Budget of Synod
- 13 Calculation of percentages of the churches' share of Synod costs

COMMITTEE 4

Members: Reverend C Bouwman - Convener
 Elder J Bosveld
 Elder J Hidding

Agenda Items:

- 8g P 't Hart - Bible translation
- 8h Byford - regarding the choice of Bible translation for use in the churches
- 8p Bedforddale - appeal regarding RCA
- 8q PW Dekker - submission regarding the recognition of other churches
- 8s K Heerema - regarding relationships/contacts with churches and ICRC
- 8y Armadale - proposal on Bible translations
- 11e Relations with churches abroad
 - Ireland
 - Scotland
 - Singapore
 - other activities
- 11g Bible translations
- 11q Dialogue with the RCA
- 11t Supplementary - Relations with churches abroad

ARTICLE 13

Reverend S Bajema (from the Reformed Church of Canning) who is present in the church, is given permission to attend the open sessions of Synod as a visitor.

ARTICLE 14

ADJOURNMENT

Following some preparatory arrangements for tonight's session and for the planned visit by Reverend WP Gadsby (PCEA) on Tuesday 26 May, Synod is adjourned to permit the advisory committees to do their work.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 15

REOPENING

The meeting is reopened with the singing of Psalm 24: 1,2 and 3. The chairman extends a welcome to delegates and to the audience.

ARTICLE 16

ADDRESS BY DELEGATE FROM THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF THE NETHERLANDS

The chairman invites Reverend OJ Douma to address Synod, who does so and conveys greetings and best wishes in the Lord. He also passes on greetings from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, whose Synod he visited only recently (see Appendix N). The chairman thanks Reverend Douma for his words, and promises him to officially respond during Thursday evening's session (see Article 39).

ARTICLE 17

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO USE SYNOD'S ACTS

Committee 3 presents its report. After amendment it reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item: 8aa - letter from M Vermeulen, asking permission to use the daily *Acts* of Synod, so that he can make reports for the press of our sister churches.

ADMISSIBILITY:

Admissible: received prior to commencement of Synod.

CONSIDERATION:

Previous synods, for example, 1990 (Article 60), have given permission for the use of the *Acts*.

RECOMMENDATION:

Synod decide to accede to this request.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 18

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO USE SYNOD'S ACTS

Committee 3 presents its report. After amendment it reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8j - A letter from Reverend G van Rongen, requesting permission to use the *Acts* of Synod for his book of standing decisions of the FRCA.

ADMISSIBILITY:

Admissible: received prior to commencement of Synod.

CONSIDERATION:

Previous synods, for example, 1990 (Article 60), have given permission for the use of the *Acts*.

RECOMMENDATION:

Synod decide to accede to this request.

ADOPTED**ARTICLE 19****RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD****POSITION AND PRIVILEGES OF OTHER DELEGATES**

Committee 1 presents its report:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item: 11t - Supplementary - Churches Abroad (section B)

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Deputies received the following mandate:

“To request the DpRCA to recommend to the churches and the next Synod a definition of a visitor and an observer from other churches and a description of their status and privileges,” *Acts* 1990, Article 38, Recommendation 4.
2. Deputies observed the following:
 - a. Synod Armadale 1990 discussed the matter regarding a visitor/observer on two occasions - in relation with a request of the RCA that Synod receive an observer from their churches, *Acts* 1990, Article 38, Observation 1, and in relation with the status of Reverend J Sawyer who attended synod Armadale on a personal title, *Acts* 1990, Article 53, Recommendation 4. In both instances Synod made a decision ad hoc, since neither the rules for sister relations nor the rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact cover the status of a delegate from a federation of churches the FRCA have no official contact with.
 - b. As to delegates of one of the sister churches, deputies have recommended to receive them and to sit them as advisers, as much as possible, Report of deputies, B.3.1.8.
 - c. As to delegates of churches with which the FRCA have temporary ecclesiastical contact it has been decided to invite them and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor but no vote, *Acts* 1987, Article 82, Recommendation 5a. Synod Armadale amended the rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact as follows:

to invite delegates to each other’s assemblies and to accord such

delegates the privilege of the floor to convey greetings and allow them to briefly address the Assembly/Synod.

3. Deputies recommend:
 - a. To make the following distinction:
 - Advisory delegates from sister churches;
 - Observer delegates from churches that are in the process of becoming sister churches;
 - Visiting delegates from churches that want to come in contact with the FRCA.
 - b. To give these delegates the following privileges:
 - On any matter they may be permitted to speak when requested. This applies both to the floor of the Synod and the advisory committees.
 - Advisory delegates - They will be given the right to speak on matters that involve their churches, but they shall have no vote.
 - Observer delegates - They will be given the right to address Synod once for the purpose to pass on greetings and to tell something about their churches.
 - Visiting delegates - They will be given the right to attend Synod, yet without privileges. Such delegates will be offered normal Christian hospitality i.e. lodging and meals.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The present rules for sister relations state delegates from sister churches be received as advisers, while the rules recommended by deputies state that "the churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers." In both cases the privileges of an adviser are not clearly defined. This should be done, seeing that this Synod has received Reverend OJ Douma and elder DJ Van Wijnen from the sister churches in the Netherlands as advisers.
2. The three-fold distinction of deputies is clear concerning the advisory and visiting delegates. However, the category of observer delegates is unclear. Is this classification an umbrella under which all churches with which we have contacts or temporary ecclesiastical contact (TEC) are included, or does it exclude certain churches with which we have contact but with which sister relations seem remote in the foreseeable future? It would seem best to have a four-fold distinction, in which the difference between TEC and contacts is expressed. Reverend Fangidae from Timor who is at this Synod as delegate of the Evangelical Pilgrim Churches of Timor would then be treated according to the realistic level of contact we have at present.
3. The statement under "Recommendation b" of deputies ("To give these delegates...the advisory committees.") seems to hang loosely on its own. Does it apply to the "advisory delegates" only or to all the delegates? If the latter is correct, then this recommendation is questionable. This statement about privileges needs further definition.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Synod adopts a fourfold distinction of delegates from other churches, namely,
 - a. Delegates from sister churches;
 - b. Delegates from churches with whom we have TEC;
 - c. Delegates from churches with whom the FRCA have entered official contact;

- d. Delegates from churches which want to come into contact with the FRCA.
2. Synod specifies the privileges of these delegates as follows:
 - a. Delegates from sister churches:
 1. They will be given the privilege to address Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about our sister relations;
 2. They will sit as advisory members of Synod. As such they will be permitted to give advice when they request or are requested to do so. This applies both to the floor of Synod and the advisory committees;
 3. They will offered normal christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 - b. Delegates from churches with whom we have TEC:
 1. They will be given the privilege to address Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about our TEC;
 2. They will be permitted to speak when they request or are requested to do so, but only on matters specifically pertaining to the relations between the two bonds of churches. This applies both to the floor of Synod and the advisory committees;
 3. They will offered normal christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 - c. Delegates from churches with whom the FRCA have entered official contact:
 1. They will be given the privilege to address Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about our contacts;
 2. They will offered normal christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 - d. Delegates from churches which want to come into contact with the FRCA:
 1. They are invited to attend Synod, yet without any other privileges;
 2. They will offered normal christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 3. Synod decide to receive Reverend OJ Douma and elder DJ Van Wijnen as advisory members of Synod and to afford them privileges as applicable to delegates from sister churches and as defined above.
 4. Synod decide to welcome Reverend Fangidae as a delegate from churches with which the FRCA has entered official contacts and to afford him the applicable privileges as defined above.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 20

ADDRESS BY VISITING DELEGATE

Synod decides to invite Reverend E Fangidae to address Synod as a delegate from a church with whom our churches have official contact, on Wednesday 20th May, in the evening session. L van Burgel, as one of the deputies for churches abroad, has been found willing to reply to Reverend Fangidae (see Articles 31 and 39).

ARTICLE 21

CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OF MINISTERS BY THE CLASSIS

Committee 3 presents its report. Some discussion ensues on the admissibility of this proposal. The committee takes it back for further consideration (see Article 53).

ARTICLE 22

SYNOD ARCHIVES

Committee 3 presents its report. After discussion the committee takes the report back for further consideration (see Article 52).

ARTICLE 23

BEDFORDALE - APPEAL REGARDING RCA

Committee 4 presents its report. The discussion is interrupted when time for this session has run out (see Article 32).

ARTICLE 24

ADJOURNMENT

After the singing of Psalm 72:1 and 4 and thanksgiving prayer by Reverend C Bosch the chairman adjourns the meeting.

THIRD DAY - Wednesday, 20 May, 1992

Morning Session

ARTICLE 25

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 33:1,2 and 3, reading of Isaiah 40:12-24 and prayer. A welcome is made to all present.

ARTICLE 26

ANNOUNCEMENT

The chairman announces that a photo session will take place on Thursday 21 May at 4pm.

ARTICLE 27

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The Acts of 18 May are adopted.

ARTICLE 28

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting is adjourned to give the advisory committees time to meet.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 29

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 34:3 and 4. A word of welcome is spoken, also to the audience which is present in good number.

ARTICLE 30

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The Acts of 19 May are adopted.

ARTICLE 31

ADDRESS BY REVEREND E FANGIDAE

Reverend Fangidae from the Gereja Masehi Musyafir di Timor (GMMT) is invited to address Synod. He does so in an informative and encouraging speech. The text of this speech may be found in Appendix N (see also Articles 20 and 39).

ARTICLE 32

BEDFORDALE - APPEAL REGARDING RCA

The discussion is resumed (see Article 23). The proposal reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item: 8p - Bedforddale's appeal regarding Articles 42 and 102 of Synod 1990

ADMISSIBILITY:

The Church at Bedforddale is of the opinion that the decision made by the churches in Articles 42 and 102 of Synod 1990 is in conflict with the *Church Order*. Hence their appeal is admissible per Article 31 of the *Church Order*.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The Church of Bedforddale "requests" Synod "to declare that Synod 1990 contravened the *Church Order* (Articles 30 and 80) and the *Rules for Synods* by admitting the letter of the RCA as an agenda item."
2. The Church of Bedforddale defends this request with the following argumentation:
 - a. "Synod 1990's decision to admit the letter of the RCA, thereby adding this matter to the agenda, cannot be justified by referring to Article 30 *Church Order*, because the fundamental principle underlying Article 30 is that Synod may deal only with matters which have originated from the churches."

- b. "Synod 1990's decision to justify admittance of the RCA letter on the ground that 'past synods have requested that the RCA address themselves to Synod and not to local churches' can not be substantiated by reference to *Acts* 1985, Article 78, Ground 2., because:
 - i. *Acts* 1985, Article 78, Ground 2 does not prove that such a request was ever made (ie, the claim in Article 78, Ground 2, is not supported by reference to a particular document);
 - ii. even if such a request had been made, past synods could, in accordance with the *Church Order*, only make the request where contact with the RCA had already been made an agenda item (ie, where deputies had already been appointed to correspond with the RCA)."
 - c. "Synod 1990's claim that the RCA letter is admissible 'on the grounds of Article 30 *Church Order*, since it is not a new matter, but an old matter, which has occupied numerous past synods' is wrong." Bedfordale contends that "official correspondence came to an end in 1966. Thus the matter was closed." This leads to this conclusion: "Hence the decision to deal with this matter actually conflicts with Article 30 *Church Order*."
 - d. By taking up into the agenda an item that was "technically inadmissible" according to the *Rules for Synods*, "Synod 1990...has acted in a hierarchical manner, dealing with a matter which the churches did not request and committing the churches to a course of action the possibility of which was not contemplated by the churches beforehand."
 - e. Since there was already some contact between the church of Launceston and the RCA classis in Tasmania, "Synod should not have bypassed the Church of Launceston, but should rather have awaited the results of its work," in the expectation that Launceston "if, in its opinion, the local discussions were going satisfactorily" "could have come to Synod with a proposal to set up a dialogue at synod level."
 - f. Launceston's request for advice about its contacts with the RCA "did not constitute a ground for the contacts with the RCA becoming an agenda item at Synod" because Synod did not entertain Launceston's notes about the RCA.
3. Synod 1990 admitted the correspondence from the RCA on the basis of the following grounds:
- a. It is admissible on the grounds of Article 30 *Church Order* and past decisions. This letter is an official piece of correspondence from the RCA, through its deputies, to our Synod. It contains the decision by their 1988 Synod about our churches, ie, a request for a dialogue committee with us. It is properly addressed to Synod, according to Article 30 *Church Order*, because it is a matter which is of common concern to all the churches and which cannot be resolved in the minor assembly. Past synods have requested that the RCA address themselves to Synod and not the local churches.
 - b. It is admissible on the grounds of Article 30 *Church Order*, since it is not a new matter, but an old matter, which has occupied numerous past Synods.
 - c. Since the matter came to Synod through the DpRCA, by the *Rules for Synods* the letter is technically inadmissible; however, the RCA cannot be expected to be aware of these Rules."

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The first ground used by Synod 1990 to admit the correspondence from the RCA (mentioned above in Observation 3.i) makes reference to "Article 30 *Church Order*". Synod 1990 referred incorrectly to Article 30 *Church Order* as a ground for admission since "the fundamental principle underlying Article 30 *Church Order* is that Synod may deal only with matters which have originated from the churches." This is true even though, in the judgment of Synod, the matter is of common concern to all the churches.
2. In the past the synods of the FRCA have indicated that correspondence from the RCA should be addressed to the Free Reformed Churches together, ie, to their Synod. The following evidence suffices:
 - a. In a letter dated 5 December 1957, the Synod of the RCA makes reference to a letter sent earlier by the Free Reformed Church of Armadale. This letter reads in part as follows:

"...as was mentioned correctly in the reply from the church council of Armadale the situation has changed since November 1953 to the extent that in the meantime also a bond of Free Reformed Churches was established. For us this means that there is no longer any reason to continue correspondence with one local church. Therefore Dandenong Synod instructed us to write now to your Synod with the urgent request to continue the correspondence initiated by the Church of Armadale, and mutually to make it a matter of synodical correspondence" (cf Letter 13 in *The broken staff called Union*, pg 61).

The following Synod of the FRCA (1959) acceded to this request, and made the matter one of synodical correspondence. Subsequent synods followed this pattern.
 - b. Synod 1985 put on paper what was accepted practice in previous years (by mutual consent), viz,

"the Reformed Churches were notified in earlier correspondence that the matter of contact is one which concerns all the Free Reformed Churches, and is, therefore, a matter which should be dealt with by Synod" (Article 78, Ground 2).

Hence, Bedfordale's contention that Synod 1990 could not justifiably appeal to past decisions to admit the correspondence from the RCA is incorrect. On the basis of past correspondence, Synod 1990 could do nothing else.
3. Bedfordale's claim that the matter of the RCA had been finished in the past and hence any reopening of the contact ought to be considered a "new matter" is incorrect. The letters from previous FRCA synods to the RCA have repeatedly urged the RCA to answer the charges surrounding the Liberation of 1944. The RCA in 1965 decided:

"to discontinue under the present circumstances the correspondence with your churches until such a time that you change your attitude" (cf Letter 19 in *The broken staff called Union*, pg 67.)

To this letter the 1966 Synod of the FRCA responded with one more encouragement to the RCA to "take seriously the matters which we have put before you repeatedly" (cf Letter 20). The correspondence with the RCA was, then, not "closed"; by default on the part of the RCA this correspondence was simply discontinued. From the side of the FRCA the opportunity for contact was always there, as long as the RCA would take seriously the matters placed before them.

4. It is true that the correspondence from the RCA ended up at Synod 1990 in an unorthodox way (in as much as it came to Synod via deputies who had no mandate concerning the RCA). Yet, because contact with the RCA had been a Synod matter in the past, Synod 1990 did not act in an hierarchical manner in admitting this correspondence.
5. Since Synod 1990 was correct in accepting the correspondence from the RCA, any reference to Launceston is irrelevant to the argument.

RECOMMENDATION:

Not to accede to the request of the church at Bedfordale.

After three rounds of discussion it is voted upon and

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 33

ADJOURNMENT

Elder J Bosveld invites all present to sing Hymn 2:2 and 5, after which he leads in thanksgiving. The chairman adjourns Synod.

FOURTH DAY - Thursday, 21 May, 1992

Morning Session

ARTICLE 34

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 25:2,3 and 4. The chairman leads in prayer. He reads Isaiah 40 from verse 25, and extends a welcome to delegates. Some housekeeping items are attended to.

ARTICLE 35

PROCEDURE OF SYNOD

Some discussion takes place on the interpretation of Synod's rule (Article 10.B2) "Deputies are invited to committee meetings..." The chairman rules that "courtesy requires that committees invite deputies when their reports are discussed."

ARTICLE 36

ADJOURNMENT

Synod is adjourned until the evening session.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 37

REOPENING

Synod's meeting is reopened and we sing Psalm 25:4 and 6. The chairman speaks a word of welcome, also to the audience. He mentions that Synod is pleased to note the interest of the brothers and sisters who are present in the church.

ARTICLE 38

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 20 May are adopted. Synod decides to incorporate the texts of official addresses spoken at Synod in an appendix to the *Acts*. (appendix N)

ARTICLE 39

RESPONSES TO VISITING DELEGATES

The vice-chairman, Reverend A van Delden takes the chair, to permit the chairman to respond to the delegates of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (see Article 16). L van Burgel, in his capacity of secretary of deputies for churches abroad, responds to the address by Reverend E Fangidae (see Articles 20 and 31). The text of these responses may be found in Appendix N.

ARTICLE 40

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Committee 1 presents its report for a preliminary round of discussion (see Article 50).

ARTICLE 41

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

Committee 2 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda item(s) : 11e Deputies' Report - Section C
11t Deputies' Supplementary Report - Section C

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Deputies supplied the Canadian sister churches with copies of the 1990 *Acts* and invited them to send a delegate to this Synod;
2. Deputies wrote a letter to them regarding our concerns with the ICRC, but have received no reply;
3. Canadian deputies sent a letter of greeting and good wishes to this Synod. They also invite us to their Synod - which is to commence on 2 November, 1992 at Lincoln.

CONSIDERATION:

1. It is somewhat disappointing that there is no more information about these sister churches, for example, on their contacts with the OPC. This scarcity of contact activities may be due to the fact that they have had no Synod since 1989.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank and discharge deputies;
2. To appoint new deputies with the instruction to continue the sister relations under the adopted rules;
3. To urge deputies to try to give more content to the contact, in particular as regards matters mentioned in the rules for sister relations.

After one round of discussion the report is

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 42

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Committee 2 presents its report. After one round of discussion the committee takes it back for further consideration (see Article 79).

ARTICLE 43

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA

Committee 2 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda items : 11e Deputies' Report - Section D
11t - Deputies' Supplementary Report - Section D

OBSERVATIONS :

1. Synod 1990 appointed new deputies, instructing them "to intensify efforts to improve the exchange of information between our churches";
2. Deputies were advised of details of the PCK's 1990 General Assembly, and sent greetings;
3. The PCK Fraternal Relations Committee provided a summary in English of some of the important discussions and decisions at this General Assembly. A noteworthy decision was to "establish sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches". Similar information was provided for the PCK's 1991 General Assembly. From it we learn that the PCK appointed study committees on (1) "the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as to in particular the controversial issue of baptism by the Holy Spirit", and (2) "on divorce and remarriage";
4. A letter of greeting and good wishes was received from Korean deputies for this Synod;
5. Deputies sent copies of the 1990 Acts to PCK; and also wrote a letter about

the concerns our churches have with the ICRC, to which no reply has been received.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The available information shows that the PCK have remained faithful to the Word of God and to their adopted *Church Order*.
2. There is an improvement in communication received from the PCK and this is reason for thankfulness.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To appoint new deputies with the following instructions:
 - a. to continue efforts to improve the exchange of information between the churches;
 - b. to continue the sister relations under the adopted rules.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 44

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Committee 2 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda item : 11e Deputies' Report - Section G

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Since their report to Synod 1990, deputies wrote twice to these sister churches, first to inform them of the continuing sister church relationship under the adopted rules, and on the second occasion about our concerns with the ICRC, to which a response was received.
2. Deputies sent two copies of Synod 1990 *Acts* to FRCSA, and received two copies of *Acts* from their 1990 Synod;
3. An invitation was received to attend the 1992 FRCSA Synod, which was replied to by a letter of greetings;
4. Deputies give a useful summary of the FRCSA's 1990 Synod.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Deputies have fulfilled their mandate;
2. The available information shows that the FRCSA have remained faithful to the Word of God as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity and to the adopted *Church Order*.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To appoint new deputies with the instruction to continue the sister relations under the adopted rules.

ADOPTED.

ARTICLE 45
ADJOURNMENT

Reverend C Bouwman requests the singing of Psalm 66:1 and 2 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns the meeting.

FIFTH DAY - Friday, 22 May, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 46
REOPENING

The chairman invites Synod to sing Psalm 26:1,2 and 5. He reads from Isaiah 41:1-13 and leads in prayer. In his opening word he welcomes the delegates, reflects for a moment on what we read from God's Word and encourages Synod to cling to the promise that our faithful God will be with us. Reverend C Kleyn requests that Synod go into closed session to discuss an important matter of personal nature.

ARTICLE 47
CLOSED SESSION

Synod decides to meet in closed session. The meeting is adjourned.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 48
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 27:1 and 6.

The chairman reads a prepared statement, as follows:

"This morning Synod in a closed session has dealt with a point of order. It has happened during a few evening sessions that brothers delegates addressing certain issues should have phrased their words more carefully. This morning we have reminded one another of the fact that, although the discussion in Synod requires candidness, we should try to convince one another out of love for the truth without hurting or condemning one another. It was good to have this discussion, and as delegates we hope that we may also reap the fruits in days to come."

ARTICLE 49
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 21 May are adopted.

ARTICLE 50

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Committee 1 presents its amended report (see Article 40).

MATERIAL:

Agenda items : 8e, 8f, 11h

ADMISSIBILITY:

1. Agenda items 8e and 8f are submissions from the churches concerning the report of deputies.
2. Item 11h is the report of the deputies appointed by Synod.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The deputies for Training for the Ministry submit their report (cf. Appendices).
2. A letter was received from Byford requesting Synod to remove from the *Rules and Regulations* for the support of Needy Students (Article 19 of the *Church Order*) the references to married students, and by a special decision to allow for the possibility for married students to receive support from the churches. They make the following observations:
 - a. A historical overview of the interpretation of Article 19 shows that this article has been understood as a reference to young men.
 - b. Byford quotes several respected commentators of the *Church Order* to confirm their interpretation of Article 19.
 - c. Synod 1985 adopted *Rules and Regulations* which allowed for the support of married students, without an in-depth study being made of the intent of this Article.
 - d. The consistory proposes that Synod amend the *Rules and Regulations* as follows:
 - i. Delete the second sentence of Article 3 of the *Regulations*, to wit: "Any additional aid for a married student will be provided on the same basis".
 - ii. Delete Articles 7 and 9, to wit: "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" and "If a student married 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".
 - iii. The numbering of the Articles shall be amended accordingly.
 - iv. Amend the second sentence of Article 12 to read as follows: "Deputies will take into account the support from his parents or from any other source".
(This sentences replaces the current "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.")
 - v. Delete Point 4 of the *Rules* for the fund for the support of needy students.
 - vi. Renumber Point 5 to become point 4, with the following reading:

“The income of the student’s parents shall be assessed annually by means of a ‘means test’, before the student can be supported by FSNS”.

- vii. Renumber Point 9 to become point 8, with the following reading: “An agreement between deputies and the student’s parents shall be completed and signed before financial aid can be given by FSNS”.
- viii. The numbering of the other points concerned shall be amended accordingly.

- e. The consistory also proposes that Synod will make a special decision regarding married men who want to train for the ministry of the Word. However, they are of the opinion that the proposed decision cannot be included in the *Rules and Regulations*, but must be taken by Synod as a separate decision. This in order to prevent the return of an incorrect interpretation of Article 19 of the *Church Order*.

They propose that Synod makes the following decision:

Although Article 19 of the *Church Order* must be understood as regarding unmarried young men, the deputies for the Training of the Ministry are authorised to consult the churches if a married brother applies for financial aid not only for his theological studies at one of the theological institutions recognised by our churches, but also for the needs of his family.

If the churches agree to this request and promise sufficient financial aid in such a case, the deputies for the Training for the Ministry are mandated to render this support from these special funds, thereby acting along the lines of the *Rules and Regulations*.

- 3. The Church of Bedfordale wishes to incorporate into the *Rules and Regulations* for Support of Needy Students a provision for the local church from which the student comes prior to the commencement of his studies to assume more responsibility in encouraging and supporting theological students. They put forward the following observations:
 - a. Historically, it was the task of the local church to fulfil this Article of the *Church Order*. Only gradually did it become the responsibility of the classis or synod.
 - b. The local church is in the best position to stimulate young people for the ministry, and to determine whether a young man is suitable for the ministry. The local congregation from which he comes can also be more involved in the financial contribution, in prayer and in maintaining contact.
 - c. The church proposes:
 - i. To include in the *Rules and Regulations* a provision that the church, to which the eligible student belongs when he begins his studies, has secondary responsibility to provide support, after the student’s family, and before the federation of churches.
 - ii. To include in the *Rules and Regulations* a provision that deputies, when assessing the individual churches for financial support, must take into account the financial responsibility that the local churches have already assumed in respect of student support.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The deputies have maintained correspondence with the Hamilton Theological College and have published relevant news about the Training for the Ministry.
2. The deputies recommend that the Synod request the churches to forward \$35.00 per communicant member as of the 1st July, 1992. Synod 1987 requested the churches to pay \$30.00 per c.m.. Synod 1990 increased this to \$35.00. Although deputies did not recommend an increase, it seems reasonable to increase this amount to \$37.50 due to the increase in cost of living.
3. Contact with the Theological University in Kampen and the Theological Seminary of our sister churches in Korea has been maintained. Although Kampen no longer requires our financial assistance, they do solicit our prayers. The seminary in Korea (and students) still need financial support.
4. Concerning the possibility for an Australian based theological training, there are no new developments which would necessitate reevaluation of the situation. Concerning the housing of books for a future theological seminary, the deputies have made space available in their homes. It seems better to try to have theological books housed in a central, accessible place, e.g. the library of the John Calvin Senior High School, in Armadale, where these books can be put to the maximum use. Also, it would be good to make some efforts in assembling a library, e.g. by asking for donations of theological books.
5. The deputies have relayed all relevant information about the study debts of Dutch candidates to the Dutch deputies for relations with churches abroad. No further developments can be reported.
6. Financial support was extended to one student using the present *Rules and Regulations*. Concerning these *Rules and Regulations*, the church of Bedfordale proposes deletions as observed above. It is agreed that the local congregations have a prior responsibility and privilege in encouraging and supporting needy theological students and are best able to do this. The *Church Order* (Article 19) states "the churches shall encourage members so that there will be students of theology." The reference to "members" indicates involvement at the grassroots' level. The reference to "churches" does not exclude but includes the responsibility of the local churches, as history shows. Furthermore, Synod 1972, (Article 12, sub 2) reads: "Requests for support will be assessed by deputies, after they have asked advice from the church council of the congregation from which the student came originally." Thus the proposal of Bedfordale should be incorporated into the *Rules and Regulations*.
7. Deputies request clarification on Article 7 of the *Regulations* for the Financial Aid to Students as to what constitutes exceptional cases. The church of Byford proposes that this (and all other references to the support of married students) be deleted.
 - a. The church of Byford gives extensive evidence that the emphasis of this article is to give support to young men. But while it is shown that the emphasis is to support young men, it has not been shown from the history of this Article that young men cannot be married. Here we detect a measure of confusion in Byford's proposal, wherein they associate young men as being single, and older men as being married. This does not always hold true. Young men who have finished the initial step of their training have reached a marriageable age. (Normally, a young man who has obtained his B.A. degree will be around

the age of 21 years.) It is not reasonable to expect all young men who wish to train for the ministry to refrain from marrying, however desirable it would be for them to remain single during the course of their studies. This is especially true when this would entail leaving a girlfriend in Australia for 4 years, or when this would involve having a couple go to Canada together where they have no family. Therefore provision should be made in the *Rules and Regulations* for the possible support of young men who marry prior to their theological training.

- b. Byford's historical overview correctly shows that the church has emphasised the training of younger men, for obvious reasons. However, they go further to state that Article 19, *Church Order* refers to young men ONLY. It is this contention that needs to be addressed. Byford admits "that Article 19, *Church Order* does not mention any specific age" of the "students of theology". They further concede that this could have led the 1972 Synod (*Acts*, Article 12) to abstain from specifying age-qualifications. History can also be used, e.g. to show how at certain times, when there was a severe shortage of ministers, mature students benefited the churches greatly. Also, the principles of *Church Order* come from Scripture. God in his wisdom did not see fit to choose only young men for the special office (e.g. Jesus chose mature, married men; since Jesus Himself was only in his thirties when He began his public ministry, many questioned his credentials; Paul specifically had to encourage Timothy, telling him not to allow anyone to reject him owing to his youth). On the basis of Scripture and the *Church Order* one can not conclude that Article 19 refers to young men ONLY.

For these reasons the proposal of Byford should not be accepted; rather, the request of the deputies to define "exceptional cases" should be fulfilled.

Thus far several factors have been listed which help to define "exceptional cases".

8. The deputies request Synod to decide whether the churches are morally bound to support the family of a married student in light of the statements of previous deputies.
 - a. The previous deputies have written the following: "We wish to make full allowance for your exceptional circumstances. ...This must not be interpreted as anything less than positive encouragement in your considerations of the course to be followed." The phrase of the deputies "exceptional circumstances" is parallel to the phrase "exceptional cases" in Regulation 7, which is a reference to the support of the student's family.
 - b. The deputies have also stated "the churches have a general obligation to provide financial support.... We should qualify this to the extent that the support would be of a supplementary nature."
From these quotes it becomes clear that the previous deputies have morally obliged the churches to support this student and his family.
9. The deputies request an emendation of Rule 7 so that the support scheme is not based upon the TEAS. The reason for this emendation is that with the TEAS support is based only upon income and not upon the value of personal assets. The deputies wish to have support based upon income and assets (eg. students who own a house should use this asset base as part of their funding.) Furthermore, the deputies request that support be based upon gross income

and reasonable liabilities rather than upon taxable income. The deputies would like to determine the income and the liabilities (deductions) rather than use the standard of the government which may be inequitable in the case of needy students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide:

1. to continue correspondence with both Hamilton and Kampen in order to maintain contact and to obtain information;
2. to continue our combined support for the Theological College of the CanRC at Hamilton, and to request the churches to forward \$37.50 per communicant member annually for this cause, starting 1st July 1992;
3. to publish relevant news about the training for the ministry so that church members understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
4. to remain alert to the need and possibility to establish an Australian based theological training, and to maintain facilities to house theological books for possible library in the future;
5. to agree with the appeal of Bedfordale and add their proposal to the end of Article 3 of the *Regulations*, to read:
The church to which the eligible student belongs when he begins his studies has secondary responsibility to provide support, after the student's family and before the federation of churches. The deputies, when assessing the churches, must take into account the financial commitments which the local churches have assumed with respect to the support of needy students;
6. not to accept the proposal of Byford;
7. to give some clarification to the phrase "exceptional cases" with the following possibilities:
 - a. Exceptional shortage of ministers; and/or
 - b. Exceptional abilities of a mature and married man, which abilities the local, home congregation has recognised and encouraged.
 - c. Unforeseen circumstances, e.g. calamities strikes the family of a married theological student.
8. that the churches are morally bound to give supplemental support to the student in question and his family in light of the commitments made by previous deputies;
9. to agree with the change proposed by the deputies concerning point 7 of the *Rules* for the Fund for the Support of Needy Students (pg. 395 *Acts* 1990) to read:
The basis for applying the 'means' test referred to in Articles 5 and 6 will be the student's gross income together with reasonable assets;
10. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College.
 - b. to encourage the churches to hold regular collections for the Theological Seminary in Pusan.
 - c. continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and to obtain information.
 - d. publish relevant information about the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students.

- e. continue to arrange the support of theological Students whenever required in accordance with Article 19 CO.
- f. to monitor the need for establishing theological training in Australia.
- g. to try to house theological books in a central, accessible place where they meanwhile can be put to maximum use; also to make efforts to assemble theological books, e.g. by asking for donations.

After three rounds of discussion the report is

ADOPTED

The *Rules and Regulations* referred to in this Article may be found in Appendix L.

ARTICLE 51 PULPIT EXCHANGES

Committee 2 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda Item: 11.i - Letter from the church of Albany reporting on Pulpit Exchanges

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Albany advises that the visits to and from Tasmania were made in accordance with the adopted roster.
2. Albany observes that the exchanges for the minister of Albany to Perth and vice versa as arranged by Synod Armadale 1990 have ceased. As from 1991 Reverend Veldman has joined in with the normal pulpit exchanges as they have been arranged for the ministers of the metro area.
3. Albany recommends to Synod that pulpit exchanges between Albany and the Metro area be no longer included in the roster set by Synod.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. It is still advantageous for the well-being of the bond of Churches to have pulpit exchanges particularly for those churches and ministers who reside in comparative geographic isolation.
2. Seeing there is sufficient ministerial contact between the ministers of the Metro area and Albany it should no longer be necessary for Synod to arrange pulpit exchanges between them.
3. Pulpit exchanges made by the ministers of the West in the Tasmanian churches should be combined with church visitation.
4. In light of Consideration 1 (above) it is advisable that the Tasmanian minister(s) have an annual pulpit exchange to the Metro area / Albany area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the Church of Albany for coordinating and monitoring the roster of pulpit exchanges.
2. To appoint a church to coordinate and monitor the roster of pulpit exchanges and church visitation listed below.
3. To accept the following schedule of pulpit exchanges to be coordinating with Church visitations and synods wherever possible.

Minister of	1992	1993	1994
Albany	Laun/Legana		
Byford		Laun/Legana	
Kelmscott			Laun/Legana
Launceston		Metro/Albany	Metro
Legana	Metro	Metro/Albany	Metro

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 52 SYNOD ARCHIVES

Committee 3 presents its amended report (see Article 22).

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11a: Synod archives

11b: Supervision of the archives and library

OBSERVATIONS:

1. In accordance with the recommendation of Synod 1990 the archive documents are now placed in labelled envelopes that are sealed after inspection.
2. The items of Synod 1990 were placed in the archives.
3. The librarian advises that putting the archive documents on to microfilm would cost up to \$1,000, whilst a secondhand microfiche projector can be purchased for \$100. An alternative method of safeguarding them would be to photocopy them.
4. Also in accordance with the instructions, a subject index of the archives' contents has been compiled.
5. All archives are now stored in a fireproof filing cabinet.
6. The church of Byford reports that the archives and library were inspected and were found to be in good order.
7. Notwithstanding the report of Byford it appears that the list of items placed in the Archives of the 1990 Synod does not include the outgoing correspondence of 1990 Synod nor any correspondence of the various deputies.
8. The librarian reports the purchase of some Synod *Acts* for placement in the library. There is no mention of any other books or periodicals.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. It appears that the archives are well cared for and secured.
2. The microfilm option provides a secure backup, but does not provide a hard copy for borrowers. Costs of microfilm and photocopying are comparable and not prohibitive.
3. The churches had decided in Synod Armadale 1956 "to urge the respective synodical deputies, after they have obtained their discharge from Synod, to hand over to the archives of Synod any documents that are in their keeping, as far as their contents have been dealt with." (Article 48b, sub 3)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the church of Bedforddale, and especially brother J Numan, for the excellent care of the archives and library, and to discharge them.
2. to instruct deputies appointed for the care of the archives and library of Synod to:
 - a. preserve all faint and flimsy documents by photocopying;
 - b. make and maintain a microfilm record of the archives;
 - c. acquire all the correspondence and other relevant material from past deputies, and
 - d. ensure that borrowers of documents are given photocopies, so that the originals remain in the archives.
3. include the current rules for archivist in these *Acts* (see appendix K).

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 53

CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OF MINISTER BY THE CLASSIS

Committee 3 presents its amended report (see Article 21).

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.1 - A letter from Reverend G van Rongen regarding the *Certificate* of release of a minister by the classis.

ADMISSIBILITY:

The issue is not a new matter which ought to be presented via one of the churches, but is no more than a simple and necessary correction to Form 6 - *Certificate* of release of minister by the classis.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Reverend G van Rongen alerts Synod to an omission in the *Certificate* of release of minister by the classis, as published in the *Acts* of the 1987 and 1990 Synods (pages K-2, and 369 respectively).
2. Synod 1987 did not adopt any ecclesiastical ordinances, Article 72. The present text of the *Certificate* of release of minister by the classis was adopted by Synod 1990, Article 148.
3. The Form as published on page 369 of *Acts* Synod 1990 is ambiguous in that it does not clearly differentiate between the decisions of the consistory of the local church and of the classis church.
4. The *Certificate* in its current form lacks a statement of release by the consistory of the classis church.

CONSIDERATION:

1. The *Certificate* in its presents form needs to be amended.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. To adopt the reconstructed text as provided by Reverend G van Rongen, which reads as follows:

FORM 6 - CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OF MINISTER (by classis)

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 has accepted the call extended to him by the, and that the consistory of The Free Reformed Church of has, at its meeting held on (date), decided to 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

At its meeting held on (date) this classis church has decided to:

1. grant the Reverend an honourable discharge from his duties within the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia;
2. declare that during the period of his ministry within The Free Reformed Churches of Australia 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 Release* 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 release 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 commend 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 church which he may now begin to serve.

For the Classis Church:

Chairman:.....

Clerk:.....

2. To thank Reverend G van Rongen for bringing this omission to the attention of Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 54

**PROPOSAL THAT HOBART BE DECLARED A 'HOUSE
CONGREGATION'**

Committee 3 presents its report. After one round of discussion the Committee takes it back for further consideration (see Article 145).

ARTICLE 55

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

INDONESIA

Committee 2 presents its report. After one round of discussion the committee takes it back for further consideration (see Article 59).

ARTICLE 56

ADJOURNMENT

Reverend van Delden asks us to sing Psalm 130:2 and 4, after which he leads in prayer. Synod is adjourned.

SIXTH DAY - Saturday, 23 May, 1992

Morning Session

ARTICLE 57

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 28:4 and 5, the reading of Isaiah 41:14-20 and prayer. Some domestic matters are dealt with.

ARTICLE 58

REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 4 presents its report (see Articles 67 and 78). The discussion is adjourned.

ARTICLE 59

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

INDONESIA

Committee 2 presents its amended report again (see Article 55). After further amendment it reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item(s) : 11e Deputies' Report - Section F
11t - Deputies' Supplementary Report - Section F

OBSERVATION(S):

1. Deputies were instructed:
 - a. To continue the sister relations with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (RCSTS) in accordance with the adopted rules;
 - b. To continue contact with the RCSTS by correspondence and, where possible, by visits;
 - c. To seek contact with the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor (GMMT) to see whether we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according to our confessions;
 - d. To gather information about the progress of the reformed activities of the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia.
2. Deputies have had various contacts with the Reformed Churches of Sumba Timor Savu (RCSTS) and the missionary working there, Reverend Pol.
3. Deputies extended invitations to Reverend Doko (RCSTS) and Mr Johnson Dethan (a theological student and a member of the GMMT) to visit our churches, to have an opportunity to study English and receive further theologi-

cal orientation in Australia. They considered that this would enable our churches to strengthen the cause of the Reformed faith in Timor.

4. Deputies have received a communication from Reverend AJ Pol in Sumba, from which it is clear that consideration is being given to send Johnson Dethan to the Hamilton Theological College for further studies. In his address to Synod Reverend Fangidae requested the Churches to consider sponsoring future studies of Johnson in Hamilton.
5. Deputies received information that Reverend Fangidae from the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor was intending to visit Australia during May. The opportunity was taken to invite Reverend Fangidae to visit the Free Reformed Churches.
6. Deputies recommend that although there is no formal contact between the FRCA and the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches, Synod consider allowing Reverend Fangidae the floor of Synod to express a word of greeting and give him an opportunity to introduce the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Churches in Timor.
7. At the request of deputies, C De Man attended a conference of Reformed Churches in Indonesia. He was able to take a letter of greeting. His report on the conference is included as an appendix to deputies' Report.
8. Deputies were unable to fulfil their mandate regarding the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia.
9. The Synod of RCSTS was postponed to the end of August 1992. Deputies have delegated C de Man and H Swarts to attend.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Fruitful contact has continued with the RCSTS.
2. There is still insufficient concrete information regarding the GMMT which would enable us to recognise them as true and faithful churches. The relationship between these churches and the RCSTS should continue to receive the attention of deputies as the FRCA cannot recognise the GMMT until the RCSTS and GMMT have themselves done so mutually.
3. In Articles 19 and 20 of these *Acts*, this Synod has recognised that there is a sufficient degree of contact between the FRCA and the GMMT to give Reverend Fangidae the privilege of addressing Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about the churches.
4. On the basis of the information received and the request made there is reason to recommend further support of student Johnson depending on the progress he makes in his studies in the coming months.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide:

1. to approve deputies action to invite student Johnson Dethan from the Musyafir Churches in Timor and Reverend Doko from the RCSTS to visit Australia for orientation and training;
2. to continue sister relations with the RCSTS in accordance with the adopted rules;
3. to continue contact with the Musyafir churches by visits if possible;
4. to instruct deputies to continue their search for information regarding the

Musyafir Churches in Timor to see if we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according to our confessions;

5. to instruct deputies to gather information about the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia;
6. to authorise deputies to give further support to student Johnson, enabling him to pursue his studies in Hamilton, provided deputies can recommend this after further investigation.
7. to authorise deputies to encourage the individual churches to provide the financial and other support which may be required for deputies to carry out Recommendations 1 and 6.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 60 ADJOURNMENT

The chairman speaks a few words of thankfulness for what could be done in the past week. He expresses the wish that we may all be encouraged by the preaching of God's Word on Sunday.

Elder J Eikelboom requests the singing of Psalm 105:1 and 3, after which he leads in thanksgiving. The chairman adjourns the meeting.

SEVENTH DAY - Monday, 25 May, 1992 Morning Session

ARTICLE 61 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 30:1 and 2, the reading of Isaiah 42:1-9 and prayer.

The chairman welcomes the brothers, refreshed and strengthened by the preaching yesterday. Synod may continue its work, also during this new week.

The chairman mentions that a request has been made to permit Reverend WP Gadsby from the PCEA, who will be visiting Synod today, to attend the advisory committee dealing with the PCEA agenda items. After some discussion the chairman rules that permission will not be given.

Some housekeeping items are attended to.

ARTICLE 62 ADJOURNMENT

Synod adjourns to give the committees time to continue their work.

ARTICLE 63

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 31:12,13 and 15, and prayer.

ARTICLE 64

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 22 May 1992 are adopted.

ARTICLE 65

PROCEDURE OF SYNOD

A proposal is tabled by elder H Olde, seconded by Reverend C Bosch, as follows:

PROPOSAL:

Synod has decided on the position and privileges of delegates from churches with whom we have entered into contact. These do not allow Reverend WP Gadsby from the PCEA the privilege to answer questions from the floor of Synod.

A special ruling therefore needs to be made by Synod in order to afford this extraordinary privilege.

This proposal asks Synod to decide to do so.

GROUNDS:

1. The rules do not include this and thus this special ruling is needed;
2. This would make Reverend Gadsby's delegation more worthwhile with respect to our contacts on the synodical level;
3. If deputies appointed by previous Synod have this privilege, so should Synod. After two rounds of discussion it is

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 66

REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER

Committee 3 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the committee takes it back for further consideration (see Articles 83, 113).

ARTICLE 67

REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 4 presents its amended report (see Articles 58 and 78). During the discussion the chairman rules that the Minutes of deputies' meetings may not be quoted by the committee in defence of its report. The committee once again takes its report back.

ARTICLE 68
ADJOURNMENT

We sing Psalm 48:3 and 4, elder J Everts leads in thanksgiving and the chairman adjourns Synod.

EIGHTH DAY - Tuesday, 26 May, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 69
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 32:1 and 3, the reading of Isaiah 43:1-7 and prayer. The chairman welcomes all brothers, in particular Reverend WP Gadsby from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, who is present as a delegate for today's programme. It is decided to consider at lunchtime whether Synod shall have an open session during this afternoon.

ARTICLE 70
ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourns Synod.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 71
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 33:5 and 6.

ARTICLE 72
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Committee 1 presents its report. When the chairman invites Reverend WP Gadsby to answer questions from the floor, Reverend A van Delden, in a point of order, puts the view that Synod is transgressing its own rules in permitting Reverend WP Gadsby to speak. The chairman rules that Synod's decision, made yesterday, stands. Reverend WP Gadsby replies to a number of questions. The discussion is briefly interrupted by a tea break. After amendment by the committee the report reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item(s) : 11f, 11r, 11t Section E

ADMISSIBILITY:

1. According to Article 48 of the *Church Order*, deputies of Synod are to submit a report to the following Synod.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Synod 1990 gave to deputies the following mandate (*Acts* 1990, Article 77, Recommendation 5):
 - ...to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ
and in the light of this goal:
 - a. to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987, viz, the supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant;
In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'. All this should be done in the light of God's Word giving heed to the complete doctrine of salvation;
 - b. to exchange visitors at deputy and synodical level;
 - c. to use the current rules for sister churches in the discussions leading toward mutual recognition as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ."
2. In addition to their report the deputies have submitted the position paper delivered to the deputies of the PCEA. Further correspondence between the deputies of the churches was submitted in a supplementary report (cf the Appendices for these reports).
3. It is noted that that the RCN is sending delegates to the PCEA in the latter part of this year.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Deputies have followed their mandate by addressing the areas of concern. They have given the deputies of the PCEA a position paper on the supervision of the Lord's table and the practice of pulpit exchanges in April 1991, as well as a discussion paper on children in the covenant, as stipulated in their mandate.
2. The deputies of the PCEA have responded to the position paper on the supervision of the Lord's supper, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the doctrine of the church as follows:
 - a. Regarding the supervision of the Lord's table, they write that "such an extreme position has never characterized those churches which adhere to the Westminster Standards." Nor have they been convinced that this is required of them by the arguments of our deputies.
 - b. Regarding pulpit exchanges with ministers outside of their federation, the PCEA allow faithful, gifted men endowed with the Holy Spirit to preach though they do not belong to their federation or sister churches. The deputies of the PCEA have not been convinced by the paper of our deputies that such a practice disagrees with the Word of God.
 - c. Regarding the doctrine of the Church, the deputies of PCEA do not agree with the statement of our deputies that the PCEA is "sick with the ailment of pluriformity." They wonder "whether there is in [our] own position a tendency to the schismatic."
It is thus apparent that there is a substantial difference between the views of our deputies and those of the PCEA. Our deputies should continue to pursue the contacts in line with the decisions and considera-

tions of the 1987 and 1990 Synods in order to make progress towards the goal set out, i.e. recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The deputies have attended the 1991 Synod of the PCEA, and have addressed the matters spoken of above. That only one response has come from the deputies of the PCEA to the position paper of our deputies would indicate that the discussion on these points is unfinished and needs more time.
4. According to the conclusion of the deputies address to the Synod of the PCEA, they “thankfully conclude that there is in the PCEA a desire to serve God according to His Word,” although sick with pluriformity.
5. It is noted that the term “pluriformity” causes some misconceptions on the part of the PCEA. It might therefore be advisable to replace this word with “interdenominationalism,” a synonymous term which does not carry with it the connotations of the historic controversy in the Netherlands in the earlier part of this century.
6. In a letter to our deputies, the deputies of the RCN have assured us that “as far as contact with churches in a country where the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands have a sister-church, there is always the rule applied that consultation with the sister-church takes place.” It is to be trusted that the RCN will indeed maintain this good rule.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the deputies for the work done, to discharge them and to appoint new deputies.
2. To renew the mandate as follows:
 - To work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the light of this goal:
 - a. to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987, viz, the supervision of the Lord’s table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant. In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding interdenominationalism. All this should be done in the light of God’s Word giving heed to the complete doctrine of salvation;
 - b. to continue this discussions with the PCEA mindful of the considerations of Synod 1990 (*Acts* , Article 77);
 - c. to exchange visitors at deputy and synodical level;
 - d. to use the current rules for sister churches in the discussions leading toward mutual recognition as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - e. to inform the RCN (through the deputies for correspondence with churches abroad) of our decision concerning the PCEA (cf. Consideration 6).

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 73
ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourns Synod.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 74
REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod and asks us to sing Psalm 34:6 and 7. A welcome is extended to all present.

ARTICLE 75
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 25 May 1992 are adopted.

ARTICLE 76
ADDRESS OF REVEREND WP GADSBY

The chairman invites Reverend WP Gadsby, of the PCEA, to address Synod. He does so, conveys the greetings from their churches, and presents a brief history of the PCEA in this country. The text of this address is appended to these *Acts* (Appendix N).

ARTICLE 77
RESPONSE TO REVEREND WP GADSBY

Reverend C Bouwman, on behalf of Synod, responds to Reverend Gadsby.

ARTICLE 78
REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 4 presents its amended report (see Articles 58 and 67). After further amendment it reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item: 11q

ADMISSIBILITY:

1. In as much as Synod 1990 mandated deputies to report to the next Synod, must deputies' report be considered by Synod 1992.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The mandate given by Synod 1990 to deputies for contact with the RCA was basically to discuss with deputies from the RCA the conditions for reunion of the two churches, viz,

- a. the recognition from the side of the RCA that the Liberation was a work of God, and
 - b. the RCA was to break all correspondence with the RCN(S).
2. Because the RCA had in 1982 broken official ecclesiastical correspondence with the RCN(S), deputies were able to concentrate their discussions on whether the Liberation of 1944 was a work of God.
 3. Deputies have done an enormous amount of work in preparing an English translation of the documents relevant to the Liberation of 1944 and the progress of the contact with the RCA.
 4. Our deputies report that deputies from the RCA studied the matters seriously and recognized a number of the wrongs:
 "Deputies report with thankfulness that RCA deputies were found most willing to study the matters seriously. A good understanding regarding the legitimacy of the Liberation developed. RCA deputies were convinced that the synodical/doctrinal pronouncements of 1942 binding all office bearers to the one point of view, as opposed to the two views of 1905, were ill conceived. They agree that the content of these bindings cannot be proved from Scripture and that these in fact went beyond Scripture and the confessions. They are also convinced that in the suspension and deposition of office bearers and the summary dismissal of appeals, Synod(s) acted in an hierarchical manner and thus violated the Reformed *Church Order*. In setting its own agenda, as well as extending its 'life' beyond what was allowed by the accepted rules, the Synod acted unlawfully."
 5. Our deputies report that their counter-parts from the RCA had criticism of the way the past Synods of their churches handled things:
 "RCA deputies are also of the opinion that past Synods of their churches should have acted in a more consequential manner. While they, on principle, did not take over the synodical bindings, they entered into a full sister church relationship with the RCN(S) while that federation maintained those bindings.
 "RCA deputies agree that thus there was an inherent conflict in the RCA's decision to offer a sister relation to both the RCN(S) as well as the RCN.... Justice required that before the RCA offered a sister church relationship to the RCN(S) they should have addressed the matter of the liberation in a judicial manner."
 6. Our deputies feel that developments since the 1960s may not be forgotten by ourselves:
 "Your deputies note that...the FRCA may...not adopt an a-historical position. We must be grateful that in 1982 the RCA have completely terminated all relations with the RCN(S), breaking the sister church relationship which they had."
 Our deputies inform Synod that the RCA continue to make appeals to the RCN(S),
 "urging the RCN(S) to return from an unscriptural, anticonfessional path. They have given a biblical and confessional critique of the (synodical) reports 'God with Us' as well as its 'Sequel' and they have voiced their strong disapproval of the RCN(S)'s stand on homosexuality."
 7. Deputies make the following recommendation:
 "that Synod appoint new deputies to continue the contact with the RCA in order to discuss relevant issues (e.g. the RCA's 1991 'Word and Spirit' decision) that are of concern to us today."

Our deputies offer the following grounds:

- a. the dialogue we have had has proved to be fruitful;
- b. deputies RCA have accepted the conclusions as stated (above);
- c. there is thus good reason to continue the contact for the FRCA must be ready to assist those who desire to be truly reformed. As long as the door is open we must use the opportunity [for] confessional ecumenicity."

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The enormous amount of work done by deputies in having documents relevant to the developments in 1944 translated into English and made available to the general public deserves special commendation.
2. Synod 1990 spoke in line with the historic stand of FRCA Synod's in the 1950s and 1960s when Synod 1990 "declined the request of the RCA to receive...an observer" on the ground that "it is premature to speak about any real progress in contacts until the obstacle which separated us in the past and which our past Synods have addressed is removed. The FRCA continues to be grieved because of the issues that divide us. These must be addressed before we can receive a representative of your churches" (Article 38, Recommendation 3).
3. In light of the fact that RCA deputies knew basically nothing about the events surrounding the Liberation of 1944, it is to be appreciated that these deputies recognised particular wrongs on the part of Synod 1942/43, and even acknowledged the legitimacy of the Liberation.
4. The report of the deputies is to be submitted to the coming Synod of the RCA. The Reformed Churches of Australia as a whole will now have to indicate whether they will support the stand taken by their deputies and recognize the Liberation as a work of God.
5. Deputies remind Synod of the fact that the RCA had "definitely broken all official ties with the RCN(S) (except that they exchange letters with them on matters of concern)." This allowed our deputies to make the recognition of the Liberation of 1944 as a work of God "the focus of the dialogue". In the past, FRCA Synods have maintained that the RCA's decision to recognize the RCN(S) as sister churches was sin before the Lord. As such, repentance is necessary. We note, for example, what the 1959 Synod of the FRCA wrote to the RCA:
"You shall have to answer the question whether the reformation which we praise as a gift from the Lord is from heaven, or from the earth, that is revolution, as those Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (synodical) - genuine reformed churches and true churches of Christ according to you - do. We call on you to take these questions seriously. For if you continue your refusal to answer them, you have made your choice by default. But then it remains a choice in favour of participation in the works of darkness and against the Christ of the Scriptures" (cf Letter 14 in 'Union', pg 65).
To date no RCA Synod has acknowledged that the Lord was grieved by the decision of the RCA to establish relations with the RCN(S). Rather, the RCA has severed official sister relations with the RCN(S) because of "the development of theological thought in the RCN(S) as this has become more apparent in their recent Report 'God met Ons' ('God with Us') on the nature of the authority of Scripture and in their decision on homosexuality as an outflow from that development" (Acts RCA 1982, Article 64.4).

6. In its considerations leading to the decision to appoint deputies for dialogue with the RCA, Synod 1990 mentioned that "the RCA decided to terminate its membership in the REC if the RCN(S) were allowed to remain as member at the next REC."

This turns out to be factually incorrect. In fact, the 1988 Synod of the RCA decided:

"that unless there are definite changes in the RCN(S) on matters of Scripture and homosexuality, the RCA, subject to review at our 1991 Synod, at the next meeting of the REC move that the RCN(S) be asked to resign its membership" (Article 66.11).

Synod 1991 subsequently decided that:

- "4. if...there are no grounds for reconsidering our earlier decisions, to then implement the decision of 1988 to 'move that the RCN(S) be asked to resign its membership'.
 5. That, upon submission of the report of the delegates to REC, our next Synod makes its decision on our own membership of the REC."
7. In the past four to five decades, negative influences have entered the RCA from various sources and impacted these churches. The result is that, when and if the RCA as a whole acknowledge that the Liberation was a work of the Lord and that the RCA was wrong before God in establishing sister relations with the RCN(S), there are more items that will need to be discussed before sister relations and union can occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank deputies for the immense amount of work done in making available in the English language the documents relevant to the Liberation of 1944 and the contacts between the FRCA and the RCA.
2. To discharge deputies.
3. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to observe what the next Synod of the RCA will do with the report which their deputies for dialogue with the FRCA will submit, and to report to the next Synod of the FRCA with their recommendations as to whether and how to proceed.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 79

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Committee 2 presents its amended report (see Article 42).

MATERIAL:

Agenda item(s) : 11e Deputies' Report - section E
11t Deputies' Supplementary Report - Section E

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Deputies sent 3 copies of *Acts* 1990 to the sister churches; wrote a letter soliciting comments regarding our concerns with the ICRC; and a letter expressing disappointment that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have entered into a sister relationship with the Reformed Church in the United

States, the Eglise Reformée Confessante au Zaire, and the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines without informing or consulting the sister churches in Australia.

2. Deputies received 3 copies of the *Acts* of Synod Leeuwarden. That Synod finalised a new set of rules for establishing and maintaining sister relations with churches abroad, and instructed deputies to send these rules to sister churches with the request that the sister churches agree to continue the sister church relationship on the basis of these new rules. To date no communication of this nature has been received from the Dutch deputies. According to Dutch delegates present at this Synod a letter on this subject appears to have gone astray.
3. Our deputies however did obtain an English translation of these proposed rules, studied them, and come with the recommendation to accept them, with the suggestion however that minor points should still be the subject of consultation.
4. It is evident that the RCN are actively pursuing contacts with many other churches.
5. Deputies' supplementary report contains a reply from Dutch deputies to their letter on sister relationships, mentioned in 1 above. Dutch deputies state that the FRCA received the information concerning their new sister relations via the *Acts*. They defend their Synod's decisions on the basis of one of the newly adopted rules for sister relations, viz 'the churches will inform each other concerning the entering in of relations with third parties'. Moreover they are of the opinion that if all of the eleven sister churches would have to be consulted regarding a possible relation with another church, that would unjustifiably delay a decision and would therefore not be practicable. Our deputies note that Dutch deputies fail to realise that these new rules for sister relations are not in force until mutually adopted.
6. A response was received to our deputies' letter regarding the ICRC.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. From the correspondence with the RCN and their Synod *Acts* we may gratefully conclude that these sister churches are faithful to God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to their adopted *Church Order*.
2. It is disappointing that the RCN in the matter of recognising sister churches did not honour their commitment under the adopted Rules for relations with churches abroad (Rule e).
3. As regards the Rules for relations with churches abroad, these are dealt with in Synod's decisions on the general activities of deputies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To appoint new deputies with the instruction to continue the sister relation under the adopted rules.

ADOPTED.

ARTICLE 80

ADJOURNMENT

After we have sung Psalm 8, elder H Heys leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

NINTH DAY - Wednesday, 27 May, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 81

REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod, asks us to sing Psalm 35:1 and 2 and reads Isaiah 43:8-13. After welcoming the brothers he announces that today will be spent mainly in committees. It is announced on behalf of Reverend Bouwman and his wife, that the Lord blessed them this morning with the birth of a healthy son. The chairman adjourns Synod to allow the committees to do their work.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 82

REOPENING

Synod is reopened and we sing Psalm 35:4 and 11. Warm congratulations are passed on by the chairman to Reverend Bouwman and his wife, and best wishes that their new child may grow up as a faithful child of the Lord.

ARTICLE 83

REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER - OVERTURE OF ARMADALE

Committee 3 presents its second report (see also Articles 66, 113).

MATERIAL:

Agenda Item 8v : Letter of FRC Armadale regarding revision of the *Church Order*

ADMISSIBILITY:

Armadale's proposal relates to the revision of the *Church Order* and the report of deputies.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The consistory of FRC Armadale proposes to defer the adoption of the revised *Church Order* until the next Synod for the following reasons:
 - a. the churches have had only limited time to study the report of deputies;
 - b. deferral of the decision to adopt the *Church Order* will give the consistories more time to study and comment on individual Articles;
 - c. deferral will also give deputies further opportunity to review their work.

2. The original request for a linguistic revision was presented by the FRC Kelmscott to Synod 1987. The FRC Byford proposed that such a revision make use of the Canadian text as much as possible. Synod 1987 adopted both proposals in its mandate to deputies (*Actis* 1987, Article 33).
3. Synod 1990 appointed new deputies with an amended mandate which was subsequently shown to be too idealistic. Deputies were compelled to reinterpret their mandate in the light of the 1987 mandate.
4. The report of deputies was the first report received by the churches; well before the three month time limit stipulated in the rules.
5. By means of excellent presentation deputies have ensured that the complete subject matter of their report is quite easy to follow.
6. The report has been well received and the recommended *Church Order* submitted by deputies provides a sound basis and starting point for proceeding with the task initiated by Synod 1987.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. It is obviously true that the consistories have had 'limited' time to study deputies' report, and deferral of the report will obviously give consistories and 'new' deputies more time to review its contents. However, consistories have had the mandatory three months and therefore have had the opportunity to thoroughly appraise the report.
2. If the claim that consistories have not had enough time to study the report has validity then it must apply equally to other reports; viz. Churches abroad, Bible translations; no proposal to defer consideration of any other report has been received.
3. Whilst input from the consistories is certainly desirable, it is equally true that the churches have placed this item on Synod's agenda and have sent delegates to Synod to work through the agenda.
4. Although (provisional) adoption could well be time consuming, this argument may not be applied exclusively to this particular agenda item.
5. Consideration of the recommended *Church Order*, article by article, need not result in a work-of-haste, but can greatly help new deputies in preparing an improved final text.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Not to accede to Armadale's request.

After two rounds of discussion it is

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 84

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Committee 3 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion and some minor amendments, it reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11e : Report of deputies, section K

11t : Supplementary Report, sections E and K

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Deputies received the following mandate (*Acts* 1990, Article 53, 5-9):
 - a. to maintain the contact at the present level, in order that the FRCA may be a hand and a foot in the struggle by the RCNZ to preserve the Reformed faith in their churches, to address the obstacles that kept us apart in the past and to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties with whom we do not have any official relations, specifically, to encourage them to break the ties with overseas churches such as the RCA, the CRCNA and the contacts with the NGK, since if these continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ;
 - b. to adopt deputies' recommendation regarding more direct contacts with the RCNZ, and to permit the deputies to visit the RCNZ in order to clearly address the impediments mentioned in the previous recommendation;
 - c. to consult with the Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts;
 - d. to keep the churches informed about progress;
 - e. to report to next Synod.
2. Deputies have conveyed the decisions of the 1990 Synod about the RCNZ to their deputies; in this same letter reference was made to past barriers between the RCNZ and FRCA as well as the sister relation which the RCNZ has with the CRCNA.
3. Deputies wrote to the deputies of the RCN regarding their contact with the RCNZ and specifically about the NGK, thus attempting to coordinate our efforts concerning the contacts with the RCNZ.
4. In a next letter to the RCNZ deputies it was asked whether any action had been taken with regard to their sister relations with the CRCNA. In response to this letter the RCNZ deputies write that they have taken note of our concerns and express their own concerns about the trends in the CRCNA. They will provide a full report to their forthcoming Synod in September '92 to seek a clear mandate as to how to proceed from here.
5. The RCNZ deputies wrote that a visit from our deputies would be most beneficial, specifically, to their 1992 Synod in Bishopdale. Deputies accepted this invitation. The Reverend W Huizinga has been appointed to represent the FRCA.
6. Deputies were advised that RCN have delegated the Reverends A DeJager and H VanVeen to visit the forthcoming Synod of the RCNZ.
7. Deputies recommend to maintain the contact at the present level and to consult with the Dutch deputies to coordinate our contacts.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. In their correspondence deputies have thoroughly addressed the matter of third parties; viz. NGK, CRCNA.
2. Notwithstanding the value of visits made by Br TMP vander Ven and Dr J Faber, these visits cannot be seen as part of deputies' mandate to have more direct contacts.

3. Deputies must continue to liaise with deputies RCN to ensure that their respective delegates to the RCNZ Synod 1992 will have a common approach to the question of third parties.
4. The RCNZ's response to our correspondence shows interest and gives reason to continue the contact, see Observation 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To discharge deputies.
2. To express its appreciation for the manner in which the RCNZ deputies have responded to the issues raised by our deputies and for the invitation to be represented at their forthcoming Synod.
3. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. to maintain contact at the present level and to assess the RCNZ's commitment towards resolving the issues that have kept us apart (cf *Acts* 1990, Article 53, recommendation 5);
 - b. to liaise with the deputies of the RCN, especially with regards to third parties;
 - c. to keep the churches informed about any progress.
 - d. to report to next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 85

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE

Committee 3 presents its report (see Articles 96 and 98). A proposal is tabled to continue the discussion in closed session.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 86

**AUDIT OF THE BOOKS OF DEPUTIES FOR TRAINING FOR THE
MINISTRY**

Committee 1 presents its report as follows:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11n : Auditing the Books ad Articles 18,19 *Church Order*

ADMISSIBILITY:

Synod 1990 appointed the church of Bedfordale to audit the books of the deputies for the Training for the Ministry, and to report to the next Synod.

OBSERVATION:

Two brothers appointed by the church of Bedfordale have audited the books. They report their findings to the church of Bedfordale in a letter dated 21 March 1992.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The books have been found to be in good order.

2. The auditors believe that an incorrect figure may have been given in the *Acts* 1990 (cost sharing) for the communicant members of Albany. A member of Albany has inquired into the matter, and their records indicate that as of 31 December, 1989 they had 234 communicant members. The figure given in the *Acts* Synod 1990 (pg.387) is 229. Although the number given in the *Acts* may not be exact, Synod does not feel that the difference would warrant any further action.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the church of Bedfordale for auditing the books.
2. To appoint a church to audit the books ad Article 18,19 *Church Order* prior to the next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 87

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD DECLARATIONS, RULES AND RELATIONS

Committee 1 presents its report (see Article 95). After one round the discussion is adjourned.

ARTICLE 88

FAREWELL ADDRESS BY VISITING DELEGATES

Brother DJ van Wijnen addresses Synod in a word of farewell. The text of this address is appended to these *Acts* (Appendix N).

The chairman responds, thanking him for his kind words and asks the Dutch delegates to take along with them, to their churches, the words of concern spoken in this Synod. He wishes the brothers a safe journey back to Holland.

ARTICLE 89

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman announces Synod's provisional program for the next few days. In conclusion we sing Psalm 100. Elder J Hidding leads in prayer, and the chairman adjourns Synod.

TENTH DAY - Thursday, 28 May, 1992

Morning Session

ARTICLE 90

REOPENING

The chairman reopens the meeting and we sing Psalm 47:1,2 and 3. After leading in prayer, in which our Lord Jesus Christ's ascension is also thankfully remembered, the chairman directs that Synod will go into closed session.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 91
ADJOURNMENT

Synod reconvenes at 3pm to close for the day. Reverend W Huizinga asks us to sing Psalm 24:4 and 5 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod till Friday.

ELEVENTH DAY - Friday, 29 May, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 92
REOPENING

The chairman opens Synod and asks us to sing Psalm 36:2 and 3. After having read from Isaiah 43:14-21 he leads in prayer. He first of all congratulates elder H Olde on the occasion of his birthday today and passes on best wishes also for his wife, on behalf of Synod. After announcing that the committees will again meet to do their work, he adjourns the meeting.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 93
REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod at 3.30pm. We sing from Psalm 37:1 and 2. Elder A van Leeuwen replaces elder J Bosveld. At the chairman's request, elder van Leeuwen rises to show his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

ARTICLE 94
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 26 May and 27 May are adopted.

ARTICLE 95
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
DECLARATIONS, RULES AND RELATIONS

The discussion is continued (see Article 87). The report reads as follows:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11e : General activities

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The 1990 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

- a. Rules for permanent relations:
To consult with sister churches abroad regarding proposed changes to rules for ecclesiastical relations and present to the churches a final proposal as soon as possible. (*Acts* Article 90, Recommendation 2b)
 - b. Rules for temporary relations:
To continue the study of the rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact in consultation with sister churches, keeping in mind Article 74.II, *Acts* 1985. (*Acts* Article 90, Recommendation 2c)
2. Deputies submit their report about general activities, namely the matter about declarations for ministers, rules for sister relations and temporary ecclesiastical contact, and about the two types of relations (cf the Appendices for the text of the report).

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Deputies mention that certain declarations were given for our ministers who went abroad to sister churches and none were sighted by deputies for ministers visiting our churches. Yet we know that some of these visiting ministers in our midst did receive the privilege to lead the worship services. It is apparent that the good rule stated so clearly by the 1987 Synod (cf Article 49, Consideration 4 and Recommendation 4) needs to be repeated to our sister churches.
2. The matter of consultation about rules has been a topic for the deputies for quite some time. This matter also received considerable attention at the 1989 ICRC. The Dutch 1990 General Synod of Leeuwarden adopted a revised set of rules for establishing sister relations and for maintaining them. Deputies have modelled their proposed revision of the rules for sister relations on these Dutch rules. The Dutch rules for maintaining sister relations are as follows: The sister relation entered into with a church abroad shall be exercised according to the following rules, with the goal that as reformed churches we together remain faithful to the confession of God's Word, that we assist one another, and that we encourage and exhort one another to be witnesses in word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.
To ensure this, the following rules shall apply as a minimum:
 - a. The churches shall see to each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.
 - b. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their *Acts* but otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (where possible in translation).
 - c. The churches shall inform each other concerning the entering into relations with third parties.
 - d. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation.
 - e. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.

In exercising these relations the churches shall strive to implement also the following:

- f. In cases of changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms which are of a material confessional nature, the sister

churches shall be especially informed of this intent, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.

- g. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as this is possible. Though the deputies in general are happy with the above Dutch revision of the rules, they do make some remarks on them, as follows:
1. Deputies objected to the previous proposed set of rules because the requirement for churches to "care for each other that there is no deviation from the Reformed faith etc." was omitted. This objection has now been addressed by the reinclusion of rule a.
 2. The matter of double correspondence which previous deputies had raised as a concern, still exists, however the possibility is highly qualified and as such cannot be an objection. It remains to be seen how the churches will apply this in practice. (comment: this refers to the Dutch rule for establishing sister relations and thus does not technically address their rules for maintaining sister relations).
 3. That the churches shall inform each other concerning the entering into relations with third parties, was omitted from the first draft, reintroduced in the second draft and is also in this final set of rules, but is still weak as it stands. The preamble does give more depth to this rule. Preferred however is the present "be responsible to each other" or better still the Canadian formulation "give account to each other."
 4. Rule "e" is not as specific as our current rules regarding the admission of ministers from sister churches, but considering the complexity of the present rules, the new rule is an improvement. We suggest the rule should be broadened to include the calling of each other's ministers as well as the practice of 'visiting/guest ministers.' We suggest to add "Also, the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls."
 5. Rules "a" to "e" are to apply as minimum rules whilst churches will strive to implement rules "f" and "g". This distinction should be removed by deleting this sentence. It seems to us that rule "f" is of such importance that it should be part of the minimum rules. In any case there has been much discussion between the churches as to whether churches are required to notify sister churches well in advance of a decision being made to changes in the Confessions etc. This was a matter in dispute between the sister churches in the Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed Churches and remained unresolved. Seeing the difficulty our Dutch sister churches have had with their sister relations in consulting beforehand regarding changes to confession, church order or liturgy, it would be unwise to stipulate an absolute demand here. Synods are often not coordinated time-wise; it takes a long time to receive a response on proposed changes and some changes really do not warrant such a protracted procedure.

6. In an earlier draft rule "g" limited advisers to matters concerning relations with churches abroad. Normally such delegates address Synod on behalf of the sister church and as advisers speak only when asked for advice. Anyway we as deputies must still give recommendations regarding position and privileges of advisers and visitors. This question can be addressed then.
 7. We prefer that the GOAL of sister relations be included in the rules rather than in the preamble. The first rule could read "sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world." This proposal is made because the current first rule "to see to each other..." has dominated the exercise of sister relations. A new first rule would make sister relations more positive in outlook.
3. The comments of the deputies are worthwhile and reflect a long period of consultation and discussion. Some further remarks should still be made:
 - a. This Synod has adopted specific rules regarding position and privileges for a delegate from a sister church. However, since these are household rules for Synods, they do not need to be amplified in rules for sister relations.
 - b. The comments about minimum rules are in order.
 - c. Rule "f" above mentions changes which are of a "material confessional nature ('die inhoudelijk van confessionele aard')." This expression might restrict mutual consultation, i.e. in matters of church order which are also very important. It would be better to read "In cases of SUBSTANTIAL changes or additions to the confessions, church order or liturgical forms the sister churches shall..."
 4. The above comments, when applied to the rules recommended by deputies, would result in the following set of

RULES FOR EXERCISING SISTER RELATIONS:

 1. Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.
 2. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.
 3. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their *Acts* or their *Minutes* and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible in translation).
 4. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.
 5. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.
 6. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations. Also the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls.
 7. In cases of substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms this intention shall be brought to the special

attention of the sister churches, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.

8. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.
5. The deputies refer to the decision of the Dutch sister churches to discontinue offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact." They comment as follows about this part of their mandate:
Previous concerns about the possibility of fraternal relations with churches where sister relations were not possible has now also been satisfied. There is to be only one form of ecclesiastical relationship. In that respect the FRCA differs by having introduced the relationship of temporary ecclesiastical contact. The Dutch sister churches have ceased offering temporary ecclesiastical contact. In our situation we have recognised the FCS and the EPCI but there seems a reluctance to offer sister relations to them. That they have problems with the concept of sister relations may be a reason for delaying sister relations but as a rule we should not have problems in offering sister relations once recognition as true churches is made by Synod. Thus we support the Dutch decision and recommend the same. That would mean we must become serious about what was said in temporary ecclesiastical contact that we use it to come to sister relations.
On the grounds of uniformity with the Netherlands and on the principle that TEC, which was a temporary measure occasioned by the reluctance of reformed churches with a presbyterian form of government to adopt our rules for sister relations, has become unnecessary this proposal seems sound and should be adopted.
6. Since the Dutch rules and the rules recommended by deputies are almost identical, and since our changes to these rules should be considered as improvements, it would seem preferable to request the Dutch sister churches to accept our (revised) rules above as common rules for sister relations between the RCN and FRCA (the delegates from our sister churches thought that this would not present any problems).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the deputies for their work and to discharge them from this part of their mandate.
2. To ask newly appointed deputies once more to communicate to our sister churches our rules about declarations for ministers who visit abroad or who visit us.
3. To adopt the rules recommended by deputies (and emended) for sister relations as follows:

RULES FOR EXERCISING SISTER RELATIONS:

1. Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.
2. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.
3. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their *Acts* or their *Minutes* and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible in translation).

4. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.
 5. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.
 6. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations. Also the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls.
 7. In cases of substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms this intention shall be brought to the special attention of the sister churches, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.
 8. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.
4. To request the Dutch sister churches to accept and adopt these rules as common rules for our sister relations; and to do the same for our other sister churches.
 5. To discontinue offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact" and to ask deputies to work towards sister relations with those churches with whom we presently have temporary ecclesiastical contact.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 96

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE

Committee 4 presents its revised report (see Articles 85 and 98).

As time is running out, Synod is adjourned till the evening session.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 97

REOPENING

Synod is reopened. We sing Psalm 37:12 and 16. Elder J Bosveld is present again.

ARTICLE 98

EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE

The discussion is continued (see Articles 85 and 96). The amended report reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item: 11e - Section L

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Synod 1990 gave to deputies the following mandate:

- a. a renewed mandate to investigate thoroughly this church to ascertain whether it is a true and faithful church, according to our confessions;
 - b. to continue to discuss with them their sister-relations with the PRCA, and any other relations/contacts with other third parties;
 - c. to prepare for the ERCS a paper on how we see the “covenant and election” together with the offer to discuss this with them;
 - d. to be prepared to develop the contacts by visits, and whatever other help requested so that the ERCS is encouraged to be and to remain Reformed;
 - e. to discuss with the ERCS their views on coming to sister relations, or possibly, a type of working relation in which we accommodate our rules for sister relations to their situation;
 - f. to issue periodic updates about the ERCS.
2. From the information received, there is indication that the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore strives to grow and live in faith.
 3. Deputies have sent two letters encouraging the ERCS to discuss the matters mentioned in the mandate deputies received. Deputies received an answer stating that manpower in the ERCS “is too limited to enter into discussions of mutual concern.”
 4. The classis of the ERCS in May 1991 decided:
 “That a correspondence relationship be maintained with the FRCA with no view towards sister relationship at this time.”
 At the same time, the ERCS indicated that
 “we would like to continue to get to know you as churches through mutual communication.”
 5. The Dutch sister churches have sent deputies to visit the ERCS.
 6. The Committee for Contact with other Churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) have sent a letter to our deputies complaining about alleged inaccuracies and misrepresentations contained in the *Acts* of Synod Armadale 1990. Deputies have attached a copy of that letter in their report. They opine “that Synod Bedfordale 1992 ought to address the allegations and respond to them in a suitable manner.”
 7. In their letter, the PRCA express their anger at “obvious attempts” from our side “to drive a wedge” between the ERCS and their churches.
 8. The last few Synods of the FRCA have habitually had the reports submitted by deputies to Synod published as Appendices to the *Acts* (cf i.a. *Acts* 1987, Article 16).
 9. Deputies suggest the following recommendations:
 - a. to maintain the contacts at the present level;
 - b. to use these contacts to ascertain whether the ERCS is a true and faithful church according to our confessions;
 - c. to discuss with the ERCS their sister relations with the PRCA, and any other relations/contacts with other third parties;
 - d. to consult with the Dutch deputies to coordinate our contacts.

CONSIDERATIONS

Part A

1. What is published in the *Acts* is read by churches all over the world. As such, what is in these reports should be both factual and edifying.
2. When deputies from the FRCA visited the ERCS in 1988, these deputies were

received by the ERCS with enthusiasm and interest (cf *Acts* 1990, pg 277). The deputies could offer to Synod 1990 much information that indicated the genuineness of this interest. This led Synod 1990 in turn to be enthusiastic about contacts with the ERCS, and so mandate new deputies to intensify contacts with these churches.

3. Since the time of Synod 1990, the eagerness for contact with the FRCA was tempered.
4. The letter from the PRCA, as well as information received from those who had personal contact with Singapore, indicated that elements mentioned in the deputies report to Synod 1990 were indiscreet, out of order, and therefore not edifying. For these inaccuracies the FRCA ought to apologise to the ERCS. This means too that Synod 1992 ought not to go in the direction advised by deputies (cf Observation 9). It would be better to go in the direction set out in Observation 4.

Part B

5. The letter from the Protestant Reformed Churches of America contends that there were no official contacts between the FRCA and the ERCS. Our own deputies in their report to Synod indicate that “in the past there has never been any official contact by way of letter” between the two churches. This is in fact incorrect (cf Observation 3). From the side of the FRCA, contacts were distinctly official (cf *Acts* 1987, Article 106). We understood the contact from the side of the ERCS to be official also, in as much as the contact was a result of decisions made by the consistories of both the First and the Covenant Church (cf Letter dated 3 September 1988).
6. The letter from the PRCA says that the reports of deputies to Synod 1990 - which included information concerning the PRCA since these churches work closely with the ERCS - was “accepted” by the FRCA Synod, and that it “has the official sanction” of our broadest assembly.
This statement is not correct. Reports which deputies present to Synod are not “accepted” in the sense that their contents become the findings of the churches in Synod. Rather, Synod receives the reports of deputies, and has the practice of publishing them as appendices to the *Acts*, for the information of future deputies and the church membership.
Nevertheless, when Synod permits the reports of deputies to be published, the churches in Synod must accept a degree of responsibility for the material in question. If, then, there is wrong in the deputies reports, the churches in Synod should apologize for the error and any resulting damage.
It remains disputable, however, whether the presentation of the PRCA offered in the deputies’ report is indeed inaccurate. Deputies have done nothing else than quote from publications available in the general market (cf the report). This had to be done in order to clarify what were the distinctives of Protestant Reformed theology.
It should be understood that neither the deputies’ report nor the act of Synod 1990 to allow the publication of the report were intended to offend.
7. The theological data mentioned in the report which served Synod 1990 were gathered from publications coming from authors in our Dutch and Canadian sister churches. The deputies did not endeavour to give a view of the PRCA from a PRCA perspective, but rather sought to present Synod with the conclusions reached by members of overseas sister churches well acquainted with the PRCA. Members of these sister churches have over the years had

extensive discussions with members from the PRCA, and no agreement has been reached on the doctrinal points raised.

8. It neither was nor is the intent of the FRCA to drive a wedge between the ERCS and the PRCA. It came to our attention that there was in Singapore a church with a similar confessional basis to the FRCA, and therefore contact was sought.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank deputies for the work done and discharge them;
2. To express apologies via letter from the FRCA to the ERCS for permitting the printing of a report which contained information not edifying to the ERCS;
3. To appoint deputies who shall:
 - a. further discuss the letter in a face to face meeting if the ERCS consider such a meeting desirable;
 - b. continue the contact so that the FRCA and the ERCS can come to know each other better.
4. To send a copy of this Article to the PRCA as answer to their letter.

ADOPTED

The text of the letter referred to in Recommendation 2 is in Appendix Q.

ARTICLE 99

AUTHENTIC GENEVAN TUNES

Committee 1 presents its report. A discussion takes place on admissibility of this item of correspondence. A counter proposal is moved and seconded as follows:

MATERIAL:

Agenda Item 8t : Singing of Genevan Tunes

ADMISSIBILITY:

This item has not come to the table of Synod via the ecclesiastical way i.e. through the minor assemblies. This item has been finished in the past (cf *Acts* 1983, Article 24). Synod declares the item inadmissible.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 100

ARTICLE 66 OF THE CHURCH ORDER

Committee 2 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11m : Article 66 of the *Church Order*

OBSERVATIONS:

The FRC of Launceston reports that to-date the need to call a special day of prayer has not arisen.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the church of Launceston.

2. To appoint a church according to Article 66 *Church Order*.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 101

FREQUENCY OF SYNOD MEETINGS AND MEETINGS OF CLASSES

Committee 2 presents its report. After some discussion it is taken back for further consideration (see Article 122)

ARTICLE 102

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 1 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11p : Correspondence with EPCA

ADMISSIBILITY:

The deputies submit their report concerning the mandate received from the 1990 Synod, and thus it is admissible.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The deputies received the following mandate from the 1990 Synod:
 - a. to send our greetings and to provide them with the material requested via Reverend Jonker and also information about our stand in the faith, and how we strive to fulfil our mandate for the true ecumenicity;
 - b. if the EPCA seeks membership in the ICRC, Synod instructs deputies to investigate the EPCA (Article 118).
2. Deputies submit their report about contact with the EPCA (cf Appendices for the text of their report).

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The deputies have conveyed greetings, provided the requested material, and held an informal meeting with four representatives of the EPCA. Thus the deputies have fulfilled the first part of their mandate.
2. The deputies report that the EPCA has not sought membership in the ICRC thus far. Thus the deputies did not need to investigate the EPCA.
3. The deputies do not supply the Synod with recommendations. In order to come to a recommendation about this contact the following should be considered:
 - a. the EPCA wants contact at a low key because of lack of resources;
 - b. the EPCA wants recognition as true churches but no sister relations ("less than sister church", Appendix II);
 - c. there seems little desire from the EPCA to discuss their doctrinal position;
 - d. a number of the EP Churches are located close to our local churches in Tasmania.

On the ground of these considerations it would seem best to discontinue these

contacts at the synodical level where contacts have been unfruitful and leave it to the churches at the local level, especially the local churches in Tasmania.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the deputies for the work done and to discharge them.
2. Not to appoint new deputies but to leave contacts to the local churches.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 103

BOOK OF PRAISE AND CREEDS

Committee 1 presents its report. The proposals are dealt with in sections.

MATERIAL:

Agenda items : 11o

ADMISSIBILITY:

Since this is a report in fulfilment of a mandate from the 1990 Synod, it is admissible.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The 1990 Synod gave deputies the following mandates:
to instruct other deputies to keep in touch with the Canadian sister churches regarding Hymn 1A (Article 65, Recommendation 3);
to appoint deputies for examination of the changes in the *Book of Praise* excluding these made to the *Church Order* and Hymn section (Article 119, Recommendation 3);
to appoint deputies to study the Report on Ecumenical Creeds and report their findings to next Synod (Article 145, Recommendation 4).
2. The deputies submit their report (cf the Appendices for the text of this report).

HYMN 1A

The text of the report reads:

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The deputies have passed on comments made on the new melody with the new text of the Apostles' Creed, including the word 'christian'. They recommend that Synod not adopt this revised melody and text for two reasons. Firstly, the text includes the word 'christian' which the Synods of Albany (Article 100) and Armadale (Article 109) have purposely not included. Secondly, the standard of the proposed tune is considerably lower than the tune found in our present Hymn 1A. This latter point is confirmed by the Canadian deputies who reported that "the members of our music sub-committee examined the proposed melody and found it unsuitable" (1989 *Acts* of the General Synod of Winnipeg, page 233).
2. The 1989 Synod of our Canadian sister churches decided "to make the new melody with the 'new text' by br D Zwart available to the churches and evaluate any response from the churches" (Article 145, Recommendation 2.j). This means that the decision of this (FRCA) Synod should be passed on, via the deputies for relations with churches abroad, to the Standing Committee

for the publication of the *Book of Praise*. This is all the more imperative since we wish to use one common *Book of Praise* with our Canadian sister churches.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the deputies for their work done.
2. Not to adopt the revised melody and text for Hymn 1A.
3. To pass on this decision, via deputies for relations with churches abroad, to the Standing Committee of our Canadian sister churches.

ADOPTED

ECUMENICAL CREEDS

The text of the amended report reads:

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The deputies have studied the ICET texts and the texts which the last ICRC recommended, in an advisory manner. They include a copy of the ecumenical creeds highlighting the proposed changes. Very little documentation is included in their report. They recommend that the new texts of the three ecumenical creeds - Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed and Athanasian Creed - as recommended by the last ICRC (cf THE PROCEEDINGS, pages 151 ff.) be accepted.
2. Deputies have not been able to study the matter adequately.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the deputies for their work done and to discharge them from this mandate.
2. Appoint new deputies to study the proposed texts in depth and report to following Synod.

ADOPTED

CANONS OF DORT

The text of the report reads:

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Most changes were of a linguistic nature.
For example:
I,7 "but with them involved in a common misery" becomes "but involved together with them in a common misery."
I,12 "and a hungering and thirsting after righteousness" becomes "and a hunger and thirst for righteousness."
I,7 "fiery darts" is changed to "flaming darts" (in line with RSV rendering of Eph.6:14 from which this phrase comes).
II,6 "offered without distinction" becomes "offered indifferently."
III/IV,1 "vanity" becomes "futility."
III/IV,16 "admirable Author of all good" becomes "wonderful Maker of all good" (one does not author good things, but makes good things).
V,5 "deadly guilt" becomes "guilt of death."
V,12 "So far, however, is this certainty of perseverance from making

true believers proud and complacent that, on the contrary, it is the true root of humility ..." becomes "This certainty of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and complacent is rather the true root of humility."

2. Some changes brought the translation closer to the original Canons of Dort. For example:
 - I,3 inserted after the phrase "in itself is without merit" is the phrase "as well as the imperfect obedience of faith," which is in the original but was not in the old translation. Also "would count" is brought in line with the original, so that it reads "He wished to count."
 - II,2 "only Son" becomes "only begotten Son."
 - III/IV,9 "Some of them do not care and do not receive the word of life" becomes, "Some of them do not care and do not accept (aannemen) the word of life."
 - III/IV,12 "only by outward preaching" becomes "only by outward teaching (Dutch: predicatie = English: predication, 'declare, assert, affirm.' Some took it to read 'prediking,' thus the old version reads 'preaching.')
 - V,13 "it renders them more careful and diligent to discern..." becomes "it produces in them a much greater concern to observe carefully..." (Dutch original: zoo brengt dat in hen ... een veel grootere zorg om de wegen des Heeren vlijtiglijk waar te nemen.)
 - V,13 the old translation was lacking the following underlined words which are in the original Dutch and Latin have: "the ways of the LORD which He prepared beforehand."
3. A few additions are found in the new translation which are not found in the original Canons of Dort, but which were added for the sake of clarity or for theological reasons. For example:
 - I,7 the word 'specific' is added - "God chooses a definite number of specific persons." This adds clarity to the statement, for the Arminians might agree that God has chosen a definite number of persons, but will not agree that God has chosen specific persons.
 - I,16 "are not seriously converted" becomes "do not seriously turn to God" (The Committee for revision may have changed this because "conversion" carries the thought of an inward change of heart while the fathers refer to an outward display of piety and godliness, but not of the heart. In this sense the phrase "not seriously converted" is a contradiction in terms).
 - III/IV,9 "Others do indeed receive it, but not into their hearts" becomes "... but they do not accept it into their hearts."
 - V,2, "to long and strive for the goal of perfection" The original Canons has "naar het eindperk der volmaaktheid te zuchten." The Latin original has the same: "ad perfectionis metam suspirandi" (sighing for the goal of perfection.) The words "to strive" were likely added because one does not only long for perfection. With Paul, we "press on (or strive) to make it our own, cf Phil 3:12).

4. Also many Scripture texts are cited in the margin of the Canons which were not in the old version, which make it easy to corroborate the Canons with Holy Scripture.

RECOMMENDATION:

To accept the new translation of the Canons of Dort which will appear in the next revision of the Book of Praise.

ADOPTED

OTHER SECTIONS OF THE BOOK OF PRAISE

The text of the report reads:

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The deputies report that they have not received or requested any information about changes in the liturgical forms. Scanning the *Acts* of the 1989 General Synod of our Canadian sister churches, one finds that though discussions took place about them, no changes were accepted (cf their Article 161).
2. The deputies do not report about the changes which the Canadian sister churches have adopted in the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism (cf Article 159 of their 1989 *Acts*). The changes are few. After studying them, one finds that the changes are not substantial but more on linguistic and textual grounds. The changes are improvements and thus are acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION:

To accept the minor, linguistic changes made to the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism.

ADOPTED

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

After discussion and amendment the report reads:

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Almost all the sections of the *Book of Praise* have now been finalised by the Canadian sister churches except for the linguistic revision of the Nicene Creed and the melody and new text of Hymn 1A (cf Article 145 of their 1989 *Acts*). They plan to finalise the *Book of Praise* at their 1992 general Synod, D.V. (Consideration 3 of Article 145). There is thus no need to appoint new deputies for the *Book of Praise*. If any 'leftovers' - except regarding the Ecumenical Creeds - need to be dealt with, the deputies for relations with churches abroad should be able to deal with these since this belongs to their task as defined by the rules for sister relations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank our deputies for the work done and to discharge them.
2. To give the deputies for Relations with churches abroad the mandate to study any further changes to the *Book of Praise*.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 104
ADJOURNMENT

The chairman announces the program for Saturday. Reverend C Kleyn invites us to sing Psalm 146:1,2 and 3 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

TWELFTH DAY - Saturday, 30 May, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 105
REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod at 9am. We sing Psalm 38:7, 8 and 10 and listen to the reading of Isaiah 44:1-8. Reverend Veldman then prays, and welcomes all present.

ARTICLE 106
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Committee 2 presents a majority report and a minority report (see Articles 110, 118, 124). After having adopted an 'allocation of speaking times' as proposed by the chairman, Synod commences the discussion. The matter is adjourned at the scheduled closing time of Synod.

ARTICLE 107
ADJOURNMENT

After we have sung Psalm 103:5 and 7, and prayer by elder H Olde, the chairman adjourns Synod till Monday morning 9am.

THIRTEENTH DAY - Monday 1 June 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 108
REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod at 9am, asks us to sing Psalm 40:1 and 2 and reads Isaiah 44:21-28. After prayer the delegates are welcomed, and the meeting adjourned to give the Committees time to meet.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 109
REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod and we sing Psalm 40:3 and 4.

ARTICLE 110

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The discussion is resumed on Committee 2 reports (see Articles 106, 118 and 124) A new version of the minority report is tabled. At the close of the first round the chairman adjourns the discussion to Tuesday afternoon's session.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 111

REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod and we sing Psalm 40:7.

ARTICLE 112

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 28, 29 and 30 May are adopted.

ARTICLE 113

REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER

Committee 3 presents its report (see Articles 66 and 83).

MATERIAL:

- Agenda items : 8d Bedfordale - proposal regarding the revision of the *Church Order*
- 8k Reverend G van Rongen - use of the text of the revised *Church Order*
- 8n Reverend G van Rongen - some notes on the revised *Church Order*
- 8r Byford: Proposal regarding Article 25 of the *Church Order*
- 11j Report of deputies:for revision of the *Church Order*
- 11s Supplementary report of deputies for revision.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Synod 1990 gave deputies the mandate to adapt the *Canadian Church Order* so that it clearly reflects the specific Australian circumstances, whilst retaining the division of articles of the *Canadian Church Order*.
2. Deputies report that the *Canadian Church Order* has been subject to a number of revisions and advise that they have chosen the 1989 version as their starting point, even though Synod 1990 based its instructions to deputies on the 1983 version then available.
3. Deputies chose the 1989 text as their starting point because their mandate aims for the greatest possible uniformity with the *Canadian Church Order*
4. In their report deputies print the *Australian Church Order*, the *Canadian Church Order* and the text of the recommended *Church Order* side by side together with notes to explain the considerations used to determine the recommended text. A system of print types is used to assist textual comparison, i.e. normal type means 'no difference' between texts, italic type is used to

highlight a provision that does not occur in the other church order and bold type is used to report “noteworthy differences” as required in the mandate.

5. Deputies conclude that:
In light of the many “noteworthy differences” between the two Church Orders, including whole Canadian articles that do not apply, whole Australian articles that must be retained, the unachievable uniformity in numbering, and the cautious approach of previous Synods in dealing with the simplest of proposals for change in the *Church Order*, deputies have concluded that the desired uniformity with the Canadian *Church Order* is an impossibility.” (section 4.5) and state that in view of this
“the mandate could have been returned as unachievable”. (section 4.6)
6. To avoid the frustration occasioned by further delay, deputies opted to reinterpret their mandate in the light of the 1987 mandate, viz. “to scrutinise and improve the language...of the *Church Order*” and “to make use of the Canadian text in so far as possible.” (Article 33 D1 and D2, *Acts* 1987).
7. The consistories of the FRC Bedforddale and FRC Byford propose that article 25 be amended by adding the words recommended by deputies, namely:
Anyone being in office who refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.
8. The consistory of the FRC Bedforddale further proposes that the following recommendations of deputies, namely:
 - a. to adopt the following new article (to be article 54 in recommended *Church Order*)
ARTICLE 54: PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH
They who have come to an understanding and acceptance of the doctrine of God’s Word and desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their motivation and knowledge of that doctrine. The public profession shall take place in a church service with the use of the adopted form.
 - b. to divide the existing article 60 into two articles and add the words “upon their request” as follows:
ARTICLE 59: ATTESTATIONS FOR COMMUNICANT MEMBERS
Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, upon their request and following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by the chairman and the clerk. This attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.
ARTICLE 60: ATTESTATIONS FOR NON-COMMUNICANT MEMBERS
An attestation for a non-communicant member shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned with the request to take the member under its supervision and discipline.
 - c. to amend the text of Article 72 of the recommended *Church Order* by adding the words printed in bold as follows:
ARTICLE 72: REPENTANCE
When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of

sin unless the member concerned has shown real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the benefit of the congregation requires that this confession of sin shall be made publicly and in case it is made before the consistory or before two or three office bearers, whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

be adopted for the reasons stated in the report of deputies.

9. The consistory of FRC Bedfordale also proposes to adopt deputies' recommendation to use the word 'advice' instead of 'consent' in Articles 74 and 79 *Church Order*; that is, to adopt the reading of these articles as they appear in the recommended text.
It is noted that:
 - a. Synod 1985 (*Acts* Article 89) commented on this issue without taking any action;
 - b. Synod 1987 (*Acts* Article 63) decided to include this matter in the mandate of deputies appointed for the linguistic revision of the *Church Order*;
 - c. Synod 1990 did not make any decision in this matter, presumably because there was no mention of it in deputies' report;
 - d. In section 7 of their report the present deputies address this matter, which is consistent with their decision to re-interpret their mandate in the light of the 1987 mandate.
10. Reverend G Van Rongen requests permission to use the text of the revised *Church Order* in new editions of the booklets "Decently and in Order," and "The Church Order of Dordrecht and the standing decisions made by the Synods of the FRCA."

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The difficulties described by deputies do support the view that the mandate given by Synod 1990 was too idealistic.
2. Deputies therefore did well to re-interpret their mandate in the light of the 1987 mandate, thus permitting the process of revision to proceed.
3. The recommended text submitted by deputies is based on the Canadian *Church Order* and uses the same division of the articles. At the same time it reflects Australian circumstances and is reasonably easy to read and understand. Hence the recommended text goes a long way towards fulfilling the ideals and expectations of Synod 1990.
4. Although deputies have tried to fulfil the expectations of their mandate, they recognise the possible need for further changes. Deputies, in fact, state that "further attention is needed, in particular where provisions are deficient or inconsistent with practice (Articles 25,54,59,60 and 72)". (section 8, page 4)
5. There is also concern that in the focus on uniformity with the Canadian *Church Order* there may have been insufficient attention given to the need or desirability of maintaining as strong a link as possible with the original *Church Order of Dort*.
6. As the function of the Church Order is to promote "good order" there is an obvious need to avoid undue haste in adopting a major revision. A testing period to allow a proper evaluation of the revised *Church Order* would appear prudent and give consistories and the members generally the opportunity to thoroughly review each article.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide to:

1. provisionally adopt the revised *Church Order*;
2. discharge deputies and thank them for drafting a carefully considered revised text that, despite many obstacles, fulfils many of the expectations of past Synods;
3. appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. invite the consistories and the membership of the FRCA to present submissions on any or all aspects of this mandate;
 - b. consider all submissions received prior to 1st June 1993;
 - c. study possible ways and means of strengthening the show of uniformity between the provisionally adopted *Church Order* and the original *Church Order of Dort* (1618/19);
 - d. review the provisionally adopted *Church Order* and advise how further improvements, linguistic and otherwise, can be made;
 - e. forward a copy of the provisionally adopted *Church Order* to our sister churches for consultation;
 - f. propose amendments to the provisionally adopted *Church Order* to incorporate the results of the above mentioned studies;
 - g. alert the churches to proposed changes that constitute "new matters" that must be submitted according to article 30 of the *Church Order* (1985 version);
 - h. instruct deputies to publish the provisionally adopted *Church Order* for distribution within the churches;
 - i. report to the churches at least six months prior to next Synod.
4. retain the copyrights of the provisionally adopted *Church Order* until it can be adopted in its final form; and advise Reverend G van Rongen of this decision.

ADOPTED

Synod then commences the discussion on Articles 1-5 as proposed by the Committee. After discussion these are **ADOPTED**, some with amendments (see Articles 121, 137 and 147 for the remainder of the discussion. See Appendix P for the provisionally adopted text, together with notes referred for further consideration by deputies).

ARTICLE 114

DELEGATES AT MEETINGS OF CLASSIS CHURCHES

Committee 2 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

Agenda Item 8c : Byford - delegates at meetings of classis churches

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Byford requests Synod to agree that consistories ought to be present via delegates, at a meeting of the classis church when matters concerning that consistory appear on the agenda.
Byford forwards the following grounds:
 - a. In a situation where classis functions as outlined in the adopted *Church*

Order, delegates from any church involved in the agenda item are participants in the discussions as full members of classis.

- b. The presence of delegates from the church involved would allow the classis church to make a more informed decision.
- c. In general distance is no longer prohibitive. Where that is the case a telephone link-up belongs to the possibilities.
- d. Synod 1990 decided that at a Colloquium Doctum the calling church may be represented by two delegates.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. At present there are no explicit rules for the attendance of delegates at a meeting of the classis church.
2. In a normal situation the classis would indeed include delegates from each of the churches belonging to the classis.
3. Even in a transition period we should reflect the thrust of the *Church Order*.
4. With its decision regarding the Colloquium Doctum, Synod 1990 set a step in this direction.

RECOMMENDATION:

Synod decide that consistories may be represented by two delegates at a meeting of the classis church when matters concerning that consistory appear on the agenda.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 115

ADJOURNMENT

Elder H Terpstra asks us to sing Psalm 118:6 and 8 after which he leads us in prayer. Synod is adjourned till 9am Tuesday.

FOURTEENTH DAY - Tuesday 2 June, 1992

Morning Session

ARTICLE 116

REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod, asks us to sing Psalm 42:1 and 3, reads Isaiah 45:1-8 and leads in prayer. There is some discussion on our work programme. The aim is to finish Synod on Tuesday 9 June. The chairman adjourns the meeting till the afternoon session.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 117

REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod and we sing Psalm 42:5 and 7. Two classes of the Kelmscott John Calvin Primary School in the audience are welcomed.

ARTICLE 118
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The discussion is continued (see Articles 106, 110 and 124). At the appropriate time the chairman adjourns Synod till the evening session.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 119
REOPENING

At 7.30pm the chairman reopens Synod and asks us to sing Psalm 43:3,4 and 5. He then welcomes everyone present.

ARTICLE 120
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 1 June are adopted.

ARTICLE 121
REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER

Committee 3 presents Articles 6-38 for Synod's consideration. After discussion these are **ADOPTED**, some with items referred to new deputies (see Articles 113, 137, 147 and Appendix P).

ARTICLE 122
FREQUENCY OF SYNOD MEETINGS AND MEETINGS OF
CLASSES

Committee 2 presents its amended report (see Article 101).

MATERIAL:

Agenda Item: 8b - letter from FRCA Kelmscott proposing to change the *Rules for Synods* with respect to the frequency of Synod meetings.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Kelmscott proposes that Synods be held every three years, that two Classes be formed and that the Articles 3 and 9 of *Rules for Synods* be amended, requiring reports to be sent to the Churches six months prior to a Synod being held.
2. As grounds for their proposal Kelmscott refers to the vastly increased workload of Synods, deputies and Consistories.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. According to Rule 1 of the *Rules for Synods* the frequency of Synods hinges

on the formation of classes. (As long as classes have not been formed, Synods shall be convened once in every two years.)

2. Synod 1990 (*Acts*, Article 64) decided not to accede to the request of FRCA Launceston to study the matter of classes formation. Synod considered that it is better to wait until the number of churches, especially in the east, increases so that formation of classes is warranted.
3. Kelmscott has not addressed this Consideration (*Acts* 1990, Article 64), neither have the number of churches increased since the last Synod.
4. Kelmscott's proposal to have reports sent to the churches six months prior to Synod cannot be separated from its request to hold Synod every three years.
5. Synod always has the right to set the time when deputies are to submit their reports (cf Article 9b, *Rules for Synods*).

RECOMMENDATION:

Synod decide not to accede to Kelmscott's request.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 123

ADJOURNMENT

We sing Psalm 119:14 and 47, elder JA Swarts leads in prayer and the chairman adjourns Synod.

FIFTEENTH DAY - Wednesday, 3 June, 1992

Morning Session

REOPENING

The chairman opens the meeting, asks us to sing Psalm 44:1 and 2. He then reads from Isaiah 45:9-17 and leads in prayer.

ARTICLE 124

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The discussion is continued (see Articles 106, 110 and 118).

A counter proposal is tabled by Reverend A Veldman and elder JA Swarts.

Committee 2 announces the withdrawal of its majority report and adoption of the counter proposal with some amendments.

Following an extensive coffee break the discussion is resumed. The majority report is further amended.

An amendment is tabled by Reverend C Bouwman and elder JA Swarts. After discussion it is voted upon and lost.

The majority report reads as follows:

MATERIAL:

Agenda items:

- 8m - Reverend G van Rongen -notes on ICR, Report B
- 8o - Bedfordale - proposal regarding the ICRC
- 8q - PW Dekker - regarding contact with other churches
- 8s - K Heerema - regarding relationships/contacts with churches and ICRC
- 8u - R Eikelboom - regarding the ICRC
- 8w - W and AC Amoraal - regarding the ICRC
- 8x - A and M Schiebaan and M and W Eikelboom - contacts with churches and ICRC
- 8z - KA Wieske - Notes responding to Reverend G van Rongen's notes on ICRC Report
- 11e - Relations with Churches Abroad
- 11t - Supplementary - relations with Churches Abroad

ADMISSIBILITY:

All items are admissible as they concern a matter which is on Synod's agenda.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Synod 1990 gave to DpRCA the following mandate (as it pertains to the ICRC):
 - "to study the concerns signalled in the Considerations with respect to the ICRC (cf. Considerations 14,15,18,19)";
 - "to consult with the sister churches regarding these concerns";
 - "to publish the results of their study for the interests of the churches";
 - "to serve the following Synod with a report and recommendations".
2. Synod also stated that "our concerns may affect our continuing membership in the ICRC."
3. As a result of studying the concerns signalled in the aforementioned Considerations, deputies present:
 - two different reports (A and B) both of which contain certain conclusions;
 - a proposed constitutional amendment of the first purpose of the ICRC;
 - recommendations to Synod.
4. In addressing the concerns expressed by Synod 1990 in Consideration 14, both reports deal extensively with the first purpose of the ICRC. This purpose reads as follows:
 - "to express and promote the unity of faith that member churches have in Christ"Both reports go into extensive detail, discussing at great lengths what this 'unity of faith' really means.
5.
 - a. Deputies as a whole propose to Synod that the FRCA propose a constitutional amendment of the First Purpose of the ICRC to the next meeting of the ICRC so that it will read:
 - "1. to express and promote unity in the reformed faith which the member churches confess;"The grounds for this amendment are given on p. 55. Section 6.
 - b. Deputies further propose that Synod give new deputies the mandate to forward our concerns (as outlined by Synod 1990), and the two reports as presented to the sister churches and to consult with them about them.

- c. Moreover, they propose to send the amendment to the ICRC and urge the next conference to deal with the matter.
 - d. In the meantime deputies propose that our membership in the ICRC be continued and that delegates be sent to the 1993 meeting of the ICRC with certain instructions.
 - e. Finally, they propose that new deputies be given a renewed mandate to finish the study of the concerns of the 1990 Synod.
6. In their letter, W and AC Amoraal express concern about our membership of the ICRC, and (a.o.)
- a. urge Synod to decide to discontinue membership on the grounds that it is improper and ineffective, and the unity of faith as expressed has not been proved. They contend that the FRCA have not investigated this properly;
 - b. say that Synod 1990 decided to limit contacts with churches from afar and concentrate on contact with churches closer;
 - c. say that by withdrawing we are not necessarily isolating ourselves. It is important to do what is right;
 - d. say that the claim of Report A (that the ICRC is a conference and not an ecclesiastical assembly) is not understood by other member churches.
7. The Church of Bedfordale:
- a. proposes that Synod decide that the FRCA withdraw from the ICRC;
 - b. argues that the deputies' recommendation to amend the ICRC Constitution amounts to an admission that the unity of faith does not exist in the ICRC, does not address the problem of that lack of unity, and in effect undermines the whole ICRC Constitution and the organisation's existence.
 - c. contends that our churches, through being a member of the ICRC, have effectively lost control over which contacts to pursue and which to terminate.
8. PW Dekker draws the attention of Synod to what we believe about the church. He urges Synod not to reach out to other churches "at the cost of internal unity."
9. In his submission K Heerema argues that there is a great contradiction between how our churches do things locally and within the bond (where we base everything on our Reformed Confessions) and at the international level (where we would apply a relaxed norm).
10. R Eikelboom contends that the deputies' proposal to amend the ICRC Constitution should not be agreed to because the substantiation for the proposal is ambiguous and the proposal misrepresents what the ICRC really is. He requests Synod to withdraw from the ICRC, citing too that the burdens of membership are greater than the FRCA can bear.
11. A and M Schiebaan and M and W Eikelboom express great concern regarding the fact that agendas of Synods continue to be dominated by matters concerning other churches, while the need in our own churches is so great.
12. Rev G van Rongen and KA Wieske in their letters to Synod comment on the nature and accuracy of material contained in the 'historical overview' of Report B.
13. In their letter regarding our concerns about the ICRC, the deputies of our Dutch and South African sister churches urge the FRCA to remain a member of the ICRC.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The 1992 Reports of deputies regarding the ICRC indicate that they were not able to complete their mandate and that the Reports A and B detail the progress made thus far.
2. While the two reports (A and B) come to certain (different) conclusions it is evident that all deputies acknowledge the concerns of Synod 1990 signalled in Considerations 14 and 15 regarding the issue of “unity in faith.”
3. Since the issue about the “unity of faith” is one of the major concerns, and in the absence of any definite recommendation in either report A or B, it seems prudent to study this matter further.
4. Though deputies recommend unanimously to propose to the next meeting of the ICRC an amendment to the Constitution, it is not wise to preempt the outcome of the study mentioned under Consideration 3.
5. Since the next meeting of the ICRC cannot deal with this amendment anyway, there is no harm in continuing the study undertaken by deputies in order to achieve the greatest possible clarity and unity with respect to what we wish to propose to the next meeting of the ICRC.
6. Deputies recommend “to send the two reports about the mentioned concerns to the sister churches and to consult with them about them.” It can only be fruitful to discuss our ongoing studies with the sister churches prior to tabling any amendment to the Constitution of the ICRC. There is ample opportunity to do this in a meeting of sister churches held prior to or coinciding with the next meeting of the ICRC.
7. Mindful of the abovementioned considerations, the churches will be well served by a decision allowing deputies to complete their study.
8. Since the submissions of the FRC Bedfordale, as well as those of PW Dekker, K Heerema, R Eikelboom, W and AC Amoraal, A and M Schiebaan and M and W Eikelboom cannot be answered in definitive form until the deputies finalise their study and a next Synod can make a firm decision, it is best to pass on these submissions to the new deputies.
9. To ensure that the ICRC remains a non-ecclesiastical body with only advisory powers it would be good to adopt a ruling which requires any conclusions from the ICRC to pass through deputies to churches for consideration and action. Only when (a) church(es) accept(s) a conclusion of the ICRC and passes it on to Synod, should such a conclusion (which is really only advice) be received as an agenda-item to be dealt with at a Synod.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. to discharge deputies.
2. to give new deputies a renewed mandate to finish the study of the concerns of the 1990 Synod about our (continuing) membership of the ICRC.
3. to send the two reports about the mentioned concerns as well as the proposed amendment to the Constitution to the sister churches and consult with them;
4. to continue our membership in the ICRC until the study of the concerns and the consultation with the sister churches have been finalised.
5. to have Synod appoint two delegates and two alternates to the 1993 meeting of the ICRC, which will be held in the Netherlands.
6. to convene a meeting of sister churches prior or coinciding with the next

- meeting of the ICRC to discuss the concerns signalled by Synod 1990 and in deputies' report to Synod 1992.
7. to have deputies publish the results of their study for the interest of the churches.
 8. to have delegates to the next meeting of the ICRC furnish a report of this meeting for the deputies so that a report can be published for all the churches and for the next Synod.
 9. to have deputies submit a report with their recommendations to the next Synod.
 10. to request the deputies to pass on to the churches the conclusions and recommendations of the ICRC, together with their comments, one half year before Synod so that the churches can prepare them and place them on the agenda of Synod, if so desired.

ADOPTED

As a result the minority report lapses.

ARTICLE 125

ADJOURNMENT

Synod is adjourned till late afternoon.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 126

REOPENING

Synod is reopened at 3.30pm with the singing of Psalm 44:3.

ARTICLE 127

BIBLE TRANSLATION

Committee 4 presents its report. As time is running out for the session, the discussion is adjourned (see Articles 130, 134 and 141).

Evening Session

ARTICLE 128

REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod and we sing Psalm 46:1 and 3.

ARTICLE 129

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 2 June are adopted.

ARTICLE 130
BIBLE TRANSLATION

The discussion is continued (see Articles 127, 134 and 141).

ARTICLE 131
ADJOURNMENT

Reverend C Bosch asks us to sing Psalm 119:40 and 42, and leads in prayer. The meeting is adjourned.

SIXTEENTH DAY - Thursday, 4 June, 1992
Morning Session

ARTICLE 132
REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod, asks us to sing Psalm 48:1 and 3, reads Isaiah 45:18-25 and leads in prayer. After outlining the programme for the day the meeting is adjourned till the afternoon session.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 133
REOPENING

At the reopening of Synod we sing Psalm 50:1 and 4. The chairman welcomes every one present and especially the classes of school children from the Armadale John Calvin Primary School.

ARTICLE 134
BIBLE TRANSLATION

The discussion is continued (see Articles 127, 130 and 141). Reverend W Huizinga is given an opportunity to prepare a counter proposal and the discussion is adjourned. The chairman adjourns Synod till the evening session.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 135
REOPENING

Synod is reopened and we sing Psalm 50:7 and 11. The chairman welcomes everyone present.

ARTICLE 136

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The Acts of 3 June, 1992 are adopted.

ARTICLE 137

REVISION OF CHURCH ORDER

Committee 3 presents Articles 39 - 71 for consideration. These are **ADOPTED**, some with suggested amendments and notes for new deputies (see Articles 113, 121, and 147, and Appendix P).

ARTICLE 138

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Committee 4 presents its report.

MATERIAL:

- Agenda item: 11e - Section I - Deputies' report
- 11t - Section I - Deputies' report (supplementary)
- 8q - PW Dekker regarding recognition of other churches
- 8s - K Heerema regarding the contacts with other churches

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Deputies appointed to serve Synod 1992 with a report regarding the EPCI received the following mandate:
 - a. to express thankfulness to the EPCI for their acceptance of the relationship of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact;
 - b. to use the contact to continue discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other and with the aim to be able to come to a recommendation to Synod to extend full sister relations."
2. In the time since the mandate was given, deputies have sent two letters to the EPCI. Response from the side of the EPCI has been late in coming, "possibly due to our mail being directed to the wrong address." Of late deputies have received Presbytery reports covering four years.
3. Deputies opine that, "to be consistent with our efforts to phase out temporary ecclesiastical contact, we should move in the direction of sister relations."
4. Deputies recommend that Synod appoint new deputies with the mandate "to move towards becoming sister churches with the EPCI, in so doing, to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister relations."
5. Br Heerema draws attention to "the contradictions that exist between how we do things at local level..., and at international level". He contends that in practice we have higher thresholds for recognising churches locally than we have for churches far afield.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Our common membership with the EPCI in the ICRC lays upon us the responsibility to seek “the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship” with the EPCI.
2. This Synod has decided to “ask deputies to work towards sister relations with those churches with whom we presently have temporary ecclesiastical contact” (cf Article 95).
3. Already in 1983, the FRCA has recognised the EPCI to be true church of Jesus Christ. Later Synods, on the basis of further deputies’ reports, have confirmed this finding.
4. Where mail is very slow in being answered, it is next to impossible to work out a “set of mutually acceptable rules” for sister relations. Further, once sister relations are established, a sluggish mail contact makes it doubtful whether the two parties concerned will be able to carry out the obligations involved in sister relations.
5. Earlier Australian Synods have expressed that “in order to practise relations as sister churches according to the adopted rules it is imperative that there be good and understandable correspondence” (*Acts 1987, Article 52, Consideration 2*). More, earlier Synods have decided “to express disappointment that the relations with The Presbyterian Church in Korea have been frustrated by lack of information...” (*Acts 1987, Article 52, Recommendation 1*).
6. In its decision concerning the EPCI, Synod 1990 considered that “more and personal contact is desirable before a sister relation is offered.” In the intervening years the contact has been negligible.
7. Despite the moral commitment we have with respect to the EPCI (cf Considerations 1 and 3), it would be for this Synod both meaningless and inconsistent with the decision of 1990 to “move towards becoming sister churches with the EPCI.”
8. The FRCA should be consistent in the approach taken to churches elsewhere. There should be no difference in what is asked of churches near and far.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank deputies for their work and discharge them;
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to use the existing Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to improve the quantity of discussions and exchange of information so that the two churches might get to know each other better. In the discussions with the EPCI, the items mentioned for discussion with the PCEA are not to be overlooked.

After two rounds of discussion the report is

ADOPTED.

ARTICLE 139

ADJOURNMENT

Elder J Bosveld asks us to sing Psalm 98:1 and 4 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

ARTICLE 140

REOPENING

The chairman reopens Synod. We sing Psalm 51:1 and 3 and read Isaiah 48:12-22. Everyone is welcomed including a class of students from the Kelmscott John Calvin Primary School. Elder T Houweling replaces elder H Terpstra.

ARTICLE 141

BIBLE TRANSLATION

The discussion is continued (see Articles 127, 130 and 134). An alternative proposal is tabled. After the morning teabreak an amendment to the alternative proposal is tabled. This will be dealt with, if necessary, after a vote on the Committee's proposal is taken.

The committee's proposal reads:

Agenda items: 11g - deputies' report

8g - appeal P 't Hart regarding Article 138

8h - submission from Byford

8y - submission from Armadale

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Synod 1990 gave deputies the following mandate:
 - a. to explore, in consultation with (in the first instance) the sister churches, the feasibility of the churches themselves undertaking the task of translating the Bible;
 - b. as regards the NASB, NKJV and NIV translations, to supplement the 1989 report and:
 - i. to further study in line with considerations 4c and 4d the suitability of the NASB and the NKJV to replace the RSV;
 - ii. to further evaluate the NIV in line with considerations 4e and 6, in respect of its method of translation;
 - iii. to make use of previous deputies' reports including those of our Canadian sister churches;
 - iv. to monitor developments in these translations;
 - v. to send relevant suggestions and improvements to the Committees on Bible translation concerned, and await and evaluate any replies on these;
 - vi. to invite comments from the churches on these translations;
 - vii. to consult with the Canadian Reformed Churches to see whether a common approach can be reached.
 - c. to report to the churches on progress and findings;
 - d. to report, and if possible make recommendations, to next Synod. Deputies have served Synod with an extensive report. They write, though, that "they found it difficult to do justice to their mandate", due to the "limited time span".
2. Deputies have explored the feasibility of the churches themselves

undertaking the task of translating the Bible. After consultation with the sister churches, they conclude that “a new Bible translation arranged by the churches does not present itself as a feasible option.”

3. Deputies, per instructions, have invited comments from the churches regarding the NASB, the NKJV and the NIV. Deputies received six submissions, of which four argued, on textual grounds, that the churches use the NKJV. Another discusses the pros and cons of the translations mentioned, and urges the NIV. This translation, this contributor concludes, “is readily available and, also, has a place already in many of our families.”
4. Re NASB:
 - a. Synod 1990 had considered that its strength lay in its aim of staying close to the Greek and Hebrew text. The result, though, was its weakness; this translation suffered from a “wooden style, lack of clarity and poor readability.” Nevertheless, Synod 1990 desired more study of the NASB as a possible translation for use in the churches.
 - b. Deputies have studied this translation further. As a result, they are “agreed that on the basis of its linguistic and stylistic characteristics, the NASB cannot be recommended to replace the RSV for worship services, for instruction at home and at school, and for memorisation.”
5. Re NKJV:
 - a. Synod 1990 has considered that it would not be proper to “accept or reject any translation on choice of text alone.” Therefore “the NKJV should be further investigated with respect to loss of reliability as a result of text choice and method of translation.” This same Synod had been told by previous deputies that the NKJV suffered from allegiance to dispensationalism.
 - b. Deputies have studied that matter of dispensational leanings. They conclude: “it would appear that hard evidence of any allegiance to dispensationalism in the translation is not available.”
 - c. As to whether reliability was lost as a result of text choice, deputies give information regarding both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Old Testament: deputies inform Synod that they were unable to check whether the original sources were adequately used. They advise that “this matter merits further investigation.”

New Testament: deputies had to analyse whether the NKJV’s allegiance to the Textus Receptus is an insurmountable objection. They find that it is not. In fact, they write, “nomination of a strictly defined autograph, rather than an eclectic text chosen by a committee majority enlightened by a textual theory prevailing at any point of time, will make a substantial contribution to the fidelity of the translation. At the same time, it will enhance the authority of Scripture...”
 - d. On the matter of the method of translation, deputies note that the NKJV’s character as a Formal Equivalent translation could imply “a considerable loss of reliability”, though not near as much as with the NASB. They advise that “the extent and seriousness of this loss will need further investigation before definite recommendations can be made.”

Yet when it comes to accuracy of translation, the deputies register concern about the Dynamic Equivalent method of translating, and

clearly consider the FE method to do more justice to the God-breathed character of Holy Scripture. In as much as the NKJV shows great respect for this God-breathed character, this version receives high marks from deputies.

Deputies have examined also the clarity and readability of the NKJV. They find that the NKJV, endeavours to be as clear or as ambiguous as the original languages. Where a word had to be inserted into the translation to make it 'read', the translators have indicated this addition by printing the relevant word in italics. The NKJV steers away from making easy sentences that are difficult in the original; the NKJV instead endeavours as much as possible to do justice to the form used by the Bible authors. Where choices had to be made between accuracy of translation and readability, the NKJV reflects a distinct bias to accuracy.

- e. Deputies come to this conclusion: the NKJV "is worthy of serious consideration by the Churches."
6. Re NIV:
 - a. Although previous deputies had been very positive about the NIV, even recommending it for use in the churches, Synod 1990 had declined to support this recommendation. Synod 1990 rather wished for more study to be made "as to the degree that the DE method of translation has effected the NIV's reliability."
 - b. Deputies have served Synod 1992 with a lengthy study on the merits and demerits of the DE method. After interacting with publications on the subject, as well as the recommendations of past deputies' reports, deputies come to this conclusion:

"Deputies do not call [the NIV] an unreliable translation because they are conscious of the fact that no translation - not even the best FE translation - is perfectly reliable. The NIV has its value as a clear translation in contemporary English and one cannot call it un-scriptural. Yet...deputies main concern is that the NIV does not indicate where it is interpretative; the Bible readers are led to believe that they have God's inspired Word in front of them, whereas all too often it is the translator's interpretation of God's Word."

So they conclude:
"the loss of reliability as a result of the method of translation makes deputies reluctant to recommend the NIV for use in the church services."
Deputies do not advise further study of the NIV.
7. Deputies further serve Synod with a comparison of the NKJV and the NIV. On the basis of three New Testament texts studied by deputies, they conclude that "both translations have their pros and cons", the strength of the NIV being the weakness of the NKJV and vice versa. Hence their observation that "this would make it ideal to use both translations side by side." The churches, then, "will have to weigh the pros and cons and judge what is worse: losses through simplification or paraphrastic interpretation or losses through unclarity."
8. In their recommendations to Synod 1992, deputies suggest, a.o.,
 - not to consider further the possibility of making an own translation;
 - to omit the NASB from further consideration;
 - to withhold final endorsement of a new translation until more study has been

made of the NKJV and a common approach has been reached with the Canadian sister churches;

- to continue studies of the NKJV in comparison with the NIV.

9. P't Hart appeals the decision made by the churches in Synod 1990 in Article 138, Recommendation 3: "as regards the underlying text (of the translations of the Holy Scriptures, PH), to accept the premise that there is room for a careful eclectic approach."

He draws attention to what he considers the term "eclecticism" to mean. Contrary to the popular opinion that the term refers to "choosing the best", it means - says br 'tHart with a quote from Prof vanBruggen - "the choosing of one reading from the many divergent readings in those manuscripts that deviate from the Majority text." He then understands that Synod 1990 - probably unconsciously - has grouped all extant manuscripts into two bodies, rejected the one body (the Majority text) and pronounced that from the remainder (10% of the total body of manuscripts) careful choices should be made to determine what is the Word of God. He contends that such a procedure both takes away from the congregations the Word of God itself, and undermines respect for and trust in the Word of God. He 'tHart therefore trusts that Synod will decide that Synod 1990 was incorrect in making the mentioned statement and come back from it.

10. The Church at Byford requests Synod to "come to a definite decision on the matter of which translation to recommend to the churches for use in public worship, instruction and family." Byford draws attention to the fact that the search for a suitable translation has been underway for more than 30 years, with a brief interruption in the mid 1980's when the churches settled for the RSV. In the intervening years, much study has been done resulting in the statement from Synod 1990 that:

"...every one of these translations [ie, NASB, NKJV, NIV] has some drawbacks. A perfect or near-perfect translation does not exist" (Article 138, Consideration 7).

Meanwhile, Byford argues, "the need to find a proper translation has become urgent." Byford mentions that "the RSV (second edition) is no longer available." Further, "the churches saw need a number of years ago to warn against the infiltration of unreliable translations into the families (Synod 1980, 1983)" and notes that "the inavailability of the RSV compels the membership to look for an alternative." Again: "a measure of discontent festers among the general membership because of the uncertainty regarding the Bible translation." Byford refers to the decision of previous Synod that "the NASB, NKJV, and NIV are better translations than the RSV." Yet the RSV continues to be recommended.

Byford advises Synod to recommend the NKJV for use in the churches. The following grounds are mentioned:

- a. none of the three translations currently under investigation can be considered perfect. "The weakness of the one is the strength of the other; the strength of the other is the weakness of the one." As such, all three are more or less equal.
- b. No Synod in the past has criticized the King James Version on any ground except its antiquated language. The NKJV has gone a long way to contemporising this language. As such, it is "logical" that the churches continue in the line of the KJV.
- c. Byford feels that the translators of the NKJV have not acted according

to Synod's finding that "there is room for a careful eclectic method" (*Acts*, 1990, Article 138, Recommendation 3). This is not seen as an insurmountable problem since ministers have always had the freedom in their sermons to refer to other translations.

- d. Correctly or not, unrest regarding Bible translations has grown in the churches since the adoption of the RSV. To quiet this unrest, it seems prudent to the Consistory to return to the basis of the translation used in the churches before the RSV was adopted.
11. The Church of Armadale asks Synod not to consider work on the NASB finished and reject this version. Armadale suggests that to do this would be making a hasty decision. In method of translating, the NASB is not so different from the NKJV anyway. Armadale hastens to add that "this does not mean that Armadale favours the choice of the NASB." Concerning the NKJV and the NIV, Armadale recommends that more study be made of relevant aspects of these translations. What is to be studied regarding the NKJV includes the textual base, its readability, its suitability for church and school use, and its acceptance by the Canadian sister churches. Concerning the NIV Armadale wishes to see more study regarding the merits and demerits of the FE approach and a non-eclectic text.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Deputies have done good work in augmenting the report of previous deputies. For this they deserve commendation.
2. On the basis of the argumentation presented by deputies, it indeeds appears not feasible for the churches, be it in conjunction with sister churches, to prepare an own translation. Pursuit of this avenue ought to cease.
3. P 'tHart's contention that the decision of previous Synod implies that the churches have chosen to reject the vast majority of manuscripts in favour of the remaining 10% reads too much into the decision. Synod 1990 did not use Prof vanBruggen's definition of the term "eclectic" (however valid that definition may be in scholarly circles). What Synod 1990 meant with its decision "to accept the premise that there is room for a careful eclectic method" is described in Consideration 2 of that decision. In that Consideration Synod recalled that the church over the centuries has used more than strictly the Byzantine text-type. Now to elevate one text-type only is a - historical. Synod further recognised that it is not sound to elevate the Byzantine text-type because of its numbers, while disregarding its lateness and uncertain origin. In a word, with the decision regarding "a careful eclectic method", Synod recognised that the Lord in His providential care has given to the church more than one family of texts, and that therefore the church must give careful consideration to all the types that be. For this reason Synod 1990 instructed deputies to give serious consideration not only to the NASB and the NIV, but also to the NKJV.
4. The NASB has been studied by various deputies in the past. Repeatedly the same criticism is heard concerning this translation; its translation style is too stilted for use in the worship services. There is therefore little point in subjecting this version to yet another scrutiny of the same points.
5. Both the deputies which served Synod 1990 as well as the deputies which served Synod 1992 have done considerable study on the NKJV. Current deputies have added such information to the work of previous deputies that a fuller and more positive picture of the NKJV is presented (cf Observation 5).

Current deputies, as well as the church of Armadale, indicate that there is room for more study of this version. After the previous studies, though, one wonders whether further research would actually uncover new material that would permit the churches to answer with greater conviction the question of whether the NKJV can be used in the churches or not.

6. Despite deputies' reports favouring the NIV in 1975 and in 1990, the churches in Synod have consistently felt that the DE method of translating was the major hindrance to the adoption of the NIV for use in the churches. Current deputies come to the same conclusion. The church of Armadale recommends more study on the matter of translation methods, urging a "more balanced appraisal" than was given by the deputies serving this Synod. Given the consistent findings of past Synods, and given Armadale's failure to demonstrate the advantages of further study on matters already extensively studied, there appears to be no worthy benefits to subjecting (the translation method used by) the NIV to another round of scrutiny.
7. Byford's reference to urgency in coming to a definitive decision has merit. One correspondent already mentions that "the NIV...has a place already in many of our families." If the churches in Synod give no leadership in the matter at this time, events will overtake the churches such that no decision needs to be made in the future. Either the churches in this Synod shall have to draw attention to the NIV (and so encourage further purchase of this version), or the churches in Synod shall have to put forth the NKJV (and so direct the families to this translation).
8. Armadale's urging to "be patient and make a ripe decision, not one based on personal preference" is not to the point. Over the past 30 years adequate study has been made so that a rather ripe decision can be reached. Besides, postponing a decision may also be a decision "based on personal preference."
9. Synod 1983 recommended the RSV for use in the churches. At the same time, this Synod left room for the use of the KJV if the RSV met with "insurmountable objections" (cf Art 35). Synod 1990 declared that "the NASB, NKJV and NIV are deemed better translations than the RSV." This latter decision makes one question whether the choice of Bible for the pulpit should still be only the RSV or the KJV. It should be remembered that the KJV was replaced because of its antiquated language, a reason that makes its use on the pulpit today practicably impossible.
10. It is highly desirable to follow the deputies' recommendation to "continue the contact with the CanRC with the aim of a common approach in mind." However, if the FRCA would allow time for consultation with the Canadian sister churches before any translation were recommended to the churches, events would overtake Synod.
11. Deputies counsel Synod "to withhold final endorsement of a new translation", recommending instead that further study be made of the NKJV and a common approach be pursued with the Canadian sister churches. Given that:
 - a. the RSV is scarcely available anymore;
 - b. Synod 1990 found the NKJV to be better than the RSV;
 - c. past Synods and current deputies caution against the NIV;
 - d. it is the task of office bearers -also assembled in Synod- to give active leadership to the flock;

it is best that the attention of the churches now be directed to the NKJV for use in the churches, in the homes and in the schools.

12. This recommendation of the NKJV is not made solely on the basis of the underlying text-type (cf *Acts* 1990, Article 138, Recommendation 3). The recommendation is rather made on the basis of its overall positive qualities. As such, this recommendation should not be understood as if the FRCA is making a distinct choice for the *Textus Receptus* as opposed to other manuscript types.
13. The NKJV's use of the popular pronoun 'you' for God (in place of the archaic, more respectful sounding 'Thou'/'Thee') may be expected to be a "culture shock" to some of the members. This prospect makes it advisable that the NKJV be given time to grow upon the membership.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. to thank deputies for the extensive work done, and discharge them;
2. to retain the archives gathered by deputies for Bible Translation;
3. to stop investigating the feasibility of the churches undertaking the task of translating the Bible;
4. not to grant the appeal of br P 't Hart;
5. not to accede to the request of the church of Armadale;
6. not to grant the request of the church of Byford to come to a definitive decision at this time;
7. to recommend to the churches that the NKJV be used for study, instruction, and family purposes;
8. to withhold final endorsement of the NKJV in the church services until
 - a. the churches have become familiar with this version and so are able to evaluate it from hands-on experience, and
 - b. more study has been made of the NKJV in comparison with the NIV.
9. to leave room for the use of the NKJV in the churches if consistories so wish;
10. to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to continue studies of the NKJV, in comparison with the NIV, to determine whether the NKJV can be endorsed as a final recommendation to the churches. The areas of study should include:
 - whether Old Testament textual sources are properly used;
 - the extent and seriousness of the loss of reliability resulting from the chosen method of translation;
 - b. to solicit from the churches comments on possible improvements in this translation for a conceivable reprint and send these comments to the publishers;
 - c. to keep the churches posted as to further possible editions of the NKJV;
 - d. to communicate this decision, together with the reports of deputies serving Synod 1990 and Synod 1992, to deputies from the Canadian Reformed Churches prior to their Synod in November 1992, urging the brotherhood in Canada to reach a similar decision;
 - e. to maintain the archives;
 - f. to monitor how the NKJV is received in the churches with a view to whether this version is worthy of final endorsement;
 - g. to report to the next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 142
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
ZAIRE AND PHILIPPINES

Committee 1 presents both a majority and minority report (see Article 144). After one round of discussion it is agreed that Committee 1 takes its reports back for further consideration. Synod is adjourned till 2.30pm.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 143
REOPENING

Synod is reopened at 2.30pm. We sing Psalm 51:4 and 5. The chairman presents a list of items yet to be dealt with by Synod.

ARTICLE 144
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
ZAIRE AND PHILIPPINES

Committee 1 presents its new report (see Article 142). An amendment is tabled and discussed. It is put to the vote and lost.

The committee proposal reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 11e - Section N

ADMISSIBILITY:

1. Synod 1983 gave deputies an open mandate "to instruct deputies to investigate those possibilities [to seek new contacts with other churches] in close contact with deputies from our sister churches, especially with those of the Netherlands, and report to Synod" (*Acts* 1983, Article 77). This mandate was renewed in 1985 (cf. *Acts*, Article 95). It was not renewed in 1987, nor in 1990, thus the deputies rightly conclude that they had no mandate to deal with this matter.
2. It should be noted that the deputies have not initiated this contact themselves, since they had no mandate to do so. Yet they correctly pass on to Synod letters which the churches in Zaire and the Philippines have addressed to the FRCA. As such, these letters should be accepted by Synod, and the deputies should receive instructions as to what reply should be sent or what course of action should be taken.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. In a letter, the Reformed Church of Zaire (RCZ) has given information about their reformed confessions and churches. It requests sister relations with us. The Deputies point out that our sister churches in the Netherlands decided at their 1990 General Synod to establish sister relations with the RCZ.
2. In a letter, the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines (FRCP) send

greetings and information about their churches. It is noted that our sister churches in the Netherlands have established sister relations with the FRCP.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Lest our small bond of churches should be overburdened with contacts, Synod 1990 acknowledged that the establishment of further contacts must be limited. Synod decided:
 - a) to limit the requirements of the relative mandates to a manageable level;
 - b) to limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad and with churches which we have recognised as true and faithful to the minimum level necessary for us to remain acquainted with their situation and to fulfil our obligations made to them; and
 - c) to limit present contacts and relations with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility (cf. *Acts* 1990, Article 58).
2. We have already established sister relations with five federations. We have also established Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact (TEC) with two other federations. Further, we have contacts with the five churches and are engaged in discussions with the RCA. In light of the fact that we are a small federation consisting of seven churches with limited manpower, it is not responsible to establish further relations at this time. At the same time it is noted that the FRCP is relatively closer than some of our other relations and contacts.
3. Article 30 specifies that new matters must arise from the churches and be placed on the agenda of major assemblies (Synod) only by way of preparation in the minor assembly (consistory). In light of the fact that the deputies of our sisterchurches in the Netherlands have obtained information about these churches, our deputies could translate this information and distribute it to the churches; and let the churches, if they deem it desirable and responsible, prepare it further and place it on the agenda of Synod.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Synod decide to instruct the deputies to return the greetings to the RCZ and FRCP, and to explain to them that in light of the considerations stated above we cannot accede to their request of establishing relations with them at this time.
2. to instruct new deputies to translate information about the RCZ and FRCP and send it to the the churches a half year before next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 145

PROPOSAL THAT HOBART BE DECLARED A 'HOUSE-CONGREGATION'

Committee 3 presents its report again (see Article 54).

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8i - Launceston - proposal that Hobart be declared a "house-congregation".

ADMISSIBILITY:

The consistory of the FRC of Launceston requests help in a matter pertaining to

church life of that congregation. This is in accordance with Article 41 of the *Church Order*

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Since 1983 the Hobart members have conducted their own worship services under the care and the oversight of the Church of Launceston. These services have been conducted in a public hall within the city of Hobart for some years. In 1989 the Launceston consistory also arranged for the sacraments to be administered in Hobart.
2. In a letter dated 7 March 1991, the Hobart members, acting on advice, asked their consistory to support their desire to be granted a "house-congregation" status according to Article 39 *Church Order*
3. The Launceston consistory acted on this request and applied to its classis church to have the Hobart members declared a "House- congregation". The classis church declined this request believing that Article 39 *Church Order* gave it no jurisdiction to make such a declaration.
4. Amendments adopted by Synod 1985 concerning Article 39 *Church Order* (*Acts* 1985, Article 81) appear to have caused some uncertainty about the church-orderly way to resolve the issue of conferring "house congregation" status.
5. The FRC of Launceston now requests that either synod make the desired declaration or, alternatively, give direction as to how a "house congregation" status be conferred on the Hobart members.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The term "house congregation" is derived from New Testament places such as Philemon vs. 2 and Colossians 4 : 15, and refers to groups of believers, small in number, who come together to worship not in a public building, but in a private house.
2. The term "house congregation" is not used in the *Church Order* and hence the concept "house congregation status" has no precise ecclesiastical meaning.
3. Article 39 of the *Church Order* refers to groups that are already under the care of a consistory. This article therefore does not apply to the Hobart situation. The amendment to this article adopted by Synod 1985 (i.e. "...shall, by the Synod, be placed..." instead of "...shall, by the classis, be placed..." does not affect this case.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Synod serve the consistory of Launceston with the advice that the consistory should deem itself empowered and called to make the decisions concerning the issue raised.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 146

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Committee 1 presents its report. A discussion ensues. An alternate proposal is tabled. The Committee agrees to take its proposal back (see Article 150).

ARTICLE 147

REVISION OF CHURCH ORDER

Committee 3 presents Articles 72-81 for Synod's consideration. These are **ADOPTED**, some with suggested amendments and notes for new deputies (see Articles 113, 121 and 137, and also Appendix P). Synod is adjourned at 4.30pm.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 148

REOPENING

Synod is reopened at 7.30pm and we sing Psalm 51:6 and 7. Elder H Terpstra is present again.

ARTICLE 149

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 4 June are adopted.

ARTICLE 150

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Committee 1 presents a revised report. The discussion is resumed (see Article 146). An amendment is tabled, discussed, voted upon and rejected. The committee proposal reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item: 11e (Section J) - deputies' report
8s - K Heerema regarding contacts with other churches

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The 1990 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:
 - a. to seek clarification whether or not our offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, as well as the associated rules, have in fact been accepted by the FCS and to ask the FCS to clarify their understanding of "fraternal association";
 - b. to use the Rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to discuss issues of concern as mentioned in the report of deputies;
 - c. to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS while giving due heed to the concerns outstanding.
2. The deputies present their report (cf the Appendices for the text of their report).
3. K Heerema draws attention to the alleged inconsistency between how we deal with churches far away and those closer at home. Also, he asks that more attention be paid to churches closer at home and less on those far away.

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. In 1983 the Synod recognised the FCS as a true and faithful church; this was confirmed by subsequent Synods after further investigation of the FCS. The 1987 Synod translated this recognition into a relation of TEC with two rules. These rules were to be used for reaching sister relations. Mutually acceptable rules for sister relations had to be reached before this could eventuate. Also, the 1987 Synod specified that our concern about “adherents” in the FCS had to be addressed.
After 1987 Synod two delegates visited the FCS. In their report, as well as in the report of deputies, attention was paid to church life in general and to special concerns such as adherents, the position of the children in the covenant, fencing of the Lord’s table and preaching. At the end of their visit some mention was made of pulpit exchanges.
At the 1990 Synod this report of deputies and delegates was discussed. As a result, the concern about adherents, the children in the covenant and the fencing of the Lord’s table were sufficiently answered so that they did not (re)appear in the mandate to new deputies. However, the matter of certain views regarding the ICRC and pulpit exchanges remained areas of concern, and were included in the mandate. Our deputies have written to the FCS about these concerns.
2. Regarding the alleged inconsistency in dealing with churches far away and those close by, it should be pointed out that Synods and deputies have paid attention to adherents, children in the covenant, fencing of the Lord’s table and pulpit exchanges as well as views regarding the ICRC. Some have been settled satisfactory; others not. So the charge of inconsistency cannot be maintained.
As far as limiting contacts and mandates to a manageable level, Article 58 of the 1990 Synod addressed this. The deputies do not need to exercise contacts with the FCS as intensively as deputies do with the PCEA, for instance, because our sister churches in the Netherlands can do that better and should feel more responsible.
3. In a letter dated October 1990 the deputies asked clarification whether our offer of TEC had indeed been accepted; asked what the FCS meant by “fraternal association”; and inquired about their practice of having a minister from the FCS fill the pulpit in a Reformed Baptist Church. Thus our deputies have fulfilled their mandate.
4. Thus far deputies have only received the *Acts* of the 1990 and 1991 General Assemblies (GA) of the FCS. These *Acts* seem to indicate that our offer of TEC “has indeed been officially accepted by the GA (of the FCS), though it does not say this explicitly.” Further in the report of our deputies reference is made to the fact the FCS committee will seek endorsement of their response to our deputies’ letter at their (May) 1992 GA. Thus a clear acceptance of our offer of TEC has not been received; and a firm response should be forthcoming soon. One laments the slowness in progress in an age of rapid communication. Though this TEC does not need intensive attention, the areas of concern need to be resolved before any progress towards sister relations can be made.
5. This 1992 Synod has decided (cf Article 95) not to offer TEC anymore and to approach those bonds of churches with whom we presently do exercise TEC in order to ask them to move in the direction of sister relations (cf Article 95, Consideration 5 and Recommendation 5). New deputies should receive the

mandate to carry out this decision. However, some qualifiers need to be made. After five years of official TEC with FCS, we still do not know if they have accepted our offer of TEC. Discussing issues of mutual concern seems difficult, almost impossible. These matters need to be addressed frankly before deputies engage in discussions about sister relations.

6. No response has been received from the FCS about our concern concerning their practice of pulpit exchanges with Reformed Baptists. Lack of progress on this concern will impede progress towards sister relations and phasing out TEC. Thus the deputies should urgently request answers about this.
7. The deputies report that delegates from our Canadian sister- churches paid a visit to the FCS. Their conclusion was:
“We came away from the meetings with the impression that here is a Church which is faithful to the Lord and which seeks to serve Him in all things. The certain practices are different from what we are used to can not be doubted, but we are of the opinion that those differences do not hinder us from recognising the FCS.”
8. As far as the discussion about the rules for sister relations are concerned the deputies report that the 1991 GA of the FCS addressed this issue. The GA awaits the outcome on discussions with churches in the Dutch tradition desirous of securing sister relations (the Dutch delegates present at this Synod gave a copy of correspondence on this matter; this will be passed along to our new deputies).
9. The FCS received a request from the RCNZ for information about the FCS since the RCNZ decided to “begin negotiations toward establishment of sister relations with the FCS.” This was welcomed by the FCS.
10. The FCS thankfully received a report from their delegates to the 1989 ICRC. This report assured the FCS of the usefulness of the conferences between the churches faithful to the reformed standards. No information is given how the FCS regards the rejection of their proposal that all member churches of the ICRC recognise the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches (see PROCEEDINGS, pages 12-14). This is concern on their part and communication on this matter would be beneficial.
11. The 1990 GA of the FCS encouraged its committee to arrange a regional conference (of the ICRC member churches).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank the deputies and to discharge them from this part of their mandate.
2. To express our thanks for the receipt of the *Acts* of the 1990 and 1991 General Assemblies of the FCS but to express keen disappointment about the lack of communication from the FCS concerning the letter of our deputies (cf Considerations 1,5 and 6).
3. To charge new deputies with the instruction:
 - a. to ascertain whether or not the FCS has indeed accepted our offer of TEC;
 - b. to use the rules for TEC to improve our contacts, especially in the discussions about mutual areas of major concern and our concerns with the FCS (pulpit exchanges and certain views of the FCS regarding the ICRC), so that we can expect eventual sister relations to be fruitful; the rules for TEC are as follows:
 1. to invite delegates to each other’s assemblies/Synods and to

- accord such delegates the privilege of the floor, to convey greetings and allow them to briefly address the assembly/Synod;
2. 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;
 3. 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.
- c. if and when the above has been finished, to discuss with the FCS our decision to phase out TEC and to move in the direction of one relation between churches, i.e. sister relations on the basis of our (revised and amended) rules.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 151

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Committee 4 presents its report (see Articles 155 and 157).

After several rounds of discussion the matter is adjourned till Monday.

ARTICLE 152

SYNOD'S BUDGET

Committee 2 presents its report. After discussion and some adjustments it is **ADOPTED**. The text of the budget appears in Appendix O

ARTICLE 153

ADJOURNMENT

After announcing that Synod's next sitting will be on Monday 8 June and giving details of the programme, the chairman asks Reverend C Bouwman to close the meeting. We sing Psalm 145:3 and 5 and Reverend C Bouwman leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

EIGHTEENTH DAY - Monday, 8 June, 1992

Morning Session

ARTICLE 154

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 56:4 and 5, reading of Isaiah 49:8-23 and prayer. The chairman speaks some encouraging words for this last day of Synod. Elder HJ Dekker is present, replacing Reverend A van Delden. At the request of the chairman, elder Dekker rises to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. The chairman proposes that Reverend C Bouwman be appointed as

vice-chairman for the remainder of Synod. This is agreed to. The chairman outlines the programme for the day. It is agreed that the appointment of deputies be done after Synod has completed the consideration of the church visitation reports.

ARTICLE 155

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Committee 4 presents its amended report (see Articles 151 and 157). After a brief pause a third round of discussion takes place. Reverend W Huizinga tables a counter-proposal. The discussion is adjourned till after the tea break.

ARTICLE 156

RULES FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Committee 3 presents its report. After discussion and amendments it reads:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8a - Byford

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The church of Byford requests that a closing date for incoming correspondence to Synods be stipulated. Byford notes that delegates serving Synod 1990 received "a considerable amount of correspondence of significant importance...up to the last day before...Synod convened."
2. Byford considers that "delegates have the mandate to thoroughly study all correspondence...."
3. Byford recommends:
 - a. that all incoming correspondence, be it new items or correspondence pertaining to items dealt with on previous Synods, be received and placed on the agenda by the convening Church at least four weeks prior to the date Synod convenes.
 - b. that any other correspondence received after this date will not be dealt with unless Synod agrees for exceptional reasons to permit a late submission."

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The present *Rules for Synods* of the FRCA instruct the convening church to place on the draft agenda (Article 3 c):
 - a. all those [items] listed in Article 13 of these Rules;
 - b. all those received from the churches by at least four months prior to the Synod date;
 - c. all deputies' reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of Article 9(b) of these Rules;
 - d. all correspondence received.
2. The Rules instruct the convening church to "forward to the churches -...at least three months prior to the convening of Synod- the draft agenda..." (Article 3b5). The Rules give the convening church no mandate regarding correspondence received after the draft agenda has been sent out.
3. Regarding further correspondence, the Rules stipulate that "after having

adopted the agenda, Synod shall accept no further correspondence” (Article 4e). As such, there is no regulation concerning what ought to be done with correspondence received in the time since the draft agenda was sent out. It would, accordingly, be in place to give instructions to the convening church about what to do with such correspondence.

4. It is true that delegates sent to Synod should have sufficient time to prepare themselves to evaluate the items on the agenda.
5. Sister churches have Synod guidelines stipulating that correspondence be received no later than three weeks (The Netherlands) or four weeks (Canada) before Synod convenes.
6. The Dutch sister churches have allowance for Synod receiving material received after the stipulated closing date if Synod judges that there are exceptional reasons requiring the admission of the late material.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To accede to the request of Byford.
2. To amend the *Rules for Synods* of the FRCA as follows:
 - a. Add to Article 3b1 the words: “and inform the churches of the closing date for correspondence.”
 - b. Add to Article 3b5 the words: “An updated agenda - in triplicate and including documentation - is to be sent to the churches immediately after the closing date for correspondence.”
 - c. Add a new Article 3d: “The closing date for correspondence to be dealt with by Synod shall be set at three weeks prior to the convening date.”
 - d. Change the numbering of Article 3d to 3e.
 - e. Alter Article 4e to read as follows: “On the agenda of Synod shall appear all items submitted to the convening church before the closing date. Items of correspondence received after the closing date shall be included on the agenda only if Synod is convinced that there are exceptional reasons requiring their inclusion. However, after having adopted the agenda, Synod shall accept no further correspondence.”
3. to have the amended *Rules for Synods* printed in the *Acts*.

ADOPTED

The *Rules for Synods* may be found in Appendix M.

ARTICLE 157

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

The discussion is resumed (see Articles 151 and 155). The committee report reads:

MATERIAL:

- Agenda item: 11e - Section I - Deputies' report
- 11t - Section I - Deputies' supplementary report
- 8q - PW Dekker regarding the recognition of other churches
- 8s - K Heerema regarding contacts with other churches

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Deputies appointed to serve Synod 1992 received the following mandate regarding the RPCI:
 - "a. to keep contact at a low level;
 - b. that deputies be given a mandate to study all the materials received and the reports from our sister churches in the Netherlands. If necessary they are to ask the RPCI for more information in order to commence investigation to see whether the RPCI may be recognised as a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 - c. to report to Synod concerning progress made."
2. Deputies have served Synod with quite some information about the RPCI, including its history, current circumstances, confessional standards, the marks of the church, church government, and some general comments about the distinctives of the RPCI. Deputies find all aspects of the RPCI to be positive. Of particular relevance is deputies' discussion regarding the marks of the true church. Deputies regard the three marks confessed in Article 29 to be present.
3. Deputies recommend that "additional study and consideration" is needed concerning the RPCI's distinctives of covenanting and purity of worship. They find this necessary because "they may lead to impediments in future sister relations." A late supplementary report relates that the RPCI has "a special bond with other Covenanting Churches, whereas with Reformed Churches that are not Covenanting in our sense, but are true to their confessional position, we have what you term sister relations..., except that a minister from one of those churches could not join our body unless he was convinced of the rightness of our distinctive principles...."
4. Regarding the RPCI's inter-church relations, deputies inform Synod that the RPCI "has a sister-church relationship with...the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia." Because the RPCA is also a "covenanting church" is the relation with the RPCA "a special bond."
5. In their report, Deputies recommend:
 - "a. that deputies be appointed to maintain contact at the present level;
 - b. to use these contacts to continue discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other, particularly on the matters of covenanting and purity of worship;
 - c. to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister relations on which basis the FRCA and RPCI can move in the direction of becoming sister churches."
6. In their supplementary report, deputies inform us that the contacts between the EPCI and the RPCI "are developing and growing all the time."
7. In their late supplementary report, deputies tell us that "as far as the deputies go, the investigation (of the RPCI) is finished," and so they recommend "to recognise the RPCI as true and faithful churches."
8. K Heerema draws attention to "the contradictions that exist between how we do things at local level..., and at international level." He contends that in practice we have more stringent requirements for recognising churches locally than we have for churches far afield.
9. PW Dekker draws the attention of Synod to what we believe about the church. He urges Synod not to reach out to other churches "at the cost of internal unity."

CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The evidence of deputies regarding the marks of the true church, combined with their sentiment that “the investigation is finished”, give reason for the FRCA to adopt the recommendation of deputies “to recognise the RPCI as true and faithful churches of the Lord,” and consequently offer to them a sister relation (cf *Acts* 1985, Article 67). This is the more so because our common membership in the ICRC obliges us to “the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship.” Further, mutual sister relations have already been established between the RPCI and our Dutch sister churches.
2. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia is a ‘daughter’ church of the RPCI, having achieved autonomy from the Irish church not 20 years ago. This means that we have virtual RPCI’s in our own country. Given that we have (had) no contact at all with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Australia, it is not prudent to recognise the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland at this time. To do so could place us potentially in the same anomaly in which we currently find ourselves in our respective relations with the FCS and the PCEA.
3. The material available in deputies’ report concerning what impact covenanting would have on future sister relations reveals that this distinctive would affect sister relations in as much as ministers accepting a call to that church will be bound beyond the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards. Because a supra-confessional binding is implicit for ministers who would go to the RPCI, it is worthwhile to investigate whether the practice of covenanting would bind one above Scripture.
4. Deputies do not offer information on whether the matter of purity of worship would impact future sister relations. This ought, therefore, yet to be considered.
5. In as much as there should be consistency in what we discuss with different churches, a study on the two points mentioned in Considerations 3 and 4 should not focus only on the RPCI, but should be of a more general nature.
6. As there is no request from the churches to establish any contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, this Synod cannot instruct deputies to investigate these churches. Such investigation will have to wait until (one of) the churches request it.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To thank deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to maintain contact with the RPCI at a low level until such time as we can conclude an investigation of the RPCA;
 - b. to advise the RPCI of this decision;
 - c. to study the matters of covenanting and purity of worship in line with Considerations 3,4 and 5;
 - d. for the sake of consistency, the items mentioned for discussion with the PCEA ought not to be overlooked in any contact with the RPCI.
3. To draw the attention of the churches to Consideration 6.

ADOPTED

As a result the counter proposal lapses

ARTICLE 158

ADJOURNMENT

Synod goes into closed session, in order to deal with church visitation Reports, and appointments.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 159

REOPENING

Open session is resumed at 4.30 pm.

ARTICLE 160

QUESTIONS OF ARTICLE 41 OF THE CHURCH ORDER

The chairman asks each Church the questions in accordance with Article 41 of the Church Order, and one of the delegates from each Church answers in turn.

ARTICLE 161

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

One of the delegates asks a personal question. The matter is deferred to the agenda item dealing with Censure after Article 47 of the Church Order.

ARTICLE 162

CENSURE AFTER ARTICLE 47 OF THE CHURCH ORDER

There is found to be a need for censure, and this is duly exercised. The chairman makes some concluding remarks and then adjourns Synod till the evening session.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 163

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 90:1,6 and 8. The chairman reads Isaiah 55. He then welcomes everyone present.

ARTICLE 164

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 5 and 8 June 1992 are adopted.

ARTICLE 165 APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments are made:

- 1 Publishing of the *Acts* - the first clerk
 - 2 Archives and library of Synods - *Acts*, Article 52
the Church of Bedfordale)
 - 3 Inspection of archives and library - *Acts*, Article 52)
the Church of Byford
 - 4 Treasurer of Synod - *Acts*, Article 152; Appendix O.
Ad. Hordyk
Alternate: JG Versluis
 - 5 Auditors for Synodical treasury
the Church of Kelmscott
 - 6 Deputies for relations with other churches:
 - 6.1 Sister churches
The Netherlands, Canada, South Africa, Korea - *Acts*, Articles 79, 41,
44 and 43. These deputies will also deal with matters relating to the
Book of Praise - *Acts*, Article 103
Reverend A Veldman (convener), Reverend C Bosch, L 't Hart, AMC
Bruning. Alternate H Olde
 - 6.2 Other churches (Reformed)
New Zealand, Reformed Churches of Australia, Singapore,
Zaire/Philippines, Indonesia - *Acts*, Articles 84, 78, 98, 144 and 59.
Reverend W Huizinga (convener), J van Dyk, J Bosveld, L van Burgel
Alternate: W Buist
 - 6.3 Other churches (Presbyterian)
PCEA, Ireland, Scotland - *Acts*, Articles 72, 138, 157 and 150.
Reverend C Bouwman (convener), Reverend C Kleyn, J Bruning,
J Eikelboom, P Posthuma. Alternate: A Slobe
 - 6.4 ICRC - *Acts*, Article 124.
Study Committee
Reverend C Bouwman (convener), Reverend A Veldman, Reverend C
Kleyn. Alternates : J Bruning, L van Burgel
Delegates to ICRC
Reverend C Bouwman, Reverend A Veldman. Alternates: Reverend
C Kleyn, L van Burgel
- These four deputyships will aim to meet together three times.
- 7 Deputies for Bible Translations - *Acts*, Article 141.
Reverend C Kleyn (convener), G Brouwer, G Groenewold, J vander Ros
 - 8 Deputies for Training for the Ministry (Articles 18,19 *Church Order*) - *Acts*,
Article 50
Reverend A van Delden (convener), J Bolhuis, A Schiebaan, A Van Leeuwen
 - 9 Deputies for the Ecumenical Creeds - *Acts*, Article 103
Reverend C Bosch (convener), Reverend A van Delden
 - 10 Pulpit Exchanges - the Church of Albany - *Acts*, Article 51

- 11 Deputies for revision of the *Church Order - Acts*, Article 113, Appendix P.
J Eikelboom (convener), J Numan, S H Terpstra
- 12 Classis Church : the next church in alphabetic order
Second-appeal Church: the preceding church in alphabetic order
It is understood that if another church is instituted, this new congregation takes its place according to its alphabetic order in the list below:

	classis-churchs	second-appeal church
for Albany	Armadale	Legana
for Armadale	Bedforddale	Albany
for Bedforddale	Byford	Armadale
for Byford	Kelmscott	Bedforddale
for Kelmscott	Launceston	Byford
for Launceston	Legana	Kelmscott
for Legana	Albany	Launceston
- 13 Deputies for Church visits
The ministers (Reverend A Veldman - convener),
Alternates - the convener may request the consistory of the church neighbouring the one to be visited to appoint an experienced elder from its midst.
- 14 Deputies for Articles 48,76 *Church Order* - Reverend A Veldman, Reverend C Bouwman, L 't Hart
- 15 Deputies for Article 66 *Church Order* (days of prayer) - *Acts*, Article 100.
the church of Launceston
- 16 Deputies for auditing the books of deputies for Articles 18,19 of the *Church Order - Acts*, Article 86.
the church of Bedforddale
- 17 Convening church for the next Synod :
the church of Byford, place :Byford, time : June 1994

ARTICLE 166

APPROVAL OF PRESS RELEASE

Reverend C Bouwman reads the press release which is then approved.

ARTICLE 167

CLOSING OF SYNOD

The chairman expresses Synod's appreciation and thanks for the good care of the sisters who looked after refreshments, lunches etc. This has been a great help.

He then addresses Synod as follows:

Brothers delegates

We have almost come to the close of the 17th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We have worked together for 18 working days, just one day longer than our predecessor, Synod Armadale 1990. As delegates we have struggled together with the many items which the churches placed on the agenda of this Synod. It was not always easy to come to the most responsible decision. At times, when we could not convince one another, we had to deal with a majority and minority report or with some counter proposals. Yet together we have tried to seek the well-being of the churches.

It is these churches whose task it now is to judge what we have done. Let us pray

that the decisions which have been taken will be well received. However ultimately it is the Lord Himself who will judge our work. May He be merciful to us, also with respect to the work of this Synod. For this work too was defiled with many sins and shortcomings. We pray, therefore, that the King of the church through His Holy Spirit may sanctify the work we have done. May He use it for the upbuilding of His church and the glory of His Name.

In his opening address the chairman of the convening church referred us, as delegates, to Revelation 1, where the glorified Christ reveals Himself to his servant John on the island Patmos as the Alpha and the Omega; as the One who was, and who is, and who is to come, i.e. as the One who is with His church always. Well, as delegates we have indeed experienced His nearness, His love, His care, every Synod day. He it was who through His Spirit and Word led and guided us in all our deliberations and discussions. We have not done this work in our own strength, but in the strength of Him who walks amidst the lampstands.

At the beginning of every new Synod day we were reminded of these mighty promises by opening the prophecies of Isaiah, as we did also at the beginning of this evening session. The Word of God shall not return empty to God, but it shall accomplish that which He purposes. Isaiah 55 confronts us with the majestic working of the powerful Word of God. It points us to our riches as against the poverty of a secularised society. Today many people spend their money for that which is not bread, they labour for that which does not satisfy in a life without God. Yet we may put our trust in Him who will make all things new in and through Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, our Saviour. In a world in which today we still experience the brokenness of sin, we long for the day that this great promise may come true, i.e. the promise of which we sang at the beginning of this Synod with the words of Hymn 46, viz. that Christ may perfect His church in love, cleansed and conformed unto His will.

Brothers, after tonight our ways will part. On behalf of the moderators we will thank you for the confidence placed in us. We hope that it was not ill-placed or abused. As chairman I wish to thank you, my fellow delegates. Please forgive any remark or ruling by which you were hurt or even offended. If at any time I have done anyone injustice, I apologise for it. Together we have sought to serve the Lord, each with his own talents and gifts. We came as brothers, we may depart as brothers one in faith.

On behalf of all delegates I will express a word of gratitude to the hosting church of Bedfordale. We have been made to feel very much at home in this building. The lunches were delicious and every coffee and teabreak there was another surprise on the table. A special word of thanks is in place to the sisters Diek and Heerema who were here every day to cater for us. Thanks also to the ladies of the typing room. What would we have achieved without you?

And now it is time to say farewell. After three weeks of intensive work, we may go back to our normal duties. Brothers, may the Lord be with all of you. May He give especially the delegates of Tasmania and Albany a safe journey home and a happy reunion with their families. May the King of the church also strengthen those who have been appointed as deputies and may He enable them to do their work faithfully. Finally we pray that He who walks amidst the lampstands will bless and keep His churches. May His Spirit and Word guide us also in time to come to direct our path in the truth of His Word.

In conclusion Reverend C Bouwman asks us to sing Psalm 138:1,2. He then leads in prayer.

The chairman closes Synod.

