

APPENDIX 1

Committee Questions to Rev FJ vanHulst, and his answers (refer *Acts*, Article 28)

Questions formulated by the Investigation Committee

1. How do you define conversion with respect to repentance and regeneration?

Regeneration (rebirth) is the work of the Holy Spirit in which someone's moves from his state of spiritual death into the state of being spiritually alive.

From that moment on he has a twofold life.

1. His physical and temporal life (including his flesh which will still cause him to fall into sin every now and then). This flesh is also called the sinful nature, or the old nature. We do not get rid of this sinful nature in this earthly life.
2. The new life, which is spiritual and heavenly. This new life is under control of the Holy Spirit, for since the moment of your rebirth the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Before your rebirth you are under the control of your old nature. After your regeneration your spirit, quickened by the Holy Spirit, starts to fight your old nature. In that process we are renewed into the image of Christ. This is the battle of the Spirit and the flesh as described in Galatians 5 and Romans 7.

Conversion is actually the same as regeneration, but then seen from the side of man.

The conversion is man's personal reaction to his regeneration by the Spirit.

After the regeneration immediately the renewal of life starts, so that we can say indeed, man is converted and also man converts. Think of Augustine's prayer: Lord convert me so that I convert. Or Jeremiah's prayer: Restore me and I will return (31:18)

A converted man really believes and changes his life to become like Christ.

Sometimes, in theological terminology this renewal, which is a lifelong process, is included in the term 'conversion' or even in 'regeneration'. But that is a bit confusing. If it is done it is in theology referred to as 'conversion or regeneration in broader sense'.

The Canons use the words 'conversion' and 'regeneration' in the narrow sense.

This regeneration or conversion is the beginning of the process of renewal, that will take a whole life. (V, Article 1,2)

In their conversion believers are transferred to the Kingdom of Christ.

Before their conversion they are under the dominion of Satan. They are subjected to the powers of darkness. Then they are called out of the darkness into the light so that they may proclaim the wonderful deeds of their Saviour. (III/IV, Article 10)

The Canons speak about conversion as a grace of God that He bestows on whomever He wills and whenever he wills (III/IV 15). He moves them from inside so that they are able to produce the fruit of good works (III/IV, Article 11).

In the last chapter of the Canons we hear more about the life of those 'who have been converted' (V, Article 3). Note that a 'perfect past tense' is used, 'those who have been converted'. They have received the grace of conversion. In that grace that God once conferred upon them, He confirms them time and again until the end of their earthly life.

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What follows after the rebirth/regeneration/conversion is in the Canons not called 'conversion' but 'spiritual renewal'. (III/IV, Article 16).

The Heidelberg Catechism uses the word 'conversion' in one place in a somewhat broader sense, namely in Lord's Day 33, by including the dying of the old nature (mortification) in the conversion. This mortification is a process of more and more to hate sin and flee from it (Question 89). In that sense we could say that the Catechism uses the word 'conversion' to indicate an ongoing process.

However in the same Lord's Day we hear about the coming to life of the new nature. Which is a life-changing event that can not be repeated. (Question 90) See also 1 Peter 1: 23.

Also in Lord's Day 44 the Catechism uses the word 'converted' in the narrow sense again. ('those converted to God'). Those converted to God have started the new life.

I suppose that since this point caused already some confusion in the 16th century that the Synod of Dordt decided to be consistent in its terminology. Conversion is the start of the process of spiritual renewal in which man himself with his whole being is included. Repentance is previous to your conversion. Seen from the point of view of God, even this repentance is worked by the Spirit. So repentance is part of the process of coming to regeneration and spiritual life.

Lord's Day 32 Question 87 explains that you have to convert to God from an ungrateful and impenitent (unrepentant) walk of life. If you do not do that, you forfeit your inheritance of the Kingdom. So the believer certainly has a responsibility here. He is not only passive in the process.

For the gospel comes to people with the calling to repent and to believe.

Repentance is in Greek 'metanoia', renewal of thinking. That applies especially to denying our human mind, so that we can receive a spiritual mind. Our human mind is part of our flesh to be crucified.

For example, we have to believe that it is possible that we are received into grace without any contribution from our side, which is mind-boggling to ordinary human mind. It is so hard to believe that many people settle for legalistic thinking. That is a thinking where you (often unconsciously) expect something of your own good deeds in your justification. Then you can't experience the liberation of your justification. It is even possible to fall back into legalistic thinking after your rebirth! That why we continue to need the preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone, for if we fall back into legalism we become immediately fruitless in our faith life. Then the process of sanctification stops. Further growth is stilted until you return to 'grace alone.'

Regarding the renewal of our thinking, (repentance- resipiscentia- metanoia) we also have to 'see' that Jesus on the cross is not a show of weakness, but a proof of divine power. That requires a complete turn around of human thinking.

So the normal order is repentance under a strict law preaching (combined with believing the promise of forgiveness of sin), then regeneration by the Spirit, then conversion (in narrow sense), then renewal of life (also called 'sanctification'). Do not forget that ultimately this whole process is under control of the Holy Spirit. It all belongs to the making alive of depraved, spiritually dead people.

2. Is the Spirit's work of conversion a life-long process as described in Lord's Day 33 Heidelberg Catechism?

If you use it in the sense of the Canons: No

If you use it in the sense of Lord's Day 33 Question 89, mortification, Yes.

3. Is a person converted with the use of the means of grace or without?

He is converted with the use of means. Namely through powerful preaching of the gospel in which he is called to faith and repentance.

Another important means for coming to faith is the use of the sacrament of infant baptism. That is a support for weak man to believe that his sins are forgiven by grace alone indeed. Completely without his own doing.

You could say: Infant baptism symbolises your election. It does not say that you are elected, but it shows clearly God's gracious initiative for your salvation. Without your knowledge, while you were still an enemy of God, God has reconciled himself with you by bringing his Son on the cross for you. Without your knowledge in your baptism He graciously promises you forgiveness of all the sins you are going to do in your life.

Without your physical existence, God has already elected you.

To believe this amazing message with all your heart, requires an enormous change of thinking. It requires repentance, through a powerful working of the Spirit.

4. How do you regard the unconverted members of the church? Are they "in Christ"? If so, what does this mean?

I have not given a lot of thought to the question whether unconverted members of the church should be considered to be 'in Christ'. I would say that they are in Christ per promise. But the promise has to become a living reality in the appropriation of the promise. Allow me a few more remarks:

a. The children of the covenant are received into grace in Christ.

The promises of the Covenant are for them. But that does not take away that these promises still require personal appropriation.

b. They are also sanctified in Christ. They are adopted to be his children. They have to be nurtured with the gospel so that they can grow and increase in Jesus Christ. In the meantime we continue to pray for our children that they will acknowledge God's grace.

c. If they are elected, they are elected in Christ.

d. Lord's Day 7 states that by true faith we are grafted into Christ. That means also an elected person is grafted into Christ by true faith. Though he might be elected in Christ from eternity, he is only grafted into Christ on the moment of his justification. From that moment on, he is truly and physically in the body of Christ. Then he is also entitled to eat the body of Christ to feed the spiritual life he has received in himself.

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5. Do you regard the unconverted in the church who have professed their faith as having only historical faith?

It is not up to me to make a judgement who is really converted and who is not. It is possible that confessing members have only temporary or historical (fruitless) faith. And no true faith. That is why self-examination must be part of the preaching. Those who do not repent and because of that cannot come to the point of conversion, eat and drink judgement upon themselves (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 31).

6. Is historical faith sufficient for salvation?

No, for it is a faith without the fruits the parable of the sower speaks about.

With this answer please keep in mind that with 'salvation' I do not mean: going to heaven after you die.

Salvation is entering eternal life. That happens on the moment of your regeneration. When you are justified, you proceed from the state of spiritual death to the state of eternal life.

I have often seen that people who had a historical faith all their life, were converted just before their physical death. Only when they had accepted the fact that they were going to die in a very short time, they were finally able to give up their own life and focus on Christ's promise only. A death-bed conversion. Grace.

I deem it even possible that God's grace is so great that someone who had only historical faith all his life, in the moment of his death can ask for grace, when he meets Jesus Christ. But I am not sure of this and I would certainly not propagate this idea. For then this person had an absolute fruitless life and the Bible is certainly not positive about that.

There is a moment that it is too late. Matthew 25:12.

So I would no one encourage to count on that.

Now, when you hear his voice, you have to obey! And now you receive salvation!

That is the gospel!

Unconverted people can physically attend the Holy Supper, but do not receive the truth of it. The body of Christ is exclusively communicated to the true believers. The others take the sacrament to their condemnation.

6. Does the Holy Spirit through preparatory grace, work historical faith only in the elect, or also in the reprobate?

Preparatory grace is mainly outward grace.

You are baptised. You are brought up in a Christian family. You go to the church. You hear the gospel preached to you. You are urged to faith and repentance. That is all preparatory grace. The Holy Spirit works in these things with you, but not in you.

On the other hand we could say he is preparing the soil for sowing the seed of regeneration. He softens the hearts of the elect.

This preparatory grace is in principle resistible. If you refuse to repent and believe, you will not be converted. God will even hold this preparatory grace that He has spent on you, against you. The Spirit worked with you, but you did not believe.

In not believing you are responsible for your own reprobation. God is a righteous God.

If you go to hell, because of your refusal to believe, you first have to admit that God is a righteous God indeed. You have to admit that your reprobation is not caused by his eternal rejection of you, but by your own disobedience to Him. God is not to blame. You only have to blame yourself. Though called to service in his Kingdom, you were a worthless servant and you are thrown into the eternal darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30).

Those who believe the gospel, initially perhaps with a historical faith, will be tested for a while whether they really trust in God and believe in Christ.

This testing usually takes place in the form of a certain suffering. This suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance gives character. And character finally produces hope. (Romans 5: 3-5). This hope is the certainty of faith.

This hope is the main support of our faith. For this hope lives in our hearts. It is planted there by the Holy Spirit who poured out God's love into our hearts.

Everyone who experiences this love of God in his heart is converted. And he knows it. He has received the assurance of his election. He cannot do anything else than love God in his turn. The natural hatred of his heart against God and his neighbour dies and it is replaced by sincere love for God and a hearty concern for his neighbour. This is the death of your old self. From then on, Christ is your life.

Anyone can have historical faith. If someone for certain reasons wants to be accepted by the group he belongs to, it is not so hard to outwardly accept the beliefs and moral standards of this group. He can also convince himself that he really believes with his heart. If the group around him (the church) just accepts that as true faith, without preaching the necessity of regeneration (i.e. without an urgent call for self-examination), then he might never come from his historical faith to true faith. He might in false security be vainly boasting that he has what he does not have.

Faith is more than accepting certain doctrines or certain lifestyle. True faith is placing complete trust in Christ. If this need for true faith is not seriously preached, (and certain people who cherish a false security, might be annoyed with it), then the church is co-responsible for someone's reprobation.

Co-responsible I say, God ultimately holds each person personally responsible.

False teaching or poor teaching of the gospel in your church is no excuse.

7. Is historical faith part of the Spirit's irresistible work of regeneration?

No. Until the point of regeneration / conversion the preparatory grace is resistible.

Even elect people might resist the Holy Spirit for a long time, before the light comes through.

Those who persevere in their resistance, i.e. refuse to believe are responsible for their own condemnation.

We have to be very careful in speaking about God's reprobation. We should make sure that we do not blame Him for the condemnation of people who refuse to believe. Their lack of faith is not because God did actually not seriously offer them grace.

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"What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath- prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy whom He has prepared in advance for glory...? (Romans 9:22,23)

Note in these two verses the sharp formulation:

The reprobate ..are prepared for destruction.

The elect ..are prepared by God for glory.

There is a double predestination. But there are not two decrees. There is one decree.

Those who respond to the outward calling with faith and repentance, will (usually after a period of testing) receive the inward calling. This inward calling by the Spirit is irresistible for man. He can't do anything else than respond to it.

Seen from the point of view of God the grace of conversion of the elect is invincible (insuperabilis).

Take note that I am not saying that historical faith is a necessary stage in someone's life. Only those brought up in the church usually go through such a stage. They can for a long time accept the doctrine with their mind, they can also adapt to the accepted lifestyle, but it can be that they do not experience the heartfelt joy of the new life in them. They do not yet know by experience the love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.

On the other hand a prostitute or drugs addict of whatever, might be born again straightaway, only by accepting the love of Christ which is offered him or her by a witnessing Christian. At that moment she/he might not have the vaguest idea of the complete Christian doctrine. He only believes and experiences in his heart that God loves him indeed. And that can cause the great life change of conversion straightaway. Such a person did not need much to detest himself. Life without God, life without love had brought him that far, that he realised that he needed help from outside.

One witness of a Christian can bring him to the Saviour Jesus Christ.

"indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last"

Luke 13 :30

To those to whom much is given, from them much will be asked.

8. Is it the will of God or the will of man that determines whether the preparatory grace of the Spirit (who works 'historical faith') proceeds to true faith?

This question is based on several misunderstandings.

Everything happens ultimately completely according to the holy and perfect will of God. (Belgic Confession, Article 13)

Therefore the word 'determine' cannot be used. This term stems from heathen fatalism, which is a distortion of the biblical doctrine of predestination. The difference between determinism and predestination is that in predestination every man can be held personally responsible for all his actions.

In the fatalistic (deterministic) distortion of the doctrine of predestination people argue as follows:

If I am elected then whatever I do, I am going to heaven anyway.

If I am not elected, then whatever I do, I am going to hell anyway.

In both cases human responsibility is taken away. That is an offence to God who is righteous.

God gives true faith to the elect. So via preparatory grace (outward calling), He moves on to irresistible grace (inward calling). He predestines, calls, justifies, glorifies. But that is the story seen from the point of view of God.

From the viewpoint of man the picture is different. Man is not informed about his personal election. He only hears the outward calling to faith and repentance.

He has to make a decision himself whether he wants to deny himself and follow Christ. He has to repent and believe the gospel.

He has to embrace Christ with true faith.

If he does that, he is tested and in the way of perseverance, he receives the firm hope.

This hope is the assurance of his election.

Looking back, he can only praise God, for bringing him to the point of surrender to Christ, for supporting him in the testing of his faith and for granting him the grace of faith and conversion (Canons III/IV, Article 14). It is all Gods work. It is through predestination. The believer who has come to this point, perfectly understands that if he were left by himself in the process, he would never have come to this true faith. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

If someone does not believe the gospel of grace, then the wrath of God remains on him. He signs for his own condemnation. He is left by God in his own wickedness and hardness. The gospel offer was seriously meant. Also for the one who ultimately proves to be reprobate. God is a righteous God.

Take into account that the whole world is condemnable before God (Canons I, Article 1)

The rule is that everyone deserves reprobation.

That God makes exception on this rule for a certain number of people is his eternal decree of election.

I cannot work with 'the will of man that determines...'. That is unconfessional language.

The confession says:

Some do not believe the joyful message of the gospel. The cause of this unbelief is in themselves. It is their own guilt. (Canons I, Articles 4 and 5)

Others receive the gospel and embrace Jesus the Saviour with a true and living faith. They respond to the call for faith and repentance and receive faith in Jesus Christ and salvation as a free gift. (Canons I, Article 5)

Moving on from historical faith to true faith somehow includes also a decision of man. Namely to repent and to seek his salvation outside himself in Christ. In this process a lot of prayer is necessary. the preaching has to encourage people to do this. Without constant prayer you cannot receive the Holy Spirit in you (Lord's Day 45). So here is definitely personal responsibility involved.

But again, when you ultimately receive the grace of conversion, you would not think of boasting in yourself that you did the right thing. Even the very beginning of giving attention to the gospel you heard, is still a gift of grace. You get never over the amazement and thankfulness that God made you respond to the call to believe and repent.

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9. Are there conditions or pre-requisites to conversion? If so, which?

No. However, from the above it can be clear that there usually is a long way to go.

But that I would not describe that as conditions or pre-requisites in man.

What is needed is humility, being prepared to listen, being prepared to give away your life for Christ, denying yourself, taking up your cross.

You might call that pre-conditions. It is the attitude, mainly.

By the same token it is still the Holy spirit who has to make you humble.

10. Do you keep your opinion about someone's conversion as a 'private opinion' or have you expressed your doubts about the conversion of some of those who have professed their faith and amend their life? If you do express doubts, how does this fit in with Canons III/IV Article 15?

I try to keep my private opinions for myself. Whether I have always been able to do this is a different thing. Expressing such opinions is risky, for I do not know people's hearts.

There are people of whom I believe that they have not yet been called. They might be stuck in historical faith and be perfectly happy with that. For them I pray that God will grant them the grace of conversion.

If I would let them know that I pray for their conversion, they would certainly experience that as haughtiness, so I cannot do that. (Canons III/IV, Article 15)

If someone seriously desires to be converted to God, to please Him only and to be delivered from the body of death, and yet cannot reach that point on the way of godliness and faith that he would like (Canons I, Article 16), and would speak to me as pastor about it, then we would pray together. Usually after shorter or longer time he will receive it. But I cannot guarantee that of course, since God is not obliged to give the grace of conversion at the time we desire it.

But such situations do not often occur, for it requires quite some humility to admit that you desire to be converted because you feel you are not yet. (Canons I, Article 16)

Usually people are too proud to admit a lack of spiritual life. It is very hard to help them. For with a direct approach you create usually a greater resistance.

If the mind has not changed, then it is impossible to think spiritually.

So a direct question to an unconverted person: are you converted? is only threatening.

His flesh spontaneously resists.

Only a general call for self-examination can bring forth the desired fruit.

Also the example of people around you can create the desire to be converted yourself.

11. How do you deal with unconverted in the church as far as discipline is concerned?

12. How do you deal with the converted in the church as far as discipline is concerned?

I assume that most baptised members are unconverted. To them you have to show lots of love and lots of patience. Preach the gospel. Make the voice of the Good Shepherd audible to them. They might respond in faith, for Christ's own sheep recognise his voice.

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Since the love of God is not yet in an unconverted person, I would be very careful with church discipline for baptised members. Church discipline should have the effect of medicine. But applying medicine to a dead body cannot make the person alive.

By placing unconverted baptised members under church discipline, you might be able to create an outward life change. But that is not the same as spiritual repentance. That is only bringing them back under the law. Which is not necessarily always a bad thing, of course.

But we should not call it church discipline. For what you actually do in such a case is: reinforcing parental discipline with elders' authority (power). This usually has the opposite effect. Then the hope for real repentance might be still further away.

I can see room for a public chastisement of a baptised member, if the person in question is a source of defilement for other church members. Point him out as a notorious sinner. For such a public warning, I think you do not have to go all the way of church regulations for church discipline. Keep him on the membership roll so that he receives regular attention. But in the meantime warn the congregation, by all means.

A confessing member is supposed to be converted. Otherwise he should not partake in the Holy Supper.

If someone is converted he might still fall into serious sin. Swift discipline should be exercised in such a case. With lots of love, but the process should be a matter of weeks rather than months. A re-born person can respond to discipline applied in love. For the imperishable seed of regeneration is in him.

One finger of Nathan was sufficient to convince David of a sin that he had been hiding for a long time. The love of God that is poured out in a converted heart can easily be rekindled so that placed under discipline, the person soon repents.

Since for a long time we have not given enough attention to the need for regeneration and therefore not enough stressed the need for self-examination, I think that we have allowed unconverted people to make profession of their faith. I am not doubting anyone's sincerity with which he professes his faith.

But in my opinion the doctrine of the Canons regarding the need for conversion has not received sufficient attention for a long time. I hold myself co-responsible for that, for as a minister in the church I should have given earlier attention to what they really say.

Now we are in this situation we have to show lots of love and patience in all discipline cases. The discipline cannot work as medicine in unconverted people. So therefore usually they do not mind at all being cut off from the body of Christ, neither being banned from the Kingdom.

For an unconverted person discipline might still work as a shock treatment to rethink his life. Some unconverted came via that way to true spiritual repentance followed by a whole new life. Not because they feel forced by a law, but because they feel motivated by love for God.

But in general our discipline approach should be focusing rather on bringing the gospel of grace and the message of God's love in a personal form, than be considered as applying medicine to a heart (which was never alive in the first place.)

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Ecclesiology

1. What is the relationship between the doctrine of the church and regeneration or conversion? Do all those who are converted become members of the holy catholic church by way of this conversion? If so how do you understand Article 28 of the Belgic Confession which requires believers to join the true church?

Lord's Day 21 states that the Holy Catholic Church is gathered, defended and preserved by Christ. This church is chosen to everlasting life. Since a church as institute can not be chosen for everlasting life, the Catechism speaks here about the elect people of God. This church is characterised by the unity of true faith. Ephesians 4:1-6: *"there is one body and one Spirit..."*
To become a living (!) member of this church needs rebirth. You have been brought from spiritual death to spiritual life.

1 Peter 1:3-5 *"In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time"*

Being a living member of this church needs true faith, so this is a spiritual matter. You might have been an heir of the Kingdom since you were elected, but as long as you have not appropriated the promises of God with true faith, you are not made alive yet. From God's point of view you are to be raised from the dead. You are to be called by the life-giving voice of the Holy Spirit. He speaks to you by means of the gospel of grace. This makes the gathering of the Catholic Church by Jesus Christ a dynamic process. The Catholic church is in the process of being built up. All the elect have to be called in.

Note: I am not saying that the Catholic Church is only to be considered as the complete number of elect as they have been counted by God before the beginning of this world. A. Kuyper promoted that idea and was rightly criticised for it..

This Catholic Church of Lord's Day 21 is identical with the Catholic Church of Article 27 Belgic Confession.

"It is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by his blood and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit."

A true believer is someone who has true faith.

To become a true believer, you have to expect your entire salvation in Jesus Christ. You have to believe that your works in no way come into account with your justification. You appropriate God's promise of forgiveness of sin by grace alone, and then you are washed indeed by his blood. In your regeneration your conscience is set free. You receive in your heart the seal of ownership.

Ephesians 1:13 *"Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption..."*

All those who belong to this holy church are joined and united with one another with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

Since the Apostles' Creed says: *I believe one Holy Catholic Church*, and not: *I see one Holy Catholic Church*, we have to assume that this Holy Catholic Church has certain invisible aspects. That can be clear from the fact that this Catholic Church includes e.g. Adam and Eve (from the beginning of the world) and also those who will be born in the future.

But that the Church is ultimately a spiritual matter, an object of faith, does not mean that it remains invisible. Spiritual life always becomes visible. In the first place we can think of the sanctification of someone's life. Fruits of (invisible) faith show (visible).

True believers become visible when they come out for their faith, when they seek each other in the unity of faith to express their belonging to Christ. So their faith is revealed when they start to seek visible unity with visible believers in a visible church. Then you arrive at the duty Article 28 is talking about: Join the church. Joining the church is a visible action in joining a visible church. Before you make a choice with whom you join, make sure that you have to do with a true church. Check the marks (Article 29).

I believe that the Catholic Church which only Christ Himself can oversee, is perfect. It is completely his work.

But the moment the Catholic Church takes a visible form in the coming together of true believers for worship, there comes immediately a human element to it.

It is still Christ who calls, but as soon as people start to respond to this calling, all kinds of weaknesses are mingled with the good things in the church. Also true believers are imperfect and sinful people. However seriously they take their calling to be a true church and to preach the gospel faithfully there will always be a human element that spoils the perfection. A true church will never be 100% pure. *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. We have to take this into account when we speak about a local church, which is a manifestation of the Catholic Church. The church as we meet it in its concrete form on earth is always defiled with sin. The doctrine is e.g. not 100% perfect. And even if the doctrine would be really perfect, then the interpretation of the doctrine can easily move away from truth.

That is why we have to be careful in discerning what is a true church and what is not.

A true church is also not a perfect church as far as membership goes. Hypocrites are mixed along with the true believers. These people confess to be Christians, but they do not have the sealing of the Spirit. For a variety of reasons they have joined the church or do not leave the church where they have grown up.

From God's point of view it might be that these hypocrites are elect, but they have not come yet to the point of accepting the promises and asking for a personal relationship with Christ. We do not know these things about people. We are not to make judgements on someone's heart.

Even if a true believer would know for sure, that his brother in the church is still a hypocrite, he is not allowed to say that. For that is not edifying the body of Christ. You might take away the possibility for the hypocrite to repent.

Ephesians 4:2: *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love"*

Ephesians 4:7 *"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ has apportioned it"*

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An important point to understand is that the attributes that belong to the Catholic Church are in the Bible also given to every true congregation of Christ. Holy, Catholic, Christian. E.g. Though ultimately only the Catholic church is the bride of Christ every local Christian congregation may call itself 'bride of Christ'. However imperfect and impure this congregation may be. The same applies to the expression 'the body of Christ'. Every New Testament congregation is in the Bible simply called 'the church'.

Christ gathers his true children from those who since their birth belong to the church and from those who, through the service of the visible church, are called to faith and repentance (mission and evangelism). The advantage for those who are grafted into the Christian church by baptism, is that from the beginning of their life, they have promises of the faithful God. They are called to believe the sincere promises of God. They are invited to embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour as soon as they come to an age that they can understand.

The disadvantage for those who since birth belong to a visible true church might be that they could take it as a given that their formal belonging to the church, makes them already true believers. This is a real danger.

For then church members might become like the "Lord, Lord-callers" from Matthew 7: 21-23. They prophesy in Christ's name, they perform miracles in Jesus' name. They show everything that we would call fruits of faith. But yet, since they never entered the kingdom of heaven by true faith, Jesus does not know them. They are called evildoers. Self examination must be preached to the "Lord, Lord-callers"!

The principle order of Article 27 and Article 28 Belgic Confession is: Come to faith by rebirth and then join a true church. This reflects also the practical situation in the 16th century. Many people were reborn by hearing a travelling preacher, but then they were scared to join a group of Christians who had their public worship services. This joining which makes you visible as a believer might cost you your earthly life. Yet they were called to do it, for the Kingdom of heaven had to be promoted by the service of the (visible) church. You had to join in with the church's effort to preach the true gospel.

Today, however, the practical situation is completely the opposite. If you are born in the church, but you have no faith and have no real spiritual interest, it actually takes more guts to leave the church (friends, family), than to stay. The local church provides a certain security, a social safety-net. Leaving this church might rather bring you the physical punishment Article 28 speaks about, than joining the church.

2. You were able to attend the services and the Lord's Supper of a non-sister church. Does this indicate a broader view on the church than in the Three Forms of Unity?

No. It indicates my faith in the Catholic Church. It indicates my belief that this holy church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. It indicates my belief that my sins are washed by Christ's blood. It indicates that I am joined and united with heart and will in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith with all who share this faith with me.

3. Since a person's participation in the Lord's Supper symbolises one's unity with the body of Christ, how do you view your unity with St. John's Presbyterian church in Hobart?

The Lord's Supper is not a Free Reformed Supper, neither is it a Presbyterian Supper. It is the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the communion with his blessed body. Since I know the preaching of the gospel in St John's is completely scriptural and the administration of the sacraments is pure, I have no hesitation to partake as a guest in their celebration of the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, if invited to do so. It is easy to recognise that this church is a true church in the sense of Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.

And therefore it is surely a manifestation of the Catholic Church. I have unity of faith with all the true believers in St John's and I feel called to express that by sharing the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That there is not a visible ecclesiastical unity between our bond of Free Reformed churches with the Presbyterian Churches of Australia as a bond, is a different story altogether.

I cannot establish such an ecclesiastical unity on my own. Neither can my consistory. Official relationships between different bonds of churches are to be decided upon by their respective Synods. Before you would do that, I suppose a lot of investigation has to be done.

4. You (with your consistory) strongly contribute and promote unity with the (local) Reformed Church of Australia. The developments toward unity proceed much faster and much further than the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as a whole proceed. Again, does this indicate a broader view on the church than is practised within the Free Reformed Churches of Australia?

I do not understand the word 'again'. It seems to suggest that this question has been asked earlier. I suppose that you think you are reiterating Question 2. I responded to Question 2 with 'No'

The new question : Does this indicate a broader view on the church than is practised within the Free Reformed Churches of Australia?, can be answered with 'Yes'.

Within the Free Reformed Churches of Australia unfortunately the meaning of Articles 27 - 29 of the Belgic Confession is completely misunderstood.

In my opinion this is caused by a lack of historical insight. I have the impression that if in our churches people speak about joining the true church, that they think in terms of a bond of churches. They would say e.g. "I believe that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is the true church", or somewhat softer: "I believe that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is a true church".

I believe both sayings to be in contradiction with the confession.

Article 28 does not speak about a bond of churches, but about a local congregation. That is the church. Namely the Catholic Church of Article 27 manifesting itself on a local level.

Article 27 has indicated that the Catholic Church is one in faith, hope and love. But this holy church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world.

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I cannot read that in any other way than that we cannot confine or limit the holy church to one particular bond of churches, or to one particular international organisation of churches. Belonging to a certain bond or organisation cannot make a church (a congregation) true or false. Not a bond, but truth decides whether a church is true or false.

Articles 28, 29 point out how this dispersion shows in reality and advise the true believers how to deal with it.

Article 28, the duty to join the church is not speaking about joining a bond of churches.

As a believer you cannot apply for membership of a bond of churches. Only a church can do that. A believer can only apply for membership of the church. That is a local congregation in which the Catholic Church becomes manifest. This church is to be recognised by the marks of the church (Article 29).

We have to realise that when in 1561 Guido de Bres wrote this confession, there was nothing like a bond of churches. There were only lots of small home congregations. Each was correctly and scripturally called 'church'. That is, if they showed the marks of the true Catholic Church.

Only in 1568 there was a first attempt to organise something like a bond of true churches in order to help each other, to encourage each other, to do things together etc.

But joining such a bond, is a free choice for a local church. Without breaking the unity of the Catholic Church, a church can decide to join another bond of churches, if they with a good conscience before the Lord are convinced, it is prudent to do so. Once you as church have decided to join a bond you have a responsibility for the other members of that bond as long as you are part of it. Therefore leaving a bond of churches should not be done lightly, but e.g. for the sake of your local calling as church, it can be necessary.

In the time of Guido de Bres there were already many sects around. They also claimed the name 'church'. But they did not have the right to do so. That is why the believers had to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God what the true church is.

Since the Word of God is the truth, you have to discern what is a sect, or a false church or the true church. Which is easy to do, according to the confession. As a true believer I do not need a Synod decision to do that for me.

The word 'recognise' in Article 29 is something different from what seems to be understood in our circles. In my Synod experiences in Australia I have found that people are inclined to think that 'recognising a true church' is making an official statement as Synod about another bond of churches. That, in my opinion, is unconfessional language.

If we after more than 15 years of contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia still find it hard to 'recognise' them as true churches, we implicitly deny the 'easily recognised' of Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.

A bond of churches (even not the Free Reformed Churches of Australia) is not placed by the Lord in a position of giving that kind of official statements about other bonds of churches in the country, or in the world.

If we recognise the marks of the church in other churches who belong to a different bond of churches, a Synod can decide to start an ecclesiastical relationship with those churches. And of course that requires a kind of judgement (Is it our calling? Is it beneficial? etc). But our official statement about a church cannot make a church true or false. Only truth does that.

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According to Article 29 the question has to be asked whether a specific group of believers is a manifestation of the Catholic Church in dispersion, or not. If it is, then you have found the true church. This true church is open for all true believers. If a true believer is not accepted in a group of believers for whatever (unspiritual) reason, then you have to do with a sect. A club that wants to stay on their own for the wrong reasons. The word 'sect' means that it has cut off itself from the Catholic Church.

A true believer who for whatever reason stays apart from the Church as it reveals itself in a local group of believers, is acting as a sectarian. But Article 28 is very careful in judging such an act of non-joining: it is against God's ordinance.

Apart from sects there were and there are also false churches. They are not called sects, for they are open for everyone to join, but their problem is: they cherish a false or distorted doctrine. For a true believer that is not the place to go either. The Catholic Church does not reveal itself in a false church.

Moreover the true believer joining a false church or remaining in a false church brings himself in danger of losing the truth. He would certainly not want his children to be there, for the chance that they will discover truth in a false church is very small. Stay away from it, if you seek the church. Break with it, if you are part of it.

You were asking whether my view on the church is broader than is practised within the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. I have already responded "Yes".

But I can say a bit more about the Free Reformed Churches of Australia church-view-practice.

Our Synod decisions over the past years (especially regarding Presbyterian churches and ICRC) are proof that we are limiting and confining the Catholic Church to a certain bond of churches. This is an offence to the Son of God who gathers preserves and defends his church out of the whole human race in the unity of true faith. It is also a direct denial of Article 27 of the Belgic Confession.

Moreover we show the same mentality as the sectarians who wanted to stay on themselves for the wrong reasons. They wanted to cherish their own particular pieces of doctrine but refused to work together with Christ in the gathering and preserving and defending of the Catholic Church. That is acting against the ordinance of God.

If leading church members (ministers or magazine writers) place an almost exclusive emphasis on the importance of belonging to the visible true church, they are misleading the flock. They teach called children of the Lord, to trust in their membership of a church which considers itself to be the true church with exclusion of many others. This wrong emphasis can ultimately lead to idolatry with the visible church. If such an idol is not hacked down to pieces, true faith can hardly enter into people's hearts and true conversion will not be experienced.

The emphasis must remain on the calling of being 'a member of Christ'. This is a spiritual matter.

Belonging to the true church can be a matter of only being a member of the true (local, visible) church. We have to keep warning that a 'visible' membership (being in the books of the true church) cannot save you.

If there is too much emphasis on belonging to the true church, real spiritual life easily peters out.

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Then we end up with the same situation as the church in Corinth where divisions dominated the church scene. (1 Corinthians 1)

Then Paul warns us with this warning: *"You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says: 'I follow Paul' and another 'I follow Apollos' are you not mere men?"* (1 Corinthians 3 : 3,4)

Let us rather pray for the grace of understanding so that we can become spiritual again. As churches and as Synod.

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him for God's temple is sacred and you are that temple. Do not deceive yourselves" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17)

Coming back to the specific question about the local Reformed Church of Australia. With the brothers and sisters there we share the true faith of Article 27 of the Belgic Confession. We are joined together by it. Now we are seeking to express that also in a visible way. We have to do that carefully and patiently. But the calling of Article 28 remains, for us and for them, especially because we have the very same confession. So both of us are under the same divine obligation. And we try to act carefully according to this calling.

To have only ecclesiastical ties with churches at an enormous geographical distance (Tasmania- Western Australia) can be rather convenient. But we do not have a calling to make it easy for ourselves but rather we have the calling to be obedient, also in regards to the calling for visible union with all the true believers. That applies in the first place on the local level.

How this visible unity has to be pursued, is a matter of prayer and discussion.

How far we can come with creating a more visible unity of the Catholic Church in Launceston, is in the hands of the Lord.

At this moment we are only in the beginning stage of getting to know each other. If you do not know each other it is hard to love each other. So that is where we started.

Consistory treads carefully, for we have responsibility for a congregation too.

That takes time. We recognise them as true church of Christ, that was easy enough.

But we have not made official declarations about them. We will not do that either.

There may come a time that we make an official declaration about our relationship.

We still have no official (formal) relationship with each other. But since when do you have to be engaged or married to someone before you can make a first move to get to know each other?

If a Synod wants to make an official statement about the relationship with the Reformed Churches of Australia as bond of churches, that is a different story.

In discussions with the Synod investigation committee, I also got the impression that there is no clarity on the point of how to speak about the (local visible) true church. Can you call that the body of Christ? Can you call that the bride of Christ? Can you call that the family of God? Can you call that the temple of the Holy Spirit?

I answer all these questions without hesitation affirmative.

That is exactly the beauty of it, that Christ wants a to call a struggling, sinful congregation: his bride. He sees her already as his perfect creation. The true church is perfect in the sight of God indeed. Just as a true believer is.

I do not want to take anything away from that. But a warning is in place.

It is true indeed that someone who is engrafted into the church by baptism enters the body of Christ. He is part of the bride of Christ. He is in the temple of the Holy Spirit. He can be called a temple of the Holy Spirit etc.

But this speaking is comparable with what we call the 'sacramental way of speaking'.

Lord's Day 27 Question 73. God does speak in this way for a good reason. He wants to teach us and assure us of something. This promise is for you, but the promise becomes a reality in the act of faithful accepting of this promise.

All the members of the true church are in the body of Christ (sacramental language). This way of speaking urges you in the strongest possible way to believe this. But only when you accept this promise with true faith (your justification), you are engrafted into Christ, into his real body. (Lord's Day 7)

If there is in church-members no response of faith, which shows in the fruits, then there can come a moment that they are cut off from the body of Christ. That is also a sacramental way of saying. For they were never in the real body of Christ, though they enjoyed all the benefits from it.

For those once sealed by the Spirit in the assurance of their election cannot fall out of the Catholic Church again. You cannot be removed from the real body of Christ. Christ's body cannot be mutilated. The Canons therefore clearly teach the perseverance of the saints. Anyone can leave or be cut off from the true church, but no one can kick a true believer out of the Catholic Church. Not even the devil or yourself have such a power. Once you have received the seal of the Holy Spirit, it can't be made undone.

If a true church cuts a true believer off, it shows by doing just that, the marks of the false church. A false church persecutes those who live holy lives according to the Word of God and who rebuke the false church for its sins, greed and idolatries. (Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.)

5 You (with your consistory) endorse common Bible study for the senior youth with the local Reformed Church. Does this indicate a differing view on the church?

As far as I know I have never endorsed this, neither has my consistory.

Personally I would encourage it, if it would come up, but as I indicated in the previous answer, we have to tread carefully. The spiritual interests of our youth are important to us, but also parents have to be taken along in spiritual growth. This might take a while. But that should not keep us from taking small steps now and then.

Bible study with people from various backgrounds is always beneficial for your own growth in understanding. If we do never interact with other believers, we become confused in our doctrine ourselves before we know.

Moreover to study the Bible with other people is the only way for us to get the truth of God's Word across to them.

I suppose promoting this kind of interaction with other believers or unbelievers, indicates a differing view on the church than certain people in our churches promote.

The true church is always busy with sharing the Word of God with those outside Christ. They have to be called to faith and repentance. You can only do that with the Bible in your hand.

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6. You do not appear to discourage members of the church from seeking Christian marriage partners from other churches. If this is correct, why not?

As a pastor I am in general not in the business of discouraging people.

I am always encouraging people to find a marriage partner in the Lord. For that is what the Bible tells us to do. If you marry, make sure that you marry in the Lord.

This also applies within the church. Marrying a church member is not automatically marrying in the Lord.

The important point is not that someone is in the church, but that he is in Christ. And that is not the same.

In our local situation, the choice for marriage partners within the Free Reformed church is very limited. In stead of just seeking courtship with an unbeliever, I rather encourage them to find at least a Christian as a partner.

When I find out someone is courting an unbeliever, I try to speak to the couple. If I find that there is no interest in the gospel at all, then I command my congregation member in Christ's name to break the relationship. You could call that discouraging of mixed courtships. What has Christ in common with Belial?

I also discourage 'mixed marriages' where one partner remains in our church and the other one in another. The church question should be solved and decided upon before the marriage. I can assist in that choice, but the ultimate choice is their own responsibility before the Lord. They have to give account for their choice.

Forgiveness of sins

1. Is it necessary for those who have been converted to ask for forgiveness of sins on a daily basis?

Regarding the forgiveness of sins I do not make a distinction between converted and not converted people.

I preach to each and every believer that God has really forgiven all their sins as often as they by true faith accept the promise of the gospel. In my opinion we should not emphasise that people have to ask for forgiveness of sins. We have to emphasise that they have to believe the promise that their sins have been forgiven. Believing this promise makes you a true believer. Then you can claim that Christ has died for all your sins. That he has paid the debt you have made and are making all the time.

I can not quite understand what you mean with asking for forgiveness of sins on a daily basis.

If you think of unconscious sins (daily sins?) you might have done, then you better ask that the Holy Spirit makes you aware of those unconscious sins, so that you can confess them and fight them.

If you think of sins you have done and are aware of, you have to confess them to the Lord and give Him thanks that they too have been covered by the blood of Christ. Pray then that the Spirit may enable you to get over this sin. And believe that He will do this. In the meantime you have to take responsibility that it is your sin and that you are also responsible to break with this sin. You have to continue to work out your salvation (Philippians 2:12)

If you think of the good works you have done which are defiled by the flesh, I would say the following. Do not boast in your good works as if you did it yourself.

It is God who did it in you. The good works which you do out of true faith, are completely in accordance with God's law. They are to His glory. And He rejoices in it.

Do not ask for forgiveness of the human weakness with which you did these good works. For then you actually deny that God did these works in you and through you.

In God's eyes your good works are perfect and completely acceptable. In the meantime your works are defiled by the flesh and do deserve punishment indeed, but also of this defilement applies: Christ has already taken the punishment for it. Those who believe this,

have therefore a free conscience. The burden of sin is taken away from their conscience. So there is no so much reason to ask for forgiveness as there is reason to ask for true faith to believe the forgiveness of your sins, so that you can truly experience freedom of conscience and can rejoice in it.

The point I try to make is that the forgiveness of sins is yours per promise. And it is not the asking, or the seriousness, or the humility with which you ask, which makes this forgiveness a reality in your relationship with God, but true faith that not only to others but also to me forgiveness of all my sins is granted. This faith is worked in my heart by the Holy Spirit.

If someone is burdened by uncertainty whether his sins are really forgiven, I encourage him not to ask and ask again until he feels lifted from the burden, but I rather encourage him to believe the promise that for the repentant sinner all the sins are forgiven indeed.

I have found in pastoral practice that many people think that forgiveness of sins comes to them in the way of daily asking for it. They have an idea in their mind that sins pile up during the day. At the end of the day in an evening prayer, they ask for forgiveness and then the slate is clean for the day. I consider that a Roman Catholic misunderstanding.

A true believer stands (with all the humility that is befitting sinful man) in the forgiveness of sin. *Otherwise he would be always in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be constantly tormented, if they did not rely on the merit of the death and passion of our Saviour (Art 24 BC)*

What everyone should do is: claim the forgiveness of sins in faith.

Plead on the promise made in your baptism: Your sins are forgiven. Everyone once baptised, can go back to this promise, converted or unconverted.

In the Covenant you are entitled to forgiveness of sins. Christ has died for your sins. God will not hold back this forgiveness from you. For He is a righteous God.

Only when you do not forgive your debtors, (those who sinned against you or did injustice against you) then God in his anger holds back the forgiveness of your sins. For if you have not forgiven every person for whatever they might have done to you, you prove that you do not believe that your own sins have been forgiven by grace alone. Then God's wrath remains on you, until you come to faith.

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"I believe the forgiveness of sins". This is one of the twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed. Also here is the emphasis rather on the believing that on the asking.

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It does not say: I believe that I can ask for forgiveness of sins and that they then will be forgiven. No I believe the forgiveness of sin. That is, I believe that God will no more remember my sins, nor my sinful nature.

I claim the forgiveness of sins with just as much confidence as that I claim my daily bread. "Give us today our daily bread"

I take my daily bread that is available already on the table, for I know it is a gift of God. And it is meant for me to eat it with a free conscience and praise the Lord for it.

I invite my own children who sit at my table to take whatever they want to eat. Here children this is for you! You are entitled to it as my children.

If one of my children when I pass them a piece of bread would say, please Dad I know I am absolutely unworthy, but can I please have this bread then I say: Listen I have given it to you. Believe that you are my child. Take it and eat it. I expect my children to behave as my children and not as beggars.

God has made us his children. We have to believe that and act accordingly.

With all humility of course, for it is grace to be called as a child of the Lord.

As God's child I have to accept the forgiveness of my sins with humility and thankfulness.

As true child of God who was made his lawful child by Jesus Christ, I am entitled to it. And that is a matter of faith. I permanently seek the forgiveness of my sins and my righteousness in Christ My Saviour.

In terms of reconciliation with God.

Romans 5:10 *"For if when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."*

This text says that God reconciled with us when we were still enemies. That is the gospel to be preached to everyone. This ministry of the gospel implores people to be reconciled with God: The available reconciliation becomes effective when someone accepts this gospel with true faith. Then he also experiences his reconciliation with God (which exists in the forgiveness of his sins) with great joy. He knows for sure that his sins are really forgiven.

The Law of God

- 1. What function does the law of God serve for the unconverted?**
- 2. Must the law of God still be preached strictly to those who have been converted? Why or why not?**

I make indeed a distinction between the law for the converted or for the unconverted.

Not that the law is different, but there is a difference in use of the law.

When I preach I am aware that I speak to a mixed bunch of people in the church. Unbelievers, true believers, hypocrites. But I do not address them separately, of course.

I speak to them as the congregation for whom Jesus Christ has given his life. But they have to examine themselves whether they really believe that their sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ's blood only.

To the whole congregation the Ten Commandments are to be preached strictly.

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To the unconverted the Ten Commandments have to be preached as a law. That is as a law demanding a perfect obedience, with the sanction: If you do not fulfil this law perfectly, you are cursed! This threat is an important part of the preaching, so that the unconverted can come to repentance. They have to understand their depravity and ask for the grace which at the same time is offered in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:24)

To the converted the Ten Commandments still have to be preached strictly. But not as a law. For a law is characterised by a sanction. Since Jesus Christ has taken the sanction for transgression of the law upon Himself, the true believer is free from the curse of the law. What is left for him is to listen carefully to the Ten Commandments and do them. For Christians are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14).

It is by grace that they are made able to fulfil the demands of the law.

Not that they have a perfect obedience already. Lord's Day 44 Question 114 asks this question.

"But can those converted to God keep such a command for perfect obedience?"

The answer is that even the holiest ones have only a beginning of this perfect obedience.

So also to the converted the Ten Commandments should still be preached strictly.

That keeps them from becoming conceited. They have to keep their spiritual humility under all circumstances, so that they will never boast in themselves.

Through the strict preaching of the Ten Commandments they become more and more aware of their sinful nature (their flesh). The deeper your awareness of your sinful nature, the more eagerly you seek the forgiveness of your sins and your righteousness in Christ.

A second reason why also to the converted the Ten Commandments have to be preached sharply, is that they will more and more strive for perfection. Though they know they will not reach this in this life, they long for the promised perfection with all their heart. In the state of perfection (after this life) never even the slightest desire contrary to any of God's commandments will ever arise in our heart again. Then we will always hate all sin and delight in all righteousness. Then we are really the same as Jesus.

Now we are only in God's eyes just as perfect as Jesus.

But then we are just as perfect as Jesus also in our own eyes and in the eyes of our neighbour. Then our renewal into Christ's image by the Holy Spirit is completed.

That is our glorious future.

Humbly submitted to Synod 1998 Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Launceston, 10 June 1998

Fred van Hulst, Verbi Divini Minister.

Appendix 2
Speeches at Synod

APPENDIX 2 - Speeches at Synod (refer Acts, Articles 80, 92)

Speech delivered at Synod Launceston of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia 11 September 1998

Dear esteemed brothers in Jesus Christ

This is an historic occasion - for the first time in the almost fifty years of our existence as churches in South Africa and Australia respectively, we have an official delegate at your synod. It is really not something to boast about, but we are glad that our good God and Saviour gave the ways and means for a final realisation of a more personal contact.

It is therefore my great privilege, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, to bring you the sincere greetings of the brothers and sisters in South Africa. We would also like to assure you, brothers, of our love for you in Christ Jesus. You are dear to us because we know of your desire and willingness to serve our Lord according to His infallible Word. This is a gift of God's grace in which we with you may and must rejoice. We live in evil times - times in which the love for God, His Word, His church and His service are diminishing. What an encouragement it is then to hear about and, as has been my privilege these past few days to witness your steadfast faith.

May I use this opportunity to encourage you in this holy faith of yours. Because it is indeed because of the special difficult and trying time that you as churches experience at the moment, that we have deemed it of the utmost importance to encourage you with our presence and words. May the Lord give that our personal presence here will help to assure you of our love for you. But even more important, we hope that the Lord may use our presence to help you fix your eyes on the unspeakable and eternal love of our Father in heaven who called us to Him.

I can assure you that especially during these past few months since we came to know about the disunity in your midst, that we have lived intensely with you in our prayers. That is true of the whole federation of Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, but in a very special way of the Free Reformed Church of Cape Town which I have the privilege to serve as minister. As you all know, the Rev FJ vanHulst was my immediate predecessor, and he served the church in Cape Town with much fruit for almost ten years. Many people in that church came to know and believe in the love of our Saviour, through his preaching and pastoral care. You can imagine the intensity of our emotional and spiritual involvement around the charges that are brought in against Rev vanHulst.

From our deputies I received the instruction to "encourage all parties involved with their specific burdens and serve them with advice." I have already attended the proceedings of your Synod for the past few days and met with Rev vanHulst. I hope there will be an opportunity to meet with the consistory of the church here in Launceston and also to encourage the whole congregation through the preaching of God's Word on Sunday.

Our wish for you is that God may grant you His Holy Spirit to lead you in all the work that you have to do as synod. May He give you the faith to expect everything from Him who demands your all. You have difficult work to attend to. You have to discern carefully and

to exercise patience in the way Christ Jesus taught us by word and example. Our arch-enemy, Satan, will try to destroy the work of God's Spirit amongst you, if he can. Be steadfast in the faith and hold on to our one and only Head of the church, Jesus Christ. Serve one another with long-suffering and great patience, knowing that the church is Christ's building to complete on the day of His coming when He will judge our work.

All our work must be done from the perspective of His long-suffering with everyone of us knowing that our best works need God's forgiveness. We may also know that our worst performances are complete in Christ if done in the obedience of faith. May our God and Father grant us all this faith that we need to please Him. The Lord has given us a banner to hold forth and that is the Word of life (Philippians 2:16). Not as a sign of our personal triumphs, but as a confession to the world dying in unbelief. It is our sincere wish that your work as synod may therefore also serve the purpose of spreading the Word of true liberation - the gospel of liberation from death and sin and Satan.

Developments in the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.

As part of our encouragement to you, I would like to give you a bird's eye view of the Lord's work in the midst of our churches the past few years. Until 1992 the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa lived a life in many ways isolated from the world in which God has placed and called us to be a shining light. Much, if not all, our energies were devoted more or less to justify our existence separately from other churches with reformed confessions, and claiming to be the church of Christ in South Africa. In our search for fellowship our attention was almost exclusively directed towards the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika ("Doppers"). In the meantime there was a big struggle for reformation in the much larger Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk. All of this was happening right under our noses, but we had no expectations from that church.

The whole life of the three Free Reformed Churches in the big South Africa was given a new direction when ministers of the Word, who were either disciplined when fighting for the truth of God's Word or could not stay in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk with a clear conscience, suddenly joined the Free Reformed Churches! These brothers were accepted as true ministers of the Word of God after proper examination; and all currently serve as ministers in the bond of churches. Hence the frequent ad hoc synods we had the past six years! The first of these ad hoc synods that had to deal with the examination of a minister from other churches that joined us was held in 1993.

That was also exactly the time that all the ministers that previously served in the bond of churches in South Africa left for one reason or the other. Rev vanHulst received a call to Tasmania, Revs EA deBoer and FJ Bijzet both had to leave for Holland because of difficult circumstances in their families. Also in the mission-field a vacancy arose with the departure of Rev M deVries. That was the Lord's clear way of removing all the previously 'foreign' ministers and replacing them with men who all went through a time of long and difficult struggle for church reformation in other federations. The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa were finally becoming churches in South Africa for the people of God in South Africa!

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The biggest occasion was when a whole church that had to break away from the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk applied for affiliation with our churches. We all rejoiced in the Lord's wonderful dealings with them and us, and in an ad hoc synod in 1996 held in Bethal, the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk van Bethal formally joined our bond of churches. Their minister, as with all the other ministers that joined the Free Reformed Churches, went for a period of theological orientation to the Theological University at Kampen in the Netherlands.

In this way, the Lord has led us to become a truly indigenous church! We had to be shaken from our sleep as an immigrant church, just trying to defend what we perceived as 'our heritage', to become churches of Christ truly sharing the rich grace of our God with others around us. To become an indigenous church does not mean for us that we must become any less a truly Reformed church! On the contrary! In many respects we have learned to appreciate even more what God has given us in His gospel and in the history of His church on earth.

In the past few years we had to send many men for shorter and longer periods to Kampen to help in their further theological training. At the moment there are a few young Afrikaans men from our churches that want to be trained for the ministry. We were again confronted with the options that we had, and decided that it is in the best interest of the church of Christ in South Africa that we start with our own theological training. Deputies were appointed to explore the possibility of supplying the necessary education from our midst. Advice was gathered from Hamilton and Kampen on the grounds of a report that was submitted to some of the lecturers. The reaction from Kampen was a great encouragement, and our ad hoc synod of 1997 decided to form our own theological university with the name of The Theological University of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.

Five part-time lecturers were appointed by synod, and the first student started his theological studies proper at the beginning of 1998. Students seeking admission to the program must be in the possession of a BA degree with Greek and Hebrew at third year level and at least Latin at first year university level. After that he still has to complete a four-year course, of which the second part of the last year is used for a thesis in the field of specialisation chosen.

Why this story of mine? Brothers, you and we struggle with similar issues. You want to be church of Christ in Australia. Great! I just want to encourage you that you have your eyes wide open to notice the work of the Spirit of God in your country. Be prepared to sacrifice certain peculiarities of our own lives as Free Reformed Churches. Never our principles! For them we must rather die! But let us learn to discern between what is only part of our Dutch church culture on the one hand and what is part of our most holy faith that unites us with the people of God in our time and through all the ages.

May God give that our contacts will intensify and that we will truly be of mutual benefit to one another as we earnestly seek to serve the Lord with the gifts He has chosen to give us.

To His name be the glory, now and for ever more.

E. Viljoen
Verbi Divini Minister

RESPONSE on behalf of Synod by Rev A Veldman

Dear brother Viljoen,

When responding to your address of last Friday evening, on behalf of synod first of all I would like to express our warm appreciation for the gesture of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa that in this difficult and trying time for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia you did not simply send us a letter of greetings, but instead saw the need of sending a delegate to pass on a message of encouragement. I can assure you on behalf of all of us that we are encouraged indeed, not only by the words you have spoken but also by your actual presence in our midst. Your presence has once again brought home to us what significance sister relations have, especially when there is the opportunity to speak with each other face to face. Please thank the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa for the effort they have taken in making this visit possible, even on such a short notice.

We were encouraged hearing about Christ's church gathering work in South Africa, about the amazing developments which have taken place there during the past years. Indeed, a miracle from God's hand. It is our sincere wish and prayer that these developments may continue in a positive way for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom on your continent.

In the discussion after your address to synod, you spoke about the political climate in your country as becoming more and more anti-christian. May the King of the church through His Spirit continue to give you the courage to witness the truth in an undiluted way and may He also bless this faithful witness of His churches in South Africa.

In the closing words of your address to synod you urged us to keep our eyes of faith wide open for the work of the Spirit of God also in our own country. You said, *"Be prepared to sacrifice certain peculiarities of our own lives as Free Reformed Churches of Australia."* Coming from a specific cultural background one can indeed get so used to certain customs, the way in which we do things in church life, that these customs almost become the truth, whilst in meeting with churches from a different background they may well become a stumbling block on to the road to practical realisation of unity. We agree with you that this should never be the case. Certain customs should not function as the truth.

Yet next to cultural differences there are also matters of principles. On that score we should never water down the truth, but contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints, (Jude 1:3) i.e. the holy faith which indeed unites us with the people of God world-wide and throughout the ages. Here we touch upon the catholicity of the church of which we make profession every Sunday with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

As to this word catholicity it has various aspects, which are also mentioned in Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 54. There is the geographical aspect, which highlights that Christ gathers His church *"out of the whole human race."* Next there is a historical aspect, pointing out that Christ gathers His church *"from the beginning of the world to its end."* Yet next to this geographical and historical aspect, there is also what has been called a quantitative aspect, which refers to the fact that Christ gathers his

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church "in the unity of the true faith." This quantitative aspect as referred to by professor Faber in his writings is derived from the word 'catholic' also meaning 'belonging to the whole of the truth'. It means that only on the basis of the whole truth of Scripture there can be real unity. Rev. Viljoen, we thank the Lord that we were able to experience this unity throughout your presence here at synod. We experienced that it is indeed our mutual aim to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Therefore it was good to meet you. It was also good to hear you preach the gospel yesterday, in which you spoke both of the joy we may experience in faith as well as the obedience to which God calls us. It is my sincere wish and prayer that both that joy and obedience may grow stronger and stronger in Christ's churches in South Africa as well as in Australia, and this to the glory of God who has chosen us in Christ, not because of us but according to the sovereign good pleasure of His will, out of mere grace.

Rev Viljoen, again we thank you for your presence here, in due time we wish you a safe trip home. May God bless you not only in your local ministry but also in your task as lecturer at the recently instituted Theological University. Greet the brotherhood and the churches on behalf of us. Hopefully in time to come, according to the decision taken by this Synod, the Lord willing we will meet again but then in that beautiful country of yours to see with our own eyes what Christ has done for the furtherance of His kingdom in South Africa.

Indeed to Him as King of the church be all glory for now and for evermore.

APPENDIX 3
Nicene Creed

Esteemed delegates of Synod:

1994 Synod made this decision.. "To retain our present text of the Nicene Creed for the present, and appoint deputies to scrutinise the revisions which our Canadian sister churches will adopt at their next Synod and report back to synod with their recommendations " (Acts 1994, Art 124). This mandate was not completed and no report was sent to Synod 1996, and thus the deputy was reappointed to finish his mandate and report to Synod 1998 (cf. Acts 1996, Art 110.8).

Regarding the Nicene Creed, Synod 1996 of the Canadian Reformed Churches made the following decision:

"To adopt provisionally the following revised edition of the Nicene Creed requesting the churches to test it and to send their comments (if any) to the Standing Committee of the "Book of Praise" for evaluation:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made; of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried, and the third day He arose, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; and we look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen"

For your information, I submit the report of the Canadian deputies to Synod which highlights the changes that have been made, and the reasons for these changes. On the basis of their report, I make the same proposal as indicated above.

PROPOSAL: To adopt provisionally the revised edition of the Nicene Creed (as above), requesting the churches to test it and to send their comments (if any) to the Standing Committee of the "Book of Praise" for evaluation:

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FOUNDATIONS:

1. Since we use the *Book of Praise* in our churches, it would be preferable to have the same text for the Nicene Creed as found therein (cf. Acts 1994, Art 124, Ground 1c).
2. It would be premature for the Australian churches to adopt a revision of the Nicene Creed which has only been provisionally adopted by the Canadian churches, and which may be changed at their next synod.
3. By adopting the Nicene Creed provisionally, we give the Australian churches the opportunity to test it and send their comments to the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise*.

In Christ's service,

A van Delden

Parts of the Report of Canadian Deputies to their Synod (1966)

III CONSIDERATIONS:

D. The proposed revision of the Nicene Creed is more than a linguistic revision. It is also a structural change. The Committee has followed the suggestion of Dr. N.H. Gootjes and translated the original text making allowances for English language and theological development. Based on the submissions of a number of churches, it becomes clear that some allowances for the English language have taken away from the flavour of the original text and some of the changes are not convincing.

1. The deletion of the words "God of God" as suggested by the church at Grand Valley is based on a particular text of the Nicene Creed. Other Greek texts of the creed and the received Latin include it.
2. The proposal of the church at Fergus to retain the word "I" instead of "we" is based on their preference and not on any of the original texts of the Nicene Creed.
3. The church at Fergus is incorrect when it suggests that the revised text as proposed by the Committee has changed "Creator" to "Maker."
4. There is no compelling reason to change "God of God" to "God from God" since both "of" and "from" are good translations of the word used in the original text.
5. "And" has an important structural function in the Nicene Creed and should be retained wherever possible.
6. The Committee's reasoning is debatable when it says that "one may state that he believes in the church as an indestructible reality, and a life giving divine work present on earth". It may be better to leave out the "in" in the phrase "I believe (in) a holy catholic and apostolic church" to avoid confusion.
7. There is no need to change "we acknowledge" to "we confess" since both are possible translations of the Greek verb and are used interchangeably throughout Scripture as well.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

F. To adopt provisionally the following revised edition of the Nicene Creed requesting the churches to test it and to send their comments (if any) to the Standing Committee of the *Book of Praise* for evaluation:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one substance with the Father; through whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He arose, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified; who spoke through the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; and we look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Though General Synod decided not include the appendices to the Reports, the following appendices have been added because they form an integral part of the Report.

A. Proposed Text for the Nicene Creed (Linguistic revision)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one substance with the Father; through Him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and He arose on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; with the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified; He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

B. Report for a linguistic revision of the Nicene Creed, for the Standing Committee for the Publication of the *Book of Praise*, submitted by N.H. Gootjes.

1. General Remarks Concerning the Text of this Creed

The creed which we now call 'Nicene Creed' is the creed decided upon by the Council of Constantinople, 381. The original text is in Greek, it can be found in J.N.D. Kelly's book

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Early Christian Creeds, pp. 297ff. with a careful translation in English. The translation in Kelly differs in a number of details from the text in our *Book of Praise*. This English text goes back to a Latin text used in the liturgy of the Mass.

Your committee has to make a general decision as to what kind of version it wants to present to Synod. Generally speaking, three avenues are open to you:

- a. To update the version in the *Book of Praise* in today's English, without considering the original Greek text;
- b. To translate the original text as literally as possible, without taking into consideration the history of this creed (including the English translation in the *Book of Praise*);
- c. To translate the original text, but not in a rigid way, making allowances for English usage and theological development.

The disadvantage of the first alternative is that the text will grow away from its roots if the original text is not considered. The second alternative will end up in a scholarly correct rendering (see e.g. the translation in Kelly) which may not be fitting for a congregation today confessing God and his work for us. The third alternative seems to be the best and is, in fact, in agreement with the way the Forms of Unity have been updated in the 1980s. If you opt for this route it means that it should be argued case by case what version is most satisfactory.

Following this approach I present the following translation for your consideration. The numbers inserted in the text correspond with explanations following the text.

2. Translation

We believe (1) in one God, the Father almighty, Maker (2) of heaven and earth, of (3) all things visible and invisible.

We believe (4) in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from (5) the Father before all ages (6) [(7)], Light from Light, true (8) God from true (8) God; begotten, not made; [(9)] of one substance with the Father; through Him (10) all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation He (11) came down from heaven; by (12) the Holy Spirit He became (13) incarnate of (12) the virgin Mary and was made man;

He (11) was crucified (14) for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried;

on (15) the third day He arose (16) according to the Scriptures;

He (15) ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father;

He (15) will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead;

His (15) kingdom will have no end.

We believe (4) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life;

He proceeds from the Father and the Son (17);

He is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son (18); He spoke through (19) the prophets.

We believe (4) in (20) one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We confess (21) one baptism for the forgiveness (22) of sins.

We look forward (23) to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming world (24).

Amen.

3. Explanation

- (1) We believe. The Greek text has the plural. The majority of the Eastern Creeds use the plural, rather than the singular in the Western Creeds. The singular "I believe" in our version of the Nicene Creed is an adaptation of the Nicene Creed to the Apostles' Creed. There can, of course, be no objection against retaining the expression from the *Book of Praise*: "I believe." I am, however, in favour of following the original form: "We believe." This underlines that the personal and the communal aspect of faith complement one another. With the Apostles' Creed we express that I personally am committed to this faith. With the Nicene Creed we express that we share this faith with the catholic church.
- (2) Maker. The *Book of Praise* has in the Apostles' Creed "Creator" but in the Nicene Creed it has "Maker." This is a correct rendering of the Greek text and can be retained.
- (3) The Greek does not have "and" here. *Te* should not be translated as "and", it forms part of the parallel, *oratoon te kai aoratoon* 'of visible as well as invisible things'.
- (4) The Greek text has "We believe" only in the first line, and it is nowhere repeated. In fact, most of it, up to baptism, is one long sentence. Such long sentences are possible in Greek, also because the meaning is indicated in the repetition of the accusative case. In English, however, they are awkward, and more difficult to understand. In the version of the *Book of Praise* the verb is added to the articles on the Spirit and the church. It is, therefore, inconsistent that "we believe" is not added to the confession of the Son. If "We believe" is added here, "and" could be deleted.
- (5) "From" replaces "of" four times in the *Book of Praise*. This is closer to the Greek text (*ek*). Kelly uses in all instances "from"; the New International Consultation Text has "of" once and "from" three times. Is "from" not better English?
- (6) Ages. The Greek word *aion* can be translated in a temporal sense (age) as well as in a local sense (world). The meaning of the plural "worlds" is difficult to understand in this context, and the obvious meaning of the plural is "ages."
- (7) God from God. These words are missing in the Greek original, they have been added later to the Latin version. Since these words are repeated in "true God from true God" this later addition does not contribute anything substantial and the original text can be restored.
- (8) True. The Greek word *alēthinos* does not mean "very" but "true." The translation "very" may be a case of scholarly Latinized English, derived from the Latin *verum*. But in today's English *verum* does not mean "very" but "true."
- (9) Being (of one substance). The Greek does not have a participle. I would prefer to omit "being" if that is possible in English.
- (10) Through Him. Two remarks: a) "through" is closer to the Greek *dia* than "by" (would be: *hupo*). b) I would not translate this as an independent sentence: "Through Him since it is connected with the preceding phrases as part of the proofs for the Son's full divinity.
- (11) He. The Greek does not have a full stop after "made"; the sentence continues. If one wants to stay close to the Greek text the translation could read: ... through Whom all things were made, who for us man... I follow the suggestion of the New International Consultation Text to begin a new sentence here.
- (12) By... of. Actually, the Greek has only one preposition: *ek*: "He became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary," see Kelly. This could give the impression that the

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- Holy Spirit is the Father of Jesus Christ. The proposed translation avoids this impression.
- (13) Became incarnate. This is a better rendering of the acrist than the usual: "He was incarnate."
 - (14) Crucified. The *Book of Praise* has "was crucified also." The word *te*, however, should be read in connection with *kai pathonta*: He was crucified... as well as He suffered (the construction is the same as in no. 3). If the redundant "also" is dropped the line reads better, too.
 - (15) On. The Greek connects the sentences with repeated *kai*, "and," see the translation in Kelly. This sounds awkward in English.
 - (16) Arose. The word "again" seems to imply that Jesus Christ had risen before this. The Greek verb does not convey the notion of "again." The word can be omitted here, just as it has already been omitted in the Apostles' Creed.
 - (17) Proceeds from the Father and the Son. The text as decided by the Council of Constantinople has only: "proceeds from the Father." The words "and the Son" were added to the Nicene Creed by the Synod of Toledo, 589 as the result of the theological development in Augustine. I, for one, would not easily give up this addition.
 - (18) He is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son. The *Book of Praise* has a different order: "Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified," - which sounds somewhat ponderous. The proposed translation tries to follow the usual word order in English.
 - (19) Through. The *Book of Praise* has: "by the prophets." The Greek, using *dia* and indicating that the prophets are God's means of revelation, could be translated as *through*; see also *dia* in (10).
 - (20) In. The Greek text shows that the verb "to believe" is used in all cases (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, church) with the preposition "in". The Apostles' Creed, however, makes a distinction, by adding "in" only to the triune God, not to the last part of the creed. The result was that via Augustine the difference between "to believe in" and "to believe" became part of western theology. The Nicene Creed, on the other hand, does not use the preposition to express the difference between believing God and believing something. The committee has to make a hard choice between two equally valid approaches:
 - a. Follow the Greek text and maintain "believe in" in connection with the church. This would show that we know ourselves to be heirs of the Council of Nicea, Constantinople and of Athanasius. The difference between believing God and believing the church is so obvious that it does not need a terminological distinction.
 - b. Bring the Greek text into agreement with the formulation of the Apostles' Creed. The reason for this change could be that we should not create difficulties in a church where the Augustinian explanation has become popular knowledge.
 21. We confess. The *Book of Praise* reads: "I acknowledge." *Lampe's Dictionary of Patristic Greek* gives both translations for the verb: to confess, to acknowledge, so either translation is possible. "To confess" fits better in the context.
 22. Forgiveness. The Greek word, when used in the New Testament, is usually translated as "forgiveness" (Mt. 26:28; Mk. 1:4, Luke 1:77 etc).

23. Look forward. The expression "I look for" has a different connotation in today's English. The Greek verb is now usually translated as "to look forward to," see also Kelly.
24. Coming world. Is this not smoother English than "world to come"?

Yours in Christ's service.

N.H. Gootjes, December 9, 1993

C. Committee Notes on Proposed Translation:

1. The Committee prefers "of" for stylistic reasons.
2. This word order follows the Greek text. The Committee felt that we must hold to this text as much as possible.
3. Here we have followed the Greek text.
4. Here we have followed the word order of the Greek text.
5. The Committee opted for the first of the two choices put forward to us on this matter by Dr. Gootjes (see Appendix 4a). Our rationale for this is two-fold: first, it honours the original text; second, it allows for the fact that, if properly qualified, one may speak of "believing in the church." That is, one may state that he believes in the church as an indestructible reality, and a life-giving divine work present on earth. The church is then looked upon not as a human work, but as a divine work. As such, one may believe in it. This, it seems to us, is also the unique element which the Nicene Creed serves to isolate.
6. The Committee prefers "acknowledge" for stylistic reasons.
7. According to Lampe, the Greek *prosdokao* means: expect, (cf Latin: *expecto*, *are*). The Committee opted for the term "await".

APPENDIX 4

Formation of Classes

Dear Brothers,

Synod 1996 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (*Acts*, Article 38) appointed the churches of Launceston and Legana to “

- a) study this whole matter of forming classes, using Kelmscott’s materials and past submission to and decisions of Synods,
- b) invite comments from the churches, and
- c) report to the churches at least six months before next Synod.”

The churches of Launceston and Legana appointed a Study Committee for this matter. Regrettably, it was not feasible to comply with the deadline imposed. However, the following report is offered to the churches in the conviction that the matter should proceed for the benefit of the churches, in line with the thoughts expressed in their submissions.

A. SUBMISSIONS BY THE CHURCHES

Seven churches assisted by putting their thoughts on paper, in response to some initial suggestions by the Study Committee. We present a very brief overview of these submissions.

1. Albany

1.1 Should two classes be formed, then rather not on a regional basis. Three classes would be better (one Perth church to join Albany, one Perth church to join Tasmania). Each classis to delegate four members to synods.

1.2 Strong reasons for formation of classes:

cut synod’s work load; have a further avenue of appeal; reduce the possibility of synod delegates judging their own decisions.

2. West Albany

2.1 Having only two classes might degenerate into a ‘them-and-us’ situation; a three-way situation is to be preferred.

2.2 The federation of churches is too small to effectively implement a multi-tiered system.

2.3 The present system could be improved: give deputies four years to do their work; deal with certain issues at every second synod only.

3. Armadale

3.1 If two classes, there will be no ‘neighbouring churches’.

3.2 The number of churches in the East has not increased (Synod 1990!).

3.3 Better to take a step back: have an annual classis of all the churches (two delegates per church).

3.4 The ‘classis church’ system can meanwhile be maintained.

3.5 Every third year the classis also does the work of a synod.

3.6 Synod to be re-established when two classes can be formed.

4. Kelmscott

- 4.1 Agree with the suggestion to form two classes, with costs shared as per the synod formula.
- 4.2 Each classis to delegate two ministers and three elders to Synod ('highly desirable that...there are different delegates at a following Synod').
- 4.3 Classis normally every three months, or six months if there is nothing for the agenda.

5. Launceston

- 5.1 Request the Can. Ref. Churches to be received as a regional synod in their federation.
- 5.2 Every three years take part in a Canadian Synod.
- 5.3 The regional synod to focus on Australian church issues.

6. Legana

- 6.1 Agree with the suggestion to form two classes.
- 6.2 Classes to meet once yearly 'face-to-face', plus twice in a 'phone hook-up'.
- 6.3 Form one classis of Tasmania and Albany and one of the metro area.

7. Bedfordale

- 7.1 Query: can classes of four or five churches be effective? One should rather think of ten than of four (ref. art. 44 CO: 'at least two of the more experienced...').
- 7.2 Does the CO model suit our bond, with few churches scattered over a large area?
- 7.3 It's difficult to regard churches in two classes as 'neighbouring'.
- 7.4 Synod could function as classis if meeting at a six-monthly frequency; not all items would be dealt with in every meeting.
- 7.5 Delays in decision making will not be serious if classis meets every six month and if meeting dates can be advanced if needed.

B. TWO OPTIONS OUTLINED

Our Study Committee took good note of the submissions by the churches. It outlined two options which, each in its own practical way, could to meet the wishes uttered in the submissions.

Option 1

Form one classis comprising all the churches, meeting once yearly face-to-face, plus one teleconference or video conference if needed;
each church sends two delegates to classis;
Classis meets as synod once in three years, with two delegates from every church;
as the number of churches increases, formation of two classes can be considered.

Considerations

1. More frequent contact between churches is the overriding aim expressed by the churches (see also Kelmscott's submission to Synod 1996, especially section A, in Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 202 ff).
2. A classis of four or five churches could hardly be called a viable entity.
3. Classis can deal with appeals, church visits, approbation of calls, etc.

Appendix 4
Formation of Classes

4. The work of synod deputies loses its deadline stress when synods no longer meet every two years.
5. Costs will increase sharply, yet optimal use of financial and time resources may be achieved if the timing of classis can be tied in with eg. pulpit exchange, church visitation, office bearers' conference, lectures on common interest issues, and the like. For reasons of good stewardship, classis would most frequently convene in the metro area.

Option 2

Form two classes comprising four or five churches;
meeting once yearly face-to-face, plus one teleconference or video conference if needed;
each church send two delegates to classis;
synod meets once in three years, with five delegates from each classis (two ministers and three elders).

Considerations

1. Top priority remains: more frequent contact between the churches.
2. Four or five churches can hardly form a viable classis.
3. Delegation from two classes to a synod should reduce the possibility of the same brothers serving synod upon synod.
4. Appeals to synod would benefit from 'two-tiered' delegation via a classis.
5. Classes can deal with appeals, church visits, approbation of calls, etc.
6. Optimal use of resources may be achieved if regional events in church life can be arranged close to the classis date.

C. INVITATION

The text of the 1996 Synod decision, as quoted in our first paragraph, and the context of the amendment which was defeated, make it clear that the results of our study are to be reported directly to the churches (Acts of Synod 1996, page 27).

Consequently, the churches are now invited to consider this report and to come to Synod 1998 with their proposals.

May the Head of the Church grant you Scriptural understanding and wisdom in the consideration of these matters, so that the bond of churches may be strengthened by brotherly love and sound stewardship.

With Christian greetings,
for the Consistories

Launceston, F.J.vanHulst

J.Everts

Legana, C. Kleyn

H. J. Alberts

APPENDIX 5
RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

General Secretary's Report

Esteemed brethren,

1. Synod Kelmscott 1996 gave separate mandates to the various deputies for relations with other churches. It also specified that:

All deputies will work under one umbrella. The various deputies will do their own work and are responsible for their own report to synod. The three deputyships will meet together regularly to inform and consult with each other regarding their work. The frequency of the combined meetings will be decided by deputies. Deputies shall present their final report for interaction and consultation by the full deputyship before sending them to Synod. (Acts, Art 110)

The General Convener appointed by Synod, Rev. Veldman, asked to be relieved of this task. Only one combined meeting was held. This meeting, on Feb 13th 1998, appointed Rev. Bouwman as convener and each deputyship presented their reports for discussion as directed by Synod. The reports enclosed are the final reports adopted separately by each deputyship after this meeting.

2. The general secretary received three items for correspondence that did not apply to any of the deputyships.
 - a) The John Knox International Reformed Centre requested detailed information about the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for a *Handbook of Reformed Churches World-Wide*. This information was provided and a draft entry (which contained some information obtained from other sources) was duly corrected.
 - b) A letter was received from the Lanka Reformed Church advising of their formation and asking for assistance. The letter has been acknowledged. After advice from combined deputies meeting, the information has been passed onto the churches as per the general secretary's mandate.
 - c) A letter was received from the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) responding to the FRCA decision to terminate membership. A copy of the letter is attached.

J.L. van Burgel
General Secretary

Deputies for Contact with Sister Churches

Introduction

1. To date, deputies met a total of 8 times in carrying out the mandate received from Synod Kelmiscott.
2. At this time in our mandate, we have not received any requests for testimonies from ministers in our midst who travelled overseas. From overseas ministers visiting (and preaching) in our midst we have received a testimony from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa in relation to Rev Boessenkool.
3. A copy of the Acts of Synod 1996 was sent to all the sister churches, as well as to the Theological Colleges in Kampen and Hamilton. Invitations to Synod Launceston have also been extended to all sister churches.
4. The Rules for Sister relations governing our work are as follows:
 - a) *Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.*
 - b) *The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.*
 - c) *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 their respective churches (if possible in translation).*
 - d) *The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.*
 - e) *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.*
 - f) *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.*
 - g) *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.*
 - h) *The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.*

Adopted by Synod Bedfordale 1992, Article 95.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Mandate:

"To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules" (Acts, Article 24).

Greeting:

A letter dd 01 July 1996 passed on greetings to our 1996 Synod, with apologies that the greeting arrived too late.

Synod Pretoria:

We understand that a Synod was held in 1997, but have to date received no notification of the Synod nor information about its decisions. We have written to the South African deputies seeking an update.

Recommendation:

To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.

Ground:

No evidence has arisen suggesting that the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa have departed from the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions or the Church Order.

Presbyterian Church in Korea

Mandate:

"To continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) according to the established rules" (Acts, Article 25).

General Assembly

Deputies received an invitation to the 46th and 47th General Assemblies of the PCK. In turn we passed on our greetings to these sister churches, with the wish that the Lord would bless their Assembly and churches. We have received no reports on either of these Assemblies, even though we requested them.

Recommendation:

To continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) according to the established rules.

GROUND:

No evidence has arisen suggesting that the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) has departed from the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions or the Church Order.

Canadian Reformed Churches

Mandate:

1. "To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules;

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Relations with other churches

2. To send a delegation to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches subject to available finance" (*Acts*, Article 20. That finance was available is evident from the Synod Budget adopted in Article 107 and printed in Appendix S.)
3. to inform the Canadian sister churches of the decision to add the words "encourage the congregation to" into the charge to the deacons (*Acts*, Article 89).

Work Done

1. Deputies drew the attention of the Canadian Reformed Churches to the decision of Article 89. Canadian deputies assured us that they "decided to pass [this decision] on to our Standing Committee on the Book of Praise for their consideration."
2. Deputies received a letter from the Canadian Reformed Churches, in which they express "respect" and "regret" for our decision to withdraw from the ICRC.
3. Deputies have delegated Rev C Bouwman to attend the next triennial Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This Synod is to be convened early in May, 1998. In connection with this proposed trip, a request was received from Deputies for Training for the Ministry that the delegate will also visit the Theological College in Hamilton on behalf of these deputies.

Recommendation:

To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules.

GROUND:

The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Mandate:

The mandate given by Synod Kelmescott to deputies regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands is embodied in the following decision (*Acts*, Article 19):

1. To continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands according to the established rules.
2. To ascertain what progress there was in discussions about differences (beyond what is covered by Article 46 CO) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

Greeting:

Synod Kelmescott received no letter of greeting from the sister churches in the Netherlands. Your deputies received a letter dd 7 October 1996 in which the Dutch sister churches apologised for not responding to our letter of invitation to be in attendance at our 1996 Synod. They explain that our letter got buried under the paper work.

Synod Berkel Rodenrijs

The Dutch sister churches met together in Synod in 1996 in Berkel Rodenrijs.

Visit

Deputy br HJ Dekker had plans to travel to the Netherlands during the time the Dutch synod was in session. Deputies consequently requested br Dekker to visit the synod of the sister churches to pass on greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We used the opportunity to explain to the Dutch churches why it was that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided in Synod 1996 to withdraw from the International Conference of Reformed Churches. The address deputies prepared for br Dekker has been printed in *Una Sancta*, and is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Acts of Synod

Deputies received a copy of the Acts of this synod. Below is a digest of the more significant decisions.

1. four new instructors were appointed to teach at the Theological University in Kampen. They are WH Rose, ID Haarsma and PW vandeKamp (Art 16) and ALTh deBruijne (Art 26). Two instructors left the University, viz, Prof Dr J Douma and Prof Dr K Veling.
2. various appeals were received against the decision of the 1993 Synod to allow the sisters of the congregation to vote at the election of officebearers. The appeals were based largely on Church Orderly grounds, though also dogmatic grounds were mentioned (ie, the place God gave to the woman in relation to the man). All the appeals were disallowed (Art 29).
3. guidelines were established so that the churches can take a common approach in matters of divorce (Art 47).
4. the decision of the 1993 Synod to allow a reading elder to lay the blessing of the Lord upon the congregation resurfaced by way of appeal. Synod acknowledged that the 1993 decision on this matter came about without regard to proper ecclesiastical channels (Art 50). However, seeing that this decision was well received in various of the churches, it would not be desirable to undo this decision on grounds that the Church Order had not been properly followed.
5. Further appeals against the 1993 decision were disallowed, be it with clarification being given that elders only (and not non-officebearers assisting in a reading service) may extend the Lord's blessing to the congregation (Art 51).
6. a revised order of liturgy was adopted, whereby confession of sin and announcement of grace, as well as reading the law after sermon, was permitted (Art 63). Deputies were mandated to prepare a report for next Synod containing proposals for more changes in relation to:
 - variation in liturgy for the PM service (if indeed the PM service is found to have a character different from the AM service);
 - more texts or forms should be prepared so that there is possibility for more variation in the celebration of the Lord's Supper;
 - more variety and/or numbers of liturgical forms should be considered;
 - more melodies should be found for worship services;
 - as the deputies consider ways to improve worship services, they should take into account the time and culture in which we today live (Art 63).
7. a deputyship was mandated to work on increasing the number of hymns to be included in a prospective Song book (Art 64).
8. an alternative marriage form was given into the freedom of the churches for testing. Of interest is that this alternative form does not instruct the bride to submit herself to her husband, in accordance with the command of the Lord in passages of Scripture as

Appendix 5

Relations with other churches

I Cor 14:34; Eph 5:22; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1. The bride is instead instructed to "entrust herself to" her husband ("vertrouw u aan hem toe") (Art 67). Your deputies are taking up contact with Dutch deputies on this point.

9. relations with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken are continued, though there appears to be no real change in circumstances (Art 80).
10. relations with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken have been terminated at the national level, since deputies reported that there is no opening to speak further with the NGK.
11. relations with churches abroad may be schematised as follows:

Sister Church Relations maintained with:		Art
Canadian Reformed Churches		87
Eglise Reformee Confessante au Zaire		86
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland		87
Free Church of Scotland		87
Free Reformed Churches of Australia		87
Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines		86
Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia		85
Iglesia Cristiana Fe Reformada		89
Igreja Reformada da Colonia Brasolanda		89
Presbyterian Church in Korea		86
Reformed Church of the United States		87
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland		87
Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika		88

Sister Church Relations established with:		Art
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Northern India		86

Correspondence Relations established with:		Art
Reformed Church in Japan		86

Sister Relations were actively sought with:		Art
African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)		88
Eglise Reformee Confessante au Benin		88
Ely Presbyterian Church (Reformed) in Cardiff		87
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales		87
Evangelical Reformed Churches Union of Russia		88
Free Church of Central India		86
Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil		89
Nongo u Kristu u Ken Sudan Hen Tiv		88
Orthodox Presbyterian Church		87
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia		87
Reformed Church of Eastern Africa (Kenya)		88
Reformed Churches of New Zealand		87
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan		86

Other Contacts in Various Stages of Development:		Art
Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka		86

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Relations with other churches

Eglise Refomee Evangelique Independante (France)	88
First/Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)	86
Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika	88
Gereja Gereja Maseli Musyafir	85
Greek Evangelical Church	88
Iglesia Presbiteriana Independiente de Mexico	89
Iglesias Cristiana Reformadas	89
Iglesias Reformadas de Espana	89
Igreja Crista Presbiteriana de Portugal	89
Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil	89
Igreja Reformada em Portugal	89
Presbyterian Church Pakistan	86
Reformed Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong)	86
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Manipur	86

12. the decision regarding the Free Reformed Churches of Australia reads (in translation received from Holland) as follows:

"to maintain their relationship as sister church

1. *giving special attention to their questions as to developments within the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands;*
2. *urging the FRCA to give room to the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands for a relationship of sister church with the PCEA and to clarify this issue for the following general synod;*
3. *to follow the progress of their contacts with the PCEA and the RCNZ and their attitude as to the developments in the RCA;*
4. *to pay regular visits to the synod of the FRCA, because continuation of the discussion with the FRCA about the differences in approach as to the contacts with the presbyterian churches and the membership of the ICRC proves to be necessary."*

The stated ground for this decision is: "in the relation with the FRCA special caution is demanded regarding contact about developments within the RCN(L) and the establishing of sister relations with church in their region."

13. the decision regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia reads (in translation received from Holland) as follows:

"to maintain the existing relationship in view of the developments of a relationship of sister church, meeting the urgent wish of the FRCA not to start a relationship of sister church until 1999".

The stated ground for this decision is "that the relation between the FRCA and the PCEA will have become clearer before the general synod of 1999".

Developments in Holland

In conversations with deputies from Holland (see below), we learned that the Dutch sister churches are currently in more troubled waters than was the case some years ago. A number of leaders have written and/or preached things that are judged by others to be lacking in Scriptural correctness. Questionable positions have been defended on topics as the place of the confessions, the (non) uniqueness of Christ's suffering, the fourth commandment and the Sunday, and homosexuality. In part (so far) the ecclesiastical route has been followed in seeking to correct the views expressed. Deputies informed us that

Appendix 5

Relations with other churches

the movement looking to America for inspiration in pursuing sanctification is losing steam, but the results of this teaching are evident. The summary of the Synod Acts mentioned above also reveals details about developments in the Dutch sister churches.

Deputies consider that here a word of caution is in order. The temptation is present for us in Australia to be critical of developments in the Netherlands. But, precisely because Holland is far away, it is fitting that we be circumspect in our words of criticism about developments in the Dutch churches. Globally, culture is shifting as we move from the modern era into the post-modern era. This move invariably confronts the Lord's churches with issues that cannot be resolved overnight. Instead of being critical, it will be more beneficial to make it our business to stay informed, and then assist our brethren in deeds and in prayers.

Meeting with Dutch Deputies

Introduction

The letter dd 7 October 1996 from Deputaten Betrekkengen Buitenlandse Kerken (BBK) gave expression to Dutch reaction to our decision to withdraw from the ICRC. Deputies were "deeply disappointed" ("diep teleurgesteld") by the decision of Synod Kelmscott. As a result, Deputies BBK indicated their intent to visit with Australian deputies in Perth in October 1997.

Your deputies embraced the proposal enthusiastically. We saw the purpose and goal of the meeting as:

- From Dutch side: to speak about FRCA decision to step out of the ICRC, and seek clarity concerning our relation with the PCEA.
- From Australian side: use the opportunity to seek answers to the concerns raised and the questions asked by the FRCA on points relating to contact with Presbyterian churches.

Consequently a five hour meeting was held with Dutch deputies (Revs A deJager and H vanVeen) in Kelmscott on October 10, 1997. Since the topic of the meeting concerned also our relation with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, deputies responsible for Presbyterian Churches were invited. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting is available from Deputies.

Analysis

Conversation was brotherly, and at the same time very candid. We choose to think that the two parties at the meeting ended up with a better understanding of each other's lines of thought. We doubt, however, whether a better *appreciation* for each other's positions developed. That is: Dutch deputies and Australian deputies are agreed that the points of concern raised by the FRCA in relation to the PCEA (viz, pulpit exchange, fencing of the Lord's table, place of children in the covenant) require discussion and resolution. Dutch deputies and Australian deputies differ on *when* these discussions ought to take place, viz, before recognition or after. From this discussion it became evident (again) that views on the church are not identical. The Dutch delegates, for example, expressed much appreciation for Rev van Rongen's booklet entitled *True and False*, and fully supported his view on the church described in that booklet. That makes a uniform approach to the PCEA very difficult. It should be noted too that Dutch deputies conceded that the concept of first recognising a church and then discussing points of difference did not work out in actual practice (see below).

Progress In Discussions about Differences with Presbyterian Churches

Previous Synod mandated deputies to ascertain what "progress" the Dutch sister churches had made in "discussions about differences (beyond what is covered by Article 46 CO) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia." In answer to our question on this point, Dutch deputies informed us that their Synod gave no mandate to deputies to discuss differences at all. Consequently there are no discussions about differences. The only mandate deputies have is to maintain a sister relation. In that framework, Dutch deputies have brought up with the FCS, the EPCI and the RPCI matters of common concern, such as possibilities for more cooperation in evangelism and mission. But "discussions about differences (beyond what is covered by Article 46 CO) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia" have not occurred, despite the recognition given to the FCS and planned for the PCEA.

We were informed that the reasons for not discussing points as fencing of the Lord's table and pulpit exchange are two fold. In the first place, the Dutch churches consider these points to belong to the "non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice" mentioned in the Church Order. In the second place, the Dutch feel that adequate trust has not yet developed between themselves and (say) the FCS, and so the climate is not yet ripe for discussions on such like points. It may, we were told, take another generation before a church as the FCS is no longer suspicious of discussion about pulpit exchange and fencing of the Lord's table.

We conclude that the formula of first recognising a church and then talking out the differences has not been shown to work in practice. If one cannot profitably speak before recognition about points dear to one's heart, it is not possible to pledge in rules for sister churches to "as much as possible assist each other in the maintenance, defence, and promotion of the Reformed Standards according to the Scriptures in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy."

Recommendations

1. to continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the established rules;

Ground:

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

2. to discourage the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands from extending a sister relation to the PCEA before discussions on points of difference have been satisfactorily conducted.

Ground:

1. A recognition by the RCN of the PCEA would put the FRCA in an awkward position;
2. It is good order to maintain a sister relation before adopting another relation that can damage the existing one.

Appendix 5
Relations with other churches
Appendix 1

Address at Synod Berkel en Rodenrijs¹

Esteemed brethren,

It is my privilege, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, to pass on to you our sincerest greetings. We had not thought that opportunity would present itself for one of our deputies to be present at your 1996 Synod. But I had plans to travel to the Netherlands, and so, when our recent Synod appointed me to serve as one of the deputies for our relations with our Sister Churches, the remainder of the deputies requested me to take the opportunity to pass on greetings and tell you something about what is happening in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. On behalf of deputies, I thank you heartily for your willingness to receive me.

Our churches met together for our nineteenth Synod last June, just two months ago, for a period of two weeks. I may mention to you as of first importance that our Synod decided on the first day of Synod "to continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the established rules." That decision was made because we saw evidence in you "of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God" (Art 19). Your delegate to our previous Synod informed us that "the ecclesiastical scene of the Reformed Churches (in the Netherlands) is a moving scene."² So we are the more thankful for the "continuing faithfulness" we could note in your midst.

Our Synod busied itself with various matters both internal and external to the bond of churches. We made a small change to the form for the Ordination of deacons so that the command of the apostle in Gal 6:10 (to "do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith") is no longer addressed to the deacons but to the congregation as a whole. In making this decision, Synod made grateful use of the work of Dr C Trimp and Dr AN Hendriks. On this point, our *Form for the Ordination of Deacons* is now more in line with your current Form than with the Canadian Form.

Similarly, our Synod busied itself with a proposal from one of the churches to form classes in our small bond of nine churches. The proposal made grateful use of work done by Prof J Kamphuis in his book *Zo Vonden wij Elkaar*, particularly where Prof Kamphuis drew out why the various churches cannot be independent but need each other so much. In our bond of nine churches, where we have an ecclesiastical meeting only once in two years, we appreciate the encouragement we could glean from his writings.

Yet our language and cultural affinity draw us ever closer to the churches in Canada – and that in turn makes us increasingly less dependent on our 'mother' church in the Netherlands. In matters as Bible Translation, Book of Praise and Training for the Ministry, we are keenly interested in what the Canadian Reformed Churches are doing. The strength of that bond with Canada is reflected in a first-time decision for our churches; Synod decided, for the first time ever, to send a delegate to the synod of a sister church at Synod's expense. And yes, the delegate has to visit the Canadian Reformed Churches. Please do not understand that decision as a slight to our 'mother' church in the Netherlands – through whom we've received so much over the years. It is instead simply a recognition on our part of the dictates of language and culture.

¹It should be noted that br Dekker delivered this address in Dutch translation. The translation is available from deputies.

²*Acts* Synod Byford, 1994, pg 83.

Relations with other churches

Our close bond with Canada, however, does not mean that we blindly follow wherever our larger Canadian sister chooses to go. I mentioned already the change we made to the *Form for the Ordination of Deacons*, a change Canada has not made. I can mention too the matter of Bible Translation. We have not followed the Canadian lead to recommend only the New International Version for use in the churches. In fact, most of our churches use the New King James Version.

We do not lightly go our own way. With gratitude to the Lord we recognise the many blessings God has given to us through the sister churches and the talents found in their midst. Yet we also believe that we in Australia should think for ourselves, and make decisions for which we can be held accountable before the throne of God.

In making our decisions, though, we read very widely. We in Australia are positioned geographically very far from the main centres of international happenings. Yet we are well aware of what happens in our sister churches. Many of our homes receive the three main publications from our Canadian sister churches. Similarly (though increasingly fewer of us can read Dutch), numerous of our homes receive multiple publications from the Netherlands. Your delegate to our 1994 Synod urged us not to read only one publication from Holland. He warned us that to do so is to receive very one-sided information.³ Mr Chairman, I may tell your meeting that in our homes one can find not only *Reformanda*, but also *Nederlands Dagblad*, *De Reformatie*, *Gereformeerde Kerkbode* (especially from Groningen, Friesland en Drente), *Bij de Tijd*, *Nader Bekeken*, *Wegwijs*, and others. Many of the books published within the circle of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland find their way into our hands. The information we receive from overseas is certainly not one-sided. Equally, it is true that so many of our members have migrated more than 40 years ago. But it is incorrect to say that we are unaware of the developments that have happened in the Dutch churches in the last five decades.⁴ We are most certainly aware, and have struggled (and still continue to struggle) with issues raised in these developments.

Our efforts to think along on the discussions occurring in your churches over the years have not led us to become isolated. True: an earlier Synod of ours recognised that because of our small size we cannot be all things to all people. So we have decided to restrict our field of activity predominantly to the far East.⁵ Accordingly, our recent synod answered positively a request from the churches to "instruct deputies to continue to gather information regarding the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines..., with the aim of seeing whether official contacts should be opened with them" (Art 68). Further, regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Synod could declare its "gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies found in the RCNZ" and "strive for a sister church relation with the RCNZ" (Art 53). No, we have no intent to become isolated.

³Ibid: "And second: in order to keep up in matters at stake in a sound way, it is a must for relative outsiders, to gather well balanced information. Let me be very clear, a subscription on *Reformanda* for example, only, will not do."

⁴See *Nederlands Dagblad*, 28^e June 1996, "Berkel' worstelt met contacten in Australië": "Verder wees hij (ie, Ds A DeJager) erop dat de 'vrijgemaakte' emigranten die naar Australië gingen, de ontwikkelingen in de Nederlandse kerken na de jaren vijftig niet meer hebben meegemaakt." Also *Nederlands Dagblad*, 24 Sept 1992, "Zijn kerken Australië met ons mee Gegroeid?": "Hoe komt het dan dat Australië zo argwanend richting Nederland kijkt? De deputaat, voorzichtig: 'Sommigen zijn in de jaren vijftig vanuit Nederland naar Australië vertrokken en leven daar veelal nog helemaal in het gedachtenklimaat van veertig jaar geleden.'"

⁵Acts 1990, Art 58: "Synod decides...to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility."

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That brings me to what is undoubtedly seen as the most momentous decision made by our recent Synod. Your press has reported that we have decided to "terminate our membership in the ICRC," the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We are aware that this decision was not received in your midst with great enthusiasm. We wish you to know, then, that we have made this decision for internal reasons, as also the grounds mentioned in our *Acts* testify. That is, our membership in the ICRC "has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches." That is a reality we have experienced since the initial decision to join was first made in 1983. Over the years, many overtures and appeals have been presented to Synod and deputies have written many reports. In writing these appeals and reports, as well as in digesting and answering them, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have definitely studied and made use of the thinking that has occurred in the Netherlands on the doctrine of the church. Yet we could not persuade each other that membership in the ICRC was either commanded by God or forbidden by Him. When this Synod, then, was confronted with appeals and overtures from three of our nine churches to terminate membership in the ICRC, our Synod decided to do so. Please note: we have stepped out of the ICRC not on grounds that membership in the ICRC might be unScriptural, but rather on grounds that internal division is not worth the price of ICRC membership. We plead with you not to fault us for this move. As long as God has not commanded membership, we think we should be free to determine for ourselves what the right course of action might be for our churches.

You will wonder why membership in the ICRC has been such cause for discussion and difficulty in our midst that one third of our churches requested Synod to terminate this membership. A number of reasons could be mentioned.⁶ Possibly the reason easiest to explain is the fact that member churches of the ICRC consider each other, by virtue of their ICRC membership, to be true churches of the Lord.⁷ This reality gives problems in our midst because one of the member churches in the ICRC lives next door to us. If, as we say within the forum of the ICRC, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is a true church of the Lord, we should seek unity with this church – precisely because this true church is so close to us. Yet, despite numerous years of contact, we have not been able to recognise the PCEA on the home front as a true church of the Lord. This tension between saying Yes and No at the same time has heightened pressure in our midst to step out of the ICRC (cf Mt 5:37). For the sake of clarity, let me add straightaway that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia continue to have contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and look forward to making progress in relations.

Of course, had we been able to recognise the PCEA, the particular problem with the ICRC to which I alluded a moment ago would have disappeared. That raises the matter of why it is that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have not been able to recognise the PCEA. Allow me to state first what the problem is not. Contrary to press reports,⁸ the Free Reformed Churches of Australia do not have a problem with the fact that the PCEA is a Presbyterian church. Nowhere will you find indication of that in the *Acts* of our synods. Nor do deputies' reports point in that direction.

⁶Deputies' reports over the years, appeals to previous Synods and the submissions from the three churches to our recent Synod give various reasons why there was unrest with ICRC membership.

⁷See the "Theological Affirmation" report, as printed in the *Proceedings* of the 1993 meeting of the ICRC: "If a church is admitted..., it implies that at least two thirds of the member churches acknowledge it as true church" (page 76).

⁸*Nederlands Dagblad*, 28? June 1996, " 'Berkel' worstelt met contacten in Australië'.

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What, then, is the problem? It is this: the PCEA is next door to us. We live in the same country, we speak the same language, one of their churches is within driving distance of some of our churches. This proximity has allowed us to come to know the PCEA reasonably well.

Permit me, Mr Chairman, a little boldness in an attempt to make the problem clearer. How would you treat the PCEA if this church existed in Holland?? We've learned from the Acts of Synod Ommen (Art 66) that you have established guidelines to assist your churches in the process of coming to union with other churches within your country.⁹ Mr Chairman, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have been acting along these very lines in our contacts with this church found within our own country. As your Guidelines for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity also stipulate, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have investigated the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, noted areas of agreement with thankfulness, and listed for discussion areas of possible disagreement. We have listed these areas of disagreement for discussion so that we might be able to clear them away in a Scripturally responsible manner. We have attempted to do so in order that we might in turn be able, in the next stage, to recognise the PCEA as a faithful church of Jesus Christ and so pursue sister relations and possible ecclesiastical unity. That is: even as you are doing with the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken and the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, we are trying to clear way in a Scripturally responsible manner, the areas of disagreement between ourselves and the PCEA.

And areas of disagreement do exist. Over the years our deputies have made mention of them in their reports to our Synods. So it was that deputies appointed by our 1992 Synod were instructed to continue studies and discussions on specific "areas of concern", namely, "the supervision of the Lord's table [with respect to those who were members of other churches in the neighbourhood], the practice of pulpit exchanges [with ministers of other bonds of churches] and the position of children in the covenant." Synod instructed deputies to include in these discussions also "the confession of the doctrine of the church when applicable." That reference to the doctrine of the church was included because of "concern" on our part "about possible unscriptural concepts regarding interdenominationalism" (Acts, 1992, Art 72, Rec 2a). It will be clear: as long as there is uncertainty in our minds about (the scripturalness of) what the PCEA in practice thinks concerning the doctrine of the church, we cannot proceed to recognition of the PCEA and subsequent sister relations. We would not do

⁹These are as follows:

- In the initial phase of contact, the churches are to investigate each other carefully, giving attention to areas of agreement as well as to areas of disagreement. Areas of agreement are to be gratefully noted, while areas of possible disagreement (of confessional and church political nature) are to be honestly and clearly discussed. The purpose of the discussion on the differences is to clear them away in a Scripturally and church politically responsible manner. It is also pastorally wise to highlight possible differences relating to ecclesiastical culture and history.
- In the next stage, the dialoguing churches are to declare that they, on the basis of Scripture and confession, recognise each other locally as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, and therefore promise and bind each other to do all that's possible to reach ecclesiastical unity. To this end the dialoguing churches shall present proposals to their respective major assemblies, so that these in turn also do what's necessary to come to unity.
- In the final stage, the churches, using an adopted program, are to seek and evaluate their closer acquaintance and fellowship.

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it any more than you would do it while the differences of doctrine or practices (not covered by Art 46 CO) which you detect with the CGK or the NGK have not been cleared away. We have been talking with the PCEA for a number of years. It hurts us that the process of clearing away areas of disagreement has not gone smoothly. Would it be appropriate for us to contemplate why this process has not gone smoothly? We will readily admit that fault can be found in the way we have gone about our contacts. Only he who does no work makes no mistakes – and therein lies his mistake. But we also venture –forgive us, please, our boldness– to suggest that the manner in which our Dutch sister churches approach foreign churches has not made our dialogue with the PCEA any easier. I mean this: in your contacts with churches overseas, you take into account to such a degree the different way God has travelled through history with the other church that you recognise that church as true despite some differences. Your intent is to discuss these differences *after* recognition has taken place, within the framework of sister relations. So you have no objections in principle to offering sister relations to the PCEA, even though your deputies are well aware of the differences that exist between the PCEA on the one hand and you and us on the other. The result, though, is that the PCEA looks askance at us because we are less forthcoming than the brethren of Holland. So we're perceived as being narrow-minded and isolationist. But – and I say it with all respect– does the problem not lie with the fact that you in the Netherlands have different approaches to churches *outside* your country than you do to churches *within*? And there is the problem, for what is for you a foreign church is for us a church next door. The church you approach with a measure of latitude, we approach with the same standards that you apply to churches within your own country. We are well aware that the Lord has travelled a different road with the PCEA than He has with the FRCA, even as he has travelled a different road with the RCN than He has with the CGK. But even as you require that differences with the CGK and the NGK be Scripturally resolved before recognition occurs, so we for our part have hesitated to recognise the PCEA because differences have not been Scripturally resolved. You could help us much, I think, if you would explain to us why you expect differences between yourselves and churches within your country to be cleared away in a Scripturally and church politically responsible manner *before* you recognise each other as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, while differences between yourselves and churches overseas can be discussed *after* recognition. Further, you could help us also by indicating to us how much progress you have made in areas of differences with your sister churches of Presbyterian signature. This is a question our Synod has instructed us to ask of you¹⁰ and you will understand that your answer to this question can assist us in our relations with the PCEA.

I mentioned already that our problem in Australia is not presbyterian churches. Yes, we have a deputyship that is to "study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian churches." But the core of our problem lies in the fact that there is in our country a church with which we have so much in common but with which differences remain. That this church is presbyterian is secondary to the real point. The question is this: how can we recognise, and hence pursue sister relations with, a church next door to us as long as certainty about agreement on God's revelation is lacking? That is the question with which we struggle. We would deeply appreciate response from you in the form of further dialogue so that any action taken with respect to the PCEA can be taken by both of us together at the same time.

¹⁰Art 19 of *Acts*, Decision 2: "to ascertain what progress there was in discussions about differences (beyond what is covered by Art 46 CO) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia." The ground for this decision is listed as follows: "Dutch deputies have repeatedly assured us that the differences between themselves and Presbyterian sister churches will be discussed after recognition.

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Mr Chairman, we have tried to lay before you openly what it is with which we in Australia struggle. We hope sincerely that through our words some caricatures concerning us have been removed from your thoughts. We genuinely want to remain faithful to God's Word in the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves in Australia. We are deeply thankful for the heritage God has permitted us to have, and Yes, we do want to share that heritage with others. At the same time we are acutely aware that we have not reached the goal of perfection, and so we also want to learn what we can from that which God has given to others. We believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that the Son of God gathers a catholic church, from every tribe and tongue and nation. As we seek to see what we believe concerning the Saviour's church gathering work, we strive to see evidence that the Voice of the Good Shepherd is indeed clearly heard amongst the persons who call themselves Christ's church.

I must come to an end. Brothers, Rev Douma requested us in 1992 to "pray for your sister churches in the Netherlands." Be assured that we have done so, and, by the grace of the Lord, will continue to do so. May we ask of you: pray for your sister churches in Australia. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

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DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES (PRESBYTERIAN)

MANDATE FOR DEPUTIES

Synod 1996 mandated deputies to:

1. To renew the mandate given by Synod 1994 and to encourage deputies to fulfil their mandate for the next Synod.

(The mandate given to deputies by the 1994 Synod was:

- 1.1 to study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian Churches, addressing the following questions:
 - a. What weight the FRCA should give to the areas of concern;
 - b. Whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contacts/relations;
 - c. How in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations towards churches geographically/culturally far away;
 - 1.2 To authorise deputies to organise a conference for the churches to discuss the contact with Presbyterian churches as broadly as possible;
 - 1.3 To report back to the churches when the mandate is finished.
 - 1.4 To continue contact/relations with the PCEA, FCS, EPCI and RPCI at a low level (passing on Acts and greetings, etc) leaving the discussions in abeyance.)
2. To mandate the deputies to incorporate in their study the progress there has been in the synod reports and decisions of our sister churches.

ACTIVITIES

Deputies appointed by Synod 1996 were Rev A Veldman (convener), J Bruning, H Olde, Rev J Poppe, A Slobe, Rev W vander Jagt. Alternate: A Plug

Due to the resignation of A Slobe and Rev Veldman from Deputies, alternate br A Plug was appointed as deputy. Deputies met on four occasions. At a meeting with Deputies for contact with other churches, held on Friday 13 February 1998, a draft of this report was discussed. Deputies also met with delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to discuss relations with other churches.

INTRODUCTION

The areas of concern which remain and which were identified by previous deputies are

1. The supervision of the Lord's table
2. The practice of pulpit exchanges and
3. The position of children in the covenant
4. Covenanting
5. Purity of worship

Refer Acts of Synod 1996 Deputies report Appendix C (page 118).

The Deputies were not able to operate efficiently with one member short. In addition the time constraints and the volume of work associated with the whole mandate made it impossible for deputies to complete their mandate. In the context of this deputies considered it best to concentrate their efforts on the areas of concern in relation to the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia (PCEA). This is also in line with an earlier Synod decision for the FRCA to concentrate its inter-church relations with churches in our own region. As a result the matter of covenanting, which is not an issue in the PCEA, has not been examined by deputies. Areas of concern in relation to the FCS, EPCI and RPCI

and the matter of contacts/relations with these churches have also not had the deputies' attention. The balance of this report therefore deals almost solely with the PCEA.

OVERVIEW

Reports and decisions of our sister churches

Deputies mandate states: To mandate the deputies to incorporate in their study the progress there has been in the synod reports and decisions of our sister churches. Contact was made numerous times with Canadian Deputies for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches regarding progress of their work; however no information was received.

On 10 October 1997 Deputies also met with delegates Rev A de Jager and Rev H van Veen from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to discuss relations with other churches. The Dutch deputies informed us that their synod gave no mandate to deputies to discuss differences with Presbyterian Churches at all. Consequently there are no discussions about differences. The only mandate deputies have is to maintain a sister relation. In that framework the Dutch deputies have brought up with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI matters of common concern, such as possibilities for more cooperation in evangelism and mission. But discussions about differences (beyond what is covered by Article 46 of the Church Order) with churches as the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia have not occurred, despite the recognition given to the FCS and planned for the PCEA.

From the discussion we heard that the reasons for not discussing points as fencing the Lord's Table and pulpit exchange are twofold. In the first place, the Dutch Churches consider these points to belong to the "non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice" mentioned in the Church Order. In the second place the Dutch feel that adequate trust has not yet developed between themselves and say the FCS, and so the climate is not yet ripe for discussions on such like points. It may, we are told, take another generation before a church as the FCS is no longer suspicious of discussion about pulpit exchange and fencing the Lord's Table.

Areas of Concern

Deputies have examined the issue of the position of children in the covenant. Deputies do not consider this issue as being an impediment to recognising the PCEA. A short position paper has been produced and is attached as Appendix 1 (*Position Paper on Children in the Covenant*).

In the FRCA there remains division on whether or not the PCEA's manner of supervising the Lord's Supper Table and their practice of pulpit exchange form an impediment in our recognition of them as a true church of Jesus Christ. Some have no difficulty in recognising the PCEA while others balk at such a statement, because they are concerned about the PCEA's practices in these areas. If your deputies were forced to decide what weight the FRCA should give to these issues they would most likely be divided. Rather than come with a divided report, which would only cause more disunity within our churches, deputies propose the adoption of a number of Statements as recommended in this report.

Deputies consider that our past contact with the PCEA has not always been easy, and that somewhere in the process communication has to a large extent broken down. The result is that the PCEA is sceptical about whether it is really our desire to enter into sister church

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relations. Thus it is necessary for us to approach them in a manner which shows that it is really our desire to enter into sister church relations with them.

Deputies also consider that there remain two areas of concern, which are of such weight that they need to be dealt with before the FRCA enters into sister church relations with the PCEA. These are the PCEA's manner of supervising the Lord's Super Table and their practice of pulpit exchange.

Deputies therefore propose that the FRCA enters into sister church relations with the PCEA if they can agree to principle statements about the supervision of the Lord's Super Table and the opening of the pulpit to visiting ministers. In this manner the FRCA shows that we are serious about our intentions in pursuing sister church relations. At the same time the FRCA makes it clear that for it to enter into a meaningful relationship with the PCEA there needs to be willingness to consider and resolve with one another the issues of concern. If the PCEA is willing to agree to our proposed statements we have to trust that they will also implement them.

This is considered to be a good approach in dealing with the PCEA. It allows the FRCA to be united and to thus truly extend the right hand of fellowship to the PCEA. At the same time it forces the PCEA to consider its fencing of the Lord's table and guarding of the pulpit. While for many in the FRCA these are not obstacles for recognition, they are still matters that most of us would like the PCEA to consider.

The proposed statements put together by your deputies are listed below. In our deputyship we were served by papers dealing with the supervision of the Lord's Supper table and the supervision of the pulpit. For your information they are included as Appendix 2 and 3 (*Position Paper on Pulpit Exchange* and *Position Paper on Fencing of the Lord's Table*).

PROPOSED STATEMENTS

1) The supervision of the table:

- a) The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's Supper should not be profaned (1Cor.11:27; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch.29.8).
 - Profaning the table of the Lord has serious consequences for both the individual and the congregation. The individual who eats the bread of the Lord or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner "will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" and "eats and drinks judgment to himself" (1Cor.11:27,29). God's wrath is poured out on the congregation where this is allowed to happen (1Cor.11:30).
- b) This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the church exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church.
 - Because no one is able to look into the heart, it is necessary for each individual to examine himself before coming to the table of the Lord (1Cor.11:28). Warnings from the pulpit play an important role in ensuring that individuals take this responsibility seriously. Those who eat and drink in an unworthy manner eat and drink judgment upon themselves. Thus it is important to emphasise the personal responsibility of all those who desire to attend the Lord's table.
 - Besides the individual's responsibility, our confessions teach that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. Both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith speak about admittance to the Lord's table (HC Q&A 82; WCF 29.8). All those who

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- show themselves to be ignorant and ungodly persons are not to be admitted to the Lord's table.
- It is the officers of the church that have the responsibility of supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper. Both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith speak about their duty to exercise discipline, and the role that suspension from the Lord's Supper has in this (HC Q&A 85; WCF 30.4). The elders are to exclude those who lead an offensive life, in doctrine or conduct from coming to the table of the Lord. Thus there is also a corporate responsibility in preventing the Lord's table from being profaned.
- c) This supervision is to be applied to members of the local church as well as to guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.
- The elders do not discharge their office sufficiently by an oral warning from the pulpit. Unlike the call of the Gospel, the communion at the table of the Lord is not indiscriminately offered to all that are present. For this reason, the apostles guarded the table and excluded those from participation that confessed to be Christians but were living in sin (1Cor.5:11-13; 1Cor.11:27,30; 2Thes.3:6).
 - The elders exercise the keys of the kingdom by finding out whether or not a person has publicly professed his faith and by ascertaining the contents of such a confession. They shall also ensure that a godly confession is adorned with a godly walk of life. They are not asked to judge the heart of a member or a guest, but they are to admit on the basis of public profession and public conduct. As the Larger Catechism states, "Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of faith, may and ought to be kept from the sacrament by the power which Christ has left in His Church, until they receive instruction and manifest their reformation." (LC 173).
 - Both Presbyterian and Reformed churches have recognised the need for exercising supervision over guests who desire to attend the Lord's Supper. This supervision should extend to both their confession and way of life. This has led to the following rule for guests in the Free Church of Scotland: "An authentic intimation from a Minister or Elder, that a person is in full membership with the congregation in which that Minister or Elder officiates, is sometimes allowed to stand as sufficient ground for the temporary or occasional admission of the person to communion in another congregation." (The Practise of the Free Church of Scotland in her Several Courts, Rev. ed.; ch.1, part 2, p.8). The PCEA have adopted the following rule for the supervision of the Lord's table: "The session is responsible to see that no person openly known to be ignorant or delinquent in doctrine or life be permitted at the Table. Persons other than communicant members of the congregation, who the session are satisfied are members in good standing of other evangelical churches, are welcome at the Lord's Table." (The Handbook of Practise and Procedure of the PCEA (1992), sec 2.18). Article 57 of the Church Order of the FRCA says, "The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the basis of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct." The emphasis here is on the fact that a guest requires a

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testimonial from an office-bearer of his local church, to ensure that he is a member in good standing. We may conclude that only those guests should be admitted to the Lord's Table who the session/consistory are satisfied, on the basis of an authentic intimation from the minister or elder of his congregation, are members of good standing of another true church of Christ.

2) The supervision of the pulpit

- a) The churches of the Reformation have recognised the true preaching of the Gospel as the first mark of the true church (Scots Confession Art.25; BC Art.27). The preaching and teaching in the church has a precisely defined content: the Word of God. The minister may only preach what is in accordance with that Word.
 - When the apostles went out to preach they preached not their own word, but the Word of God (1Thess.2:13). Paul spoke of himself and his fellow workers as ambassadors of Christ (2Cor.5:20). Paul teaches Timothy that for him to be a good minister of Jesus Christ he has to instruct the congregation in the things that he has received – the Old Testament Scriptures and the teaching of Paul (1Tim.4:6,11; 2Tim.1:13; 2Tim.3:14). Paul charges Timothy to instruct faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2Tim.2:2). In this way the true preaching of the Gospel would continue to be taught.
- b) The consequence of this for the true church is that not everyone can be allowed to preach. Only he, of whom the church can be assured that he will preach the doctrine of the Word of God, can be allowed to preach.
- c) In Presbyterian and Reformed churches this has led to the institution of an ecclesiastical examination of those who want to be ministers of the Word. It has always included an investigation of the doctrinal convictions of the candidate. There may be differences in the practical rules for this examination, but the main idea is clear: the pulpit should be fenced. No one should be invited to preach as a kind gesture, or because the congregation is curious what this preacher is thinking. The pulpit is not the place to be courteous or to satisfy curiosity. For the congregation should only hear from the pulpit the pure preaching of the gospel.
 - In the PCEA probationers are licensed to preach only after they have answered a series of questions. These questions require the probationer to affirm his belief in the Word of God, and His subscription to Confession of Faith. They require Him to promise to adhere to, assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this Church, and to renounce all doctrines, tenets or opinions contrary with it. (The Handbook of the Practise and Procedure of the PCEA, 1992 edition).
 - In the FRCA students are given the opportunity to speak an edifying Word after successfully completing a preparatory examination. It includes delivering a sermon at Classis (Synod or extra-ordinary Synod) and being examined on reformed doctrine (see the Church Order of the FRCA, Art.5; Acts of Synod, 1996, Art.27). The student is also required verbally to affirm his belief in the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to promise that he will teach nothing contrary to them.
 - Both federations of churches also have stringent procedures in place regarding the calling of ministers, and their installation or appointment to a pastoral charge (see the Handbook of Practise and

Procedure of the PCEA, and the Church Order of the FRCA). The main purpose of these procedures is to ensure that only godly, capable men, who confess the Scriptures to be the Word of God and who subscribe to their respective confessional standards serve in the churches.

d) It is the recognition of another Church as a true church that lays the basis for opening the pulpit to guest preachers. When a church is recognised as a true church its Gospel preaching is accepted as true and consequently its ministers can be recognised as faithful servants of God. After recognising a church it should be possible that ministers from that church are invited to preach. Therefore only guest preachers from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship (sister church relations / fraternal relations) should be invited to preach.

RECOMMENDATION

That Synod:

1) **Agrees with the above statements about the supervision of the Lord's Supper table and the fencing of the pulpit.**

Grounds:

- a) These statements are based on Scripture and the Reformed Confessions.
- b) these statements resolve the problems associated with the remaining areas of concern in a Scriptural and responsible manner.

2) **Recognises the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and offers a sister church relationship to them, if they can agree with the statements about the fencing of the Lord's table and pulpit exchange as mentioned in recommendation 1.**

Grounds:

- a) The PCEA gives evidence of faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- b) The PCEA's agreement with the proposed statements take away the concerns we expressed about how they receive guests at the Lord's Supper table and how they allow ministers from churches not in ecclesiastical contact to preach on their pulpits.

3) **Charges new deputies with the following tasks:**

- a) to personally communicate synod's decision about the statements, recorded in 1 above, to the PCEA, and to offer to enter into sister church relationship with them if the PCEA can agree with the statements
- b) to indicate to the PCEA that if they find reason to discuss the statements we are willing and eager to enter into dialogue with them about them
- c) to allow the deputies to attend a PCEA synod if an invitation is received
- d) To investigate how the FRCA should proceed in its contacts/relations with the FCS, EPCI, and the RPCI. This investigation should consider:
 - i) Whether the statements about the fencing of the Lord's table and pulpit exchange have any impact on relations with these churches.
 - ii) Whether there are other obstacles that stand in the way of a relationship with these churches.

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- iii) How in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations to churches geographically/culturally far away.

Grounds

1. Contact with the PCEA is at deputies level and it is good to communicate the Synod's decisions in a personal way to avoid misunderstanding.
2. Although Synod is convinced that it expresses in the statements the Scriptural position regarding the two matters of concern, we are open to a dialogue about these matters on the basis of Scripture and Confession.
3. It will be beneficial to have contact at synod level with the PCEA, especially now that the synod has offered the PCEA a sister-relationship.
4. Although it was part of the mandate of the 1996 deputies, it was impossible to complete the mandate 'to study/discuss the matter of contact/relations with Presbyterian Churches'.

APPENDIX 1

TO: SYNOD 1996 OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
FROM DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES (PRESBYTERIAN)
DATE 21 FEBRUARY 1998
SUBJECT POSITION PAPER ON THE POSITION OF CHILDREN IN THE COVENANT

INTRODUCTION

Synod 1996 mandated deputies to study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian Churches. The following was included in the mandate:

- a. What weight the FRCA should give to the areas of concern;
- b. Whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contacts/relations;

The position of children in the covenant is one area of concern which has been identified.

The PCEA has accepted the Westminster Standards as their confessions. About the Covenant we read in the Westminster Confession of Faith:

VII, 1 The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

VII, 2 The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

VII, 3 Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

VII, 4 This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.

VII, 5 This covenant was differently administered in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to

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the people of the Jews, all foresignifying Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.

VII, 6 Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the new Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.

In the Larger Catechism [LC] and Shorter Catechism [SC] we find the same confession. See ad VII, 1: LC Q/A 20, SC Q/A 12; See ad VII, 3: LC Q/A 30-31, SC Q/A 20; See ad VII, 5: LC Q/A 33.34 and see ad VII, 6: LC Q/A 35.

We find in Chapter XXVIII of the Westminster Confession of Faith the following about baptism and infant baptism:

XXVIII, 1 Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world.

XXVIII, 4 Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.

XXVIII, 5 Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparable annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

XXVIII, 6 The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and

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conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.

XXVIII, 7 The sacrament of Baptism is but once to be administered unto any person.

This confession is confirmed by the Larger and Shorter Catechism. See ad XXVIII, 1 LC Q/A 165 and SC Q/A 94; See ad XXVIII, 4 LC Q/A 166.167 and SC Q/A 95.

CONCLUSION

The FRCA has accepted the Westminster Standards as faithful in recognising other churches with the same standards. Although there is the possibility that there are differences of accent, the deputies have no indication that in the preaching or publications other (unscriptural) opinions about the position of the children in the covenant are taught or are allowed to be taught. Although we are not aware of differences of emphasis within the Free Reformed Churches at the moment, in the past we have had similar differences of accent in our own church history [compare the opinions after the Secession of 1834 and the Declaration of 1905 re the covenant].

In this respect it is also good to point to and to cite what is stated at the Synod of Dort [1618/1619]: "Therefore, this Synod of Dort adjures, in the Name of the Lord, all who piously call upon our Saviour Jesus Christ not to judge the faith of the Reformed churches from the slander gathered from here and there. Neither are they to judge from personal statements of some ancient or modern teachers, often quoted in bad faith, or taken out of context and explained contrary to their meaning. But one ought to judge the faith of the Reformed churches from the public confession of these churches themselves and from the present explanation of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of the members of the entire Synod, one and all." [see Book of Praise, page 576]. *Mutatis mutandis* the position of the children in the covenant is not an impediment to recognise the PCEA as a true and faithful church.

APPENDIX 2.

TO: SYNOD 1996 OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
FROM DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES (PRESBYTERIAN)
DATE 21 FEBRUARY 1998
SUBJECT POSITION PAPER ON PULPIT EXCHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Synod 1996 mandated deputies to study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian Churches. The following was included in the mandate:

- a. What weight the FRCA should give to the areas of concern;
- b. Whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contacts/relations;

The matter of pulpit exchange is one area of concern which remains. Refer Acts of Synod 1996 Deputies report Appendix C page 118.

Part of the Deputies' activities was to research the question of pulpit exchange and come forward with recommendations to Synod 1998. This paper addresses the mandate regarding what weight should be given to this area of concern and thus provides the background to the proposal regarding pulpit exchange.

This part of the report outlines Scriptural and Confessional givens on the preaching and the position of preachers; it then discusses relevant details contained in the FRCA Church Order and "The Handbook of Practice and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia" in relation to the preaching.

1.0 HOLY SCRIPTURE ON THE FUNCTION OF PREACHERS

1.1 The preacher is to bring God's Word.

When the apostles went out to preach they preached not their own word, but the Word of God. "...when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God." (1 Thess2:3). God speaks through the mouth of the apostles. "Therefore we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). Paul here says that he speaks on behalf of God; this is very strong language, enabling Paul to say elsewhere "you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (Gal 4:14).

1.2 The apostles had to carefully follow the Gospel taught to them

In Leviticus 10 we read that Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered profane fire to the LORD - and were destroyed by God for not carefully following God's instructions. 1 Kings 13 gives us further insight into the need for the office bearers in the OT to carefully follow the LORD'S instructions.

In instructing Timothy and Titus, Paul impresses upon them to carefully follow the instructions they have received from him. "If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the good words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed" (1 Tim 4:6). He augments this argument in 1 Tim 4:11 and 2 Tim 3:14 and charges Timothy to pass on to other teachers what he had been instructed by Paul "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Tim 2:2).

1.3 The apostles were to bring the whole counsel of God

Paul makes this clear in Acts 20:27: "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." Jesus Christ also charges the apostles to teach the world "to observe all things that I have commanded you."

1.4 The apostles had to nourish the congregations in the good doctrine

Paul charges Timothy to ensure that the congregations "are nourished in the good words of faith and the good doctrine" (1Tim 4:6).

1.5 The apostles were office bearers of God

Paul says he is an ambassador of Christ in 2 Cor 5:20.

1.6 The apostles were to be lawfully called or sent

Acts 14:23 states that the apostles "appointed elders in every church". In 1 Cor 12:28 Paul writes: "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers. In Titus 1:5 Paul gives a similar instruction. Hebrews 5:4, referring to the calling to Aaron, lays down the principle of being lawfully called to office in the church: "And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was". Romans 10:15 also says: "And how shall they preach unless they are sent?"

2.0 THE FRCA CONFESSIONS AND CHURCH ORDER ON THE POSITION OF PREACHERS

The Reformed churches have adopted procedures to ensure that the scriptural injunction that the congregations "are nourished in the good words of faith and the good doctrine" (1Tim 4:6).

2.1 Church Order (CO) and the Belgic Confession of Faith

The CO lays down strict procedures which govern the calling of ministers, the binding of ministers to a church, eligibility for the ministry, ordination and installation of ministers and related matters. Article 31 of the BCF also deals with the matters of the offices of the church.

2.2 Lawfully called

Both the CO and BCF emphasise that the lawful calling to the office of the ministry is essential. See Article 3 of the CO. Rev Jansen (1976:12) comments that no-one can take up office as a minister (to administer the Word, sacraments and church discipline) without being lawfully called thereto. He cites Hebrews 5:4 for Scriptural evidence. The CO sets down the procedure for the calling to office of a minister. Art 31 of the BCF also says that the office bearers ought to be chosen to their offices by lawful election of the church. It adds that a person shall wait for the call of the Lord.

2.3 Eligibility

Only those shall be eligible to be called to the office of minister of the Word who have been declared eligible or are already serving as minister in a sister church (art 5 of CO).

2.4 Ordination and installation.

The ordination and installation of ministers can only take place after rigorous peremptory examinations. In addition ministers/candidates must show good testimonials concerning doctrine and conduct.

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De Gier in "Explanation of the Canons of Dort" (1989:p37) comments that the Synod of Dort determined "People shall see to it that competent people are called to the ministry of the Word" and only those are called that have tested "that they are sound in doctrine and upright in life, endowed with gifts to teach others and have a good standing inside and outside the congregation". He adds (p40) "There must be safeguards that the minister of the Word is not arbitrarily imposed on the congregation, that he is suitable and competent for the work in the congregation and that he agrees with the confession and ordinances of the church."

Art 9 of the CO adds that a minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches from outside the bond of churches "shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and carefully examined by the classis (or synod in Australia) in whose area he lives."

2.5 Subscription to the Confessions

The CO (art 24) stipulates that all ministers of the Word shall subscribe to the three Forms of Unity. Anyone refusing to subscribe shall be not be ordained or installed, or shall be suspended from office. Van Oene in "With Common Consent" (1990:p118) comments that a church federation is based on the unity of faith and adds: "It is therefore of utmost importance that the unity of faith be preserved and protected... True unity is only possible when...the true doctrine of the Scriptures is believed and adhered to." In order to express and maintain this unity ministers are required to subscribe to the three forms and do so by signing the Form for this purpose. This form requires several fundamental things:

2.5.1 a declaration that the doctrine as summarised in the Confessions are wholly in accordance with Holy Scripture.

2.5.2 the promise to diligently teach and defend this doctrine without contradiction. (according to Acts 20:27 and Matt 28:20).

2.5.3 to refute and contradict all errors conflicting with this doctrine

2.5.4 not to raise publicly personal difficulties or sentiments about the doctrine.

2.6 Minister is God's office bearer

The preaching comes not from a free floating person, even though he may be a doctor in theology. A lawful preacher is God's representative (see references in section 1.0) and an office bearer in the church of God. So when a preacher mounts the pulpit he does so as a office bearer, duly appointed by the church.

The Form for ordination of ministers, in referring to Ephesians 4:11 and 12, makes it clear that pastors were appointed to take care of the flock of Christ. This flock is clearly the true church as gathered and governed under the preaching of the Word. God therefore appoints His office bearers, His ambassadors to the true church. His legitimate office bearers are in the true church.

The false church does not function as the assembly where God gathers His flock, therefore His office bearers are therefore not appointed there either.

2.6 All servants of Jesus Christ.

Art 31 of the BCF states that Ministers of the Word, in whatever place they are, have equal power and authority, for they are all servants of Jesus Christ. They therefore have the authority to administer the sacraments and church discipline.

3.0 THE PCEA CONFESSIONS AND THE PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE ON THE POSITION OF PREACHERS

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The aim of this part is to look closer at the Westminster Confession of Faith and the PCEA's practice and procedures regarding this matter.

3.1 Confessional givens

The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) covers the matter of the preaching.

3.1.1 According to WCF chapter 2.1 Scriptures, contained in all the Old and New Testaments books, "are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life."

3.1.2 Chapter 30 Section 1 confesses that the Lord Jesus Christ is king and head of His Church and has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers.

3.1.3 Chapter 21.5 states "'The reading of Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching ... are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God.

3.1.4 Chapter 25 confesses the Catholic Church and states "Unto this Catholic visible Church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints". Observation: It seems the WCF here ties the ministry to the Church, that is, the ministry is given to the Church and not to an individual person. A minister can only operate within the bounds and framework of the ministry within the Church and its offices.

3.1.5 The Larger Catechism Ans 159 states "The Word of God is to be preached by those that are called thereunto; ... they that are called to labour in the ministry of the Word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season...; faithfully making known the whole counsel of God..."

3.2 PCEA Practice and Procedures

The PCEA has very similar procedures to the FRCA regarding the "licensing of probationers", and calling and installation of ministers.

The following items are covered in "The Handbook of Practice and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia"; 1992 edition¹ hereafter called "The Handbook").

3.2.1 Appointments in Christ's name.

Clauses 1.7 and 1.8 of the Handbook state that the Presbyterian courts are the Session, the Presbytery and the Synod and add that the authority of the courts of the church is a delegated authority received from Christ, the only Head and Lord of the church; it is therefore an authority not to make laws but to declare and apply the mind of Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

3.2.2 Subscription to the Formula

No person is entitled to hold office in the PCEA who has not subscribed to the Formula in terms of the Act of Synod of 1952. (See point below). If an office bearer ceases to regard the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith as "the truths of God" and his personal confession, he can no longer hold office (Cl. 1.6).

3.2.3 Probationers before they are licensed to preach the Gospel

¹ Prepared by the PCEA's Law and Advisory Committee, February 1992

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Probationers can be licensed to preach if they answer a series of questions. Questions include the following;

- a. do you believe the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and manners
- b. do you own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, to be the truths of God and acknowledge the same as a confession of your own faith
- c. will you firmly and constantly adhere to, assert and defend the said doctrine of this Church
- d. will you renounce all doctrines, tenets or opinions whatsoever contrary to or inconsistent with the said doctrine.

Probationers and ordained ministers after being called by a Congregation are also asked a similar set of questions. These questions include:

- i. Do you believe the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and manners?
- ii. Do you own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, to be founded upon the Word of God; acknowledge the same as a confession of your faith; will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and to the utmost of your power assert and defend the same?
- iii. Do you disown all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Erastian and other doctrines, tenets or opinions whatsoever contrary to or inconsistent with the aforesaid Confession of faith?
- iv. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as king and head of the Church has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers?
- v. Do you promise to submit yourself willingly and humbly to the admonitions of the brethren of the Presbytery?

(See Appendix 1 for full text of both lists of questions)

Probationers and ordained ministers who are to be inducted into a congregation must sign the Formula. The Formula basically repeat the questions but puts them into a positive statement. (See Appendix 1 for full text of the Formula.)

3.2.4 Filling a vacancy

Clause 4.58 states that the control of the vacant pulpit is in the hands of the interim moderator who co-operates with the ruling elders and any vacancy committee to providing suitable pulpit supply and bringing forward candidates... It adds "It must be clearly understood that no one can be called to the pastorate in the PCEA but a licentiate or a minister of the PCEA or of a church whose licentiates and ministers are declared eligible by the rules of the church, e.g. the ministers and licentiates of the Free Church of Scotland (subject to any limitation on their ordination or license)."

3.2.5 Ordination

Application to be ordained as a minister in the PCEA can be made by a minister of any other denomination not embraced by an Act of Synod creating mutual eligibility. The Presbytery makes an investigation and transmits its report and recommendation to the Training of Ministry Committee which in turn reports to Synod for its decision whether or not to admit him. The Presbytery then requires the applicant to answer the same questions as ordained ministers and sign the Formula. He is then admitted into communion and declared eligible for call (Clause 4.52).

4.0 DEPUTIES' OBSERVATIONS

4.1 Definition of Pulpit Exchange

In Presbyterian circles pulpit exchange means the practice of allowing ministers (from churches with whom the host church has no fraternal relations) to preach in their churches. Deputies are aware for example that ministers of Reformed Baptist persuasion and Ministers of the Reformed Church of Australia preach on PCEA pulpits.

4.2 PCEA statement

A letter (10/12/95) from Rev PG Gadsby of the PCEA about pulpit exchange states "at no time does our admission of other than PCEA ministers to our pulpits necessarily mean an endorsement of their entire system of theology. We try to teach our people to be discriminating in their reading of the Word (1 These 5:19-22) and do not cultivate any tendency to believe what a preacher says simply because he says it. There is no explicit or implicit recognition of a man's church affiliation when one of our ministers invites him to preach. Rather the point is that the man has been found faithful, gifted and a man of God endowed with the Holy Spirit, and thus allowed to preach in spite of his church affiliation."

4.3 FRCA Concern

FRCA Synod 1990 stated "The PCEA's practice of allowing for "pulpit exchanges" with ministers of other (evangelical) churches...is of considerable concern to us and must continue to be discussed."

4.4 Comparing PCEA practice with Scripture and Confessions

The Handbook, being based on Scripture and Confession sets down a rigorous procedure for the calling and induction of a minister, a preacher of the Word, as well as their responsibilities once inducted. These include promises that they own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, and firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and to the utmost of their power assert and defend the same; that they disown all other doctrines, tenets or opinions whatsoever contrary to or inconsistent with the aforesaid Confession of faith. Clearly this is to ensure that the Churches are assured that ministers have indeed been called by God and to preach the whole counsel of God, in season and out of season and refute all things contrary to God's Word.

It has been shown that a minister of the Word is an ambassador and office bearer of God, duly appointed to office by and through the Church. The WCF confesses that it is the true Church to which Christ has given the ministry.

By allowing a preacher from a church with whom they do not have full fraternal relations on their pulpits, the PCEA does not do justice to the principles Scriptures, its own Confessions and Handbook.

5.0 ICRC COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATION

The above committee in its report² to the ICRC gives a Scriptural survey, similar to this report, on the preaching of the Word. It then concludes:

² Report of the ICRC Committee on Theological Affirmation. Edinburgh, July 2, 1992.
Authors: AC Boyd; J Faber; NH Gootjes; FS Leahy; HM Cartwright.

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"The consequence of this for the true church is that not everyone can be allowed to preach. Only he of whom the church can be assured that he will preach the doctrine of the Word of God, can be allowed to preach.

In the Presbyterian and Reformed churches this has led to the institution of an ecclesiastical examination of those who want to be ministers of the Word. It has always included an investigation of the doctrinal convictions of the candidate. There may be doctrinal differences in the practical rules for this examination, but the main idea is clear: the pulpit should be fenced. No one should be invited to preach as a kind of gesture, or because the congregation is curious what this preacher is thinking. The pulpit is not the place to be courteous or to satisfy curiosity. For the congregation should only hear from the pulpit the pure preaching of the gospel.

We may conclude that recognition of a church as true church implies recognition of the doctrine that is preached in that church. After recognising a church it should be possible that ministers from that church are invited to preach. Recognition of a church is recognition of its preaching. If pulpit exchange is not permissible then there should be no recognition as a true church.

The report goes on to state that guest preachers can be invited, but adds that guest preachers should be "from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship".

The above quotes clearly tie together recognition of a church and pulpit exchange. Deputies conclude from this that where there is recognition of a church as a true church, then pulpit exchange with preachers from that church can follow, but not before.

6.0 WHAT WEIGHT SHOULD THE FRCA GIVE TO THE MATTER OF PULPIT EXCHANGE?

This question will answer the more fundamental question whether the FRCA can recognise the PCEA as a true and faithful church. Synod Acts of 1985 (article 67) has declared what is meant by "true and faithful church". In relation to the matter of pulpit exchange the first part of the declaration is useful:

"our recognition of another Church as being 'true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ' means that both our churches, and that recognised church stand on the foundations as expressed in articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;"

Articles 27 to 32 address the preaching in the Church. Article 29 identifies the preaching of the gospel as a mark of the true church. It states that the true church "practices the pure preaching of the Gospel". Also "it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it".

This means we must test whether the PCEA practice and procedure of pulpit exchange according to these articles, particularly as the preaching is a mark of the true church. The (FRCA) Church Order is also relevant here. Article 46 deals with the "Relationship with other Churches". It states: "With churches of Reformed confession sister relations shall be maintained as much as possible. On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected." Given the parts 1.0 to 4.0 of this report it is considered that the matter of pulpit exchange, since it touches one of the marks of the true church, does not qualify as a "non-essential" point of ecclesiastical practice.

Points of concern

The following concerns are raised to the PCEA's practice of opening the pulpit to ministers of churches with which the PCEA does not have full fraternal relations:

6.1 Such a preacher not duly appointed by the PCEA according to the directions of Scripture and Confessions

6.2 There is no certainty or commitment that such a preacher does "sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland to be the truths of God" (The Formula in The Handbook). Scriptural evidence of the need to be meticulous in our obedience to God's will have been given. For example, a Reformed Baptist preacher does not preach the whole council of God when he denies child baptism, and does not uphold the full covenant doctrine and the continuity of the Old and New Testaments. He has a different theological slant to what is confessed in the WCF. His preaching and the administration of his office (baptism of adults alone) in his own church are not Scriptural. Such a man is not "sound" in season and out of season. Having such a man on PCEA pulpits is clearly an untenable situation as it would not honour the Scriptural and Confessional injunctions cited in this paper.

6.3 Such a preacher has not been subject to the rigorous procedures and examination set down in The Handbook for ministers. Allowing such preachers to preach circumvents the whole process, defeating the letter and the intent of The Handbook, the Confession and Scriptures.

6.4 Such a practice leaves the door open to the infiltration of unscriptural elements in the preaching. This undermines the pledge of PCEA office bearers to "assert, maintain, and defend the said doctrine" and worship of the PCEA. This removes the protection afforded the pulpit by The Handbook. It above all undermines the absolute authority of the preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

6.5 By inviting a preacher onto the pulpit it is implied he preaches salvation. Such a preacher however remains in his own church with which the PCEA has no fraternal relations; this undermines the WCF's confession that outside of the true church there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. In addition, the guest preacher does not heed the call to join himself to the true Church (art 28 BCF).

7.0 PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

The FRCA has on numerous occasions pointed out to the PCEA its concerns about pulpit exchange. The PCEA has however been unwilling to respond in detail to the FRCA questions and concerns.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

God has appointed preachers in the churches (1 Cor 12). The authority of preachers of the church is a delegated authority received from Christ, the only Head and Lord of the church and must declare and apply not their own minds but the whole council of God and the good doctrine as revealed in the Scriptures (Acts 20:27, 1 Timothy 4:6).

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The churches have instituted an orderly way to allow preachers onto the pulpits. A person is entitled to be a probationer, be ordained as a minister or fill a minister's vacancy in the church or preach in the church only if he believes the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and manners, believes the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith to be founded upon the Word of God; firmly and constantly adheres thereto; asserts and defends the same; disowns all doctrines, tenets or opinions whatsoever contrary to or inconsistent with the aforesaid Confession of faith. If an office bearer ceases to regard the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith as "the truths of God" and his personal confession, he can no longer hold office. (Refer to 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:2; The Larger Catechism Ans 159; Clause 1.6 of the Handbook.)

The PCEA open pulpit practice leaves open the door to preaching that is not "the whole council of God" and "doctrine of the Confession of faith". It does not safeguard the congregation from preaching that renounces "all doctrines, tenets or opinions whatsoever contrary to or inconsistent with the said doctrine."

The PCEA practice of opening the pulpit to ministers of churches with which it has no fraternal relations is therefore a serious area of concern and carries such weight that the PCEA can only be recognised as a "true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ" when the PCEA adequately fences its pulpits.

APPENDIX

1. Clauses from the "The Handbook of Practice and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia" (1992 edition) quoted in this report.

1.6 No person is entitled to hold office in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia who has not subscribed the Formula in terms of the Act of Synod of 1952. The lawful exercise of the powers of the church court is subject to the constitution, and thus is limited to matters consistent with such subscription. If an office bearer ceases to regard the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith as 'the truths of God' and his personal confession, he can no longer hold office.

1.7 In accordance with the Presbyterian form of government set forth in the Standards of the church, the church is governed by ministers and elders acting in orderly association in a gradation of courts of the church by which its organic unity is expressed and maintained. In order these courts are the Session, the Presbytery and the Synod. [For status of the Deacons' Court see 3.4].

1.8. The authority of the courts of the church is a delegated authority received from Christ, the only Head and Lord of the church; it is therefore an authority not to make laws but to declare and apply the mind of Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

4.51 Application for admission being made by a minister of any other denomination not embraced by an Act of Synod creating mutual eligibility, the presbytery arranges to confer with him, with reference to, inter alia,

- a) his character and status,
- b) the reasons which have led him to make the application,
- c) the course of professional education he has pursued,
- d) the body by which he was ordained and the manner of ordination.

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The presbytery has no power to admit him, but transmits its report to the Training of Ministry Committee, together with any remarks or recommendations it may see fit to add. The Training of Ministry Committee makes such further enquiries as seem appropriate and the case is reported to the next meeting of Synod for its decision.

4.52 Authority to admit him having been granted by Synod, the presbytery requires the applicant to answer the questions prescribed in Act of Synod 1952, and to sign the Formula. After prayer and a suitable address by the moderator, he is admitted into communion and declared a Minister (or probationer) of the church eligible for call.

4.53 A congregation having only one minister becomes vacant by his death, resignation, transference, suspension without time restriction or deposition. In the case of a vacancy from any of these causes, the presbytery appoints to the session an interim moderator who has the authority and executes all the functions of a stated pastor, although he need not convene the deacons' court (see 3.5). The interim moderator is responsible to the presbytery during the vacancy.

When a vacancy has occurred, a duly constituted meeting of the congregation may appoint a committee of its members to co-operate with the session in seeking out a suitable person, or persons, to be heard by the congregation with a view to expediting the settlement of a minister in the charge.

4.58 The control of the vacant pulpit is in the hands of the interim moderator who co-operates with the ruling elders and any vacancy committee (see 4.53) with a view to providing suitable supplies for the pulpit and bringing forward possible candidates. It is considered important that vacant congregations have and take the opportunity of hearing several ministers with a view to an informed and harmonious decision being made.

4.58 (contd) It must be clearly understood that no one can be called to the pastorate in the PCEA but a licentiate or a minister of the PCEA or of a church whose licentiates and ministers are declared eligible by the rules of the church, eg. the ministers and licentiates of the Free Church of Scotland (subject to any limitation on their ordination or license).

2. PROBATIONERS BEFORE THEY ARE LICENSED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

QUESTIONS:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?
- (2) Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, approved by General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, to be the truths of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and do you own the doctrine therein contained as the confession of your faith?
- (3) Do you sincerely own the purity of worship presently authorised and practiced in this Church, and also own the Presbyterian government and discipline; and are you persuaded that the said doctrine, worship, and discipline, and Church government, are founded upon the Holy Scriptures, and agreeable thereto?
- (4) Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of the Church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of Church officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to civil government, and that the Civil Magistrate does not possess jurisdiction, or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's Church; and

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do you approve of the general principles embodied in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest, adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842 and in the Protest of Ministers and Elders, Commissioners from Presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in the presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18th May 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the Word of God, and the standards of the Church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the Church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only head and to his Word as her only standard?

(5) Do you promise that, through the grace of God, you will firmly and constantly adhere to, and in your station, to the utmost of your power, assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship, and discipline, and the government of this Church by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods and General Assemblies?

(6) Do you promise that, in your practice you will conform yourself to the said worship, and submit yourself to the said discipline and government of this Church, and not endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the same?

(7) Do you promise that you will follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church?

(8) Do you renounce all doctrines, tenets, or opinions whatsoever contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church?

(9) Do you promise that you will submit yourself to the several judicatories of this Church?

3. PROBATIONERS AFTER BEING CALLED BY A CONGREGATION

QUESTIONS to be put to Probationers before ordination (and also to a Minister already ordained, at his admission to a Pastoral Charge).

(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?

(2) Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, to be founded upon the Word of God; and do you acknowledge the same as a confession of your own faith; and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto, and to the utmost of your power assert, maintain, and defend the same, and the purity of worship as presently practiced in this Church??

(3) Do you disown all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Erastian, and other doctrines, tenets and opinions whatsoever contrary to, and inconsistent with, the foresaid Confession of Faith?

(4) Are you persuaded that the Presbyterian government and discipline of this Church are founded upon the Word of God, and agreeable thereto; and do you promise to submit to the said government and discipline, and to concur with the same, and to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the thereof, but to the utmost of your power, in your station, to maintain, support and defend the said discipline and Presbyterian government, by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies?

(5) Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of the Church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of Church officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to civil government, and that the Civil Magistrate does not possess jurisdiction, or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's Church; and do you approve of the general principles embodied in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest, adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842 and in the Protest of Ministers and Elders, Commissioners from Presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in the presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18th May 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the Word of God, and the standards of the Church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the Church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only head and to his Word as her only standard?

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(6) Do you promise to submit yourself willingly and humbly, in the spirit of meekness, unto the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, and to be subject to them, and all other Presbyteries and superior judicatories of this Church, where God in His providence shall cast your lot; and that according to your power, you shall maintain the unity and peace of this Church against error and schism, notwithstanding of whatsoever trouble or persecution may arise, and that you shall follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church?

(7) Are not zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and the desire of saving souls, your great motives and chief enducements to enter into the functions of the holy ministry and not worldly designs and interests?

(8) Have you used any undue methods, either by yourself or others, in procuring this call?

(9) Do you engage, in the strength and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, to rule well your own family, to live a holy and circumspect life, and faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge all the parts of the ministerial work, to the edification of the body of Christ?

(10) Do you accept of and close with the call to be pastor of this congregation, and promise, through grace, to perform all the duties of a faithful minister of the gospel among this people?

4. FORMULA

[To be subscribed by Probationers before receiving License, and by all Office-bearers at the time of their admission.]

I _____ do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, to be the truths of God; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith; as likewise, I do own the purity of worship presently authorised and practiced in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and also the Presbyterian government and discipline thereof; which doctrine, worship, and church government, I am persuaded, are founded upon the Word of God, and agreeable thereto; I also approve of the general principles respecting the jurisdiction of the Church and her subjection to Christ as her only Head, which are contained in the Claim of Right, and in the Protest, referred to in the questions already put to me; and I promise, that, through the grace of God, I shall firmly and constantly adhere to the same, and to the utmost of my power, shall in my station, assert, maintain, and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church, by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods and General Assemblies, together with the liberty and exclusive jurisdiction thereof; and that I shall, in my practice, conform myself to the said worship, and submit to the said discipline and government, and exclusive jurisdiction, and not endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the same; and I promise, that I shall follow no divisive course from the doctrine, worship, discipline, government, and exclusive jurisdiction of this Church, renouncing all doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said doctrine worship, discipline, government, or jurisdiction of the same.

APPENDIX 3.

TO: SYNOD 1996 OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
FROM DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES (PRESBYTERIA)
DATE 24 FEBRUARY 1998
SUBJECT POSITION PAPER ON FENCING OF THE LORD'S TABLE

INTRODUCTION

This paper was originally prepared by Rev. van Delden for Deputies appointed by 1994 Synod; hence the reference to Article 111 of 1994 Synod. Rev. van Delden has recently made some amendments which are incorporated in this paper. This paper has been used by deputies appointed by 1996 Synod and Deputies append it to their report for Synod's information.

DEPUTIES ad ARTICLE 111, 1994 SYNOD of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES

MANDATE: Article 111 Acts of 1994 Synod

1. *To study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian churches, addressing the following questions:*
 - a) *To study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian churches, addressing the following questions:*
 - i) *What weight the FRCA should give to the areas of concern;*
 - ii) *Whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contacts/relations;*
 - iii) *How in a manageable way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations towards churches geographically/culturally far away;*

The "concerns" are not described in the mandate itself, but are a referral to the concerns expressed in the mandate given to the previous deputies, namely: 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.

This paper addresses one part of this mandate, which is formulated as:

1. what weight the FRCA should give to the area of concern regarding the supervision of the Lord's table in the PCEA, with due attention given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding interdenominationalism.
2. Whether or not our concern regarding the supervision of the table in the PCEA must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contacts/relations.

1. WHAT WEIGHT SHOULD THE FRCA GIVE TO THE AREA OF CONCERN REGARDING THE SUPERVISION OF THE LORD'S TABLE, AND OUR CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE UNSCRIPTURAL CONCEPTS REGARDING INTERDENOMINATIONALISM.

We will consider:

- a) the scriptural demand for supervising the Lord's table.
- b) the reason for supervising the Lord's table.
- c) the scriptural manner of supervising the Lord's table
- d) the manner of supervision practiced by the PCEA
- e) an evaluation of the manner of fencing the table in the PCEA.
- f) the possibility of unscriptural concepts regarding interdenominationalism behind the policies on fencing the table in the PCEA

a) **THE SCRIPTURAL DEMAND FOR SUPERVISING THE LORD'S TABLE.**

- i) It must be conceded that there is no direct command in Scripture requiring office bearers to exercise supervision over the table of the Lord. Scripture gives only the direct command for the individual to examine and judge his own worthiness. *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup"* (1 Cor 11:28).
- ii) There are, nevertheless, compelling scriptural reasons for the office-bearers to exercise supervision over the Lord's table. Turning to the Old Testament, we find the priests judged those who participated in the sacrificial service at the altar. In matters of ceremonial uncleanness which were visible on the body, the priest was required to determine whether a disease was leprous. A leper was barred from the sacrificial service. Further, a leper whose wound was healed also had to present himself for examination to the priest to see whether he was "*clean*" (cf. Lev 13-14). The duty of elders in the New Testament church is similar. They must exercise supervision over the Lord's table to ensure that only those who are spiritually "*cleansed*" from their sin through the blood of Christ participate in this sacrament which seals this cleansing.
- iii) While spiritual well-being is a matter of one's own responsibility, it is not only one's own. It pleases God to appoint elders in the church who "*watch out for your souls, as those who must give account*" (cf. Heb 13:17). Thus in addition to the individual's own responsibility to ensure worthy participation, the elders of the church are to ensure to the best of their ability that no one "*eats and drinks judgment upon himself*" (1 Cor 11:29).
- iv) What is true for the individual is also true for the congregation as a whole. The elders of the church watch out for the souls of all the members of their congregation. Thus the elders of the church must ensure that the unworthy participation of one member does not God's judgment upon the congregation as a whole.

b) **THE REASON FOR SUPERVISING THE LORD'S TABLE**

- i) We confess that those are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly, for then the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation. Therefore, according to the command of Christ and His apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such persons by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, until they amend their lives (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 82).

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- ii) From the above we note two important reasons why the Lord's Supper must be supervised: to prevent 1) the profanation of God's covenant, and 2) the wrath of God being kindled against the congregation. Concerning the first, God accused the leaders of the church in the old dispensation of profaning God's holy things when they would handle them, though they themselves were defiled with sin. *"Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things (Ezek 22:26).* In the same manner all Christians who defile themselves by living in sin, and still participate in the holy sacrament, profane this sacrament and the covenant of grace which it portrays.
- iii) Concerning the second, the author of the letter to the Hebrews writes of God's wrath which will descend upon those who profane the grace which is portrayed in this sacrament by walking in disobedience to God: *Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb 10:29).* This is true for the individual. This is also true for the congregation. In Corinth the table of the Lord was defiled by the attendance of those who displayed little or no love for their brothers and sisters in the Lord. With prophetic vision Paul saw the direct judgment of God upon the defiled table. *"For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep (1 Cor 11:30).* Although we cannot be certain, *"most likely Paul does not see the judgment as a kind of 'one for one,' that is, the person who has abused another is the one who gets sick. Rather, the whole community is affected by the action of some...."*¹

c) THE SCRIPTURAL MANNER OF SUPERVISING THE LORD'S TABLE

- i) Again it must be conceded that Scripture does not delineate precisely the manner in which the Lord's table is to be supervised. This must be deduced from certain principles.
- ii) A verbal confession of Jesus Christ is an important aspect of our salvation (cf. Rom 10:9), and is itself a good fruit which faith produces in the godly. *"For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ...A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks"* (Luke 6:43,45).
- iii) A verbal confession, while a good fruit, is insufficient for judging faith. Our Lord said that there will be many who make a good confession, but who do not do the things which God commands. Immediately after saying that a man speaks from the abundance of the heart, as quoted above, He said, *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). Elsewhere He said the same: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* (Mat 7:21-23).

James contended with those who professed their faith with words, but whose

¹ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, 1987, pg. 565.

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lives did not bear fruits thereof. He said, "But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18). "For James the issue is whether one can prove the existence of a saving faith without works (cf. Heb 11:6). The objector says yes; James answers no. By his response in vs 18b, James is thought to lay the foundation of a strong argument that says that simple profession of faith is quite inadequate in God's eyes. James challenges his opponent to demonstrate...his faith apart from works. This is an impossible challenge to meet; for how can one show faith unless by means of visible and tangible evidence?"²

- iv) Because a verbal confession is insufficient for judging faith, it is by itself insufficient grounds for permitting participation at the Lord's table. The elders of the church, who are given the task of ensuring the purity of the sacrament, must have evidence of faith from both the confession and conduct of the aspiring guest communicant.
 - v) Where we have diligently and very carefully discerned from the Word of God that another church is a true Church, we may also recognise the faithful supervision which the elders of this Church exercise over its members. On the basis of this supervision over the confession and conduct of these members, and upon production of a good testimony from their consistory, we may permit them to participate in the celebration of Holy Supper in Churches.
- d) **THE MANNER OF SUPERVISION PRACTICED BY THE PCEA**
- i) We read in the Westminster Confession:
 - a) XXIX,8 The unworthy participation of ignorant and wicked persons "makes them guilty of the body and blood of the Lord to their own condemnation. It follows that all ignorant and ungodly persons, being unfit to enjoy communion with Christ, are also unworthy to come to the Lord's table. While they remain like this they cannot partake of these holy mysteries or be admitted to them without great sin against Christ."
 - b) XXX,3,4 "Church discipline is necessary for the reclaiming and regaining of offending brethren, for deterring others from committing similar offences, for purging out the leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, should it allow his covenant and its seals to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders." (The reference to "seals" is a reference to the sacraments.)
 - ii) From the *Directory for Public Worship of God* we quote, "...the minister shall exhort his hearers as to who are entitled to come to the table and who are not."
 - iii) From the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure of the PCEA* (1992) 2.18, we quote: "The celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be maintained and the frequency of its observance is left to the discretion of the session. (A common practice is a quarterly celebration.) The session is responsible to see that no person openly known to be ignorant or delinquent in doctrine or life be permitted at the Table. Persons other than communicant members of the

² Ralph P. Martin, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary, Word Books, 1988, p.88.

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congregation, who the session are satisfied are members in good standing of other evangelical churches, are welcome at the Lord's Table.

- iv) In a paper of the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee we read: "At every celebration of the Lord's Supper, the qualifications for partaking are carefully spelled out to discourage unworthy partakers, but not to exclude those believers who may be visiting from other churches."³
 - v) In a letter from Rev. Dr. R. Ward we read, "No communion service occurs in our churches without the fencing of the table - that is without the qualifications for communion being set forth, the warrant for participation being stated and the sin of unworthy participation being pointed out."⁴
 - vi) From the Westminster Standards and the documents regulating order and worship the following is clear:
 - a) The PCEA acknowledges the authority and duty of the elders to safeguard the purity of the sacrament by opening and closing the Table.
 - b) In order to safeguard the purity of the sacrament, the warrant for participation and a warning against unwarranted or unworthy participation is proclaimed from every PCEA pulpit prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
 - c) It is acknowledged that the session must be satisfied that the aspiring guest communicant is a member in good standing of another evangelical church.
 - d) It is evident that neither official recognition of these "evangelical" churches nor relations with them are required before members of these churches are permitted to participate in the sacrament.
 - e) The PCEA does not require either its own members or aspiring guest communicants to subscribe to the Westminster Confession. "Whilst the importance of correct doctrine is not to be underestimated, members are not required to subscribe the Confession of Faith as are office-bearers." The same is true for aspiring guest communicants.⁵
 - vii) There are still matters which are unclear to the deputies:
 - a) whether the aspiring guest communicant is examined prior to the celebration, and if so, the extent of this examination.
 - b) whether the term *evangelical church* can be equated with the term *true church*, and how the session judges whether the church to which an aspiring guest communicant belongs is an evangelical church or not.
- e) **AN EVALUATION OF THE MANNER OF FENCING THE TABLE IN THE PCEA.**
- i) The manner in which the PCEA exercises supervision over its own members ensures that only those who show evidence of true faith by their confession and conduct are admitted to the table. It is lamentable, however, that subscription to the Westminster Standards is not required of communicants.
 - ii) It is difficult for deputies to evaluate the manner of fencing in the PCEA since there are still matters which are unclear. Although deputies have requested

³ cf. Paper from the PCEA's Inter-Church Relations Committee as published in the Acts of the 1994 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, pg. 157.

⁴ See Appendix A

⁵ A paper from the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee, quoted from the Acts of the 1994 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches, pg. 159.

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clarification on these points, the response received did not provide it. This makes the evaluation contingent.

- a) If the fencing of the table consists only of a statement from the pulpit regarding warranted participation and a warning against the sin of unworthy participation, then the PCEA practices what is commonly referred to as an open table. If this is true, we would need to regard the office-bearers of negligence in guarding the purity of the table.
- b) If the fencing of the table entails the examination of an aspiring guest communicant, then the PCEA practices what is commonly referred to as a restricted table. If this is true, we could regard the office-bearers as exercising some measure of judgement. The question would remain, however, whether this is adequate. As we have seen, Scripture warns us that there are many who will say, "Lord, Lord," and who will claim to have done many works in Christ's name. Yet Christ judges them as unworthy of a place in His kingdom. Evidence of faith should be sought not only in words but also in works, not only by confession but also by conduct.
- iii) The PCEA acknowledge that church membership is a matter for consideration when admitting persons to the Lord's Table. It is left up to the session (or members of it) rather than to synodical deputies of the PCEA to determine which churches are *evangelical* and which are not. Time restrictions will seldom permit the session to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God whether the church to which the aspiring guest communicant belongs is a true church (cf. Belgic Confession, Art 28). Furthermore, the distinction between more/less pure churches could lead to a situation where persons would be admitted to the Table who belong to churches which maintain divergent doctrines which would make official/organisational unity of churches impossible. It hardly seems correct that unity of faith can be expressed around the Lord's Supper table on a personal level when unity of faith is not expressed on an ecclesiastical level.

On this matter we quote Professor Geertsema: "*When...the federation of the churches has acknowledged an other church group as true Churches of Christ Jesus and a sister church relationship has been established according to that acknowledgment, the pulpit is open and so is the Table.*"

...But do we, herewith, deny any unity in Christ with believers outside our own federation and the sister churches abroad? No we do not.

...However, when "my" church federation cannot merge or have a sister relationship with their church groups for reasons of doctrine and/or church government, or rather for Biblical and confessional reasons, and when so Scripture and confession are the foundation upon which the separating church walls are built, do I, or does my consistory, have the right to act as if those separating church walls all of a sudden do not exist any more when it comes to the Table of the Lord?

Must we maintain church walls on the basis of Scripture and confession, when it comes to church federation, but break down those walls when it comes to individual participation at the Table of the Lord? ...This is misusing that so-called higher unity. We should not create a concept of a higher unity in Christ

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that can be placed over against the confessional and organizational unity in Christ and in the church. Such a concept tends to bread down church walls build upon the foundation of Scripture and confession. It tends to undermine obedience to the Lord in matters of church membership, to diminish ecclesiastical faithfulness and sincerity. And it so easily brings confusion in the congregation.⁶

From this we conclude that if separating church walls are a matter of obedience to God's Word and in accordance with the adopted confession of the church which is based on Scripture, it is the calling of the churches to maintain those walls also at the Table of our Lord.

f) THE POSSIBILITY OF UNSCRIPTURAL CONCEPTS REGARDING INTERDENOMINATIONALISM BEHIND THE PRESBYTERIAN PRACTICE.

- i) In a brochure entitled, *Open Communion in the OPC [Orthodox Presbyterian Churches]*, Rev. B. R. Hofford, formerly a minister of the OPC expressed his concern that the OPC did not fence the table as was required. He wrote, "The root of the problem regarding the Lord's Supper in the OPC is not their doctrine of the sacrament perse, but rather their view of the church. We can safely say that as long as the election perspective, the invisible church, the pluriformity of the church, and the more/less pure churches views are held, so long will the OPC cling to open communion."⁷
- ii) Dr. N.H. Gootjes commented on the arguments which Rev. Hofford brought forward. In his commentary⁸, Dr. Gootjes wrote, "I am doubtful whether open communion is indeed connected with the concept of an invisible church. He went on to show that Calvin and other Reformers, in their explanation of the doctrine of the church, used the distinction of *visible* and *invisible*. Traditionally, Reformed theology organises the sacraments under the visible church. The Westminster confession also stands in this tradition.
- iii) Upon reading Dr. Gootjes' article we can only conclude that the distinction of *visible* and *invisible* church does not necessarily lead to a less restricted manner of fencing the table. But Dr. Gootjes is not able to prove that such a distinction can not lead to a less restricted fencing of the table.
- iv) In their discussions with the FRCA deputies, the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the PCEA wrote: "We must remember that the gathering of any particular local church is a foretaste of that great gathering of the elect before God's throne at the coming of Christ, and that it is a foretaste shared by all those everywhere who call on the name of the Lord. It is to this latter truth that the PCEA tries to do justice in her policies with respect to the occasional opening of her ... communion table to those who are from outside her federation, but whom we expect to share with us in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."⁹ The contrast is here between the visible and the invisible church, or

⁶ J. Geertsema, *A closed Lord's Supper Table is not proof of a sectarian spirit but shows ecclesiastical faithfulness*, in *Clarion*, Volume 35, Number 7, April 4, 1986, pg. 143.

⁷ B.R. Hofford, *Open Communion in the OPC*, Inter League Publication Board, 1990, pg. 16f..

⁸ N.H. Gootjes, *The Invisible Church and Open Communion*, in *Clarion*, Volume 40, Number 7, March 28, 1991, pg. 155-158.

⁹ Quoted from Acts of the 1994 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, pg. 157.

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the church as it is being gathered locally and as it is being gathered universally from all times and places. It is the truth of the invisible church gathering work of Christ which induces the PCEA to open up its tables.

- v) Prof. Geertsema has written regarding the same matter, although from the angle of defending the practice of a closed table.¹⁰ In this article is a section entitled, *The invisible church concept as basis for the rejection of a closed Table*. In this section he writes: *"This invisible church is the true body of Christ; it is the church as an organism, the worldwide, catholic church. In this body, according to this concept, all the true believers, all those who are born again and grafted into Christ, have automatically a place. They are its members."*

Closely related to this view of the church as visible and invisible church is the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church. The Pluriformity concept is 'that the invisible Church of Christ reveals itself visibly on earth in many forms (pluriform), namely, in many different local and regional church institutes, that is in many different denominations, which all have and emphasise their own special aspect of the truth of God.

Within this concept of a pluriformity of the church and of an invisible church with its 'higher unity in Christ' a closed Table does not fit and gets the label 'sectarian'. A closed Table, per logical consequence, must be seen in this line of thinking as a denial of that 'higher unity in Christ.'

- vi) From the above we conclude that doctrine of the visible/invisible church and the closely related notion of the pluriformity of the church may be the cause which lies behind the less restricted manner of fencing the Lord's Table in the PCEA. As such, our concern of possible unscriptural concepts regarding interdenominationalism in the PCEA will require further investigation.

2. WHETHER OR NOT OUR CONCERN REGARDING THE SUPERVISION OF THE TABLE MUST BE CLEARED BEFORE THE FRCA CAN PROGRESS WITH CONTACTS/RELATIONS.

- a) Our Church Order reads: *With churches of Reformed confession sister relations shall be maintained as much as possible. On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected* (Article 46, Church Order of FRCA).
- b) Inasmuch as the PCEA has not furnished us with more definite information concerning their practice of fencing the table, we are not in a position to make any concrete evaluation whether we can progress with our contacts. In this report we have seen that there might be some serious inadequacies in the policies of the PCEA regarding the admission of guests from other evangelical churches. This is a serious matter, since it touches upon the purity of the Lord's Table, which is one of the marks of the true church. We have also expressed the concern that the doctrinal barriers which prevent official recognition and unity of churches are overlooked when determining participate at the Lord's Table. This gives reason for further investigation whether the PCEA embraces the notion of interdenominationalism. This, too, is a serious matter, since it touches on the purity of doctrine, which is the second mark of the true church.

¹⁰ J. Geertsema, *ibid.*, pg. 142.

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- c) The serious nature of these concerns induces deputies to recommend to Synod that deputies resume their discussions with the PCEA on these matters, and that the FRCA progress in their relations with the PCEA only when these concerns have been removed.

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches)

1. Deputies Relations with Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches) had responsibility for the following areas:
 - a) Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI and GGMM)
 - b) Reformed Churches of New Zealand
 - c) Geneva Free Reformed Church (NZ)
 - d) Reformed Churches of Australia
 - e) Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines
 - f) Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
2. In order to carry out their mandate, deputies met 15 times since Synod Kelmescott 1996. Some items remain unfinished. Deputies intend to issue a supplementary report.
3. Deputies have maintained a "Fund for the Support of the Indonesian Churches." The treasurer, br J. van Dyk has submitted statements of income and expenditure direct to the Churches.

Indonesian Reformed Churches (GGRI and GGMM)

Mandate:

Synod Kelmescott 1996 instructed deputies:

- a) *to continue to visit the Synods of the GGRI*
- b) *to visit the GGMM as need and opportunity arise*
- c) *to report on progress towards an eventual recommendation to recognise the GGMM as sister churches*
- d) *to continue to support the theological training undertaken by Yonson Dethan*
- e) *to support a student from the sister churches once Yonson Dethan has completed his studies at the Theological College in Hamilton*
- f) *to coordinate the support offered to the Indonesian Churches by way of sponsoring visits, provision of literature and other aids in order to build up the reformed character of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia*
- g) *to encourage the individual Free Reformed Churches and their members to provide the finance needed to support Decisions d) and e) and f)*

(Articles 66 and 67)

A. Yonson Dethan

1. Yonson Dethan completed his studies at Hamilton Theological College culminating in his graduation on September 5th 1997. Prior to his return to Indonesia, deputies arranged Yonson to visit all the Australian Churches for a familiarisation and thankyou visit.
2. Deputies met with Yonson to give advice regarding his future work amongst the Indonesian Churches. Following a request from the deputies GGRI, deputies recommended that Yonson make himself available to teach at the Theological

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College at Wai Marangu for several months per year. Further it was our advice that Yonson accept a call from one of the GGMM Churches and gradually take up the work of training office bearers previously done by Rev. Knigge. Deputies followed this advice with a supporting letter to the GGMM. However this request appears initially not to have been favorably received but was accepted at a meeting with Brs Bosveld and van Dyk during their visit in September.

3. Yonson has been provided with a computer to facilitate his work and to allow him access to Canada and Australia via e-mail. As a consequence Deputies have offered financial support for computer supplies and repairs and to establish and maintain an email account. At this stage deputies see no reason to offer further financial support. However the situation in the GGMM following the split two years ago is unstable and to date Yonson has not received a call. If this situation continues, deputies may have to consider assistance to enable Yonson to be self-supporting.

B. Pila Njuka

1. As per the mandate of Synod, deputies investigated the possibility to support a student from the GGRI to commence studies at Hamilton once Yonson Dethan was finished. Deputies, after due consideration and advice arranged that Pila Njuka to undergo English language studies in Australia prior to commencing at Hamilton. Pila Njuka had previously visited the Free Reformed Churches from October 1995 to January 1996 for familiarisation and English instruction. Pila returned to Australia in January 1997, successfully completed his English studies in July 1997 but requested to return to Indonesia in order to marry.
2. Deputies are well aware of the extra complications in supporting a wife as well as Pila. There are considerations regarding extra costs, cultural difficulties for the spouse etc which gave cause for concern. However deputies decided to persevere with the planned support for Pila Njuka.
3. It is the intention that Pila and his spouse return to Australia for a few months of refresher studies in English and biblical languages before travelling to Hamilton in August 1998. Pila intends to marry D.V. March 5th, 1998

C. Support Reformed Churches in Indonesia

1. Synod Kelmescott gave deputies the mandate "to coordinate the support offered to the Indonesian Churches by the way of visits, literature and other aids in order to build up the reformed character of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia".
2. During the visits by Brs Bosveld and van Dyk, they were able to distribute financial assistance, provided by Mission Aid and individuals of the FRCA, to the churches of the GGRI and GGMM.
3. Financial support was provided from Synod funds to allow Revs P. Hawu and M Radjah to visit Australia for three weeks during the time of Synod, Kelmescott, 1996.
4. Deputies received a written request from the GGRI deputies for financial support to the churches of about \$20 to \$30 per month to enable the 30 churches each to support an evangelist. This is similar to support given to 5 evangelists by a group mainly within the Free Reformed Church of Mt. Nasura. The Dutch deputies advised against providing this support, although the option of initial funding to allow evangelists to be self-supporting was worth considering.
5. The support for Yonson Dethan and Pila Njuka was provided from the "Fund for the Support for Indonesian Churches" in accordance with Synod's mandate to encourage the individual Free Reformed churches and their members to provide the financial support in order to carry out their mandate. Deputies have regularly reported to the churches on the

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status of the fund, including income received and disbursements. Deputies can thankfully report that it has received sufficient support to enable it to carry out its mandate.

D. Visits to the Indonesian Churches

Synod mandated deputies to visit the Indonesian Churches, preferably during the time of the next synod of the GGRI.

Deputies delegated Brs J. Bosveld and J. van Dyk to visit the GGRI and the GGMM during 13 – 23 September 1997. The report of delegates is attached as appendix A.

The delegates could report favorably on their visit to our sister churches (GGRI). They reported a sincere desire to live according to God's Word and faithfulness to the Confessions and the established Church Order although there was evidence also of an ongoing struggle to remain Reformed. During the past two years delegates from the GGRI could visit our Synod whilst FRCA delegates visited the Synod of the GGRI. In this way the sister church relationship was strengthened.

The contact with the GGMM was more tense as a result of a communication received from Rev. E. Fangidae. The FRCA delegates were able to resolve most of the matters during a meeting between them and the GGMM deputies including Rev. E. Fangidae (see report).

The GGMM have offered sister relations to the FRCA and are disappointed that the FRCA has not reciprocated. Also this matter was discussed by our delegates, who pointed out that this decision must be made by Synod.

After the split in the GGMM, there remains about 1000 members in 9 churches. Some churches are very small.

E. Conclusions:

1. Deputies have been able to carry out their mandate to support Yonson Dethan, Pila Njuka and the Indonesian Churches. Deputies plan to continue its program of inviting Indonesian candidate ministers to Australia for theological orientation.
2. Deputies from the GGMM have offered sister relations to the FRCA and requested us to reciprocate. However it is our opinion the situation in the GGMM needs to be stabilised before deputies can make a recommendation regarding further progress towards sister relations. Rev. Knigge sent by our Dutch sister churches to work amongst the GGMM has returned to Holland and it is wise to see the intentions of the Dutch deputies towards further contact with the GGMM before we proceed.
3. The visits by delegates to both the GGRI and GGMM have not only strengthened ties but also enabled deputies to observe first hand the developments in the these churches.

F. Recommendations

Synod decide that:

1. The FRCA continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. Deputies continue to investigate developments in the GGMM with as aim to come to a recommendation to Synod regarding possible future sister relations.
3. Limited support continue to be given to Yonson Dethan to ensure effective communication remains with Yonson.
4. Deputies financially support Pila Njuka (along with his wife) to study at Hamilton if it is considered feasible.
5. Support be given to the Indonesian churches by way of sponsoring visits, provision of literature, etc.

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6. Deputies continue to visit the Synods of the GGRI and the GGMM.
 7. Deputies encourage the individual churches and its members to support the activities mentioned in 3,4 and 5.
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Appendix A

Report: Visit to Sumba and Timor 13 to 23 September 1997 by Brs J. Bosveld and J. van Dyk.

At our arrival in Sumba we were met by Rev Radjah, Pila Njuka and Rev Oosterhuis's driver, who all welcomed us to their country. On the way to Wai Marangu we paid a short visit to Rev Doko and family, saw his housing, library and living conditions (very, very basic). We also stopped off at Rev Hawu and family to have a cup of Indonesian coffee and after that we paid a short visit to Rev Radjah's home and made an appointment to visit him the coming Friday. His living standards were quite a bit better.

Early in the evening we arrived at Wai Marangu (which means salvation water) on the property of the Theological School. One of the quarters of the complex was made ready for us, which we occupied with Pila, who was going to look after us. At night we met Rev Oosterhuis and family who lived next door and we held an informative discussion with him.

Sunday 14 September

We went to church in Kataka (distance: 1 1/2 hours drive) in the mountains arriving there at 9am. The church building was very primitive. About 70 people attended the service. The preacher, Rev Pindiyawa, held his sermon on Luke 17:27-33 and Genesis 19:12-26. His theme was "Lot saved from the destruction of Sodom" Their liturgy is the same as ours with the singing of many Psalms. The sermon took forty minutes. After the service we visited the home of Rev Mitingu and had a meal with his family and the minister. Rev Mitingu is a retired minister and is still very active in preaching in many congregations. His housing conditions are also very poor (mud floors).

We left Kataka in the afternoon and went back to Wai Marangu via Melolo. In general we saw poor living conditions, barren land stripped of trees, although some scenery was very beautiful with lush green rice fields and many coconut palms along the coast. Along the roadsides you often found people just sitting or even sleeping, lacking initiative, seemingly totally lazy.

In the afternoon we attended the church service at Wai Marangu (church building being on the school-grounds) which was led by an elder. He read his own prepared sermon on L/D 25 H/Catechism (sacraments) and conducted the service and the reading in the same way as our elders conduct themselves on our pulpits. The order of service was the same as ours. We sang Psalms and Hymns. The attendance was between 30-40 people. It is a general trend that more women attend the church services than men.

In the evening we visited Rev Oosterhuis again and during the evening we were joined by eight students. There are a total of 11 students at the school, two from Kupang in Timor (one from the GGMM and the other from the GGRI). The rest are from the GGRI in Sumba. Despite the language barrier we had a good impression of the students

Monday 15 September

At 7 am we received a visit by Rev MadaBiha from the GGRI in Kupang. We had breakfast together in a Christian manner with prayer, Bible reading and singing after which we had a good discussion in preparation for Synod. Rev Radjah joined us after breakfast. Points of discussion were about the Classis Kupang forbidding their members to attend Lord's

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Supper in the Galilee church of Kupang. Lack of implementation of our reformed liturgy was mentioned as the main reason. Later we attended a meeting with the deputies GGRI. Present at the meeting were the Rev's Oosterhuis, Radjah, Hawu, MadaBiha and brs J Bosveld and J van Dijk.

Rev Hawu opened the meeting with prayer and welcomed us at the meeting, expressing the desire to work together in unity according to our mandate.

Points for the Agenda were:

1. Future plans for Pila Njuka
2. Support Indonesian churches
3. Supporting evangelists

1. Future plans for Pila

After explaining the future plans for Pila, the deputies GGRI were not unanimous in their opinion regarding our request. The discussion centred around Pila's proposed marriage, and plans to take his wife with him to Australia/Hamilton. The following points are their considerations:

- a) We will set a precedent to other sponsors and create a wrong impression.
- b) He might not be able to fully concentrate on his studies.
- c) In this Pila shows weakness in regard to his calling for the church. This is not a good example as leader.

They decided to bring it at synod and ask for advice.

2 Support Indonesian churches

For the upbuilding of the churches standing on the same foundation it was mentioned:

- a) To upgrade the Hymn Book and make it uniform in the churches via Litindo.
- b) Invite ministers or students again to Australia for three months English language courses.

3 Evangelists (Request for support of approximately \$25 per month)

Deputies request if there could be more cooperation regarding this matter. In the past it has created confusion and jealousy. They wanted to know why Kataka was supported and not other churches. Also the support from the little group in Bedforddale created disharmony. They made the remark to please deal 'with us through the deputies' to prevent difficulties.

After expressing gratefulness of the support from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia we continued with the discussion about their present contacts with the GGMM and the future of the theological school in Wai Marangu.

The brothers mentioned that the decision of classis Kupang was not a decision of the GGRI. Further that the relationship of the GGRI with the GGMM would be dealt with at synod. Classis Kupang gave reason for their decision that it was mentioned that the GGMM have access to the Three forms of Unity but they have to practice it also. There was also some discussion in regard to the registration of the theological School at Wai Marangu. Rev Fangidae had not registered it and therefore it causes some doubts as to the permanency of the lecturer Rev Oosterhuis's position and stay in Indonesia. After again expressing gratitude to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia the meeting was closed in prayer.

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Relations with other churches

Tuesday 16 September

After unavoidable delay we arrived safely at Tanalingu late afternoon. In the morning Synod Tanalingu 1997 was officially opened by the Indonesian authorities.

At 5:30 Synod was re-opened. After being welcomed by the chairman we were given the opportunity to address Synod on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We were able to do this with the help of Pila as interpreter. Rev O spoke on behalf of the sister churches in Holland in the Indonesian language.

Synod consisted of four classes, some advisors, two delegates from the Reformed Church of Irian Jaya - Rev's Herman Korwa and Agustinus Randongkir, one delegate representing the Reformed Churches (Liberated) Netherlands-Rev Oosterhuis, and two delegates from the Australian Free Reformed Churches-Brs J Bosveld and J van Dijk. There were no delegates from the GGMM. After the credentials were dealt with they voted for a moderamen consisting of the chairman Rev Hawu, A vice chairman and two secretaries.

Wednesday 17 September

The Synod was re-opened by one of the ministers from classis Kupang who read and meditated on Psalm 133 which we also sang. The minutes of last Synod were scrutinized. The following points were mentioned: the Conference Kalbar STM, more input Canadian Churches via deputies, Holland's support of the Theological School and Family Planning.

Correspondence

1) Registration of the Theological School at Wai Marangu

The school needs to be registered with the authorities otherwise there is a possibility that Rev Oosterhuis will not be allowed to stay in Sumba.

Some items on the agenda and the decisions:

1. Regulations for synod and deputies

All proposals have to go to classis first

2 Request for church building

Churches who request assistance must do it via deputies

3 Church (Goosens) Melolo wants to join GGRI

Refer to local church and classis and not direct to synod

4 Result of seminar on Adat

Appointed committee did not do their work. Another committee was appointed. These members are living in closer vicinity.

5 Relations with GGMM

Because of the difficult situation it is not wise to deal with it today. It is mentioned that the GGMM is not acknowledged by the government. Further, there is an uncertain situation.

Synod did not want to deal with the situation of classis Kupang re not to celebrate the Holy Supper in the Galilee Church because of uncertain circumstances. Synod deemed it to be wise to see first the development in the Musyafir Churches before decisions are made.

6 Smoking during church meetings

Reference was made to 1Cor 6:12 and Matt 15:11. The decision was made not to smoke at synod meetings but for the rest to leave it up to each individual's responsibility.

7 Problems with Adat re wedding

Adat is not accepted. It is not good for those members to join GGRI thinking that they are not so strict. The GGRI admit that there are office bearers from heathen descent who see Adat 'a bit through the fingers' and do not want interference in carrying out their office.

8 Revision of Church Book

Revision songbook is in the hands of Litindo. This refers to Psalms, Hymns, Confessions and Liturgy.

9 Appointment deputies 'Evangelizing'

Because there is neglect to preach the Gospel to other people every church should see their duty and task to evangelize and appoint a special person for this purpose. The remark was made that there were churches consisting of only old people - 'what will be their future?' - there is a difference between city and remote areas: appointing deputies is not seen as a solution. The decision was made to leave it to the local churches. Through church visitation consistory should be reminded of their duty.

10 Request deputies Free Reformed Churches of Australia re Pila Njuka

After deputies GGRI explained the proposal to Synod and it was dealt with and discussed, Synod accepted the proposal and gave the go-ahead for Pila to go to Australia/Hamilton with his wife.

11 Next synod will be held in Kupang on the 3 June 1999 DV Reference was made to the next conference in Irian Jaya from the Indonesian sister churches.

After the Acts were adopted Rev Hawu made his final address. Brother Bosveld spoke a few words of appreciation for the food and accommodation. He also spoke some words of Christian comfort and encouragement.

Synod was closed at approximately 7pm 18 September 1997.

Friday 19 September

We visited the daughter of Rev Mitingu whose child was operated on in Jakarta for a heart problem which Mission Aid supported. It was good to see that the operation was very successful. The young girl was very happy and grateful and attended school very soon after her operation. Via Melolo we started a trip along the coast to visit some coastal churches. At Wuia we saw an old church building made from bamboo and straw. The minister there told us that plans were ready to build a better one. Then later on we looked at the long lengths of wood which had been cut by axe, necessary for the new building. At the end of the two-hour drive we came to the village of Baingu where Yan Pariamalinya is the evangelist. He has over a hundred members in his congregation. A few who were GGRI, a few heathens and one hundred members who have come over from the Goosens church on the next property. Together they are building their own temporary church which later will be Yan's house when the next building is completed.

We returned just before 7pm and prepared ourselves for the meeting with Rev's O and Knigge.

Points of the agenda were:

- 1 Our assistance in general to the GGRI and the GGMM.
- 2 Our trip to Kupang with the intention to have a meeting with the deputies of GGMM.

Rev O came with a proposal mentioning that 50% of our aid should be for real church work, 25% for other projects and 25% for personal needs. It should be done via deputies otherwise it creates much jealousy. There should be coordination in that respect.

They warned us not to dictate the deputies GGMM and keep in mind the future of the Musyafir churches, especially the Galilee church in Kupang in connection with the return of Yonson Dethan, who was sent out in the first place for the Musyafir churches.

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Relations with other churches

Saturday 20 September

Very early in the morning, at daybreak we left Wai Marangu for the capital Wiangapu, a city with many beautiful church buildings. Especially the Synodical churches have very large buildings, much larger than ours in WA even. Before we went to the airport we visited a minister who was 54 years old and has had a brain tumour for three years. His condition is very poor and deteriorating. Mission Aid was asked to help as the family could not come up with all the costs. Their doctor suggested that he be operated on in Surabaya. This would be the only chance of improvement. We had some contact with the patient despite his serious illness. We also visited the premises of the GGRI church in Wiangapu and its evangelist who has a congregation of approx 100 members. The church building looked very poor in comparison with the other church buildings in the same city. At our arrival in Kupang we were picked up by Remy Fanggidae

Sunday 21 September

On Sunday morning we went to the Galilee church. Remy was going to preach. The setup of the service was similar to ours but with marked differences:

A word of welcome was extended to all and notices were read.

At the very beginning the elders, deacons (women included) and Rev Remy gathered behind a curtain at the very front of the church, holding hands together and prayed.

Then Blessing, Prayers (there was more prayer activity than we are used to), The Ten Commandments were read, more prayers (they have a prayer request box in front of the pulpit so that these extra prayers may be addressed), five girls and a young man sang some Hymns at the front of the church with a guitar, the collections were gathered in by women deacons who sat at the front of the church with the elders and after that the sermon was held. The preaching was based on Luke 15, the lost sheep, coin and son, Rev E. Fangidae who sat between Br Bosveld and myself translated the sermon as best as he could. The centrality of the gospel was there. The sermon was followed by the amen song, prayer, singing and blessing.

There were approximately 200 persons in the church, mostly women. The congregation was very neatly dressed and their conduct was good.

After Church we went to Rev. E. Fangidae's place and a meeting was held. Remy, Br Mooni and another deputy attended.

Rev Fangidae opened the meeting in prayer. It did not take long before it developed into a debate. Especially when we referred to his letter in which sister church relationship was mentioned. We explained that our Synod Kelmscott 1996 decided at that point of relationship not to offer sister relationship because of last years split and the implementation of reformed doctrine, liturgy and church order.

There was a lot of misunderstanding eg 1) Bedfordale's support of evangelist Paul in Savu. It was questioned 2) why support GGRI and not GGMM, 3) why isn't money sent via deputies Kupang from GGMM but via the church GGRI. 4) Are we not trustworthy? It was explained that Bedfordale was convinced that the church order speaks about supporting sister churches. On this the remark was made "You people do not stand for the truth. You put the church order above the command to preach the Gospel." We objected strongly to this and reminded the meeting that we as Australian churches have been faithful in sponsoring Yonson for the purpose of the Gospel. As far as sending money via deputies is concerned, Br Bosveld would give it some consideration.

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When it was asked why there was no representative at Synod Tanaligu 1997 it was answered that they had bought a ticket but they changed their mind, considering that several disagreements had to be cleared up first.

The problem was the decision of classis Kupang. We replied that this was not the decision of the GGRI and mentioned further that there was a promise made when entering into a sister church relationship with the GGRI that implementation of Liturgical Forms and Form of Baptism and Holy Supper in the GGMM would follow.

As far as the future of Yonson is concerned we referred to the letter dated 6 August 1997. We acknowledged first that the statement that Yonson was sent out to Hamilton to serve the Indonesian churches was worded too strongly because the documents say that Yonson at all times would remain their student sent by the GGMM (5 March 1993). We assured the deputies we did not want to dictate. That would be against the spirit of the church order. Regarding Yonson it was mentioned that Yonson should come to Kupang. Rev. E. Fangidae said that they needed him to replace Knigge. A call to Yonson's hometown would not work because of the many family relationships. Two evangelists have been working in Tarus but they do not want them as ministers. Rev. Fangidae fears that if Yonson would be called to Tarus he would not be ordained. There is much work for Yonson to be done in Kupang. The GGMM deputies fully supported these statements. They are proud with Yonson's achievements. The congregation is looking forward to meet him. Remy and Yonson should work together for the sake of the congregation and preaching of the gospel, as well as for the bond of churches. He sent a letter to both Yonson and Edwar. As far as the theological school in Wai Marangu is concerned the GGMM is willing to cooperate and to upgrade the level of the school which is now at the level of senior high. Rev's Doko and Radjah need the opportunity to increase their knowledge and improve their status. They are prepared to have good contact with Rev Oosterhuis regarding these matters.

Yonson is welcome in Kupang and consistory decided to build a house for him (which has never been done in the past). They will make sure that the equipment he will bring with him will find a proper place. They want a good relationship with us. After brother Bosveld led us in prayer the meeting was closed.

The meeting lasted approximately three hours.

Subsequent events confirmed our fears that the issue where Yonson would work would not be resolved. Regrettably the hierarchal tendency still persists if we hear that it is not accepted that there is no acceptance of Yonson working anywhere else than the Galilee Church.

At four thirty we went to our sister church in Kupang. We found the same order of worship as we have. An elder read a sermon on the sacrament of the Holy Supper according to what we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism. Approximately 26 people attended the service. The delegates from Irian Jaya were in church as well. The songs we sang were all Hymns. After church we had a cup of coffee at the minister's place who himself was not back yet from synod. Afterwards Remy picked us up and took us for dinner to his parent's place.

Monday 22 September

In the morning after Remy had delivered his Sunday's sermon (in total) on the radio station for evangelism purposes.

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Relations with other churches

Back at the hotel we received a visit from Rev E. Fangidae and had a discussion on religious matters. He seems to be quite involved with a conference to be held in Surabaya on the infallibility of the Word of God. In regard to this conference J Packer seems to be involved as well. Fangidae is a member of the committee and has to prepare himself for thesis number six. Rev Steven Thong seems to be involved as well (Rev Thong led a rally in Kupang attended by approx 30,000 people). We referred to Packer in connection with Romans 6/7.

Tuesday 23 September

On Tuesday we left the hotel at 5 am and Remy kindly took us to the airport. The flight went via Wiangapu to Denpasar. We arrived in Bali at 10:30am. According to plan we met with Rev Oosterhuis and his father Dr Oosterhuis. Rev Oosterhuis wanted to speak to us and see how we went in Kupang. We gave him a summary of our discussions with Rev. Fangidae and deputies and our contacts with Remy who is looking forward to working in harmony with Yonson Dethan for the well being of the Musyafir churches. Rev Oosterhuis expressed that he was very happy with the results of our discussions in Kupang and left us on his way to Wai Marangu.

Praise and honour to the Head of the Church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who protected and guided us where ever we went and provided good health and strength to carry out our task for the benefit of the Indonesian churches.

Submitted by Deputies

J Bosveld
J van Dijk

THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

1. Mandate:

Synod 1996 gave as mandate:

- a) To encourage the RCNZ to continue with their admonitions to the RCA and to terminate relations with the RCA if these admonitions continue to go unheeded,
- b) Clearly explain to the RCNZ the reasons for this Synod's decisions, taking into account comments in para 5.3 of Deputies report and the decision of Synod Launceston 1985 (Article 67),
- c) To attend the next synod of the RCNZ if invited, and
- d) invite delegates from the RCNZ to attend the next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in Acts Synod Bedfordale 1992, Article 19 Recommendation 2b.

2. Correspondence

- 1) Deputies wrote to the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) requesting more information on the circumstances leading to the breakaway Geneva Free Reformed Church. Some information was provided (see report on GFRC).
- 2) Deputies have written explaining the reasons for synod 1996 decisions regarding the RCNZ
- 3) The RCNZ has been invited to send delegates to Synod Launceston.

3. Relations with RCA

The RCNZ response to the decisions of the 1997 RCA Synod can be gleaned from a recent issue of "Faith and Focus". Deputies will ascertain if there is any further official response and will report to our synod in a supplementary report.

4. Recommendations

Deputies intend to provide recommendations in their supplementary report.

THE GENEVA FREE REFORMED CHURCH

1. MANDATE: Acts of Synod 1996 Article 53 Decision 5c: *to investigate the developments leading to the formation of the Geneva Reformed Church of Auckland.* Ground 6: *Deputies have received correspondence from the Geneva Free Reformed Church of Auckland requesting affiliation with the FRCA. The minister and members of this church were formerly members of the RCNZ*

2. CONSIDERATIONS:

- 2.1. The FRCA believes that it is contrary to the Confessions regarding the Church to recognise two churches in one country, when those two churches are unable or unwilling to work towards unity.
 - 2.1.1. Deputies reported to Synod 1996 *"that in doctrine, worship and church government the RCNZ must be considered a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Synod 1996 also decided: *"to strive for sister relations with the RCNZ.*
 - 2.1.2. Although the FRCA has not as yet recognised the RCNZ or entered into formal relations with them, the conclusions of deputies and the decision of Synod would prohibit us from honouring the request of the GFRC unless it is clear that their office-bearers have been unjustly suspended. In that case they could appeal to the FRCA as the legitimate continuation of the Reformed Church in New Zealand.
- 2.2. Deputies find that it is beyond their competence to sit in judgment over the deposition of the minority of the North Shore Session, due to the fact that we do not have all the information needed. However, from the summary of events it appears that:
 - 2.2.1. in the deposition of the minority of the North Shore Session the provisions of their church order were not followed in all respects. There is evidence that the Auckland Presbytery did not handle the matter correctly at all times. For example it appears to have contravened Article 70 of its CO in not allowing the accused party to be heard.
 - 2.2.2. Presbytery also went outside of its jurisdiction when it initiated the proposal and formulated the grounds to suspend the office-bearers under article 83, though presbytery did not itself suspend the office-bearers, but left suspension to the majority of the North Shore Session.
- 2.3. Parallels with the circumstances around the Liberation of 1944 do exist in that the session compelled the compliance on the part of a minority on matters of conscience without first allowing their appeals to be heard. However unlike 1944, matters of doctrine did not play a role, nor was the suspension carried out in a hierarchal way by the 'higher courts' (though it might be argued that the Auckland Presbytery displayed some hierarchal tendencies by initiating the proposal for suspension).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 3.1. To encourage both the GFRC and the RCNZ to acknowledge past failings in dealing with the difficulties in the North Shore Session, and to seek reconciliation with each other. They shall do this by way of letter, and by personal visitation if practical.

- 3.2. To charge deputies to monitor the relations between the RCNZ and the GFRC and report to the next Synod.

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Relations with other churches

Report - Reformed Churches of Australia

The 1996 Synod (art. 71) gave deputies a mandate, which is included in the following:

2. Not to enter official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the RCA at this time.

Ground:

- a) The current trends in the RCA, which have been in part imported by their past sister relations with the GKN(S), give alarm, and show that they and we travel in a different direction (the decisions by the RCNZ confirm this). Further contact would thus not be meaningful but frustrating for both parties.
3. To authorise deputies to send a letter of appeal to the 1997 RCA Synod and to all their sessions, appealing to them to return to a distinctively reformed direction so that future contact may become possible and can be meaningful.

Grounds:

- a) The gains made thus far should be used and not wasted.
- b) Synod has not given a mandate thus far to address the current trends in the RCA. To write such a letter of appeal requires a mandate from Synod.
- c) A letter of appeal, rather than official contacts which already mean we are working towards the goal of sister relations or union, seems the best route at this stage.

The deputies did send an appeal to the RCA. This appeal is appended to this report. However, owing to time constraints and other commitments, this appeal was not sent out till mid-1997. Consequently, it was not sent out in time for the RCA to deal with it properly. The local sessions could not use it for their preparations for synod, nor could they use it to send submissions to their synod, which was held in August, 1997. Also, we sent it straight to the synod as well as to the sessions, as per our instructions from our 1996 Synod. However, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations of the RCA misinterpreted this appeal as an official appeal, as per Article 31, Church Order, from our part against their previous decisions. They saw it as a blatant attempt on our part to interfere in their affairs. We have sent them a letter (which is appended) confirming our personal conversations with them, that this was not so, but an appeal in the general sense of the word, an appeal sent from one federation to another. They from their side do not accept correspondence of such a nature with federations with whom they have official contact. Indeed, the CER did not pass along our appeal to their 1997 Synod. It has not been dealt with. They require us to pass along our appeal to their deputies and the CER who in turn will pass the appeal, along with their own commentary and recommendation, on to their next synod.

Thus there were three reasons why our appeal was not dealt with:

1. It was too late. This simple truth is most important.
2. It did not follow the right procedure for submitting materials to their Synod. This must be respected.
3. It was misunderstood to be a regular appeal as described in the Church Order. Such an appeal from us is inappropriate. We have clarified this matter with them.

This left the deputies in a quandary. What to do? Our 1996 Synod stated, "The gains made thus far should be used and not wasted." The mandate to send an appeal to their synod and sessions (in time for all to deal with it properly) should still be executed. So this appeal

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should be re-submitted. However, their 1997 Synod has taken place. Decisions on matters raised in our appeal were dealt with. It would be proper to take those decisions into account. Since deputies have not received the official Acts of their 1997 Synod before making this report, they could not revise the appeal before our 1998 Synod.

Thus the deputies propose the following:

1. Accept that we have failed in passing on our Appeal to the RCA Synod and the sessions of the RCA.

Grounds: it was simply too late and we did not follow the right procedure to send it.

2. Renew the mandate for newly appointed deputies to send a revised appeal so that the decisions/changes of the 1997 Synod of RCA are reflected and any inaccuracies removed. This revised appeal should be sent to their synod via the proper channels, i.e. their deputies, as well as be sent to all their sessions.

Grounds: the previous mandate has not been accomplished, and in order to accomplish it the decisions of their 1997 Synod should be noted and their procedures for accepting material at their synods should be honoured.

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

**DEPUTIES FOR INTERCHURCH RELATIONS
WITH OTHER REFORMED CHURCHES**

P.O. Box 191, Armadale, Western Australia, 6112
Fax: 61 08 9497 3280

Thursday, 26 June 1997

Dear brothers,

Attached is the official appeal which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia are hereby sending to all the sessions of the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) as well as to the 1997 Synod of the RCA, to be held this August in NSW, Australia. The appeal speaks for itself and needs no further explanation.

We would like the RCA sessions to read and discuss this appeal, and to consider sending an instruction with their classical delegates to synod, so that this appeal receives proper attention. The deputies for dialogue with us, FRCA, will also receive copies and can make a (late) report to synod.

If you wish to correspond with us about this appeal, please use the postal address listed above.

It is our hope and prayer that this appeal may contribute to a reforming movement within the RCA so that our churches may have reason for further contacts and relations.

With brotherly greetings,
On behalf of the deputies,

Rev W Huizinga, chairman

Br J L VanBurgel, secretary

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THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

**DEPUTIES FOR INTERCHURCH RELATIONS
WITH OTHER REFORMED CHURCHES**

P.O. Box 191, Armadale, Western Australia, 6112

Fax: 61 08 9497 3280

25 June, 1997

To the 1997 Synod in Blacktown, NSW, and to the Sessions, of the Reformed Churches of Australia.

Dear brothers,

We bring you our greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The decision of your 1994 Synod to accept the combined report of the Dialogue Committees of FRCA & RCA deputies gave our deputies and synod reason for joy. May we remind you of that decision (Acts of the 1994 Synod of RCA, Article 61) and especially the adoption of the agreed statement, which reads:

1. *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.*
2. *The content of these bindings cannot be proved from Scripture and these went beyond Scripture and the Confessions.*
3. *That in suspending and deposing office bearers and the summary dismissal of appeals, synod(s) acted in an hierarchical manner and thus violated the Reformed Church Order.*
4. *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 (RCA) past synods should have acted in a more consequential manner. While the RCA on principle did not take over the bindings, we entered into full sister-relations with the GKN(S) and sought a sister-relation with the GKN(L), fully aware that these two churches were not on speaking terms. Hence, there was an inherent conflict in the RCA decision to offer a sister-relation to both the GKN(S) and the GKN(L). Rules governing a sister-relation demanded that there be mutual heed that true doctrine is maintained and the Church Order is properly exercised. Yet, by its (GKN) un-church-orderly acts, considerable injustice had been done by the GKN(S), with the result that no less than 100,000 members left the GKN(S) on principle. Justice required that before we (the RCA) offered sister-relations to the GKN(S) we should have addressed the matter of the Liberation in a more judicial manner. We did not do this, with the result that serious obstacles to the way of union with the FRCA remained.*
6. *In the light of the historical data, we agreed that the Liberation was a legitimate step for those who chose that path.*

We were happy with your adoption of the agreed statement and we thus accepted that this ends the discussion of the events of the fifties and sixties. In a previous synod we

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noted how you have terminated all relations with the GKN(synodical) in 1982. You have given biblical and confessional critique of their reports 'God with us' as well as its 'sequel.' Also, you voiced strong disapproval of the GKN(S)' stand on homosexuality. We mention these things because it was the sister relations with the GKN(S) that caused us to stay separate. Thus the stumbling block was in part removed then. The results of the dialogue removed all remaining obstacles from the past.

In response to your 1994 Synod, the 1996 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held at Kelmscott, WA, decided accordingly:

Article 71 Reformed Churches of Australia

2. To accept the decision of the 1994 RCA Synod that their sister relations with the GKN(S) seen in the historical light of the doctrinal and church-political controversies and the subsequent Liberation of 1944, were unjust, inconsequential and the express cause for lack of unity; this ends the discussion concerning the events of the fifties and sixties.

Grounds:

- a) All the doctrinal and church-political matters leading to the Liberation have been acknowledged.
- b) They thus consider the Liberation 'legitimate'. This acknowledgment allows them to understand our objections against their sister relations with the GKN(S).
- c) They acknowledge their neglect of Biblical justice and their inconsequential manner in dealing with the important matter of sister relations, and that they placed 'serious obstacles in the way of union with the FRCA'.

Having said this, one might expect that the FRCA would now respond favourably to the invitation of the 1994 Synod for "closer and further meaningful dialogue between our Churches" (Art.61.4). However, it should be pointed out that the FRCA entered the dialogue with a limited aim in mind - 'to heal the past rift' as you put it. From our side the 1990 Synod did not agree to dialogue with the aim of entering sister relations. No, it had a specific goal in mind - to clear up past problems and then synod would review the situation. This limited goal has been accomplished.

Should further contact now indeed proceed? The 1996 Synod of Kelmscott looked at the general direction of the RCA, reviewing the adoption of the agreed statement in the light of all the decisions of the 1994 Synod of Canning. If the adoption of the agreed statement and the actions of the RCA with respect to the GKN(S) would have gone hand in hand with a general reformational direction within the RCA, and if that had been evident at your 1994 Synod, then our past deputies would have had confidence in recommending (to our 1996 Synod) further contact which would have as its aim unity between the RCA & FRCA. Was this the case?

Much water has gone under the bridge since the fifties and sixties. We have not kept up to date in an official manner. Yet deputies tried to keep informed on the current direction within the RCA. We received the acts of your synods and so tried to keep abreast of the major direction in the RCA. Your magazine, "*Trowel and Sword*," also kept us informed. From all this the deputies pointed out some major concerns:

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- the decisions about "Word and Spirit" and especially the 1991 decision about ongoing, occasional prophecy today in the church;
- the rejection of appeals against this decision at the 1994 Synod;
- the divergent liturgical practices within the RCA;
- the rejection of appeals against these practices at the 1994 Synod;
- the continued membership of the REC;
- the discussions about 'women in office' in which the door is definitely kept open for women in office; and
- the developments on a local level in Western Australia and Tasmania where we have local churches as well.¹

All of this together made the past deputies conclude that the adoption of the agreed statement and the termination of sister-relations with the GKN(S) were not consistent with the current direction within the RCA. Indeed, the conclusion was made that the RCA & FRCA are not travelling in the same reformed, confessional direction. If further contact were to take place, these issues would have to be discussed thoroughly. How would you respond to such a prospect? Might further contact then not prove fruitless, even an irritation and a frustration for both sides?

Allow us to elaborate on this. The FRCA has had fruitful contacts with the RCNZ. There has been an exchange of delegates to our respective synods. From these contacts we note how the RCNZ also has grave concerns about the RCA. The RCNZ is your sister-church. They thoroughly digest the Acts of your Synods, following closely how certain key issues develop in the RCA. After all, what happens in the RCA can greatly influence the RCNZ, their closest sister-church. Then we read in the Acts of the 1995 Synod of Avondale, NZ, this assessment of the RCA and its 1994 Synod at Canning:

I began to realise that the RCA are really in a crisis situation...People are being openly encouraged, therefore, to question whether the existing structures of the church: liturgy, form of the worship service, the traditional approach to ordained ministry, etc. are a help or a hindrance in this crisis situation. The leaders...don't necessarily know where they are going, but they are learning a great deal along the way...My personal concern that the RCA is currently in danger of cutting loose from her reformed heritage was openly expressed by some RCA delegates, but at present these voices of concern are very much in the minority... In conclusion, the RCA is most definitely a church 'en route'...the changes have occurred at an alarmingly fast rate and they (older and other concerned members) are deeply concerned about the current direction and emphasis. This is a concern that we in the RCNZ share...²

This personal but fair assessment went into detail about these concerns. However, it is best to allow the 1995 Synod of Avondale, the RCNZ as a whole, rather than one individual, to voice these concerns:

Article 38.3 To continue to express grave concern to the RCA over the issue of women in office.

¹ Taken from the report of deputies to the 1996 Synod of the FRCA, see Acts, p 111-112 (5.1)

² Appendix 1, "A Church *En Route*, but Where?": Report on the RCA Synod, Perth 1994, quotes are from pages 4-54 and 4-57; this is a personal assessment by Rev M A Flinn, the RCNZ delegate to the 1994 Synod of the RCA.

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the RCNZ in recommending this expression of grave concern had pointed out that though your 1994 Synod affirmed the headship principle of the male in undefined terms, it rejected a proposal to implement it in practical terms in the church. Also, your '94 Synod took no action on a recommendation to recognise the matter of women in office as a confessional issue. Does Article 30, Belgic Confession, not point out the need for "faithful men" to lead the church in the offices of minister, elder and deacon? Have we not upheld the biblical injunction that women should not speak in the church?³ Instead, another study committee was appointed to look into these and other areas. In the FRCA we share the grave concerns of the RCNZ. This divisive issue has contributed to a serious division in the CRC-North America, a sister-church of yours. The division has been between two lines: one line entertaining modern methods of explaining the Scripture (hermeneutics), and the other line following the reformed, confessional view of the Scriptures. Will the RCA follow the CRCNA? Our fears are not unrealistic, brothers. Please, in your deliberations, show your reformed character in constantly returning "to the law and to the testimony!" For if you "do not speak according to this word, you have no light of dawn"⁴ as churches.

Another contentious, crucial issue for the RCA is that of *Word and Spirit*. Your 1991 Synod adopted guidelines on this issue, guidelines which departed from the traditional understanding of the closure of special revelation alongside of the closure of the NT canon. The 1991 Synod decided that:

Article 41.3. That, regarding the contemporary situation:

1. The NT does not appear to indicate that occasional prophecy has ceased.
2. God may communicate to us today through occasional prophecy if He so desires, particularly in situations where the written Word of God is unavailable.
3. Any claimed prophecy must be tested by Scripture; even if deemed to be in agreement with Scripture, it will not be accepted as adding in any way to God's self-revelation in Scripture.

This decision and also the pastoral guidelines that accompanied it affirm a continuation of special revelation. At the 1994 Synod of Canning there were four substantial appeals, two appeals coming from classes. Yet the 1994 Synod roundly rejected them all.⁵ This was all done in spite of the decision of the 1988 Synod of the RCA which said:

Article 22.7 That the RCA maintain their commitment to the reformational doctrine of:

1. the sola scriptura, that in this post-apostolic era the Holy Spirit speaks through his own Word in Scripture alone;
2. the sufficiency of the Holy Scripture as the only and sufficient source of truth and wisdom for all of our faith and life.

³ 1 Cor 14:34-35; this comes in a context about spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, and is thus very relevant to you.

⁴ Isaiah 8:20

⁵ Art. 16, no grounds are attached. Six men had their objection recorded.

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Article 22.8 That in the RCA there is no room for the doctrine and practice of a so-called prophetic ministry and of supposedly inspired utterances based on perceived revelations not derived from the Word of God in Scripture.

What one synod decides is undermined by a contrary decision the next time! It is understandable therefore that the criticism is levelled against the RCA that is *en route* but knows not where it is going!

Meanwhile, occasional prophecy has not ceased, says your synod. Such a gift comes directly from the Holy Spirit and is no less special than the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21 and those of other minor NT prophets and prophetesses. It is revelation, direct from God, ongoing revelation.⁶ This serious theological error is now the official, reaffirmed position of the RCA. It contradicts the reformational position about *sola Scriptura*, namely that Scripture alone is "*holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation and confirmation of our faith.*"⁷ No teaching or practical point needs to be founded, ruled or confirmed by ongoing revelation. It also opposes the reformed confession that Scripture is sufficient; all we need to believe in order to be saved "*is sufficiently taught therein. The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length.*"⁸ This last sentence of our common confession is important since prophecy often occurs within the context of worship and worship services. The FRCA appeals to the RCA, its synod and sessions, to return to the reformational position about these special *charismata* (gifts of the Spirit), namely, that with the closing of the apostolic era and of the canon, these gifts came to an end. How can one justify occasional prophecy but not the special gift of healing or of speaking in tongues? To justify one is, over time, to invite them all. Seeing the danger in this, the RCA should review and rescind its previous decision. Even as the reformers sternly had to oppose the anabaptists and their 'spiritual' excesses such as prophecy and tongues (to the demotion of the Word of God for it was "the letter that kills," cf. 2 Cor. 3), so also today reformed churches must oppose similar explosions of so-called 'spiritual gifts' which end up fracturing the church instead of building up the body of Christ as they were originally intended.⁹

Along with occasional prophecy the RCA also has divergent liturgical practices. Though the 1985 and 1988 Synods adopted principles and guidelines for worship and liturgy, there seems to be room for a great degree of freedom for local sessions to interpret and apply these principles in the way they wish.¹⁰ Appeals to the effect that the previous

⁶ To make the disclaimer that it does not add to God's self-revelation is thus inconsistent, incorrect.

⁷ Article 7, Belgic Confession

⁸ Article 7, Belgic Confession.

⁹ 1 Cor 12 accents the church as the body of Christ. The various gifts are apportioned by the one and same Spirit "for the profit of all." In 1 Cor 14 Paul underlines this pastoral need even more. Without addressing the vexing question whether these gifts continue today, the apostolic command needs to be appreciated - "Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel." If these gifts fragment, divide and allow diversity of thought and practice, then the opposite happens.

¹⁰ The appeals speak of a variety of innovations such as females leading in prayer or Scripture reading; choirs, soloists, and musical groups in the worship services; testimonies, drama and skits in the services and the use of altar calls. Private information speaks of the use of puppetry, liturgical dance and films instead of sermons, as well as the occurrence of the "Toronto blessing."

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principles and guidelines be upheld, appeals that churches refrain from practices not adopted and which divide your churches were roundly defeated. That is disturbing. These liturgical innovations depart "from traditional reformed liturgy and practice in worship"¹¹ and often represent a very practical danger. The lack of reformational action by the synod, in our estimate, will only lead to further division, and in our eyes, to deformation within the RCA. Remember what happened in the days of the Judges. Repeated deformations saw them backslide into idolatry. The end result was that the tribes were divided, not united, and suffered the repeated judgments of God. "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes (21:25)." In reformed churches Christ is King; He has taught us in a fulfilled manner ('new wine' in 'new wineskins' - Mt. 9:17) how to worship God (see Art. 25, BC). Christ wants order and decency (1 Cor 14:40). Synods should promote this.

And the manner of worship of God in the churches is very important. Think how the counterfeit type of worship which Jeroboam instituted (1 Kings 12:25-33), worship which appeared so similar to that in Jerusalem, proved fatal for the northern tribes. God judged it severely (1 Kings 13:1-3). One hears the endless refrain - "He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin (e.g. 1 Kg 15:34)." God did not consider this counterfeit type of worship as optional or an approved alternative, but roundly condemned it as sin. This shows how seriously God takes liturgy.

In reformed churches our confession obliges us to insist on and persist with the centrality of sound preaching. It has pleased God the Holy Spirit to use the preaching to produce and to strengthen faith in the hearts of sinners (Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:23-25 and HC, Q&A 65). Overagainst the ceremonies, pageantry, sacramentalism and rituals of the Church of Rome the church of the reformation confessed that we "worship God in no other manner than He has commanded in His Word (LD 35, Q&A 96)." Do we need picture books or a host of other peripherals to enliven the services? "God wants His people to be taught not by means of dumb images but by the living preaching of His Word (Q&A 98)." Therefore if liturgical reform is to take place, brothers, please let it begin with a return to sound, rich and living preaching of the Word. That brings true and lasting reformation. That is what we plead for. Otherwise the gulf between the RCA & FRCA widens. For liturgy is also a very practical matter, one which everyone sees and hears,

The FRCA can thus understand the grave concerns of the RCNZ at these developments within the RCA. The following acts of the 1995 Synod of Avondale, NZ, are worth noting:

Article 34 Synod decided to declare

1. That we believe the decisions re Word and Spirit made by the RCA Synod, 1991, namely: (see above for the quote of the two decisions) are in error.
2. These errors have the potential of undermining the very foundation of our faith, for they erode the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture.

¹¹ Report of RCNZ IRC, Acts of 1995 Synod, 4-62.

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Article 38.4 & 5

To advise the RCA with deep regret and concern that our sister church relationship is now under strain because of their decision on Word and Spirit and because of their acceptance of worship innovations which are a clear departure from traditional reformed liturgy and practice and to publish this concern in *Trowel and Sword*.

To advise the Presbyteries in their colloquia docta to question thoroughly both ministers and candidates for ministry coming from the RCA in the areas of: Women in Office, Word and Spirit, and reformed liturgy and practice, and to advise the Pastor Church Relations Committee of the RCA, the RTC faculty, and the RCA classes of this decision.

Article 40.3 That visiting ministers from the RCA must be questioned by the local sessions in regard to these issues to ensure their full confessional agreement before being allowed to preach in our pulpits.

The FRCA shares these declarations and grave concerns of your sister church in NZ. It is our wish and prayer that the Lord may lead you in a Scriptural, confessional direction. That would allow us to engage in meaningful contacts with the aim of seeking unity. At present we see the opposite happening in the RCA as a whole.

We also mentioned that some local events in the RCA can be witnessed by us at close hand. In this regard it has been disconcerting to witness the release/dismissal of two reformed ministers whose open desire was to preach the full Word of God, vigorously to teach and to maintain the reformed confessions, and to lead the congregations in their charge in a fully reformed manner. We refer to the dismissal/release of Revs J Cabrera and G Kleinjan who both reside in WA and who have both resigned from the RCA as a result of the RCA's unfaithfulness to Scripture and the reformed confessions, as well as a result of their traumatic experiences within the RCA. If such servants leave, does it make sense for us to promote contacts with an eye to eventual unity?

As a result of the above concerns the 1996 Synod of Kelmscott decided as follows:

4. Not to enter official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the RCA at this time.

Ground:

- a) The current trends in the RCA, which have been in part imported by their past sister relations with the GKN(S), give alarm, and show that they and we travel in a different direction (the decisions by the RCNZ confirm this). Further contact would thus not be meaningful but frustrating for both parties.
5. To authorise deputies to send a letter of appeal to the 1997 RCA Synod and to all their sessions, appealing to them to return to a distinctively reformed direction so that future contact may become possible and can be meaningful.

Grounds:

- a) The gains made thus far should be used and not wasted.

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- b) Synod has not given a mandate thus far to address the current trends in the RCA. To write such a letter of appeal requires a mandate from Synod.
- c) A letter of appeal, rather than official contacts which already mean we are working towards the goal of sister relations or union, seems the best route at this stage.¹²

Thus we have come to you, 1997 Synod and to the RCA sessions, to plead and to appeal to you to change your direction. In the past the sister-relations with the GKN(S) caused us grave concerns, because the FRCA saw an unholy influence flowing from the Netherlands to you via these relations. A liberal spirit, undermining the Word of God, was being imported. Even though these relations were terminated, the influence from such relations take longer to undo. In our estimation it has contributed to the current trends in the RCA which we have documented above. Your continued membership in the REC means that you still stand in association with the GKN(S) and all its teachings which deviate from reformed doctrine and its deformative practices. The GKN(S), one of the largest and most dominant member-churches, can still exert its negative influence on you. That too concerns us.

Please, do not allow a liberal or a charismatic agenda to dominate your churches. Return to the old, proven paths - the paths of Scripture and the reformed confessions. Whenever God gave reformation to his church, the church returned to the Word, to hear the sound preaching of the Word, and to confess the glorious truth of this Word as summed up in the reformed confessions. We shared this reformed heritage in one church before 1944. Afterwards the staff called union became broken.¹³ We would love to see that staff repaired, even as Ezekiel prophesied (in the vision about the valley of dry bones) how the divided tribes of God would again become one in the hand of the one Davidic King, our Lord Jesus Christ¹⁴ - "I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again."¹⁵ With sincerity and biblical hope we pray for that outcome. If that reformed heritage is practised in common, then there is scope for further talks. Though comparatively small, if both of us "keep Christ's Word and do not deny his name...holding fast to what we have (= the biblical, reformed heritage)"¹⁶ then a prospect of brotherly unity and work opens up. If a different path - one which accents peripherals, deviations and innovations - is desired, then our paths diverge further. Further talks are then meaningless, yes, even troublesome and frustrating.

Brothers in the RCA, please hear and heed this biblical appeal for you to return to and to practise your reformed confessions in these crucial areas. Then we can jointly work for true, biblical unity.

¹² 1996 Synod of FRCA, Acts, art.71

¹³ Zechariah 11:4-17; v.14 is quoted.

¹⁴ cf John 10 where our Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep says, "and there will one flock and one shepherd" (v.16).

¹⁵ Ez.37:15-28; v.22 is quoted

¹⁶ Christ's letter to the small but faithful church of Philadelphia, Rev 3:7-13, vv. 8 + 11 are quoted.

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We conclude with an appeal from Scripture which we know you too love and want to follow:

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and careful instruction.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.¹⁷

May God guide you in your discussions and deliberations by his Word alone, the Word which the Holy Spirit inspired men of old to speak.

With urgent, brotherly appeal, for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia,

Br J Bosveld
Br J L VanBurgel (secretary)
Br J VanDyk

Rev W Huizinga (convener)
Rev A VanDelden

¹⁷ 2 Timothy 1:13-14;4:2-4

**Report on the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines Recommending Initiation
of Official Contact**

Mandate

The 1996 Synod gave deputies the following mandate:

Article 68 (cf. Appendix B4) Free Reformed Churches in the Philippines

DECISION:

To instruct deputies to continue to gather information regarding the FRCP e.g. received via Acts of Synod of our sister churches or via correspondence, with the aim of seeing whether official contacts should be opened with them.

GROUNDS:

1. These churches have a sister relationship with our sister churches in The Netherlands, and are geographically close to us.
2. These churches are young in the Reformed faith and would undoubtedly benefit from the heritage of churches long standing in the Reformed faith.
3. Three churches have asked to seek contact with the FRCP.

Historical Background.

For several centuries the Philippines have been under colonial occupation by Spain. Spain brought not only colonisation and trade but in its wake came RC missionaries and Roman Catholicism, which has dominated these islands for decades and centuries. Spain fought a brief war against the USA in 1898, a war the USA won. Spain lost all its colonies. So in 1899 the Spanish occupation was replaced by American colonisation. As far as the people of the Philippines go, this has not brought about any real improvement. During the reign of Marcos in the recent past the contrast between rich and poor has been sharpened. This is reflected in the poverty of the people. A great portion of the population lives below the poverty line (= 5,000 P = \$Aus 250 for a family of four per month). Society in the Philippines also suffers from pervasive corruption on all levels. In addition, society has been strongly americanised which brings many ills as well as benefits. One result of it is the rise of the English language. Most Philipinos have learned English as their second language. In the FRCP the use of Ilongo, their native language, still dominates. But English is acceptable and well understood.

As a result of the americanisation the door was open for other churches to enter – presbyterians, methodists, baptists and the garden variety of sects. This influx of other churches and their missions has seen the gradual decline of the RCC. During the last twenty years the RCC has seen its numbers decline from 85% to 65% of the population. Mind you, this statistic also highlights how strong the RCC still is!

Discovery of the Reformed Faith.

In the midst of this society, impoverished by dictatorship and corruption, a society where every sect finds fruitful soil, came the reformed faith. That is a wonder of God's grace. It

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came not by mission work but by the discovery of the reformed faith, the biblical faith. This discovery came by the Holy Spirit in people who loved the Bible and saw that the arminianism of other 'faiths' was not biblical. They discovered the reformed faith of the Canons of Dort, the Five Points of Calvinism. God opened the eyes of one church leader after another. Rev Joy Vingno was one of the forerunners. The ministers passed on their biblical insight to the congregations in preaching and teaching. But what should they do? They were baptist ministers and baptist members. In some cases baptist organisations and congregations resisted this biblical approach. It became tense or even untenable. Something had to be done. In almost every case the congregation and its minister separated from a general baptist congregation and federation with its arminian approach to theology and then established themselves as reformed congregations. This baptistic background (most ministers had their training in baptist colleges and seminaries) is still evident in some aspects of church life.

REORGANISATION.

It might be useful to show the establishment of the reformed churches by means of one of their main leaders, Rev Joy Vingno. Rev Joy Vingno is 46 years old. Originally he was trained in a baptist seminary and became a baptist pastor. Trained in the baptist theology he became disillusioned with its arminian and modernistic views. Even during his studies these reservations had mounted. From theological books from America he learned about the calvinistic confessions and faith. His reservations became objections. When it became impossible to reform the church from within, and when it was apparent that joining another federation was impossible too because of charismatic and modernistic influences, he, with some of his former fellow students, in 1977 broke with the baptist federation and started the "Christian Brethren of the Philippines".

CONTACT WITH GKN(L)

On a trip to the Netherlands in 1986 he came into contact with our sister-churches there. He knew reformed churches existed there. Thus it was refreshing to meet churches that taught and preached justification by faith alone through the free grace of God, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura*.

Through the deputies of our sister-churches a "Joy Committee" was set up to help the "Christian Brethren of the Philippines (CBP)" (as they were called then). The DVN (De Verre Naasten = The Distant Neighbour) of our sister-churches also lent assistance with 'mission aid' projects, especially in the area of christian education. In 1989 Rev Joy Vingno was invited to attend the ICRC as an observer on behalf of the "Christian Brethren". This is when most of us became acquainted with them.

In January of 1990 A Kampen (BBK) and B Bolt (DVN) visited the CBP in order to see first-hand the church-developments there. They visited the churches (on Negros island only at that time), attended especially the Sunday services, and spoke to the leaders and members. They brought back a report to their deputies (BBK) who in turn recommended to the 1990 General Synod of Leeuwarden to offer sister-relations to the CBP (which had changed its name to Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines – FRCP), seeing that they are truly reformed, and that the need and benefit of sister-relations are great. Seeing the great poverty, the BBK also proposed to extend some financial help as well as theological support (a minister was to visit once per year). The GS (art.104) decided as follows:

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- a) To enter sister-relations with the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines; and
- b) To give new deputies the mandate to:
 - i) For the coming three years to make f 15,000.-- available annually for the FRCP for the upbuilding and progress of church-life; and to make f 2000.-- available annually for the purchase of study-material for ministers.
 - ii) If possible to offer personal/ministerial help for the brothers on Negros (a large island of the Philippines where most of the churches are located) for the edification of church-life.

Grounds:

- a) From their doctrine, ministry, church-government and discipline it appears that the FRCP are true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) The FRCP desire official sister-relations with the GKN(L). The FRCP does not have any objectionable contacts with other churches.
- c) It is a calling and a privilege to offer these young churches material support, seeing that the financial potential of most of their members is very limited in contributing to the growth of church-life.
- d) Owing to lack of financial means the ministers cannot purchase the needed study-materials.
- e) The FRCP in making these requests has pledged that conditions will apply so that this financial support will not be given except where it is necessary.
- f) The FRCP is a young and small church which urgently needs the proposed help.

It might be useful to mention that the FRCP requested such sister-relations in a document entitled, "The Proposed Partnership of the FRCP with the FRCNeths." Also, their official registration with the government is entitled, "Articles of Incorporation of the FRCP" which includes the "Statement of Faith" which reads "The Free Churches subscribe substantially to the Three Forms of Unity known as the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort."

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Our Dutch sister-churches, via their deputies, have sent much material in the way of reports and overviews. From this material (see the appended "List of Materials from the BBK") we note that in 1992 Rev J Klamer visited the FRCP twice in that year – Jan. and Sept-Oct/92. His purpose was to give the requested instruction in all of the eight churches about essentials of reformed church-life. He instructed them in his first visit on subjects such as covenant and infant baptism, the covenant of grace, the calling for the office of minister and elder, the task of the minister and elder, the local church and the consistory, and the church-federation and the church-order. In the second visit the questions in church visitations (per the CanRC) were used. Also, he was instrumental in helping them work as a reformed federation and was present for the first classis. The Church Order of Dort was officially adopted as their form of government.

However, in 1993 a split occurred. Nearly half of the churches, under the leadership of the church at Bata with its minister, Rev B. Niangar, separated from the others. It seemed to be a dispute between two leaders, Rev Joy Vingno of Bacolod and Rev B Niangar of Bata. The views of Vingno as well as the central role of the "social arm" of the FRCP were in the centre of the dispute. As to the latter, the FRCP has the CBCDI (Christian Brethren Community Development Inc.) which controls the funds for the support of mission aid

Appendix 5

Relations with other churches

projects such as the schools. Rev J Vingno is the dominant man on this body and he was looked on as a dictator who is partial.

The Dutch deputies sent out a delegation (M H Oosterhuis and B Bolt) in 1995 which looked into these disputes, visited all parties, and acted as mediator. At the same time they listened to requests, preached, taught, attended a classis as mediator, and contributed to the reconciliation between all parties. The breach was healed, although sensitive areas remain.

PRESENT SITUATION.

The FRCP is a young, weak federation of small churches. Most of the nine present churches do not number more than 100 members, some are less than 50. The federation would not be much more than 1000 members. One cannot be exact because accurate membership records are not always kept (a leftover of their baptist thinking). There are internal difficulties. The position of Rev Vingno has caused problems. Though a capable and strong leader is what the churches needed in their initial stages, he was considered a one-man operation. Jealousies developed. Rev Vingno sees that he must hand over more and more responsibilities to others. Also, the elders and deacons do not always shepherd the flock as they should. Ministers have 'tent-ministries' working as teachers, instructors at colleges, or as carpenters in order to provide for their families. The congregations cannot afford and also have not learned to support their ministers fully. It means that the care of the flock is not always uppermost. Yet these same leaders are very active in evangelising, especially to past baptist friends or colleagues. They unashamedly speak of the reformed faith with others.

There is a great need for reformed education and for reformed training for office-bearers – for ministers, elders and deacons. A request has been sent to the Dutch deputies who have supported the request. It involves having a full-time missionary in the Philippines who performs the task of providing reformed training for ministers, elders and deacons as well as for church members. At the same time he is to investigate the possibilities of theological training for the ministry – one set up by themselves or one set up in combination with other existing institutes.

In short, one could compare these young churches with our sister-churches in Sumba or with our contacts, the GGMM, in Timor. Similar problems and needs are seen in each one. The FRCA has gladly accepted the challenge and calling to offer support and help to our Indonesian brothers, who are close neighbours as far as ecclesiastical contacts go. The brotherhood in the Philippines is also close geographically and needs support just as much as, if not more than, the sister-churches in Sumba (GGRI) and the GGMM in Timor. In fact the FRCP has not enjoyed the help of missionaries as the GGRI have, nor have they any reformed history as we have. It certainly is an act of God's grace that He has established a reformed testimony in the Philippines in the midst of rampant, superstitious Roman Catholicism as well as in the explosion of sects and 'churches'.

Previous synods have asked deputies to use the reports of sister-churches instead of trying to 're-invent the wheel' by visiting the churches first-hand themselves. This has been done by using the reports of our Dutch sister-churches. One might thus expect a proposal that we offer the FRCP sister-relations, as our Dutch sister-churches have done already in 1990. However, the years between 1990-1998 have taught our sister-churches in the Netherlands some lessons, even as they have taught us valuable lessons on the mission field. Was it wise to offer sister-relations so quickly? Are sister-relations needed before

Relations with other churches

support and help can be given? Our answer to both those questions today is "no, sister-relations are not needed immediately and help can be offered without it." One of the BBK deputies who visited Perth recommended that we indeed wait with sister-relations. The FRCP are young, need time to build up church-life in their own midst without worrying about all the responsibilities of sister-relations. They have only one classis, no synod, and are struggling to operate as a bond. All in all, it does not seem wise to propose sister-relations with the FRCP immediately. Let that wait, D.V.

PROPOSAL

- 1) To correspond with the FRCP and to offer official contacts with them with the purpose of:
 - a) becoming better acquainted with each other,
 - b) seeing whether we could be of any assistance to them,
 - c) working towards the goal of sister-relations with them.
- 2) To authorise the deputies to pay a visit to the FRCP for the above purpose.

Grounds:

- 1) The FRCP is a reformed bond of churches, holding to the infallible Word of God as their supreme standard and having the Three Forms of Unity as their subordinate standards.
- 2) Our Dutch sister-churches attest that they exhibit the marks of a true church.
- 3) The FRCP is a young, small and weak bond which has many problems and needs. We could and should offer them help from our many resources and from our reformed heritage.
- 4) The FRCP is a bond of churches, which is geographically close to us and should therefore receive more consideration than (established) churches far away.
- 5) It is good to initiate official contacts with a visit.

Humbly submitted to the 1998 Synod of Launceston,
The deputies for Relations with Other Reformed Churches,

Appendix 1:

LIST OF MATERIALS FROM THE BBK

- 1) Report of visit to FRCP – Jan./1990 – by A Kampen.
- 2) Proposal of BBK to 1990 General Synod.
- 3) "The Carpenter from Manilla" – J Klamer
- 4) Information about the FRCP – 20.08.92
- 5) Report of visit to FRCP –Jan/92 – by J Klamer
- 6) Report about support to FRCP in visit by J Klamer – Sept/Oct, 1992
- 7) Confidential report re background information about the FRCP by J Klamer, Jan/92
- 8) Report of the visit to the FRCP by M H Oosterhuis and B Bolt – April/95
- 9) Addendum to above – Survey (46 pages).
- 10) Short summary of the visit to the FRCP in April/95.
- 11) Supplementary report of BBK re FRCP to the 1996 General Synod.

Besides this material we have included some pages from the #9 above. It gives some valuable statistical information about the FRCP. The consistories might find this useful.

*Appendix 6
Relations with other churches
Supplementary*

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches)
P.O. Box 191, Armadale, Western Australia. 6112.

To the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia,
Launceston
Tasmania.

Supplementary report to Synod Launceston 1998

Dear Brothers,

Attached please find a supplementary report from the deputies Relations Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches) which includes some unfinished items from the previous report and new material received or studied since the main report was presented.

1. There is an extra proposal regarding the Indonesian churches:

Deputies reported to Synod 1996 regarding the conference of Indonesian Churches held in 1995 with delegates from the GGRI in Sumba, Irian Jaya and Kalimantan as well as delegates from sister churches. The next conference is to be held D.V. in 1999 where a proposal to set up a federation of GGRI churches will be discussed.

Deputies propose to synod that provision be made to allow two delegates from the FRCA attend the conference.

2. The report previously submitted regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) has been expanded and now includes the recommendations. The full report is attached. Please note three of the deputies have submitted section 3.2 and recommendation 4.2 in the main report whilst two deputies submitted a different section 3.2 and recommendation 4.2 which are included at the end of the report.

3. A supplementary report regarding the Reformed Churches of Australia is also attached.

With brotherly greetings,

L. van Burgel (secretary)
11th May, 1998

THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

1. Mandate:

Synod 1996 gave as mandate:

- a) To encourage the RCNZ to continue with their admonitions to the RCA and to terminate relations with the RCA if these admonitions continue to go unheeded,

- b) Clearly explain to the RCNZ the reasons for this Synod's decisions, taking into account comments in para 5.3 of Deputies report and the decision of Synod Launceston 1985 (Article 67),
- c) To attend the next synod of the RCNZ if invited, and
- d) invite delegates from the RCNZ to attend the next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in Acts Synod Bedfordale 1992, Article 19 Recommendation 2b.

Synod 1994 Byford, also gave a mandate to deputies, which was not completed for Synod 1996. It instructed deputies to investigate:

- 4) how the relationship of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relations with the RCNZ

2. Correspondence

- 1) Deputies wrote to the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) requesting more information on the circumstances leading to the breakaway Geneva Free Reformed Church. Some information was provided (see report on GFRC).
- 2) Deputies have written explaining the reasons for synod 1996 decisions regarding the RCNZ
- 3) The RCNZ has been invited to send delegates to Synod Launceston.

3. Relations with RCA

3.1 Delegates who attended the 1997 RCA Synod reported in a recent issue of "Faith and Focus". The report by delegates was quite positive but deputies will await an official report from the InterChurch Relations Committee before commenting on the RCNZ reaction.

3.2 In response to Synod 1994, asking how the relationship of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relations with the RCNZ:

Deputies remain of the opinion stated by previous FRCA synods (Synod Launceston 1985, Article 72 and Synod Armadale 1990, Article 53), that the sister relations the RCNZ has with the RCA is an impediment to *further relations* with the FRCA. However this impediment should not prevent our ongoing discussions with the RCNZ. The NZRC IRC has at times seen the decision regarding the impediment towards further relations as a precondition for contact. This is not the intention. Deputies reported to the last synod "we must accept the RCNZ has a long relationship with the RCA and may feel it has a duty to continue to admonish its sister, allowing time for a change"

The rules for sister relations between the sister churches of the FRCA specify that we be responsible to each other in regard to third parties. The statement "your sister is my sister" is an important principle also in our eventual relations with the RCNZ.

Appendix 6
Relations with other churches
Supplementary

The position taken by past FRCA synods was echoed in a decision made by our Dutch sister churches in Synod Spakenburg 1987, when it charged its deputies to:

- a) to pay particular attention to the relationship of the RCNZ with other churches
- b) point out to the RCNZ, if there should be a sister-church relationship with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK –unaffiliated), this relationship will then (automatically) exclude the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (NGK –Lib)

This decision was forwarded to the RCNZ with further explanation as follows:

“However we put the question to you whether your resolution of your withdrawal from the RES should not also have some consequences for the relationship with churches which have thought that they had to stay among people who called themselves members of the RES. Notably we think of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Churches of Australia. About the policies of these churches, both the RCN (Lib) and the FRCA (our sister churches) have thorough problems which you may know from previous correspondence”.

(Report 14, Synodical and Correspondence Committee to Synod Silverstream, 1989).

The NZRC Synodical and Correspondence Committee in its report to the previous synod of the NZRC (Mangere, 1986), had already shown an understanding for this position.

In their report the Committee stated:

In the event there would be a mutual willingness for a close inter-church relationship, we would like to test each other whether we are in reality true and faithful churches. And relationships must be true in all dimensions i.e that the FRCA which is a sister church of the RCN (Lib) would need to be consulted by the RCN (Lib) before they could agree to a proper relationship with us. This is being consistent with the principle of a true and faithful church and consequential thinking, as otherwise there would be a triangular problem when A and B establish close relationship while C who already has an intimate relationship with A still has principal objections to B. It will thus be quite obvious that the journey towards this goal for a mutually acceptable close relationship is going to be a long one where much patience and understanding is required”

There is no reason to assume that the principle enunciated here by the RCNZ deputies has in any way changed for the FRCA (or for the RCNZ). Synod Byford 1994 asked deputies

to investigate how the relationship of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relations with the RCNZ because it had been made aware of the RCA's decision to break ties with the RCN (Synodical). However, the RCA remains a member of the REC, it continues its relationship with the CRCNA and the apparent unreformed trend in the RCA are enough of a concern to the FRCA not to continue further dialogue but instead to send an appeal to the churches and synod.

It is clear that principle difficulties regarding third party relations also flow to practical difficulties.

If the FRCA established sister relations with the RCNZ, whilst unable to do so with the RCA, then we have the unsatisfactory situation where members from the RCNZ would be

welcome at our Lord's Supper table and ministers free to preach in our pulpits whilst members of the RCNZ, but that same privilege cannot be granted when the same members or ministers move or are called to Australia and receive a valid attestation to the RCA.

Furthermore, members of the FRCA can receive a valid attestation to become members of the RCNZ but at a later stage return to Australia to become members of the RCA. All this is not conducive to good pastoral care and good order whilst there is no official relationship between the FRCA and the RCA because of valid concerns.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Synod reaffirms its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the RCNZ.

4.2 Synod states that the continuing sister relationship of the RCNZ with the RCA is an impediment to a sister relationship with the RCNZ.

4.3. Synod mandate deputies to strive for sister church relations with the RCNZ by:

4.3.1 Continuing dialogue with the RCNZ in order to:

- a) To develop a closer relationship and understanding between our churches including the FRCA position on third party relationships
- b) To point out unreformed trends within the RCA and to encourage the RCNZ to exercise sisterly admonitions over the RCA where needed.

4.3.2. Authorising two delegates to attend the next synod of the RCNZ to be held D.V. in Wainuimata, New Zealand from 17th to 23rd October, 1998 in order to convey greetings and to take the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest with the NZ deputies.

4.3.3 Inviting delegates from the RCNZ to the next synod of the FRCA as observers with the privileges mentioned in Acts Synod Bedfordale 1992, Article 119, Recommendation 2b.

Proposal re RCNZ giving another approach.

3.2

Two deputies had difficulty adopting section 3.2 and recommendation 4.2 of this report. After ample discussion it was decided that they should include their approach to the question posed to deputies by the 1994 Synod. That question arose when the sister-relations of the RCNZ with the RCA was discussed at the 1994 Synod. Rev M A Flinn, delegate from the RCNZ at that synod, challenged the synod to review our approach of classifying those sister-relations as an impediment for sister-relations with us (this was the stance taken by our 1985 and 1987 Synods). Synod took up that challenge and introduced an amendment, which instructs new deputies to investigate:

How the relation of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ.

This was based on the grounds:

Appendix 6

Relations with other churches

Supplementary

In the light of the changes occurring on the ecclesiastical scene, there is need to reconsider expectations (Synod Acts 1990, Art 53, Rec. 5).

Which 'expectations' are referred to? This last reference is to the recommendation that the RCNZ are encouraged specifically to break the ties with overseas churches such as the RCA since if these continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ. This expectation needs reconsideration. What were the 'changes' on the ecclesiastical scene? They refer to the resolution of what had been impediments:

- The RCNZ stopped their relations with the GKN-syn.
- The RCNZ terminated their membership in the RES.
- The RCA stopped all relations with the GKN-syn.
- The RCA via dialogue with us accepted an agreed statement about past problems re sister-relations with the GKN-syn.
- There was growing appreciation also from the side of the RCNZ about our past stance in the 1950's about sister-relations with the GKN-syn.

Synod thus signalled that our past expectations may have been too high. Changes had also occurred. Maybe another approach is needed. Deputies were not able to complete this mandate before the 1996 Synod, and thus need to address this as yet. In 1996 the decision about the RCNZ included many favourable things without offering sister-relations. Some expected that to occur at the 1998 Synod. However, deputies have been too busy with our things, the official information about the assessment of the 1997 RCA Synod came late, and thus they could not give enough attention to this. Accordingly, one should not expect deputies to recommend sister-relations, for instance. As churches we first need to come to grips with this problem of what is sometimes called 'triangular relations'.

Firstly, one needs realism. To have sister-relations with the RCNZ involves potential problems. They have sister-relations with the RCA while we decide to appeal to the RCA to return from an un-reforming direction. It means that relations with the RCA could be opened up via the back-door, i.e. members or ministers could enter the RCA by first joining the RCNZ or members and ministers from the RCA could enter the FRCA via the RCNZ. Such things might not occur. But the potential is there.

How then to address this problem that has dogged us for some years? What impact should the sister-relations of the RCNZ with the RCA have on our contacts with the RCNZ? Reference can be made to the rules used by our Dutch sister-churches. In 1994 we adopted a slightly revised form of their rules for exercising sister-relations (see Art.95 of the 1992 Synod). However, the section about their rules for entering into sister-relations were not dealt with. Yet it is this section that now needs attention. It reads:

Entering into sister-relations.

- 1) The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands will enter a sister-relation with a foreign church only after it has been ascertained, particularly by means of deputies, that such a church has not only officially recognised the reformed confessions of the Word of God, but also actually maintain them in its ecclesiastical practice of doctrine, worship, church order and discipline.

The following must be taken into account:

- a) The Lord Christ gathers his church from out of various nations, each of which are determined by their geographical location, history, and culture, so

- that foreign churches may not be judged with respect to differences in minor points in the manner of confession, church order and practice;
- b) In case of relations with third parties, it must be carefully investigated what these relations involve for the church in question, in order to determine its worth and the value, and eventually to decide the method of entering into and/or of exercising a sister-relation with them (1990 General Synod of Leeuwarden, art.93, translation is ours).

It is this last point that deserves attention. Our Dutch sister-churches thus do not classify a relation with the third party (with which our Dutch sister-churches have no relation) immediately as an impediment in itself. Instead they weigh that sister-relation.

Our investigations thus far conclude that the RCNZ use the sister-relations biblically, with principle and with resolve. The RCNZ has not been afraid to admonish its larger sister-church, though this is a close relation. They do not allow deviation to enter their churches but safeguard the churches by various means. In the past the RCNZ has suspended relations with the large CRCNA. The 1996 Synod declared *"its appreciation for the principled approach which the RCNZ have shown in dealing with third parties by their encouragement and establishment of relations with faithful churches and by their admonition and if necessary breaking of ties with unfaithful churches"* (decision 3, art. 53). Since then the RCNZ sent two delegates to the 1997 RCA Synod. These delegates reported some change for the better in the RCA. The delegates' report shows that they continue to exercise the rules for sister-relations seriously. Concerns are addressed, not sidestepped. Thus deputies confirm that such relations are exercised with principle and resolve, with Scriptural meaning and value.

But if the FRCA entered into sister-relations with the RCNZ, is the FRCA responsible for sister-relations between the RCNZ & RCA? Or is that outside our jurisdiction? The reformed church order teaches us to respect certain jurisdictions and not to lord it over one another. In our view the jurisdiction belongs squarely with the RCNZ. Also, the rules for sister-relations do not specifically mention that we carry responsibility for third parties, though they do mention we need to "give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties." However, the overall task to assist, encourage and exhort each other would include discussions about relations with third parties. Also, the rules obligate us to mutually care for each other that there is no deviation from the reformed faith. Relations with third parties would fall under this category as well. Thus there would be need for an ongoing discussion about these matters. Thus if sister-relations were established, as sister-churches there would be mutual discussions on this point.

Moreover, the FRCA & RCNZ both have safeguards (colloquium doctum) re admission of ministers from abroad, attestations still need to be processed and access to the pulpit by guest ministers remains under consistorial supervision. These safeguards should address any fears we have.

The conclusion is that the RCNZ' sister-relations with the RCA should not be viewed as an impediment. Rather the biblical and principled use of these sister-relations should make us confident in entering a sister-relation with the RCNZ.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2 The biblical and principled use of their sister-relations with the RCA should give us confidence in entering a sister-relation with the RCNZ and should not be viewed as an impediment.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT: REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

The deputies have received an official copy of the Acts of the 1997 RCA Synod. Before this their "ecumenical secretary" had sent a letter in which the major decisions (Word and Spirit and Women in Office) of the synod, matters which our appeal had raised, were given. Also, the decision about our churches was included. We quote that decision (Art. 39.10)

Concerning the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, to write to them expressing:

1. *Our thanksgiving to the Lord that the difficulties pertaining to the events of the 1944 are no longer a barrier to further dialogue.*
2. *Our belief that the decisions of their recent Synod and the their letter to the Sessions of the RCA, dated 28 June 1997, show a genuine concern for us.*
3. *Synod's belief that the best way to clarify and deal with their concerns is to re-establish discussions at the earliest possible opportunity.*

The report of the Dialogue Committee for the FRCA (III.22.6.2), a report that responded to our 1996 Decision, as well as to the Report of Deputies to our 1996 Synod, was printed in their acts.

This information confirms that the 1997 RCA Synod did not deal with our appeal, but reacted to our 1996 Decision. The appeal was not passed on to the synod, but only noted as being sent to the sessions. Thus the substance of our report still stands. However, this added information does put a different light on how we should communicate the concerns of our appeal to the RCA.

Your deputies recommend:

- 1) Instead of sending a revised appeal to their next synod in 2000, by a few face-to-face meetings convey our concerns and appeal.

FOUNDATIONS:

- a) Correspondence has been laborious and tedious. Dialogue took place between 1990-1992. In 1992 our Synod dealt with the common report of dialogue. In 1994 the RCA Synod dealt with it. Since no more dialogue occurred, we waited till 1996 to react to their 1994 decisions. We would send an appeal, which we were late in sending, and it will now take till 2000 (we will have two synods before then!) before the RCA can deal with it. This is a cumbersome process.
- b) Scripture does tell us, if possible, to resolve our differences face to face, cf. Matthew 18.
- c) Face-to-face meetings have proven beneficial in the past. It prevents misunderstandings, which arise more easily in correspondence alone.
- d) The RCA requests it and they have appointed deputies for it so that they can respond to the concerns in our appeal.

Supplementary Report
of
Deputies for Contact with Sister Churches

Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa

Early in April we received via airmail the Acts of the 1996 Synod of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, convened in Capetown in August 1996. An appendix to these Acts relate the Acts of two ad hoc Synods, convened in May 1995 and October 1995 respectively. Deputies have perused these Acts. As a result we also alter the recommendation recorded in our initial report to your meeting.

1. ad hoc Synod of May 1995

Rev C F Heiberg, once a minister in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk and now a member of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk of Johannesburg, was examined in the customary fashion and declared eligible for call in the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in South Africa.

He subsequently accepted a call to the church at Johannesburg.

2. ad hoc Synod of October 1995

The Synod received a request from a church in Bethel to be admitted to the bond of Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. (This church had seceded from the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerken because of its liberalism.) Synod decided with thankfulness and joy to recognise this church as a church of Jesus Christ and to receive this church into the bond of Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.

Subsequently, Synod addressed a request from the minister of this church, Rev P Nel, to be examined in accordance with Art 9, CO. After examination, Rev Nel was accepted as minister within the bond of Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.

3. Synod of August 1996

Your deputies have perused the Acts, and pass on the following points of interest:

1. Synod decided, if possible, to begin in South Africa their own training for the ministry. Deputies, accordingly, were instructed to research whether beginning an own seminary were feasible (Art 21).
2. a request to form classes (there are currently four churches) was not accepted because the concept was considered unworkable given the geography and number of the churches. However, deputies were appointed to consider how the Church Order might be changed to increase the number of ecclesiastical meetings (Art 23).
3. in relations with churches abroad, Synod decided:
 - to add the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to the list of churches with whom contact is sought, and

Appendix 6

Relations with other churches

Supplementary

- to instruct deputies earnestly to request ("ernstig te versoek) the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to reconsider their withdrawal from the ICRC (Art 25).

4. in relations with churches within South Africa, Synod noted with gratitude the Scripturally based unrest amongst some ministers, members and congregations of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk. Deputies were encouraged to maintain and intensify contact with such parties (Art 26).

Recommendation

To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.

Ground:

The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

8 April 1998

C Bouwman (convener)
AMC Bruning
HJ Dekker
PO Posthuma

APPENDIX 7

DEPUTIES TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Appointed by Synod 1996 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Esteemed Brothers

1.0 MANDATE

Synod 1996 gave your deputies the mandate, to:

- a. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College,
- b. continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information,
- c. 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,
- d. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 of the Church Order,
- e. request the churches supporting a student of theology to provide financial details to the deputies, so that they can assess the churches in such a way that the burden of supporting theological students is spread over all the churches,
- f. look into possibilities to invite guest lecturers from Hamilton, and
- g. to report to the next Synod, without publishing the financial details relating to individual students.

2.0 FINANCIAL SUPPORT HAMILTON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

In compliance with Synod 1996 decision, deputies have collected from the churches and forwarded to "Hamilton" \$ 38.00 annually per confessing member for the maintenance of the College, calculated from the first of July 1996 (refer 6.1 Finance).

**3.0 CONTACT WITH HAMILTON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE AND
THEOLOGISCHE UNIVERSITEIT KAMPEN**

- 3.1 Deputies on behalf of The FRCA conveyed messages of congratulations and fraternal greetings on the occasions of Hamilton's Convocation and Kampen's Schooldag 1996 and 1997.
- 3.2 Hamilton Theological College kept us up to date via financial reports. The usual informative annual reports, covering events, subject matters and financial data were unfortunately not received. The Theologische Universiteit in Kampen forwarded its 1997-98 information booklet.

4.0 PUBLICITY

Following a request from deputies, Dr Gootjes, Secretary of the faculty at Hamilton, submitted an informative article featuring a variety of College events, which article was published in *Una Sancta* Vol 44 no 6 p 114. A further article in *Una Sancta* Vol 44, no 17 p342 contained news concerning the study progress of students R Pot S 't Hart, K Janssen, F Dong, and the brothers Dethan. Congratulations on the occasion of the graduation of students Pot, 't Hart, Janssen and Dethan were conveyed in the same article. The 1997 College evening and graduation of the above brothers was featured in a

Appendix 7
Training for the Ministry
Needy Students

review by Dr Gootjes in *Una Sancta* Vol 45 no 5, p95. The same issue of *Una Sancta* also carried that evening's Speech delivered by Dr VanDam entitled: God with us: "The gospel of the Holy of Holies".

5.0 FINANCIAL AID TO STUDENTS

During the past term two students applied for and received financial assistance. In compliance with our given mandate, the churches were invited to submit financial details of their commitments to any student of theology, which has allowed deputies to calculate fair and equitable assessments. (For more information refer to 6.2 Finance)

6.0 FINANCE

- 6.1 Support Theological College Hamilton. Refer appendix A
- 6.2 Support needy students. Refer appendix B

7.0 GUEST LECTURER FROM "HAMILTON"

Deputies have sought the approval in principle from the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, for a proposal to have a professor from "Hamilton" undertake a series of lectures in Australia. Deputies have also sought an indication as to which of the professors would be available to lecture during the latter half of 1998 or the first half of 1999. Following a period of consideration, we have been advised that the proposal has been favourably received and that the Senate has delegated Dr C. VanDam to undertake the lecture tour, possibly during the first half of 1999. Deputies therefore now seek indication from Synod, as to whether or not the proposal to have Dr VanDam conduct a series of lectures for the benefit of the FRCA membership ought to be carried out. If Synod sees merit in the concept, deputies recommend that next deputies be authorised to finalise and implement this concept. Concerning the financial aspect, we would recommend that monies be set aside in the Synod budget to cover the trip of a guest lecturer.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Deputies recommend that Synod decide to:

1. assess the churches \$ 39.00 per communicant member per annum, for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton as from the 1st July 1998.
2. discharge deputies, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - b. continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen", in order to maintain contact and obtain information.
 - c. publish relevant information concerning the training of the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students.
 - d. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art. 18 CO.
 - e. finalise and implement plans for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton".

With brotherly greetings

The deputies: Rev C Bouwman, M Plug, A VanLeeuwen, A T Schiebaan

Appendix A

Statement of Receipts and Payments
March 1996 - January 1998

Opening Balance \$ 10,713.60

	Receipts		Payments
ALBANY	16,340.00	Hamilton College 29.04.96	25,000.00
ARMADALE	21,204.00	Transfer Fees	25.00
BYFORD	12,540.00	Hamilton College 10.03.97	25,000.00
KELMSCOTT	27,664.00	Transfer Fees	25.00
LAUNCESTON	13,718.00	Hamilton College 04.07.97	25,000.00
LEGANA	7,686.50	Transfer Fees	25.00
MT NASURA	12,844.00	Hamilton college 17.12.97	25,000.00
ROCKINGHAM	8,284.00	Transfer Fees	25.00
WEST ALBANY	9,120.00	Hamilton College 27.01.98	35,000.00
Interest	651.42	Transfer Fees	25.00
		State Duty Charges	50.19
Totals	140,765.52		135,175.19
Balance at ANZ Bank as per 31.01.1998			\$ 5,590.33

A Van Leeuwen,
Treasurer, Hamilton Theological College Fund

Assessments of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Church	Confessing members 1996	\$	Confessing members 1997	\$
Albany	211	8018	219	8322
Armadale	279	10602	219	10602
Bedfordale	164	6232	174	6612
Byford	160	6080	170	6460
Kelmscott	279	10602	285	10830
Launceston	183	6954	178	6764
Legana	118	4484	115	4370
Rockingham	99	3762	119	4522
West Albany	110	4180	130	4940
Totals	1603	60914	1669	63422

Appendix 7
Training for the Ministry
Needy Students

Appendix B

Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry

*Needy Students Fund
Statement of Receipts and Payments
February 1996 - Jan 1998*

Opening balance	\$262.75
<i>Receipts</i>	
Albany	3714.76
Armadale	11730.16
Byford	5302.40
Kelmscott	10000.00
Launceston	7807.07
Legana	5857.02
Mt Nasura (Bedforddale)	7122.62
Rockingham	4525.07
West Albany	5062.88
Interest	80.23
Total:	61202.21
<i>Payments</i>	
Support to students	57232.62
Bank Charges	159.00
State Duty	33.44
Total	57425.06
Balance:	4039.90

APPENDIX 8

Civil Registration

Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia 1998
PO Box 705, Launceston, Tasmania 7250
25 April 1998

Esteemed Brothers

Herewith the report of deputies for the Registration of Marriage Celebrants of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

We apologise for its lateness. We had been hopeful of receiving some information from the authorities which would have finalised the work of your deputies, however this information is not to hand at the time of writing this report. Should any new relevant information be received by us prior to Synod closing we will most certainly convey this to you.

May the King of the Church guide you in your deliberations at Synod 1998
With brotherly greetings

SC Fokkema and S Harbert

REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGE CELEBRANTS

Esteemed Brothers,

Your deputies have experienced considerable frustration and delays with the Federal authorities which deal with registration of Churches for the purposes of nominating marriage celebrants. This has been due to a restructuring within the department and the temporary relocation of the person who was dealing with our file. This was further compounded by the "loss" of our entire file in the department. As a consequence we had to start from the beginning. When copies of our files were forwarded to the department they suddenly found our file, or at least a part of it. All this has taken over twelve months to sort out.

However the person now looking after our file has been most cooperative albeit that the wheels still turn very slowly indeed.

This report needs to be read in conjunction with the following items of correspondence:

1. Letter from the department dated 26 Sept 1998
2. Undated document headed: "Recognised Denominations"
3. Deputies response to both the above dated 11 January 1998

These three items are appended to this report.

Appendix 8

Civil Registration

Summary

We draw your attention to item 1, and specifically to points (a), (b), (c) and (d) in that letter, in respect of which we advise as follows:

- (a) There are no concerns about the integrity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- (b) There needs to be a continuous central secretariat which has authority to act for the "denomination" in matters relating to the administration of responsibilities imposed by the Marriage Act.
- (c) The Free Reformed Churches of Australia does not have 12 congregations and therefore does not comply with the requirements. However the officers of the department do have discretion to recommend approval of a lesser number if all the other criteria are met.
- (d) The Free Reformed Churches of Australia clearly meets this requirement.

STATUS REPORT

We draw your attention to correspondence item 2 wherein certain information is requested. Bullet point 7 requires further clarification as to what the department requires and understands by: "...monitoring of marriage celebrants." We are of the opinion that this extends only to adherence by celebrants to the obligations imposed by the Act.

Correspondence item 3 provides the responses to the information requested. We are still awaiting a reply to this letter. The officer responsible for dealing with the application has verbally advised that his recommendation is to grant the application, on the proviso that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia appoints a "permanent secretariat" which can act with authority for the "Denomination" in all matters pertaining to the Marriage Act. The matter is presently with his senior officers who will determine whether and when to place the request from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia before the Governor-General in Council for official proclamation. We are reluctant to push for a more speedy finalisation of this matter as our case relies very much on a favourable recommendation in respect of (c) above.

We will continue to cautiously pursue the matter, and if a response is received during Synod, we shall most certainly convey this to you prior to the conclusion of Synod. Notwithstanding the fact that no absolute decision has been made by the authorities, on the basis of verbal advice we are optimistic of a positive outcome. So as to proceed to finalisation at the earliest possible time we respectfully submit the following recommendations to Synod.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The deputies' report be received.
2. Subject to the Governor-General in Council proclaiming the Free Reformed Churches of Australia a registered "Denomination" under the Marriage Act, Synod appoint a secretariat to deal with the functions required to administer the responsibilities imposed by the Act.

*Appendix 8
Civil Registration*

3. The duties of the secretariat are to correspond with the authorities, both State and Federal in all matters pertaining to the nomination and registration of duly authorised Ministers of the Word of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia seeking to be Marriage Celebrants.
4. The secretariat is to ensure that requests from ministers seeking to be marriage celebrants are supported in writing by their consistories.
5. All ministers of the Word of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia seeking to become authorised marriage celebrants must direct their request to the secretariat who shall then nominate the minister(s) to the relevant State authorities for registration.
6. The secretariat is to provide a report of its activities to each Synod.
7. The secretariat shall be composed of two persons both of whom shall reside within reasonable commuting distance of each another, so as to facilitate the functions required of them.
8. The secretariat shall have no power to reject an application by a minister whose application is supported by his consistory, except where the Marriage Act prohibits registration, for example, that the person seeking registration is not a "Fit and Proper person to be a marriage celebrant.
9. The persons who shall fill the secretariat shall be appointed by Synod and they shall continue until the next Synod, whereupon they shall be discharged from their office. Synod may re-appoint the same persons or appoint new persons whose term shall continue to the following Synod.
10. The secretariat shall be considered by the Churches and Synod to be Deputies appointed by Synod, and they shall report as such to Synod. The title of the deputies shall be 'Deputies for the Registration of Marriage Celebrants'.
11. The title they shall use in dealing with the civil authorities shall be: "The Secretary for Marriage Celebrants, Free Reformed Churches of Australia".
12. Synod discharge the present deputies.
13. Synod appoint new deputies invested with the powers and authority contained in these recommendations.
14. Deputies to clarify what the department means and requires under bullet point 7 in correspondence item 2 above.
15. Synod provide the deputies with a letter of authorisation in terms of these recommendations addressed to the Attorney-General's Department, Legal Aid and Family Services. Deputies be requested to draft this letter in consultation with the Department and with Synod's secretary.

CONCLUSIONS

Deputies are of the opinion that if the Churches require a simpler and speedier method by which ministers can obtain a marriage celebrant's license, then the course of action outlined in the recommendations are both effective and appropriate. The fact that Reformed Church Polity does not know a continuing central Synodical system of government, should not prevent the establishment of a secretariat which can deal with the administrative matters associated with the discharge of obligations imposed by the Marriage Act. New deputies need to be invested with power to act on behalf of the Churches to carry out those administrative functions. When advice of the expected

Appendix 8
Civil Registration

Proclamation is received deputies should be able to function immediately as a secretariat and advise the Attorney-General's Department accordingly.

To delay finalisation of the decision to invest deputies with the power to act on behalf of the Churches until the next Synod would seem to be an unwarranted delay, if the Churches indeed desire a quicker means to register its' ministers as marriage celebrants.

Your deputies commend the report to Synod and pray for the Lord's guidance in your work.

S Herbert and SC Fokkema

LEGAL AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

September 26, 1997

Rev S Fokkema
Free Reformed Church of Australia
PO Box 593
Armadale 6112

Dear Rev Fokkema

As you know, the Marriage Act 1961 provides two methods of authorisation of ministers of religion as marriage celebrants. Under both methods the authority of the celebrants to solemnise marriages is exactly the same.

The first method by which a minister of religion may be authorised as a marriage celebrant is by applying direct to this Department for authorisation under sub-section 39(2) of the Act by the Attorney-General or his delegate. This method is followed by ministers attached to independent churches that have not been recognised under section 26.

Under the second method some larger, established religious denominations are declared to be recognised denominations under section 26 of the Act to permit them to nominate ministers of religion directly to the State/Territory registrars for consideration for authorisation as celebrants. This is the only consequence of declaring a religious organisation to be a recognised denomination under section 26.

A declaration under this section does not in any way amount to Government endorsement of the organisation concerned or an acknowledgment that it has any particular standing in the community. The process under this section is purely for administrative convenience in the registration of marriage celebrants.

To be proclaimed as a recognised denomination an organisation

- (a) must have a reputation for integrity;
- (b) must have a central authority for the nominating its ministers as marriage celebrants, for monitoring their performance and to handle other administrative functions associated with the Marriage Act;
- (c) should have about twelve or more congregations in different locations which require religious marriage celebrants to meet the needs of the members; and

- (d) must be firmly established and likely to continue operating in the foreseeable future (Usually a period of three years operation is accepted as evidence of stability).

A new list of recognised denominations is being compiled for the consideration of the Governor-General in Council. In order to expedite your application for proclamation as a recognised denomination, please supply the information requested in the attached form as soon as possible.

I will be out of the office until 13 October but I would be happy to answer any enquiries you may have then. My direct number is 02-62506720.

Yours sincerely,

Clem Dick, Assistant Director, Education, Celebrants and Counselling Section

LEGAL AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

RECOGNISED DENOMINATIONS

The Department has considerable information already on file about some applicants for proclamation as recognised denominations. However we do not have all the information required on all the applicants and some information that we do have may be inaccurate or out of date.

Attached is a 2 page spreadsheet summarising the information we have at the moment. Would you please check its accuracy and supply any information of documentation that is missing?

If you have any concerns, please ring Clem Dick on 02-62506720 on 13 October or later.

LIST OF INFORMATION REQUIRED:

- The exact legal name of the organisation to be used in the proclamation;
- A very short history of your organisation, especially since it commenced in Australia;
- The legal status of the organisation e.g. Is it an incorporated body? (If so, please supply a copy of the certificate of incorporation).
- An indication of how your central administration functions in running the organisation especially as this will apply to the nomination and monitoring of marriage celebrants;
- A copy of your organisation's constitution;
- Details of the various congregations, including their location and size;
- Certification that these congregations accept the authority of the central administration for the appointment and monitoring of marriage celebrants;
- The name and designation, phone number and address of the person who will hold the position of Nominating Authority for the organisation – i.e. the person who will take responsibility for nominating celebrants within your church;
- A copy of the form of wedding ceremony; and
- Confirmation that all celebrants within the organisation will use a form of ceremony approved by the church.

Appendix 8
Civil Registration

Information about buildings or property owned by the church could be useful as evidence of the church's stability.

11 January 1998

Legal Aid and Family Services
Education, Celebrants and Counselling Section
Assistant Director
Mr Clem Dick

Dear Sir

I refer to your correspondence dated September 26 1997 in respect of registration of this denomination being proclaimed a recognised denomination for the purposes of registration of its clergy as marriage celebrants. File No 94/710 MN 131214 or else File No 96/662 may assist. I have also enclosed a copy of your last correspondence to me to assist in recalling the matter.

In the penultimate paragraph you request certain information, some of which I have already previously provided, and which you no doubt still have on file.

I will deal with each of the bullet points in the order of your request

- The exact legal name of the organisation is: Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- A very short history has already been provided. (copy of previous correspondence is enclosed)
- The Denomination is not an incorporated body.
- The Denomination does not have a hierarchal structure which governs all congregations from a central office. The individual congregations together form the national denomination. Each congregation has agreed to abide by the "Church Order" document. The denomination's hierarchal structure is in effect embodied in that document. Under this document the Synod only has the power to advise but not to rule over individual congregations. Synod can however expel from the federation any congregation which is and remains in breach of the "Church Order" or the confessional standards of the denomination.
- "Synod" in our "Church Order" document is basically a conference of the denomination held once every two years to discuss, advise and adjudicate on matters that the congregations refer to it. A "Synod" therefore is not a central office of Church government, but a two yearly event. Synod can however deputise certain persons to do certain things for the denomination and to report to the next Synod. This is in effect the position of the undersigned. We have been deputised by Synod

to act for the denomination in respect to marriage celebrant matters. (copy enclosed)

- Copy of constitution. Copy of 'Church Order' previously supplied.
- Details of congregations previously supplied.
- Certification that the congregations accept the authority of the central administration for appointment and monitoring of marriage celebrants. I can only refer you to the fact that the congregations are federated under the one "Church Order" and as such are bound to accept the advice and decisions of Synod as binding on them. Failure of which renders them liable to expulsion from the federation. The Synod has empowered deputies to: "Attend, on behalf of the bond of churches to the nomination and correspondence matters that shall be required when the registration is effected." (see copy of article 63, Acts of Synod enclosed)
- The name of the person who holds the position of authority for the Nominating Authority is as shown at the end of this letter.
- A copy of the form for the wedding ceremony has previously been supplied.
- Only duly ordained ministers of the Word are permitted to officiate as marriage celebrants, and they may not use any other form but the form approved by Synod. This form is the one that you have on file.
- All of the 9 congregations own their own buildings. The ministers homes are usually owned by the congregations. The denomination owns several Christian Schools. In the Perth area there is a senior high school and three primary schools. There is also a senior citizen village with 15 cottages, a nursing home and hostel owned by the members of the denomination. Borrowings are avoided and often sourced within the congregations.

Trusting that this information is now adequate to finalise the formalities at the earliest opportunity.

Yours faithfully

Mr Spike C Fokkema JP
Synod Deputies, Marriage Celebrants
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
PO Box 593
Armadale 6112

Ph 08 9399 7498 Fax 08 9497 8282

APPENDIX 9

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD

Esteemed brothers,

The Church of Mount Nasura hereby submits its report in accordance with Synods instructions.

1. LOCATION OF ARCHIVES COLLECTION

The transfer of the archives to the Library at the Armadale John Calvin Senior High School has made them much more accessible, and has eliminated the need to transport documents to and fro for processing or loan purposes.

2. CONTENTS OF SYNOD ARCHIVES

ADDITIONS TO ARCHIVES AFTER SYNOD 1996:

Item 62.38 Provisional agenda

Item 62.39 Opening address

Items 95.1 – 95.23 Extra-ordinary Synod 1995 (Examination of Candidate J. Poppe).

Item 95.24 Documents Relating to Colloquium for Rev. W. vanderJagt, 6 December 1995.

Items 96.0 – 96.146.17 Synod 1996.

Item 96.147 Documents Relating to Colloquium for Rev. PKA deBoer, 18 December 1996.

*** A detailed chronological listing of all documents in the archive collection, including all additions since Synod 1996, can be found on the enclosed computer disk.

3. CONTENTS OF SYNOD LIBRARY

ADDITIONS TO LIBRARY AFTER SYNOD 1996:

Acts of the 1996 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia - Kelmescott

Acts of the 1995 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches - Abbotsford (2 copies)

Acts of the 1990 Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken, the Netherlands - Leeuwarden

Acts of the 1993 Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken, the Netherlands - Ommen

Acts of the 1996 Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken, the Netherlands - Berkel en Rodenrijs

Acts & English Summary of the 1992 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa – Pretoria

Acts & English Summary of the 1994 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa – Johannesburg

1 Book: Mission in Unity: Ethnicity, Migration and the Unity of the Church (edited by Robin E. Gurney).

Appendix 10
Contents of Synods' Archives and Library

APPENDIX 10

CONTENTS of, and INDEX to ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD

Note: Synod decided (Art 115) to list in an Appendix to the *Acts* only those items that were added to the Archives and Library since 1996.

Also, Synod's Librarian will, upon request, make available on disk a complete Listing and Index of the Archives and Library.

The following materials were added to Synod's Archives and Library since the 1996 report of the Archivist.

SYNOD 1996 - Agenda and Credentials

- 96.0 Agenda (Draft and updated Draft)
- 96.1 Credentials FRC Albany
- 96.2 Credentials FRC Armadale
- 96.3 Credentials FRC Bedforddale
- 96.4 Credentials FRC Byford
- 96.5 Credentials Indonesia (Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir Nusa Tenggara Timur)
- 96.6 Credentials FRC Kelmscott
- 96.7 Credentials FRC Launceston
- 96.8 Credentials FRC Legana
- 96.9 Credentials RCs New Zealand
- 96.10 Credentials FRC Rockingham
- 96.11 Credentials FRC West Albany

SYNOD 1996 - CORRESPONDENCE INWARD

- 96.12 K'scott - appeal against Art. 123, Acts '94
- 96.13 B'dale - appeal against Art. 83, Acts '94
- 96.14 Rev. G. VanRongen - request to use Synod Acts
- 96.15 West Albany - Synod meeting place proposal
- 96.16 Albany - ICRC regional mission conferences
- 96.17 A'dale - edifying word for theological students
- 96.18 A'dale - Bible translations
- 96.19 A'dale - proposal: form for ordination of elders and deacons
- 96.20 K'scott - proposal: formation of classes
- 96.21 K'scott - revision ecclesiastical documents
- 96.22 L'ton - proposal FRC Philippines
- 96.23 Albany re:
 - Art. 123, Acts '94
 - proposal FRC Philippines
- 96.24 West Albany re:
 - Art. 123, Acts '94
 - proposal FRC Philippines

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Contents of Synods' Archives and Library

- 96.25 J. Byl re Bible translations
- 96.26 Byford - appeal against Art. 83, Acts '94
- 96.27 R'ham - proposal re ICRC

SYNOD 1996 - DEPUTIES' REPORTS

- 96.28 Bible translation
- 96.29 Publication of the Church Order
- 96.30 Revision: Rules for Synods
- 96.31 Synod Treasurer
- 96.32 Auditors for synodical treasurer
- 96.33 Training for the Ministry
- 96.34 Archives and Library of Synod
- 96.35 Relations with other churches:
 - 96.35.1 Sister churches
 - 96.35.2 Other churches (Reformed)
 - 96.35.3 Other churches (Presbyterian)
 - 96.35.4 ICRC
- 96.36 Inspection of Synod Archives
- 96.37 Article 66 Church Order
- 96.38 Civil Registration of the FRCA
- 96.39 Audit of the books of Deputies training for the Ministry
- 96.40 Pulpit Exchange
- 96.41 Synod Treasurer - draft budget
- 96.42

SYNOD 1996 - CORRESPONDENCE OUTWARD

- REPLIES TO CORESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

-
- 96.42 Rev. P.K.A. deBoer re his acceptance of call to FRC B'dale
- 96.43 Rev. G. vanRongen - approval to use Synod Acts
- 96.44 Br J. Byl re correspondence on Bibe Translation
- 96.45 FRC R'ham re ICRC proposal
- 96.46 FRC Albany re:
 - ICRC regional mission conferences
 - proposal to Art. 123, Acts '94
- 96.47 FRC L'ton re FRC Philippines proposal
- 96.48 FRC West Albany re:
 - proposals for Synod meeting places
 - Art. 123, Acts '94
- 96.49 FRC K'scott re:
 - appeal to Art. 123, Acts '94
 - proposal re formation of classes
 - revision of Ecclesiastical documents
- 96.50 FRC Byford re appeal to Art. 83, Acts '94
- 96.51 FRC B'dale re appeal to Art. 83, Acts '94
- 96.52 Rev. G. vanRongen - letter of thanks for submission and formulation of appendices in his "Church Order of Dordrecht", 1995 to FRC K'scott

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- 96.53 FRC A'dale re:
- proposal on the edifying word for theological students
- correspondence on Bible Translations
- correspondence for a proposed change to the ordination Form for elders and deacons

LETTERS TO ICRC MEMBERS re Synod's decision to terminate ICRC membership of FRCA and consequent withdrawal of proposed constitutional amendment:

- 96.54 Corresponding Secretary of the ICRC
96.55 Reformed Churches in the United States
96.56 Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA)
96.57 Free Reformed Churches of North America
96.58 Free Church of Central India
96.59 Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
96.60 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
96.61 Presbyterian Church in Korea
96.62 Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
96.63 Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
96.64 Free Church in Southern Africa
96.65 Free Church of Scotland
96.66 Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland
96.67 Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia
96.68 Canadian Reformed Churches

LETTERS OF THANKS AND DISCHARGE to:

- 96.69 Deputies for Archives and Library of Synod, FRC B'dale
96.70 Deputies for Inspection of Archives and Library of Synod, FRC Byford
96.71 Br A. Hordyk, Treasurer of Synod
96.72 Deputies for the Audit of Synodical Treasury, FRC K'scott
96.73 - 74 Deputies for relations with other churches: Rev. A. Veldman, Br J.L. vanBurgel,
96.75 - 77 Deputies for relations with other churches (sister churches): Rev. C. Bouwman, Br A.M.C. Bruning, Br D. Pot
96.78 - 80 Deputies for relations with other churches (Reformed churches): Rev. W. Huizinga, Br J. Bosveld, Br J. VanDyk
96.81 - 83 Deputies for ICRC: Rev. W. Huizinga, Br A. Slobe, Rev. A. Veldman
96.84 - 87 Deputies for Bible Translation: Rev. C. Kleyn, Br. G. Brouwer, Br G. Groenewold, Rev. F.J. vanHulst
96.88 - 91 Deputies for Training for the Ministry: Rev. C. Bouwman, Br J. Bolhuis, Br A.T. Schiebaan, Br A. vanLeeuwen
96.92 Deputies for Art. 17 & 18 - Church Order: FRC B'dale
96.93 Deputies for Pulpit Exchange: FRC Albany
96.94 Deputy for the publication of the Church Order: Br. J. Eikelboom
96.95 - 96 Deputies for the Civil Registration of the FRCA: Br S.C. Fokkema, Br S.R.H. Herbert
96.97 Deputies for the revision of the rules and procedures of Synod: FRC K'scott
96.98-100 Deputies for Art. 48 & 76 - Church Order: Rev. A. Veldman, Rev. C. Bouwman, Br P.O. Posthuma
96.101 Deputies for Art. 66 - Church Order: FRC L'ton
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Contents of Synods' Archives and Library

- LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT

- 96.102 Deputies for the Rules for Church Visitation: FRC K'scott
96.103-5 Deputies for Art. 48 & 76 - Church Order: Rev. A. Veldman, Br. P.O. Posthuma, Rev. C. Bouwman
96.106 Deputies for Art. 66 - Church Order: FRC L'ton
96.107 Deputies for Art. 17 & 18 - Church Order: FRC B'dale
96.108 Deputy for Synod Audio Equipment: Br E. 't Hart
96.109 Deputies for the Audit for Synodical Treasury: FRC K'scott
96.110 Deputies for the Inspection of Archives and Library of Synods: FRC Byford
96.111 Deputies for the Archives and Library of Synods: FRC B'dale
96.112 Treasurer of Synod: Br Ad. Hordyk
96.113 Mr J. Versluis, Alternate to the Synod Treasurer
96.114-31 Deputies for Relations with Other Churches
- Rev. A. Veldman (General Convener, Convener: Presbyterian Churches, Convener for Deputies for Church Visits)
- Rev. W. vanderJagt (Presbyterian Churches)
- Rev. J. Poppe (Presbyterian Churches)
- Br A. Slobe (Presbyterian Churches)
- Br H. Olde (Presbyterian Churches)
- Br J. Bruning (Presbyterian Churches)
- Br A. Plug (Presbyterian Churches)
- Rev. C. Bouwman (Convener: Sister Churches)
- Br G.B. Veenendaal (Sister Churches)
- Br P.O. Posthuma (Sister Churches)
- Br H.J. Dekker (Sister Churches)
- Br A.M.C. Bruning (Sister Churches)
- Rev. W. Huizinga (Convener: Reformed Churches)
- Rev. A. vanDeiden (Reformed Churches)
- Br J. vanDijk (Reformed Churches)
- Br J.L. vanBurgel (General Secretary and deputy: Reformed Churches)
- Br J. Bosveld (Reformed Churches)
- Br G.M. Spyker (Alternate: Reformed Churches)
96.132-33 Deputies for the Formation of Classes: FRC Legana, L'ton
96.134 Deputies for the Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod: FRC B'dale
96.135-36 Deputies for the Civil Registration of the FRCA: Br S. Herbert, Br S.C. Fokkema
96.137 Deputies for Pulpit Exchanges: FRCA Albany
96.138 Deputy for the Nicene Creed: Rev. A. vanDeiden
96.139-43 Deputies for the Training of the Ministry: Br R. Heerema, Br A. vanLeeuwen, Br A.T. Schiebaan, Br M. Plug, Rev. C. Bouwman (Convener)

SYNOD 1996 - Other

- 96.144 Press Release
96.145 - 146.17

1996 CLOSED SESSIONS

- 96.145 Acts of Closed Sessions
96.146 Church Visitation Reports:

Appendix 10
Contents of Synods' Archives and Library

- 96.146.1 Albany 23.09.94
- 96.146.2 Albany 03.11.95
- 96.146.3 Armadale 29.09.94
- 96.146.4 Letter to Synod 96 from Church Visitors re: Church Visitation in Armadale 29.09.94
- 96.146.5 Armadale 27.11.95
- 96.146.6 Bedfordale 29.09.94
- 96.146.7 Bedfordale 27.11.95
- 96.146.8 Byford 03.11.94
- 96.146.9 Kelmscott 02.12.94
- 96.146.10 Kelmscott 23.11.95
- 96.146.11 Launceston 14.11.94
- 96.146.12 Launceston 20.10.95
- 96.146.13 Legana 15.11.94
- 96.146.14 Legana 19.10.95
- 96.146.15 Rockingham 03.11.94
- 96.146.16 West Albany 23.09.94
- 96.146.17 West Albany 03.11.95

Documents Relating to Colloquium for Rev. PKA deBoer, 18 December 1996

- 96.147 Acts of Classis Byford 18 December, 1996

APPENDIX 11

RULES FOR THE ARCHIVIST

(as adopted by Synod 1975, Acts Article 53; re-stated by Synod 1983, Acts Articles 112 and 114; amended by Synod 1992, Acts Article 52; amended by Synod 1998, Acts Article 115)

1. The church council of the church keeping the Archives is in charge of the Archives of Synod.
2. This church council shall appoint an Archivist.
3. The Archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; stating also who has received or seen items, and the items involved.
4. In reporting on the contents of the Archives, the Archivist shall include details for only those items that were added to the Archives since the previous Report (*Acts 1998, Article 115*).
5. The church council reports to Synod.
6. The Archivist shall carefully store everything, using files which will be placed in the filing cabinet, taking care that everything is clearly catalogued.
7. Access to items in the general archives requires permission from the church keeping the archives. Access to items in the secret archives requires permission from two churches, or from Synod.
8. Original documents shall not be lent out, but the Archivist shall supply photo copies instead. The name of the inquirer, the title of the document and the date shall be recorded.

APPENDIX 12

RULES FOR SYNODS

(as adopted by Synod 1998, Acts Article 65)

1. CONVENING CHURCH

Every synod shall appoint a church to convene the next synod.

The tasks of the convening church are:

- 1.1 Give at least six months written notice to all the churches and all synodical deputyships, of synod's meeting place, commencement date and time. This notification shall further
 - invite the churches to submit by a date four months prior to the commencement of synod, any new items of business for inclusion on the Provisional Draft Agenda;
 - invite the churches to submit by a date three weeks prior to the commencement of synod, any other material for inclusion on the Final Draft Agenda;
 - invite the deputyships to submit their reports for inclusion on the Provisional Draft Agenda;
 - state the postal address for receipt of submissions.

- 1.2 Receive all material submitted, clearly date mark each item and place it on the Draft Agenda, listing the order of business as follows - or as near thereto as practicable:
 1. Opening by the Convening Church
 2. Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials
 3. Election of Officers
 4. Constitution of Synod
 5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
 6. Adoption of the Agenda
 7. Adoption of Meeting Procedure
 8. Incoming Correspondence
 9. Instructions
 10. Reports by Classis Churches
 11. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies
 12. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer
 13. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs
 14. Appointment of Deputies
 15. Appointment of convening church, and place and time of the 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

Appendix 12
Rules for Synods

- 1.3 After the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda, forward to each of the churches one unbound and unfolded copy of the document, in time to reach them at least three months before synod commences.
- 1.4 After the closing date for the Final Draft Agenda, forward with minimum delay to each of the churches two bound copies of the Final Draft Agenda, together with one unbound copy of all material received after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda. Confidential matters must be clearly marked: 'For delegates only'. Church visitation reports will not be distributed.
- 1.5 Arrange meeting accommodation for synod and its committees; any necessary sound amplification; all administrative support facilities; and refreshments and meals.
- 1.6 Prepare and submit to synod a recommendation for the appointment of the next Convening Church. Here the convening church shall seek to improve the rotation between the different geographic areas in which the churches are located, provided however that over an extended period of time the churches shall still have equal turns in convening and hosting synod.
- 1.7 At the opening of Synod, place on synod's table one bound copy of the Final Draft Agenda together with loose inserts of copies of all items received after its closing date; open synod in a christian manner; examine the credentials of the delegates and report its findings; conduct the election of synod's Officers; hand over control to the elected chairman; and inform him on what other arrangements have been made for the conduct of synod.

Note : In the case of an extra-ordinary synod, the times and conditions specified in this section shall, to the extent that it is practical to do so, be observed.

2. DELEGATES

In choosing delegates for synod, the minor assemblies shall observe the following rules:

- An elder may be appointed if no minister is available; and a deacon may be appointed if no elder is available.
- If Classes have been established, every Classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders; provided that as long as there are only two Classes, every Classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. These delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as possible.

3. OFFICERS OF SYNOD

- 3.1 Synod shall elect a Chairman, a vice-Chairman, a first Clerk and a second Clerk; who collectively shall be known as the Officers of Synod.
- 3.2 The vice-chairman shall assist the other Officers of Synod where needed, and prepare the Press Release of Synod. The first Clerk shall prepare the Acts of Synod, and at the conclusion of synod arrange for these Acts to be printed and distributed. He shall have responsibility for synod's administration facilities, and ensure the timely distribution of materials to the delegates.
The second Clerk shall prepare all outward correspondence. He shall place a copy of all such correspondence in synod's Archives.
- 3.3 Every Synod shall decide whether its chairman and first clerk will be appointed to an advisory committee.
- 3.4 The Officers of Synod shall prepare and submit written proposals on:
 - the number and composition of advisory committees, subject to the provisions of Rule 4 of the *Rules for Synods*; the nominations for committee chairmen; and the agenda items to be dealt with by each committee;
 - the attendance and participation of any adviser or visitor, subject to the provisions of Rules 5 and 6 of the *Rules for Synods*;
 - the time schedules for meeting;
 - the order in which the agenda items shall be dealt with;
 - nominations for deputies appointments.

4. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- 4.1 A committee shall have from three to five members, and be chaired by the person appointed by synod;
- 4.2 Unless it has good grounds to believe that a matter can be finalised by a straightforward recommendation, a committee shall submit a written report for consideration by synod. In the case of a substantial matter a committee may first distribute to synod's delegates a provisional report with draft conclusions and recommendations, with the request for written comments by a certain date and time; and thereafter submit a final report to synod.

5. ADVISERS

- 5.1 Synod may resolve to admit for the purpose of giving advice, to a full session or advisory committee, any minister from the bond of churches who has not been delegated to synod, as well as any communicant member from the bond of churches with particular skills or expertise required by synod.
- 5.2 An adviser shall confine his activities in the meeting to giving advice only at the request from the chairman. He shall vacate his place in the meeting after

having concluded his advice, and the meeting shall not commence debate until the adviser has done so.

6. VISITORS

Synod shall recognise visitors from other churches, and grant privileges accordingly, as follows:

- 6.1 Delegates from sister churches will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the particular sister relation; and sit as advisory members in synod's open sessions and advisory committees where they may give advice when they request, or are requested to do so.
- 6.2 Delegates from churches with whom we have temporary ecclesiastical contact will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the temporary ecclesiastical contact; to speak in synod's open session when they request, or are requested to do so, on matters specifically pertaining to the temporary ecclesiastical contact; and to sit as advisory members in the advisory committee(s) that deal with the temporary ecclesiastical contact, where they may give advice when they request, or are requested to do so
- 6.3 Delegates from churches with whom we have official contact will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the contact.
- 6.4 Delegates from churches who desire to establish contact with our churches will be allowed admission to the audience of synod.

All delegates so received will be offered normal christian hospitality, such as lodging and meals.

7. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- 7.1 After synod has been constituted the Chairman shall request the delegates and any advisers then present to rise; and by that action those rising shall be held to reaffirm their agreement with the Word of God and the Confessions. This reaffirmation shall also be required from any person attending for the first time as substitute for another delegate.
- 7.2 In adopting its Agenda, synod shall examine the status of each item that was not included in the Provisional Draft Agenda; and any such item that is found to contain new matter(s) - this being an item that should have been in the hands of the churches three months prior to the commencement of synod - shall not be taken into consideration by synod. Synod shall not add any item to the Final Draft Agenda except by special resolution and then only on the grounds of exceptional circumstances.

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Rules for Synods

The Final Draft Agenda as adopted shall become synod's Agenda, to which nothing shall be added.

- 7.3 The admissibility of an agenda item shall be decided at the time the item is scheduled for consideration. Submissions not from the churches, except those allowed by the Church Order, shall be received for information only and require no acknowledgement.
- 7.4 Members of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, or of any of its sisterchurches shall have the right of admission to the audience of all open sessions.
- 7.5 The daily closing of synod with prayer shall be by synod's members in alphabetic order of surnames
- 7.6 Other than in matters of a personal nature, or when otherwise decided by special resolution, synod shall not meet in closed session. Admission to a closed session shall normally be restricted to synod members.
- 7.7 Synod members shall have free access to any advisory committee's meeting but not speak except at the invitation of the chairman, and then only in an advisory capacity.
- 7.8 The Acts of the proceedings of each day shall if possible be presented for adoption at the beginning of the following sitting day.

They shall record all matters of substance under the headings MATERIAL (and ADMISSIBILITY, if applicable), DECISION(S) and GROUNDS. Proposals declared in the affirmative shall be recorded as ADOPTED. Proposals declared in the negative shall be recorded as DEFEATED.

They shall not record any details of the vote or ballot, nor any names of the movers and seconders of proposals, motions and amendments.

8. RULES FOR DEBATE

1. Any discussion relating to the introduction of a proposal or motion shall be kept to a minimum and be restricted to procedure and matter-of-fact issues. It shall not include argumentation in support of, or in opposition to, the substance of a proposal or motion except in the wording or the framing thereof.
2. No proposal, motion or amendment shall be debated, put to the vote or adopted unless it has been seconded; provided however that the Chairman, upon a proposal or motion being moved, may ask the meeting if any delegate opposes it. If no delegate registers opposition the chairman may declare the proposal or motion carried without debate and without taking a vote.

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3. A delegate wishing to submit a proposal, motion or amendment shall, if required by the Chairman, put the proposal, motion or amendment in writing.
4. Synod may decide to conduct debate on a particular matter in more than one round. In this situation the provisions of these Rules shall apply to each round, provided however that
 - in the first round a speaker shall not interact with earlier speakers in that round;
 - in the second and following rounds a speaker shall not repeat what he said in earlier rounds;
 - in the final round no new matters shall be brought up.
5. No speaker shall speak more than once in a round, except by way of explanation, or in reply upon any original proposal or motion of which he was the mover, or in reply as the mover of any amendment then before the chair.
6. A speaker shall at all times address the Chairman.
7. Any delegate may, by way of raising a point of order, direct the attention of the Chairman to any infraction of the Rules for Debate.
8. A speaker shall not be interrupted except on a point of order, in which event he shall refrain from speaking until the point of order has been heard and decided.
9. A delegate who was the mover of a proposal, motion or amendment shall, at the conclusion of the speeches of all the other delegates who chose to speak on the matter, have the right of reply. A delegate speaking in reply shall not introduce any new matter but shall strictly confine himself to answering previous speakers.
10. The following motion may be received when a proposal (or motion) is being debated: "That the proposal (or motion) be amended". In this situation attention must be given to the following points:
 1. Every amendment shall be relevant to the proposal or motion on which it is moved, and must substantially support the nature and intent of that proposal or motion.
 2. Only one amendment shall be discussed at a time. As often as an amendment is defeated, another amendment may be moved before the original motion is put to the vote.
 3. In speaking to an amendment a speaker may give notice of his intention to move a further amendment.

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4. Where an amendment is adopted, the original motion as amended shall for all purposes of subsequent debate be treated as an original motion.

9. VOTING

When to vote

Wherever possible, decisions shall be made unanimously; and on matters of principle the Chairman shall call for a vote only after every reasonable effort to obtain a consensus has been made.

How to vote

In taking the vote on any proposal, motion or amendment, the chairman shall ask those in favour to indicate such by a show of hands; and he may do so as often as is necessary to enable him to form and declare his opinion as to whether the affirmative or negative has the majority.

Declaring the result of a Vote

A motion or proposal shall be declared 'adopted' by simple majority vote. If the number of votes in favour is equal to the number of votes against, the proposal or motion shall be declared 'defeated'.

Voting on persons

Questions concerning persons, except on appointments proposed by the Officers with the prior consent of synod, shall be decided by secret ballot.

Counting Rules

- Ballot papers incorrectly filled in and ballot papers left blank shall be declared invalid.
- Those who receive the largest number of votes shall be declared elected, provided that this number is not less than one-half of the number of valid votes cast.
- If there is no result after two free ballots, any subsequent choice shall be restricted to the candidates who received the most votes in the previous ballot. If a ballot results in a tied vote another ballot shall be conducted, and if this results in a further tied vote the decision shall be made by lot after calling upon the Name of the LORD.

10. DEPUTIES

Synod shall appoint its Deputies in closed session, and provide them with clearly defined written instructions, to which Deputies shall strictly adhere. Deputies shall submit a written Report on their activities. Unless otherwise instructed, they shall submit that Report in time for inclusion in the Provisional Draft Agenda.

Deputies must make available at synod for referral and consultation, copies of all correspondence, Minutes, and records of other work done. They should also submit the same to the Archivist.

If a supplementary report is found necessary, it shall present only relevant information that has come to notice after the closing date for the provisional Draft Agenda.

Deputies shall be reimbursed all costs incurred in the execution of their task. They shall present details of their expenditure to synod for auditing prior to being discharged.

11. TREASURER and FINANCE

11.1 The synod Treasurer shall

- prepare financial estimates and inform the churches of their share of synod costs;
- collect and bank the monies received from the churches;
- invest any temporary surplus funds in an authorised trustee investment or banking institution;
- pay all properly authorised and documented synod expenditure;
- keep books of account, setting out accurately all disbursements and balances of funds held;
- submit his books of account to the authorised deputies of synod for scrutiny or audit.

11.2 The convening church, the various deputyships, synod's delegates and whoever else may have incurred authorised synod expenditure shall present properly itemised and documented accounts to the Treasurer for payment.

11.3 The members of a deputyship shall, if at all possible, submit a joint statement of expenditure.

11.4 The share of each church in synod costs shall be in proportion to the number of its confessing members as at the first day of January of the year in which synod is held

11.5 Upon receipt and adoption of a satisfactory audit report, synod shall discharge the Treasurer.

12. RULES FOR SYNODS

These *Rules for Synods* are the rules by which the synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia are conducted. They shall not be changed except by adoption in synod of a proposal submitted by one of the churches.

If any provision in these *Rules for Synods* is found to be in conflict with the Church Order the latter shall prevail.

APPENDIX 13

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH VISITS (Art 44 CO)¹ (as adopted by Synod Launceston 1998)

Preliminary Questions

- Has the consistory informed the congregation about the annual church visit?
- Are all office bearers present? If not what are the reasons for their absence?
(Note: If fewer than two-thirds of the office bearers are present the visit shall be postponed.)
- Has any member of the congregation brought any complaint to the consistory regarding church life in general since the previous visit?
- Does consistory need any help or information from the Church Visitors?

1 Offices and Supervision of Doctrine

1.1 Ministers of the Word.

- 1.1.1 Do the ministers of the Word fulfil their office faithfully?
- 1.1.2 Do they adhere to the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order?
- 1.1.3 Is their conduct in public and private life befitting faithful servants of the Lord?
- 1.1.4 Does the consistory supply the ministers with adequate means to support their families? (Art 11 CO)²
- 1.1.5 What arrangements has the consistory made for the retirement of its ministers? (Art 13 CO)³

¹ ARTICLE 44 - Church visitors

Each year classis (synod) shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to classis (synod).

² ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory, with the deacons, on behalf of the congregation which it represents in this matter, shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

³ ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

- 1.1.6 Is the preaching in conformity with God's Word and the Three Forms of Unity?
- 1.1.7 Is it evident from their preaching that the ministers diligently study the Word of God?
- 1.1.8 Is the preaching evaluated by the consistory? (Articles 20 & 26 CO)?⁴
- 1.1.9 What are the results of such evaluations?
- 1.1.10 The positive fruit of the preaching promised in Scripture is growth in love for the Lord, and therefore for the neighbour. How is this fruit evident?
- 1.1.11 How does consistory activate and stimulate Bible study societies for the youth and adults?

(the following two questions apply only if the church is vacant)

- 1.1.12 What attempts are being made to call a minister, and is this work done in accordance with Articles 3C and 43 of the Church Order?⁵
- 1.1.13 Is the counsellor called upon in all important cases, and is he willing to help?

If a minister of the Word, by reason of age, sickness or otherwise, is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

⁴ ARTICLE 20 - Task of elders

The elders shall together with the ministers of the Word govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the up building of the congregation they shall make home visits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.

⁵ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office: C Ministers.

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of the classis church shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis (classis church) to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call.

1.2 Elders and Deacons

- 1.2.1 Does the calling and the election and re-election of elders and deacons take place according to the Church Order? (Articles 3A, 3B & 23 CO)⁶
- 1.2.2 Have all office bearers signed the subscription form for office bearers? (Articles 24 & 25 CO)⁷
- 1.2.3 How many elders and how many deacons does the Church have?
- 1.2.4 How is it determined that their present number is sufficient?
- 1.2.5 Do the office bearers diligently attend the church services?
- 1.2.6 Do the office bearers diligently attend the meetings of the consistory?

⁶ ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office: A. All office-bearers

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto. The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after prayer, and in accordance with the local regulations adopted for that purpose. Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 3 - B Elders and deacons. The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices. The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation at the most twice as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled. From this number the congregation shall choose as many office bearers as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons.

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The places of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

⁷ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff
All ministers of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose. Any elder or deacon who refuses to do so shall because of that very fact immediately be suspended from office by the consistory. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

- 1.2.7 How do the elders faithfully carry out the duties of their respective offices according to the Form for Ordination?
- 1.2.8 How do the deacons faithfully carry out the duties of their respective offices according to the Form for Ordination?
- 1.2.9 Is their conduct in public and private life befitting faithful servants of the Lord?
- 1.2.10 How do they prepare themselves for the office?
- 1.2.11 Is there a good liaison between the respective offices regarding the execution of their office?
- 1.2.12 As to the ministry of mercy, does the congregation contribute liberally and willingly for the needy?
- 1.2.13 How do the deacons report to the congregation?
- 1.2.14 Is equality maintained among the office bearers according to Article 22 CO?⁸

2. ASSEMBLIES

- 2.1 How often are consistory meetings held? (Art 36 & 37 CO)⁹
- 2.2 Does the clerk keep an accurate record of all important matters? (Art 34 CO)¹⁰
- 2.3 Are only ecclesiastical matters dealt with in an ecclesiastical manner? (Art 30 CO)¹¹

⁸ ARTICLE 22 - Equality of respective duties

In the local congregation equality shall be maintained among the ministers, among the elders, and among the deacons, regarding their respective duties, and in other matters, as much as possible.

⁹ ARTICLE 36 - consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and be chaired by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall chair in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for the general management, including the material affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 37 - consistory and the deacons

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matter pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders

¹⁰ ARTICLE 34 - Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with and ensure that every one observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

¹¹ ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

Appendix 13
Rules for Church Visits

- 2.4 Are all consistory meetings opened and closed with prayer? (Art 29 CO)¹²
- 2.5 Do the deacons meet on a regular basis?(Art 40 CO)¹³
- 2.6 Which matters are dealt with by consistory in the presence of the deacons, and which are dealt with in their absence?
- 2.7 Are decisions of major assemblies faithfully adhered to? (Art 31 CO)¹⁴
- 2.8 Does consistory see to it that all financial commitments established by synod are faithfully paid?
- 2.9 Are boundaries between congregations clearly defined and does consistory adhere to these?
- 2.10 How often does the consistory meet with the congregation and what is dealt with in these meetings?
- 2.11 Are funds and title deeds kept in such a place and manner that there is no occasion for misuse, or difficulties in the event of death?
- 2.12 Are the archives of the Church safely kept?
- 2.13 Is there a functional Committee of Management which has a clear mandate regarding its duties and responsibilities?
- 2.14 How is the congregation informed about the finances of the Church?
- 2.15 Are the funds of the Church and of the deacons managed with good care and sufficient control?
- 2.16 In which way is the church involved in mission work?
- 2.17 In which way is the church involved in evangelisation?

3 Worship, Sacraments and Ceremonies

- 3.1 Are the sacraments administered according to Article 51 CO?¹⁵

¹² ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

¹³ ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

¹⁴ ARTICLE 31 - Appeal

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

As long as there are no classes, appeals under Article 31 CO shall be conducted as follows:

- a. stage 1: to the appointed classis church
- b. stage 2: to the appointed second appeal church
- c. stage 3: to the synod.

Note: stage 2 will not function when an appeal is made within two months prior to a synod.

¹⁵ ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

- 3.2 Is Holy Baptism administered as soon as feasible, according to Article 52 CO?¹⁶
 - 3.3 How is the purpose and significance of baptism made known to parents?
 - 3.4 How does consistory see to it that parents uphold their baptismal vows according to Article 53 CO?¹⁷
 - 3.5 How does consistory activate the congregation to maintain and establish Reformed education? (Art 53 CO)¹⁸
 - 3.6 For which age groups and how often are catechism classes held?
 - 3.7 How many attend catechism instruction?
 - 3.8 Is there faithful attendance? Are reasons given for absences?
 - 3.9 What is taught?
 - 3.10 What are the fruits of this teaching?
 - 3.11 Are there classes for special groups or instruction for individuals? If so please describe these.
 - 3.12 How often are the classes visited by the elders?
 - 3.13 How does consistory see to it that no one is admitted to the church rashly?(Art 55 & 57 CO)¹⁹
 - 3.14 How often is the Lord's Supper celebrated? (Art 56 CO)²⁰
-

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

¹⁶ ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.

¹⁷ ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall make sure that the parents honour their vows to instruct their children, to the utmost of their power, in the doctrine of the Scriptures as summarised in the confessions, and to have them instructed in the same by the instruction provided by the consistory.

In accordance with the same vow, the consistory shall see to it that the parents, to the best of their ability, and with the cooperation of the communion of saints, give their children education (as stipulated by the civil government) which is based on Scripture and Confession.

¹⁸ ARTICLE 53 - see footnote 17

¹⁹ ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the basis of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

²⁰ ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

Appendix 13
Rules for Church Visits

- 3.15 How is the congregation prepared for the Lord's Supper?
- 3.16 How does consistory guard against the profaning of the Lord's Supper? (Art's 20 and 57 CO)²¹
- 3.17 How does consistory encourage non-communicant members to request admission to the Lord's Supper? (Art's 54, 55 and 57 CO)²²
- 3.18 Does consistory take care that admission to the Lord's Supper is in keeping with Articles 54, 55 and 57 CO?²³
- 3.19 Are those who do not attend visited and if necessary seriously admonished? (Art 20, CO)²⁴
- 3.20 Are names, births, baptisms, public professions of faith, marriages, departures and deaths of members duly recorded in an accurate and accessible manner? (Art 58 CO)²⁵
- 3.21 How many communicant and non-communicant members does the congregation have?
- 3.22 Are attestations issued to departing communicant members?
- 3.23 Are attestations for non-communicant members sent to recipient churches?
- 3.24 Is the Word of God proclaimed twice every Lord's Day? (Art 62 CO)²⁶
- 3.25 Is the Heidelberg Catechism explained according to Article 63 CO?²⁷
- 3.26 On Lord's Days is the law of God proclaimed in one service and the Apostles' Creed confessed in the other?
- 3.27 Are only authorised persons allowed to deliver sermons?(Art 3A C)²⁸

²¹ ARTICLE 20 see footnote 4
ARTICLE 57 see footnote 19

²² ARTICLE 54 - Profession of faith
Those who desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their motivation and knowledge of the doctrine of God's Word. The public profession shall take place in a church service, with the use of the adopted Form.
ARTICLES 55 & 57 see footnote 19

²³ ARTICLES 54, 55 & 57 see footnotes 22 and 20

²⁴ ARTICLE 20 see footnote 4

²⁵ ARTICLE 58 - Church records
The consistory shall maintain Church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.

²⁶ ARTICLE 62 - Church services
The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

²⁷ ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching
The consistory shall ensure that as a rule once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

- 3.28 In reading services are only sermons read which were prepared by ministers of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia or their sister churches?
- 3.29 Are ecclesiastical feast days observed according to Article 65 CO?²⁹
- 3.30 Are marriages of members solemnised or confirmed according to Art 67 CO?³⁰
- 3.31 Are mixed marriages solemnised or confirmed?
- 3.32 How does consistory deal with forced marriages?
- 3.33 How does consistory deal with requests for marriage by non-communicant members?
- 3.34 Is Art 68 CO upheld with respect to funerals?³¹

4. Church Discipline

- 4.1 How often are members of the congregation visited? (Art 20 CO)³²
- 4.2 How do home visits conform to the purpose for which they are intended? (Art 20 CO)
Does the minister participate in these home visits and any other visits?³³
- 4.3 What is the format of the home visits?
- 4.4 How often are those visited who cannot attend the Church services?
- 4.5 What is done for lonely brothers and sisters?
- 4.6 How does consistory deal with members living away from the church?
- 4.7 Do the ministers, elders and deacons exhort and admonish each other and exercise Christian censure according to Article 78 of the CO?³⁴
- 4.8 What evidence is there that members of the congregation exercise supervision and discipline among themselves according to articles 69 to 73 of the CO?³⁵

²⁸ ARTICLE 3 A & C - Calling to office
3A see footnote 6. 3C see footnote 5

²⁹ ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days
On Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

³⁰ ARTICLE 67 - Marriage
The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

³¹ ARTICLE 68 - Funerals
Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

³² ARTICLE 20 see footnote 4

³³ ARTICLE 20 see footnote 4

³⁴ ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure
The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

Appendix 13
Rules for Church Visits

- 4.9 Does consistory exercise supervision and discipline over the congregation according to articles 69 to 79 of the CO?³⁶
- 4.10 What information can consistory provide about censures that have taken place since the last Church visit?
- 4.11 What information can consistory provide about those who withdrew their membership from the congregation since the last Church visit?
- 4.12 Are there dominant sins in the congregation?
- 4.13 What is done to promote the repentance of censured members? (Art 73, 74 & 79 CO)³⁷

³⁵ ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to His honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

³⁶ ARTICLE 69 see footnote 36

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members

A baptised shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and adverse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis (classis church) the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, using the adopted Form. If he, after his excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

³⁷ ARTICLE 73 see footnote 36

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the censure procedure

- 4.14 Does consistory ward off false doctrine and errors in the preaching, teaching and visiting? (Art 26 CO)³⁸
- 4.15 What is consistory's response to members who are also members of guilds, trade unions or other organisations which commit them to unscriptural principles or practices? (Art 73 CO)³⁹
-

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis (classis church) has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of the classis (classis church) has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 79 see footnote 37

³⁸ ARTICLE 26 see footnote 4

³⁹ ARTICLE 73 see footnote 36

APPENDIX 13 - 2

CHURCH ORDER
of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
(as adopted at the 1994 Synod of Byford)

Note: *Articles in italic print are in force until classes have been formed.*

INTRODUCTION

ARTICLE 1 - Purpose and Division

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary to have:

- I offices and supervision of doctrine;
- II assemblies;
- III worship, sacraments and ceremonies, and
- IV discipline.

I. OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE

ARTICLE 2 - The offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office

A. All office-bearers

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto. The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after prayer, and in accordance with the local regulations adopted for that purpose. Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. Elders and deacons

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices. The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation at the most twice as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled. From this number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons.

If necessary the consistory with the deacons may present to the congregation the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

C. Ministers

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same

C. Ministers

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of the classis church shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

ARTICLE 4 - Bound to a church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church.

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. Eligibility

Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

- (1) have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or
- (2) are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or
- (3) have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which The Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship. The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. Declared eligible

Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

- (1) have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the necessary documents to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or
- (1) have passed a preparatory examination by the synod, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting them selves for it submit the necessary documents to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or*
- (2) have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or
- (3) have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call.

1. They shall be ordained only after synod has approved the call.

Classis shall approve the call

Synod shall approve the call

- a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, attested by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and
 - b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This classis examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.
- b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate by Synod with satisfactory results.*

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2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:
They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.

They shall be installed after the classis church has approved the call.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only in case he remains within the same classis.

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration of honourable discharge from the consistory with the deacons and from the classis church.

2. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which The Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the required announcements were made and that the congregation has approved the call.

ARTICLE 7 - From one church to another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of his consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of his consistory with the deacons and the approval of the classis church. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church he served.

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry, classis shall (with synod's prior approval) examine him, and upon a favourable outcome allow him, as candidate, to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis for a set period of time. Thereafter the classis shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, observing the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry the classis church shall seek to obtain this evidence by way of inquiry from the church to which he belongs, and

from elsewhere if necessary. The examination shall take place in a synod (extraordinary if necessary). This synod shall set a period during which the person may, as candidate, speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis area. Thereafter the classis church, with the advice of deputies of synod, shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, observing the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLE 9 - Admission of ministers who have recently joined the church

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and carefully examined by the classis in whose area he lives. This classis examination shall be conducted with the cooperation of the deputies of synod.

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and carefully examined by synod (extraordinary if necessary).

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the sacraments in another church without the permission of the consistory of that church.

ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory, with the deacons, on behalf of the congregation which it represents in this matter, shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call or an appointment to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he is bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis. Some ministers may be appointed for the training of students for the ministry, others may be called for mission work.

If a minister accepts a call or an appointment to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he is bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis church. Some ministers may be appointed for the training of students for the ministry, others may be called for mission work.

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

If a minister of the Word, by reason of age, sickness or other wise, is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

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Text of the Church Order

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

The consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of the classis church and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of his consistory to relieve him of his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of his consistory to relieve him of his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of the classis church, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the sacraments. They shall watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 17 - Training for the ministry

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above. The churches together are obliged to provide properly for the professors of theology and for their widows and orphans.

ARTICLE 18 - Students of theology

The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology, extending financial aid where necessary.

ARTICLE 19 - Task of missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall in the specific region assigned to them proclaim the Word of God, administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded His church, and ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

ARTICLE 20 - Task of elders

The elders shall together with the ministers of the Word govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the upbuilding of the congregation they shall make

homevisits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of deacons

The deacons shall perform the ministry of mercy. They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need; and urge church members to render assistance where necessary. They shall collect and manage the gifts of the congregation, and after mutual consultation distribute them where there is need. The deacons shall give account of their policies and management to the consistory.

ARTICLE 22 - Equality of respective duties

In the local congregation equality shall be maintained among the ministers, among the elders, and among the deacons, regarding their respective duties, and in other matters, as much as possible.

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The places of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff

All ministers of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose. 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.

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 27 - Office-bearers and the government

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation its obligation to be obedient and show respect to the government, because God has instituted it. They must set a good example in this regard and by means of proper communication invoke the government to protect the ministry of the church.

II. ASSEMBLIES

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis-church, and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

These assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

As long as there are no classes, appeals under Article 31 CO shall be conducted as follows:

- a. stage 1: to the appointed classis church*
- b. stage 2: to the appointed second appeal church*
- c. stage 3: to the synod.*

Note: stage 2 will not function when an appeal is made within two months prior to a synod.

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials and voting

Delegates to a major assembly shall bring with them their credentials, signed by the minor assembly. They shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are directly involved.

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

ARTICLE 34 Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with and ensure that every one observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis.

The classis church has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis church.

ARTICLE 36 - Consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and be chaired by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall chair in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for general management, including the material affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 37 - Consistory and the deacons

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of classis shall be sought.

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of the classis church shall be sought.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by synod to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Classes shall be held at least once every three months. The ministers shall be chairman in rotation, or one shall be chosen to be chairman; however the same minister shall not be chairman twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every classis shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

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The sentence: The chairman shall.... must be read in the light of the decision taken by Synod 1985, Acts Article 81.

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis

If two or more ministers are serving the same church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call.

Each vacant church shall request its classis church to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call. When a vacancy arises less than two months prior to a synod meeting, the synod shall appoint a counsellor.

ARTICLE 44 - Church visitors

Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to classis

The synod shall appoint some of the most experienced and capable ministers to visit the churches each year. If necessary synod may appoint a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to synod, with copies to the consistories concerned.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held once every three years. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to synod. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two classes this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis.

The synod shall be held once every two years. Each consistory shall delegate one minister and one elder to synod. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two churches this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis church.

ARTICLE 46 - Relationship with other churches

The relationship with other churches shall be regulated by synod. With churches of Reformed confession sister relations shall be maintained as much as possible. On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected.

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the close of the major assemblies censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of major assemblies

Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all matters provided for in the Church Order. A classis may request these deputies to assist in cases of special difficulties. Each synod shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed as much as possible for separate matters. All deputies shall keep proper record of their work and submit a written report.

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

ARTICLE 50 - Mission

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall observe the provisions of this Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the division into classes.

III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.

ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall make sure that the parents honour their vows to instruct their children, to the utmost of their power, in the doctrine of the Scriptures as summarised in the confessions, and to have them instructed in the same by the instruction provided by the consistory.

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Text of the Church Order

In accordance with the same vow, the consistory shall see to it that the parents, to the best of their ability, and with the cooperation of the communion of saints, give their children education (as stipulated by the civil government) which is based on Scripture and Confession.

ARTICLE 54 - Public profession of faith

Those who desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their motivation and knowledge of the doctrine of God's Word. The public profession shall take place in a church service, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the basis of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 58 - Church records

The consistory shall maintain Church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.

ARTICLE 59 - Attestations for communicant members

Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by two authorised office-bearers. 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.

ARTICLE 61 Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they shall in respect of deacon support remain under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

ARTICLE 62 - Church services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that as a rule once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and hymns

In the church services only the psalms and hymns approved by synod shall be sung.

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

ARTICLE 66 - Days of prayer

In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the church appointed for that purpose by synod.

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 68 - Funerals

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

IV. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to His honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence, the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Consistory involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any report of sin unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or the sin committed is of a public character.

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Text of the Church Order

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 congregation shall be informed afterwards.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of the classis church has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of this desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the re-admission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised the re-admission shall take place, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or other wise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by the classis. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. Classis, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or other wise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the classis church. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a

deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. The second- appeal church, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

ARTICLE 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly: False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching one self; and further all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, using the adopted Form. If, after this excommunication, he comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates to be indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis church the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the date at which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, with the use of the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

Appendix 13 - 2
Text of the Church Order

CONCLUDING ARTICLES

ARTICLE 80 - No lording over others

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order

These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented or diminished. However no consistory or classis shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by synod

APPENDIX 14

Form for EMERITUS DECLARATION
(as adopted by Synod 1998, Acts, Article 113)

The Free Reformed Church of _____, acting as Classis Church, acknowledges the advice received from the consistory of the Church of _____ that the Reverend _____, who has served that Church as Minister of the Word since _____, has requested to be released from the responsibilities of his office. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the said consistory at its meeting of _____ has acceded to this request, consistent with the provisions of Article 13 of the Church Order.

Supported by the favourable advice of Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order it now declares:

1. that Reverend _____ be granted a honourable release from the responsibilities of his office, as from _____ ;
2. that Reverend _____ during the time of his labours within the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia has been faithful and diligent in his office and godly in his walk of life;
3. that Reverend _____ be thanked for the ____ years of faithful service which the LORD allowed him to perform in the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Finally, we commend Reverend _____ to the LORD, with the fervent prayer that it may please Him to confirm the fruits of his labour.

For the Classis Church:

(chairman)

(clerk)

APPENDIX 15

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY

The Secretary
Free Reformed Church of Launceston
P.O. Box 705
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Esteemed Brothers,

DRAFT BUDGET FOR SYNOD 1998.

In accordance with Synod Treasurer rules, I forward a draft budget for Synod's consideration. It is made up with data received from the Churches, Deputies and previous budget expenditure.

I have presented a budget for a two year synod period only. Should Synod make a decision on classis, then the budget will have to be revised accordingly. Of interest is that the total cost for Synod 1994 was \$30,476 and for 1996 it was \$30,390. This Synod is expected to cost in the order of \$61,200.

Church contributions:

Contribution by the Churches will be calculated based on the number of communicant members in each Church for each year. At this stage the figures only reflect 1998 year book statistics and these will be adjusted each year to reflect that particular year's statistics before the annual accounts are sent out.

Reimbursements:

Loss of income. Synod 1994 adopted a flat reimbursement rate of \$120 per week day for loss of income. This was increased by Synod 1996 to \$130 per day to reflect the change in the CPI. The CPI has increased 0.8% over the last two years therefore it is proposed that the loss of income reimbursement remains at \$130 per day. **Delegates should note that the reimbursement is not an automatic reimbursement. Synod will reimburse delegates for loss of income up to \$130 per day maximum. Claims should be lodged in writing with myself, countersigned by another synod delegate. If a delegate's loss of income exceeds this amount he can claim the extra from his own church.**

Reimbursement of travel costs between Albany and the Perth metropolitan area. The CPI for transport has dropped by 0.8% over the last two years, therefore it is proposed that this remains at \$175 per trip. Other travel costs, where appropriate can be reimbursed at a pro-rata rate of \$0.23 per kilometre.

Other. I have made no allowance for reimbursement of local travel costs and accommodation costs by delegates because the host church has offered these to delegates. This has also always been done when synods are held in the west. Should delegates choose to make their own arrangements, then I believe it is appropriate that they make arrangements with their own consistory to cover these costs.

Treasurer's operating funds:

Synod 1996 agreed with my proposal to reserve funds to cover the 1998 Synod because of high travel cost. This budget now contains those reserves and the demand on the churches over the next two years is now considerably reduced. Based on travel costs to this synod and assuming Synod 2000 will be in Legana, I have reserved \$35,000 to cover immediate costs of Synod 2000.

Notes on the draft budget:

Numbers refer to rows on draft budget spreadsheet

1. Typing: rates for clerical work range from \$13 to \$14 per hour.
2. Estimate only.
3. Estimate only.
4. Estimate only.
5. Estimate only.
6. N/A this year.
7. Estimate only.
8. Estimate only.
9. Not required.
10. Estimate only.
11. Covers things like Synod photographs, venue heating, and other miscellaneous items.
12. Loss of income is based on 130 days at \$130 per day.
13. Air fares for two sessions.
14. Estimate only. This only allows for Acts that are printed for Synod. The Churches are responsible to pay for Acts that are printed for the Churches. The printer should only invoice the Synod treasurer for Acts that are printed for Synod. Clerk please note.
15. Estimated cost of printing reports.
18. Allow \$50 per annum.
21. Allow \$50 per annum.
24. Estimated at \$100.
25. 2 trips per year. ie 4 x \$175.
26. One trip to Indonesia allow \$2000.
27. 1998 trip, actual cost was in the order of \$2900.

Appendix 15
Synod Treasurer

28. Allow \$2500. \$2000 fares, \$500 incidental costs. Assumes accommodation provided.
29. Allow \$1500. May not be required if ministers go or if delegates do not claim.
30. \$250 per annum allowed.
31. Based on expenditure for last two years.
34. Allow \$50 per annum.
37. Allow \$50 per annum.
40. Two airfares at \$750, allow \$1500.
41. Four trips at \$175, allow \$700.
43. Allow \$50 per annum.
46. Allow \$50 per annum.
48. This figure represents the total expected expenditure for the next Synod period.
50. This figure represents the amount needed to cover cash flow between accounts and Synods as detailed above. All funds are kept in a Cash Management Account and interest bearing deposits to maximise interest returns.
52. Total estimated budget.
57. These figures represent the amount to be contributed each year after deducting "other income" (row 77) from the total budget.
- 60 to 68 show estimated contributions from the churches. These figures are based on 1998 statistics. Contributions for 1999 will be apportioned according to 1999 statistics.
71. Cost of contributions from the churches per confessing member. Provided for information.
74. Bank interest.
75. Treasury balance at the time of audit.
77. Subtotal of other income to this budget.
79. Total income to match total budget.

Airfare estimates are based on booking discount fares in advance.

Should you have any queries, please contact me on the above number after hours or on 08 9429 6565 during business hours. Alternatively on mobile 041 7975754

May God bless your work of Synod.

With Christian greetings.

A. Hordyk
Synod Treasurer
26 May 1998

23	DEPUTIES CONTACT OTHER CHURCHES				
24	BOOKS ETC	\$0.00		\$100.00	
25	TRAVEL COSTS PERTH / ALBANY	\$400.00		\$700.00	
26	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS (Indonesia)	\$4,335.00		\$4,000.00	
27	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS (Canada May 1998)	\$0.00		\$2,900.00	
28	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS RCNZ	\$2,000.00		\$2,500.00	
29	LOSS OF INCOME - DEPUTIES OVERSEAS	\$0.00		\$1,500.00	
30	UNA SANCTA SUBSCRIPTIONS	\$559.00		\$500.00	
31	INCIDENTALS (postage, telephone, typing, printing)	\$627.31		\$800.00	
32			\$7,921.31		\$13,000.00
33	Travel costs (Philippines)			\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
34	Travel costs (South Africa)			\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
35	Travel costs (PCEA)			\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
36	DEPUTIES TRAINING MINISTRY				
37	INCIDENTALS		\$96.08		\$100.00
38					
39	CHURCH VISITS & PULPIT EXCHANGE				
40	TASMANIA 1 visit pa	\$2,213.00		\$9,000.00	
41	ALBANY/METRO 2 visits pa	\$90.25	\$2,303.25	\$700.00	\$9,700.00
42					
43	TREASURY ADMINISTRATION COSTS		\$41.80		\$100.00
44					
45	SYNOD ARCHIVES				
46	INCIDENTALS		\$70.00		\$100.00
47					
48	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$30,390.06		\$76,500.00
49					
50	TREASURY OPERATING FUNDS				\$35,000.00
51	(Includes funds required for 2000 Synod)				
52	TOTAL BUDGET				\$111,500.00

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY
BUDGET AND COST SHARING FOR 1998/2000
as adopted by Synod 1998 - Acts, Article 115

ITEM	BUDGET EXPENDITURE	ACTUAL FOR 1996/98	BUDGET FOR 1998/2000	
	SYNOD COSTS			
1	TYPIST	\$1,417.00	\$2,000.00	
2	PHOTOCOPIER HIRE	\$50.00	\$500.00	
3	FURNITURE AND CROCKERY HIRE	\$247.45	\$400.00	
4	STATIONERY AND CONSUMABLES	\$0.00	\$600.00	
5	COMPUTER EQUIPMENT	\$274.00	\$400.00	
6	EQUIPMENT INSURANCE	\$0.00	\$0.00	
7	CATERING	\$1,088.00	\$2,400.00	
8	POSTAGE AND TELEPHONE	\$304.55	\$600.00	
9	UPGRADE P.A. SYSTEM	\$455.00	\$0.00	
10	PRESENTATIONS	\$234.00	\$400.00	
11	MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE	\$90.15	\$1,000.00	
12	LOSS OF INCOME DELEGATES SYNOD 96	\$9,252.28	\$17,000.00	
13	TRAVEL COSTS TO SYNOD 96	\$4,069.00	\$20,000.00	
14	PRINTING ACTS OF SYNOD 96	\$813.34	\$1,500.00	
15	PRINTING REPORTS TO SYNOD 96	\$1,351.10	\$600.00	\$47,400.00
16				
17				
18				
19				
20	DEPUTIES CONTACT PCEA			
21	BOOKS AND INCIDENTALS	\$311.75	\$100.00	
22				

55	BUDGET INCOME AND COST SHARING					
56						
57	CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FROM THE CHURCHES			\$32,436.22	\$32,436.22	\$64,872.44
58		COMMUN'T	PERCENTAGE	1998	1999	
59		MBR'S 1998		SHARE	SHARE	2 YR TOTAL
60	FRC ALBANY	204	12.04	\$3,903.83	\$3,903.83	\$7,807.66
61	FRC ARMADALE	284	16.76	\$5,434.74	\$5,434.74	\$10,869.48
62	FRC BYFORD	173	10.21	\$3,310.60	\$3,310.60	\$6,621.20
63	FRC KELMSCOTT	309	18.23	\$5,913.15	\$5,913.15	\$11,826.30
64	FRC LAUNCESTON	174	10.27	\$3,329.74	\$3,329.74	\$6,659.47
65	FRC LEGANA	106	6.25	\$2,028.46	\$2,028.46	\$4,056.92
66	FRC MT NASURA	178	10.50	\$3,406.28	\$3,406.28	\$6,812.56
67	FRC ROCKINGHAM	126	7.43	\$2,411.19	\$2,411.19	\$4,822.38
68	FRC WEST ALBANY	141	8.32	\$2,698.23	\$2,698.23	\$5,396.47
69						
70	TOTALS	1695	100	\$32,436.22	\$32,436.22	\$64,872.44
71	Cost per confessing member per annum			\$19.14	\$19.14	
72						
73	OTHER INCOME					
74	INTEREST			\$1,000.00		
75	TREASURY BALANCE AT 31 January 1998			\$45,627.56		
76						
77	SUB-TOTAL OTHER INCOME			\$46,627.56		\$46,627.56
78						
79	TOTAL INCOME					\$111,500.00