

ACTS OF THE 2000 SYNOD

and

Reports to the 2000 Synod

of the

**FREE REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

West Albany, 3-13 July 2000



Delegates to Synod West Albany 2000

Rev B Zuiddam, Rev M Flinn (RCNZ), Rev R ter Beek (RCN), Elder A Byl (Kelmescott), Rev P de Boer (Mt Nasura),
Elder F Veldhuis (Legana), Rev C Bouwman (Kelmescott), Elder K Heerema (Armadale), Rev J Kroeze (Legana),
Elder J Plug (West Albany), Rev W Huizinga (Armadale), Elder B Bosveld (Rockingham),
Rev A van Delden (Rockingham), Elder F Bakker (Launceston), Elder F Postmus (Launceston),
Elder L van Burgel (Mt Nasura), Elder N Louw (West Kelmescott), Rev A Veldman (Albany), Rev J Poppe (West Albany),
Elder P Terpstra (Byford), Rev W van der Jagt (Byford), Elder J van der Linden (West Kelmescott),
Rev JA Boersma (RCN), Elder H Olde (Albany).

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Photograph of Synod delegates

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**Monday 3 July 2000
EVENING SESSION**

**Article 1
Opening by the convening church**

After a prayer service led by Reverend C Bouwman, Reverend J Poppe, on behalf of the convening church of West Albany, speaks the following opening address:

Esteemed delegates,

On behalf of the convening church of West Albany it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to the twenty-first Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We are thankful that all the delegates have arrived safely and in good health. It is good that the churches are able to send delegates to this major assembly to deal with matters we have in common. At this Synod we also welcome some guests. Our sister churches in the Netherlands are sending two deputies to visit us. Rev J Boersma and Rev R Terbeek hope to be present at Synod on July 10, 11 and 12. The Reformed Churches of New Zealand are sending a representative, Rev M Flinn, who also hopes to be present at Synod for about three days at the beginning of next week. Our deputies have also invited Rev Madah Biha from our Indonesian sister churches (GGR). I'm not sure if it has been possible for him to obtain a visa yet, or whether or not he will be present with us.

It is some thirteen years since a Synod has been convened in Albany; this is the first time that West Albany can serve as hosting church. We hope that you feel welcome in our midst, and enjoy our hospitality. We are thankful for the use of the Albany church building, the John Calvin School facilities, and the support of Albany members in hosting this Synod. May God bless our work so that you are able to serve well in your task as delegates at this major assembly.

I'd like to draw your attention to some significant events that have occurred in our bond of churches in the twenty months since the last Synod was concluded. You will remember that the last Synod was held in Launceston. It had to deal with the doctrinal teachings of Rev F J van Hulst. It found that some of his teachings were not in accordance with Scripture and confession. In the months that followed, the consistory of Launceston was unable to resolve these matters with Rev van Hulst. In the end it suspended and later deposed him from office. A consequence of all this was that our brothers and sisters in Tasmania have been through a very difficult time.

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Why mention all this? Because in reviewing some of these difficulties we may also see that our heavenly Father continues to care for His church. One of the results of the last Synod was that our sister churches in Launceston and Legana were both left vacant. Yet God has provided. He has blessed the FRC of Legana with a minister in Rev J Kroeze. The call that the FRC of Launceston extended to Candidate B A Zuiddam has been accepted. If his sermon proposal is approved by Synod, the way will be open for him to be ordained as minister of the Word. In these things we see that our heavenly Father has answered the many prayers that have been offered to Him. We praise Him for His blessings on us.

Since the last Synod, another church has been instituted in our Australian bond of churches. Thus we may welcome the FRC of West Kelmscott officially also to this Synod. In 1980 there were three churches within the bond; in 1990 there were seven; today there are ten. In a day and age in which the membership of most churches is declining, God continues to prosper us. That is not a reason for self-congratulation; it is reason for thankfulness to our heavenly Father. The Lord has also blessed West Kelmscott with an acceptance of the call they extended to Rev A Veldman. Our loss [here in Albany] is your gain! We trust that in due time the Lord will also provide for the church of Albany again.

This evening, as the chairman of the last Synod, Rev C Bouwman addressed us in the prayer service with a passage from God's Word. He spoke to us about how our God prospers the way of those who do His Word and will. In spite of our sins and shortcomings – God remains faithful. He keeps His covenant promises to a thousand generations. In Him we may trust. About a month ago we could remember Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. It is by His Word and Spirit that Jesus Christ defends and preserves us in the unity of true faith. May He grant us His Spirit to lead us in the way of truth and love. In all our deliberations and decisions, let it be our aim to remain faithful to Him.

With these words I declare the twenty-first Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia officially opened.

Let us sing from Hymn 36:2,5

Article 2 Examination of Credentials

The Chairman of the convening Church requests the brothers of the Church of Albany to examine the delegates' credentials. Having completed this task, the brothers report that all the churches are properly represented by their delegates, as follows:

<u>The Church of</u>	<u>has delegated</u>
Albany	Reverend A Veldman Elder H Olde
Armadales	Reverend W Huizinga Elder K Heerema
Byford	Reverend W van der Jagt Elder P Terpstra
Kelmscott	Reverend C Bouwman Elder A Byl
Launceston	Elder F Postmus Elder F Bakker
Legana	Reverend J Kroeze Elder F Veldhuis
Mount Nasura	Reverend P K A de Boer Elder L van Burgeel
Rockingham	Reverend A van Delden Elder B Bosveld
West Albany	Reverend J Poppe Elder J Plug
West Kelmscott	Elder J van der Linden Elder N Louw

There were no instructions.

Article 3 Election of Officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman	Reverend W Huizinga
Vice Chairman	Reverend A van Delden
First Clerk	Elder L van Burgeel
Second Clerk	Reverend J Kroeze

Article 4 Constitution of Synod

The Chairman declares Synod duly constituted and thanks the convening church of West Albany for its contribution to the arrangements for this Synod.

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Article 5

Delegates agreement with Three Forms of Unity

The Chairman asks delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

All delegates rise.

Article 6

Adjournment

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 48:1, 4. The Vice Chairman leads in closing prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

Tuesday 4 July 2000

Article 7

Re-opening

The Chairman reopens Synod, asks those present to sing Psalm 122:2, reads from Scripture at Malachi 1 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 8

Time Schedules, Homepage on Internet

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

Monday to Fridays:	9.00am to 12.00 noon
	1.30pm to 4.30 pm
	7.30pm to 9.30pm

A proposal from the executive to place Acts of Synod also on the Internet is adopted, on the proviso that the matters of personal nature are excluded. Also in matters relating to other churches, discretion will be used.

Article 9

Adoption of Agenda

The final draft agenda is presented.

1. Opening by convening church
2. Signing of attendance list and examination of credentials
3. Election of officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates agreement with Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of Agenda
7. Adoption of meeting procedure
8. Examination of sermon proposal – Dr Zuiddam
9. Incoming correspondence from:
 - 9.1. FRC Kelmscott, appealing decision of their classis and second appeal church
 - 9.2. FRC Byford, appealing Article 93 of Acts 1998
 - 9.3. FRC Byford, appealing Article 122 of Acts 1998
 - 9.4. Rev G VanRongen, requesting permission to use Synod acts
 - 9.5. FRC Mt Nasura, regarding proposed change to Church Order
 - 9.6. FRC Launceston, request for preaching examination for Dr B A Zuiddam
 - 9.7. Appeal re decision of consistory and classis church
 - 9.8. FRC West Albany, proposal date and place for next Synod
 - 9.9. FRC West Albany, regarding report of Deputies Training for the Ministry
 - 9.10. FRC West Albany, proposal regarding relations with the RCNZ
 - 9.11. FRC Albany, proposal regarding relations with RCNZ
 - 9.12. Appeal re classis church decision
 - 9.13. FRC Mount Nasura, proposal regarding contact with RCA
 - 9.14. FRC Mount Nasura, proposal regarding printing of Australian edition of Book of Praise
 - 9.15. FRC Launceston, regarding Article 10 of Acts of Special Synod 2000
10. Instructions
11. Reports by classis churches
12. Reports of deputies and discharge of deputies
 - 12.1. Archives and Library of Synods
 - 12.2. Inspection of the Archives and Library of Synods
 - 12.3. Synod Treasurer Report
 - 12.4. Relations with other Churches
 - 12.4.1. General Secretary's Report
 - 12.4.2. Deputies Relations Reformed Churches (Other Churches)
 - 12.4.2.1. Reformed Churches of Australia
 - 12.4.2.2. Reformed Churches of New Zealand
 - 12.4.2.3. Free Reformed Church of the Philippines
 - 12.4.2.4. Indonesian Reformed Churches (GGRI and GGMM)
 - 12.4.3. Deputies Relations Presbyterian Churches
 - 12.4.3.1. Presbyterian Church of Australia
 - 12.4.3.2. Free Church of Scotland, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

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- 12.4.4. Deputies Relations Sister Churches
 - 12.4.4.1. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
 - 12.4.4.2. Presbyterian Church of Korea
 - 12.4.4.3. Canadian Reformed Churches
 - 12.4.4.4. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
- 12.4.5. Supplementary Reports
 - 12.4.5.1. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
 - 12.4.5.2. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
 - 12.4.5.3. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
 - 12.4.5.4. Reformed Churches of Australia
- 12.5. Training for the Ministry
- 12.6. Nicene Creed
- 12.7. Pulpit Exchange
- 12.8. Civil Registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- 12.9. Formation of Classes
- 12.10. Church Visitation reports
- 12.11. Article 48 and 76 of the Church Order
- 12.12. Article 66 of the Church Order
- 12.13. Audit Report for the books of Deputies for Training for the Ministry
- 12.14. Synod Audio Equipment
- 12.15. Needy Churches
- 13. Audit of the books of the treasurer and discharge of the treasurer
- 14. Calculation of the percentages of the churches share of Synod costs
- 15. Appointment of deputies
- 16. Appointment of convening church and place and date of next Synod
- 17. Questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order
- 18. Personal Questions
- 19. Adoption of Acts
 - 19.1. Adoption of Acts Extraordinary Synod 1 and 2 March 2000
- 20. Approval of press release
- 21. Censure according to Article 47 of the Church Order
- 22. Closing of Synod

ADOPTED

Article 10

Committee Division and Tasks

The executive proposes the following committees:

Committee 1

Members: Rev de Boer (convenor), Rev Poppe, N Louw, B Bosveld, K Heerema and F Veldhuis

Items and Agenda numbers:

Agenda item 9.1: FRC Kelmscott appealing decision of their classis and second classis church

Agenda item 9.7: Appeal re decision of consistory and classis church

Committee 2

Members: Rev Veldman (convenor), Rev Bouwman, A Byl, H Olde, F Postmus and J van der Linden

Items and Agenda numbers:

Agenda item 9.2: FRC Byford appealing Article 93 of Acts 1998

Agenda item 9.3: FRC Byford appealing Article 122 of Acts 1998

Committee 3

Members: Rev van der Jagt (convenor), Rev van Delden, Rev Kroeze, F Bakker, J Plug and P Terpstra

Items and Agenda numbers:

Agenda item 9.12: Appeal classis church decision

Agenda item 12.9: Formation of Classes

ADOPTED

Article 11

Request for preaching examination for Dr B A Zuiddam

Material:

Agenda item 9.6 FRC Launceston request a preaching exam for Dr B A Zuiddam be arranged at this Synod.

Proposal to agree to this request.

ADOPTED

Article 12

Sermon proposal Dr B A Zuiddam

Proposed that a printed copy of the sermon proposal by Dr B A Zuiddam be distributed to delegates before its delivery.

ADOPTED

Acts of Synod

Article 13

Appeal from FRC Launceston regarding preaching consent, Dr B A Zuiddam

Material:

Agenda item 9.15

Letter from Launceston advising they cannot accept the decision of Article 10 of the Special Synod 2000 and ask for a revision

Decision:

Not to grant the request of Launceston.

Ground:

Although Br B A Zuiddam had been declared eligible for call in the sister churches (and therefore did not need to have his sermon checked), the Extraordinary Synod found his sermon proposal inadequate for ordination. In that situation it is not advisable to allow the brother to continue to preach without any assistance/guidance being offered. For that reason it was correct for the Extraordinary Synod to apply the guidance it did.

ADOPTED

Article 14

Examination sermon proposal Dr B A Zuiddam

After requesting Synod to sing Psalm 23: 1-3, the Chairman invited Candidate B A Zuiddam to deliver his sermon proposal. The text was John 10:1-18. Following the completion of the sermon proposal, Synod went into closed session.

Synod decides that the proposal is satisfactory and approves the call extended to Candidate B A Zuiddam by Launceston.

Article 15

Adjournment

Synod resumes in open session and the Chairman announces the result of the examination. On behalf of Synod he extends congratulations to Br Zuiddam.

Rev A Veldman asks Synod to sing Psalm 84:6 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

Wednesday 5 July 2000

Article 16
Re-opening

The Chairman invites Synod to sing Psalm 81:1-4, reads the Scriptures at Malachi 2:1-10 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 17
Formation of Classes

On the request of Committee 3, there is a round of discussion to determine the options of the number of classes and the possibility of a second appeal.

Article 18
Adjournment

Synod adjourns to allow advisory committees to meet.

Wednesday 5 July 2000
EVENING SESSION

Article 19
Re-opening

Synod is re-opened in the evening session. The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 118:1,4.

Article 20
Adoption of Acts

Articles 1-18 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 21
Address to Dr B A Zuiddam

The Chairman addresses Candidate Zuiddam, reading 1 Kings 3:1-16 and wishing him the "wisdom of Solomon".

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Article 22

Signing of subscription form by Dr B A Zuiddam

In accordance with Article 24 CO, Dr Zuiddam is asked to sign the subscription form. After the Chairman reads out the contents of the form, Dr Zuiddam signs the form.

An ecclesiastical ordinance is signed for Dr Zuiddam.

Article 23

Synod Archives and Library

Materials:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Agenda Item 12.1 | Report of the FRC of Mt Nasura as deputies for the Synod Archives and Library |
| Agenda Item 12.2 | Report of the Inspection of the Synod Archives and Library |

Decisions:

1. To accept the report from the FRC Mt Nasura responsible for the Synod Archives and Library;
2. To purchase another new cabinet to house future archives;
3. To receive gratefully the report of the inspection of the Synod Archives and Library;
4. To thank the Deputies for their work and discharge them.

Grounds:

1. The archives and library were well cared for.
2. A new cabinet is needed.

ADOPTED

Article 24

Byford Appeal - Art 122 of the Acts 1998 (refer article 51)

Committee 2 presents its proposal. A round of discussion ensues. Committee 2 takes back its proposal for further consideration.

Article 25

Training for the Ministry

The proposals from deputies and West Albany are placed in discussion.

Materials:

Agenda Item 12.5	Report of Deputies for Training for the Ministry
Agenda Item 12.13	Audit Report of the Books of the Deputies
Agenda Item 9.9	Proposal of West Albany re Training for the Ministry

Decisions:

1. Synod thanks the deputies for the work done.
2. Synod decides to assess the churches \$40.00 per communicant member per year, for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton as of 1 July 2000.
3. Synod decides to discharge deputies and to 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. ensure that relevant information is published concerning 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 Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
 - e. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" once every four or five years.
 - f. to investigate the long-term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library.

Ground:

In the past (Art 125 of the 1990 Acts) Synods have mandated deputies "to alert the churches to the requirements and the possibilities for Australian based

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theological training in the light of changing circumstances” and “to appoint deputies ... to investigate the possibility of finding a facility to house some books.” The 1992 Synod repeated this mandate (Art 50). However, the 1994 Synod did not renew this part of the mandate. It seems that support for Hamilton grew to the extent that this mandate was forgotten (cf Art 78 of the 1996 Acts and Art 102 of the 1998 Acts). West Albany FRC however makes a strong plea to keep this matter alive. Article 17 CO obliges us “if possible, to maintain an institution for the training for the ministry.”

ADOPTED

Article 26 Nicene Creed

Material:

Agenda item 12.6 Deputy report for the Revision of the Nicene Creed

Decision:

To adopt the same translation of the Nicene Creed as adopted by our Canadian sister churches and found in the *Book of Praise*.

Grounds:

1. The translation is faithful to the original, and an improvement on the present wording of the creed.
2. It is desirable to retain the same translation of the creeds and confessions as the Canadian Reformed Churches, our only English speaking sister church, especially in light of the fact that we use their *Book of Praise* in which the Nicene Creed is found (cf. Acts 1994, art 124, Ground 1c).

ADOPTED

Article 27 Adjournment

At 9.30 pm, Synod was requested to sing Psalm 25:1,2. Br F J Veldhuis leads in thanksgiving prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod to Thursday 6 July 2000 at 9.00 am.

Thursday 6 July 2000

Article 28
Re-opening

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 128:1-3, reads Malachi 2:10-17 and leads in prayer.

Article 29
Closed session

Synod goes in closed session to deal with appeals (agenda items 9.1, 9.7 and 9.12).

The acts of the closed session will be adopted in closed session at a later session.

Synod resumes in open session.

Article 30
Dr B A Zuiddam

It is decided to invite Dr B A Zuiddam to sit in Synod as an observer.

Article 31
Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Material:
Agenda item 12.4.4.1 Deputies report
Agenda item 12.4.5.1 Supplementary Report to Synod

Decisions:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) according to the established rules.
2. To agree that it is desirable for deputies to aim to visit alternate Synods of the FRCSA.

Grounds:

1. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confession and Church Order.

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2. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the FRCSA are both small bonds of churches confronted by very real challenges in this modern world. Their recent visit to us and our recent visit to them have shown that we can support one another, as well as learn from each other.
3. Synod 1990 decided "to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us" (Acts, Art 58). Of our historic sister churches, South Africa is certainly the closest to us geographically.

ADOPTED

Article 32

Presbyterian Church in Korea

Materials:

Agenda item 12.4.4.2

Deputies report

Decision:

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.

ADOPTED

Article 33

Canadian Reformed Churches

Materials:

Agenda item 12.4.4.3

Deputies report

Decision:

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

Ground:

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

ADOPTED

Article 34

Greetings from the Canadian Reformed Churches

The Chairman reads a letter of greeting to Synod from the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Thursday 6 July 2000
EVENING SESSION

Article 35

Re-opening

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 74:1-3.

Article 36

Classis Formation (refer articles 39, 40, 41, 42, 43)

Committee 3 presents its amended proposal.

Material:

Agenda Item 12.9

Deputies Report

Decisions:

Synod decides:

1. To thank deputies for their work.
2. To establish two classes instead of one.

Grounds:

- a. Offer a two stage appeal process (Classis and Synod);
 - b. Allow for fewer delegates to Classis, giving more time for discussion and personal contact to the delegates;
 - c. Operate at a lower cost;
 - d. Give greater variety of persons delegates to Synod than the one classis model;
 - e. Will not quickly take on its agenda matters that belong to churches as a whole, and properly dealt with at Synod.
3. To change Article 41 Church Order so that it reads ... *“Classis shall convene at least once every six months in person ...”*

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Grounds:

The great distances that lie between many of the churches and the high cost of travel discourages a classical meeting every three months.

1. To establish a boundary for the division of classes in the Metro area, and appoint the Tasmanian churches to Classis North, and the churches of Albany to the Classis South. From west to east, the border could run along Forrest Road, which runs into Armadale Road as far as the Albany Highway Junction. All churches established north or south of this line would belong to Classis North and South respectively. At this point of time, Armadale, Byford and Rockingham would be joined to the Albany churches, while Kelmscott, Mt Nasura and West Kelmscott would be joined to the Tasmanian churches.

ADOPTED

The remainder of the proposals will be considered at the next session.

Article 37

Adjournment

The Synod was requested to sing Psalm 75:1,6. Br J van der Linden leads in thanksgiving prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod to Friday 7 July 2000 at 10.30 am.

Friday 7 July 2000

Article 38

Re-opening

The Chairman requests Synod to sing Hymn 11:1, 2, reads Scripture at Malachi 3:1-12 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 39

Formation of Classes (refer articles 36, 40, 41, 42, 43)

Delegates from Launceston request item 4 of the Classis Formation previously decided on be revisited.

Upon listening to the reasons presented, Synod decides to allow further discussion and on possible revision of item 4.

Article 40

Formation of Classes (refer articles 36, 39, 41, 42, 43)

Proposal:

4. Synod decide to establish a boundary for the division of Classes into Classes A and B with newly instituted churches added in such a way so that Classis remain nearly equal.

DEFEATED

Article 41

Formation of Classes (see Article 36, 39, 40, 42, 43)

Committee 3 proposal:

5. To adopt the italicised portion of Article 45 Church Order so that it reads:
“... *Each consistory shall delegate one minister and one elder to Synod...*”

Ground:

This allows all the churches to maintain contact with each other, which is still possible while our churches are relatively few in number.

DEFEATED

A counter proposal is presented:

5. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders.

Ground:

Owing to the smallness of the bond of churches, a Synod shall have a minimum of 12 members.

Amendment to proposal:

To replace the words “three ministers and three elders” in the proposal by the words “four ministers and four elders”. In the ground, “12” is replaced with “16”.

ADOPTED

The new counter proposal now reads:

5. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders.

Ground:

Owing to the smallness of the bond of churches, a Synod shall have a minimum of 16 members.

ADOPTED

Article 42

Formation of Classes

Committee 3 presents proposals 6 to 9 (see articles 36, 39, 40,41,43)

6. To reimburse the travelling costs of the churches for classes, pulpit exchanges and church visitations from the synodical treasury.

Ground:

A cost-sharing arrangement is necessary because otherwise Classis North would have to bear the burden of travel costs between Tasmania and Perth on its own.

Counter Proposal to delete proposal 6.

DEFEATED

The original proposal is then presented.

DEFEATED

Counter proposal:

6. Concerning travelling cost, if necessary, classes can ask for reimbursement from the synodical treasury.

Ground:

A cost-sharing arrangement may be necessary because otherwise Classis North would have to bear the burden of travel costs between Tasmania and Perth on its own.

ADOPTED

7. To delete the italicised words in the Church Order, as well as the indented sentence at the end of Article 41, and to amend the Ecclesiastical Documents where necessary (*Acts 1996*, Appendix N).

Ground:

With the introduction of classes, it is necessary to update the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents to reflect our new situation.

ADOPTED

8. To appoint the FRC of Launceston as the convening church of Classis North, and the FRC of Armadale as the convening church of Classis South to host the first classis meetings in October, 2000.

Grounds:

1. Since the Tasmanian delegates have just travelled to the West, it is good to have the first meeting of Classis North in Tasmania. Since the Perth Metro delegates have just travelled to Albany, it is good to have the first meeting of Classis South in the Metro area. The particular churches chosen are first in alphabetical order in those regions.
2. October and April are good months for classis to normally meet. They are neither too close to the beginning of the year, nor too close to the end.

Amendment no 1:

To change the words "host the first classis meetings in October" by the words "host the first classis in August 2000"

Delete ground 2.

DEFEATED

Amendment no 2:

Replace the words "in October" by "within next three months".

DEFEATED

The original proposal is presented.

ADOPTED

9. To leave it in the freedom of the former classis churches whether they deal with outstanding matters presented to them, or pass them on to be dealt with by the classis as a whole. Any matter dealt with by a classis church may be appealed to classis.

Grounds:

1. In the transition from the former method of church government to a classis model, it is wise to allow the former classis churches discretion in how to deal with outstanding matters presented to them.

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2. The appeal process should not be hindered during the transitional period. At a classis, more churches are involved in making a judgment.

ADOPTED

Article 43

Formation of Classis (refer articles 36,39,40,41 and 42)

Synod decides to instruct the Second Clerk to notify as soon as possible the Churches of the decision regarding Classis as follows:

Decisions:

1. To thank deputies for their work.
2. To establish two classes instead of one.

Grounds:

1. Offer a two stage appeal process (Classis and Synod);
 2. Allow for fewer delegates to Classis, giving more time for discussion and personal contact to the delegates;
 3. Operate at a lower cost;
 4. Give greater variety of persons delegates to Synod than the one classis model;
 5. Will not quickly take on its agenda matters that belong to churches as a whole, and properly dealt with at Synod.
3. To change Article 41 Church Order so that it reads ... *"Classis shall convene at least once every six months in person ..."*

Ground:

The great distances that lies between many of the churches and the high cost of travel discourages a classical meeting every three months.

4. To establish a boundary for the division of classes in the Metro area, and appoint the Tasmanian churches to Classis North, and the churches of Albany to the Classis South. From west to east, the border could run along Forrest Road, which runs into Armadale Road as far as the Albany Highway Junction. All churches established north or south of this line would belong to Classis North and South respectively. At this

point of time, Armadale, Byford and Rockingham would be joined to the Albany churches, while Kelmscott, Mt Nasura and West Kelmscott would be joined to the Tasmanian churches.

5. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders.

Ground:

Owing to the smallness of the bond of churches a synod shall have a minimum of 16 members.

6. Concerning travelling cost if necessary classes can ask for reimbursement from the synodical treasury.

Ground:

A cost sharing arrangement may be necessary because otherwise Classis North would have to bear the burden of travel costs between Tasmania and Perth on its own.

7. To delete the italicised words in the Church Order, as well as the indented sentence at the end of Article 41, and to amend the Ecclesiastical Documents where necessary (*Acts 1996*, Appendix N).

Ground:

With the introduction of classes, it is necessary to update the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents to reflect our new situation.

8. To appoint the FRC of Launceston as the convening church of Classis North, and the FRC of Armadale as the convening church of Classis South to host the first classis meetings in October, 2000.

Grounds:

1. Since the Tasmanian delegates have just travelled to the West, it is good to have the first meeting of Classis North in Tasmania. Since the Perth Metro delegates have just travelled to Albany, it is good to have the first meeting of Classis South in the Metro area. The particular churches chosen are first in alphabetical order in those regions.
2. October and April are good months for classis to normally meet. They are neither too close to the beginning of the year, nor too close to the end.
9. To leave it in the freedom of the former classis churches whether they deal with outstanding matters presented to them, or pass them on to be

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dealt with by the classis as a whole. Any matter dealt with by a classis church may be appealed to classis.

Grounds:

In the transition from the former method of church government to a classis model, it is wise to allow the former classis churches discretion in how to deal with outstanding matters presented to them.

The appeal process should not be hindered during the transitional period. At a classis more churches are involved in making a judgment.

Synod decides to advise the churches regarding the decision on formation of classes as soon as possible.

ADOPTED

Article 44 Needy Churches

Material:

Agenda item 12.15 Report of Deputies for Needy Churches

Decisions:

1. To thank the deputies for their work done and to discharge them.
2. To pass the report of deputies on to the classes.

Ground:

Since classes have been formed by this Synod, and since this is a matter for classes, it is proper that this report with all the work done be passed on to classes for their benefit.

ADOPTED

Article 45 Byford's appeal Art 93, 1998 Acts (re PCEA) (refer article 61)

Committee 2 presents its proposal for discussion.

Committee 2 takes back the proposal for further consideration.

Article 46

Indonesian Churches (Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia)

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.2.4 Deputies Report

Decisions:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the Synods of the GGRI subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
4. To support financially Pila Njuka and his family to allow Pila Njuka to study at Hamilton and to monitor his progress;
5. To adopt the "Guidelines for Support" and to ask deputies to keep refining these guidelines;
6. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 3 and 4 above;
7. To confirm the decision of deputies to pay from the synodical treasury the travel costs of Reverend Mada Biha; and
8. To send delegates to the next Conference of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

Grounds:

1. The Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. The churches are in a position to support these sister churches in training future leaders and building up the congregations. For this reason, visits to the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia are in place also.
3. Synod 1998 decided to support financially Pila Njuka and his family to enable him to study at Hamilton. This commitment should continue, subject to satisfactory progress.

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4. Previous deputies reports had mentioned problems relating to providing support and guidelines will be beneficial.
5. Since the Conference of Reformed Churches in Indonesia will discuss important matters, including theological training which concerns us, it is good to send delegates.

ADOPTED

Friday 7 July 2000
EVENING SESSION

Article 47 **Re-opening**

Synod is re-opened in evening session. The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 102: 5,6,10,11.

Article 48 **Adoption of Acts**

Acts Article 18 to 34 are adopted.

Article 49 **Gereja-Gereja Musyafir Reformasi (GMMR)**

Material:
Agenda Item 12.4.2.4 Deputies Report

Decisions:

1. To continue to visit the synods of the GGMR subject to finance;
2. To support the GGMR in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
3. To monitor and report developments in the GGMR;
4. To provide limited support for Rev Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him;
5. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 2 and 4 above.

Grounds:

1. The churches are in a position to help the GGMR develop in a reformed manner and building up the congregations. For this reason, visits to the Gereja-Gereja Musyafir Reformasi are in place also.
2. The GGMR needs to be stabilised before recommendations regarding sister church relationships can be considered.
3. Rev Yonson Dethan has in the past been supported by the FRCA for theological training and it is appropriate to continue the support in a limited but meaningful manner.

ADOPTED

Article 50

Rev G van Rongen (Agenda item 9.4)

Synod decides to accede to Rev van Rongen's request to use a copy of the Acts to enable him to publish a supplement to his book on the Church Order and standing decisions of synods of the FRCA.

ADOPTED

Article 51

Appeal of FRC Byford re Article 122, 1998 Acts

Materials:

Agenda item 9.3

Byford's appeal on Article 122 re the Law

Committee 2 presents a revised proposal.

Decision 1:

To deny Byford's request to judge that Art 122 Decision 1 is *"not a fully consistent and logical result of the evaluation as mentioned in the Acts."*

Grounds:

Byford argues on the premise that the judgment *"not in accordance with Scripture and confession"* is *"much clearer, stronger and more direct"* than the judgment *"distorts the full biblical message"*. This premise is faulty since Scripture teaches that twisting or distorting the gospel message is also most serious (cf 2 Peter 3:16). Furthermore, a distorted view is itself *"contrary to Scripture and confession"* as the evaluations 1-4 of Synod 1998 make clear.

ADOPTED

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Decision 2:

To deny Byford's appeal to judge that Synod Launceston 1998 in Art 122 made a wrong decision in accepting the unpublished book of Rev F J van Hulst merely as background information.

Grounds:

"In order to do full justice to the doctrinal matters raised in the correspondence between Legana and Rev van Hulst", the Church of Legana requested Synod "to take on board as an appendix to its request dated 20 May 1998 Rev van Hulst's book *De Achillesheel van het Calvinisme*" (letter from Legana to Synod dated 28 May 1998). With this request, Legana did not ask Synod to do a complete examination of the book itself. The purpose of submitting a copy of the unpublished book was simply to ensure that any necessary background information was legally on Synod's table.

ADOPTED

Decision 3:

Not to accede to Byford's proposal that in addition to and in correction of the decisions of Synod Launceston Art 122, the appended teachings of Rev van Hulst about the law are not in accordance with Scripture and confession.

Grounds:

The purpose of further examination of Rev van Hulst on the law was to assist Legana in the pastoral care of the congregation. Synod's investigation was sufficient to satisfy the church of Legana.

Byford pursues correction and clarity because they "are of the opinion that our congregations and the churches in general are in need of clear and scriptural guidance by our major assembly". If Byford needs assistance in matters concerning the law, the manner of obtaining this assistance is not through appealing a decision with which Legana is satisfied, but rather by submitting their own specific request.

ADOPTED

Decision 4:

Not to forward this evaluation to Rev van Hulst, the consistory of his own group and to the consistories of the churches in Launceston and Legana.

Ground:

Synod has decided not to accede to Byford's request to add further judgments regarding the teachings of Rev van Hulst.

ADOPTED

**Article 52
Adjournment**

After inviting Synod to sing Psalm 103:1,2, Rev W van der Jagt closes in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod to Saturday at 9.00 am.

Saturday 8 July 2000

**Article 53
Reopening**

The Chairman invites Synod to sing Psalm 98:1,2, 4, read Malachi 3:16 to 4:6 and leads in prayer.

**Article 54
Book of Praise**

Material:

Agenda item 9.14 Proposal from Mt Nasura

Decision:

To accede to the request of Mt Nasura that deputies be appointed to look into the possibility of having an edition of the *Book of Praise* printed for the Australian churches. Such an edition would include the Bible references in the prose section from the New King James Version, the particulars of the Australian Churches in the confessions (eg the word *Christian*) in the Apostles' Creed and the wording of the *Form for Ordination of elders and Deacons* as well as the *Australian Church Order*.

Grounds:

1. An Australian Synod (1996) endorsed the use of the New King James Version as the faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches.
2. With today's use of computer technology in printing such a special edition of the *Book of Praise* may be well possible.

ADOPTED

**Article 55
Indigenous Missionary Ministers of the Word**

Material:

Agenda item 9.5 FRC Mt Nasura regarding proposed change to Church Order

Mt Nasura proposes:

Synod add as new article to the Church Order with the title "*Indigenous Missionary Ministers of the Word*" namely:

For mission work overseas, the churches may call and ordain a person indigenous to the area as a Minister of the word for the extraordinary task of preaching, administering the sacraments and working towards the institution of churches. He shall remain under the discipline and supervision of the sending church. His calling and task as Minister of the Word shall be limited to the area to which he is indigenous and has been called to labour.

Only those persons shall be eligible for ordination in the office of Minister of the Word for this extraordinary task as an indigenous missionary who:

1. Are members of good standing of one of the churches;
2. Have shown evidence of steadfastness in faith;
3. Received favourable approbation of the calling congregation;
4. Satisfied classis (Synod) of the sufficiency of their theological training; and
5. Have been examined by classis (Synod) with respect to their ability and faithfulness to carry out this extraordinary task.

For the ordination, the adopted *Form for the Ordination (or Installation) of Missionaries* shall be used.

Alternative proposal:

On a point of order, a motion was made to first vote on the proposal of Mt Nasura.

DEFEATED

Material:

A request from Mt Nasura to add an article to the Church Order to ordain a person indigenous to the area as a Minister of the Word for the extraordinary task of preaching, administration of sacraments and working towards the institution of churches.

Decision:

Synod decides not to change the Church Order but to add the following rule to those adopted by Synod 1970, Art 47:

- iv Regarding indigenous men called to do mission work overseas, and who have not studied at the Theological college of our sister churches, they shall be examined by the classis prior to ordination. Their calling and task as Minister of the Word shall be limited to the area to which they are indigenous.

Grounds:

1. Synod does not deem a change in the Church Order necessary in order to answer Mt Nasura's request about indigenous ministers.
2. Synod supports the ordination of indigenous ministers so that they can preach the Word and administer the sacraments subject to the successful completion of an examination following of the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 56

Adoption of Acts

Articles 35 to 52 are adopted.

Article 57

Adjournment

Br L van Burgel requests Synod to sing Psalm 46:1,2 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until Monday at 10.30 am.

Monday 10 July 2000

Article 58
Re-opening

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Hymn 21:1,2 and 3, reads Mark 5: 21-43 and leads in prayer.

Article 59
Welcome to overseas visitors

The Chairman notes that there are visitors from New Zealand and from our sister churches in the Netherlands. He extends a hearty welcome.

Article 60
Credentials

The Chairman reads out the credentials for Rev J A Boersema and Rev R ter Beek provided by BBK from our Dutch sister churches. These delegates are afforded the privileges as determined by Synod for delegates from sister churches.

The Chairman also reads out the credentials for Rev M Flinn from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. He is invited to sit as observer with the privileges determined by Synod for observers.

The Delegates from overseas rose to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

Article 61
Byford appeal Article 93, 1998 Acts (re PCEA)

Committee 2 presents its revised proposal.

Material:
Agenda item 9.2 Byford's appeal on Article 93 re PCEA

It is proposed that Synod declare this appeal inadmissible.

Grounds:

1. Article 93, 1998 Acts, is a decision in which the FRCA makes an agreement with the PCEA. On the basis of statements the two bonds of

churches could enter into a mutual relationship. Wisdom and orderliness dictate that once this decision goes to the PCEA the FRCA should keep it word and not start to change its agreement.

2. Thus, though technically it is a proper appeal, this matter should have been resolved before it was sent to the PCEA. Our 'yes' should remain 'yes' and 'no' should remain 'no'.

DEFEATED

Synod continues to discuss the proposal from Committee 2.

An amendment was proposed as follows:

Decision 2:

Not to accede to Byford's appeal to acknowledge that *"the statements regarding the 'supervision of the table' and the 'supervision of the pulpit' are still open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding so that both parties will still give a different explanation of the same statements and will allow a different practise."*

Grounds:

1. Byford argues that the statement regarding the supervision of the Lord's table will be applied differently in the PCEA than in the FRCA. Byford correctly points out that the adopted statement does not restrict the PCEA from admitting guests to the table who are not members of one of the PCEA's sister churches, as long as they provide an authentic intimation that they are members in good standing of another church which bears the three marks of the true church. The FRCA, on the other hand, admit only those guests who come with an attestation from a sister church. But by their own submission, Byford shows that the statement regarding the Lord's table is not open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. For the statement requires agreement to a Scriptural principle, while leaving room for a different application of this Biblical principle in the PCEA than in the FRCA.

Byford argues that the statement regarding the supervision of the pulpit will be interpreted differently in the PCEA than in the FRCA. Byford correctly points out that the adopted statement does not restrict the PCEA from admitting ministers to her pulpits who are not from one of the PCEA's sister churches, as long as they are ministers of another church which the PCEA have recognised as true, and who have undergone the proper ecclesiastical examinations of the PCEA for ministers of the Word. The FRCA, on the other hand, admit only those ministers to their pulpits who come from one of the FRCA's sister churches. By their own submission, Byford shows that the statement

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regarding the supervision of the pulpit is not open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. For the statement requires agreement to a Scriptural principle, while leaving room for a different application of this Biblical principle in the PCEA and the FRCA.

Decision 3:

Not to accede to Byford's request that Synod decide *"that Synod Launceston 1998 has wrongly decided that the doctrine of the church ... is implicitly addressed in the statements on fencing of the Lord's table and supervision of the pulpit."*

Grounds:

1. The PCEA's doctrine of the church has never been listed as one of the areas of concern, except inasmuch as it affects their view regarding the supervision of the Lord's table and the pulpit. Deputies received this mandate: *"In this discussion about the areas of concern, the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable"* (Art 77, 5a, Acts 1990).
2. Synod 1998 thought particularly of the doctrine of the church when it tightened the wording in the statement re the supervision of the Lord's table. Deputies proposed to speak of *"another true church"*, but Synod deemed it necessary to speak about *"another church of Christ which displays the three marks"* (Art 93, Dec 1). If the PCEA agrees to these statements, they agree not to accept guests to either the Lord's table or to the pulpit who come from a less pure church, but to accept only those guests who come from a church that displays the marks of the church, which are *"the pure preaching of the gospel and the pure administration of the sacraments"*. In this way, both deputies and Synod 1998 have taken into account the doctrine of the church as it affects these areas of concern.

DEFEATED

Amendment to Decision 2, Ground 1:

Delete the words "The PCEA thus should rethink the principles underlying their current practices to bring them in line with the statements which are based on Scripture and confessions as adopted by Synod 1998".

ADOPTED

Committee proposal 2 as amended is presented.

Decision:

Synod decides not to accede to Byford's requests.

Byford has recommended that Synod adopt the following decisions:

Recommended Decision 1:

1. Synod West Albany 2000 regrets the fact that Synod Launceston 1998 took decision 2 too hastily and without sufficient grounds and acknowledges that at this point of time, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia cannot offer sister relations as a first step towards full unity (under the conditions as are stated in the Decision 2 Synod Launceston 1998) before they have investigated the impact of their opinion regarding Purity of Worship upon such a relationship.

Grounds for rejection:

1. Synod 1987 was made aware of a discussion between delegates from the PCEA and the FRCA (in Melbourne in March 1987) about (among other topics) the purity of worship (see Acts 1987, appendix B, pg 5; see also Art 115, Obs 7c). While Synod 1987 listed a number of areas of concern that required further discussion with the PCEA, purity of worship was not one of them (cf Art 115, Rec 4). Now to include an item not included in 1987 (or following years) is not upright.
2. That the matter of purity of worship was listed in 1998 as an area needing assessment with respect of the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (Art 93, Dec 4, pg 51) does not automatically put the topic on the agenda for discussion with the PCEA – especially in light of the 1987 decision.

Recommended Decision 2:

1. Synod West Albany 2000 acknowledges that the statements regarding “the supervision of the table” and “The supervision of the pulpit” are still open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding so that both parties will still give a different explanation of the same statement and will allow a different practise.

Grounds for rejection:

1. Byford is very correct when they write that “The PCEA is of the opinion that you have to explain the phrase ‘another church of Christ which displays the marks of the church’ with the help of their opinion regarding ‘less/more pure churches’” (page 3, B). However, this reality does not make the adopted statements themselves open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

The statements themselves are clear enough. The cause for possible misinterpretation and misunderstanding is the thinking of the PCEA which applies the concept more/less pure not to the local churches (as was the original intent of the Westminster Standards), but to other bonds of churches instead.

Recommended Decision 3:

1. Synod West Albany 2000 decides that Synod Launceston 1998 has wrongly decided that 'the doctrine of the church, as mentioned in mandates to Deputies by Synod 1990, 1992 and 1994 is implicitly addressed in the statements on fencing of the Lord's table and Supervision of the Pulpit'.

Grounds for rejection:

1. Synod 1998 thought particularly of the doctrine of the church when it tightened the wording in the statement re the supervision of the Lord's table. Deputies proposed to speak of "*another true church*", but Synod deemed it necessary to speak about "*another church of Christ which displays the three marks*" (Art 93, Dec 1). This alteration shows already that the doctrine of the church was "implicitly addressed in the statements".
2. The intent of the statements was to achieve agreement between the PCEA and the FRCA on the principles behind the supervision of the Lord's table and the guarding of the pulpit. By these statements, the PCEA would be forced to consider its practices of fencing the Lord's table and guarding the pulpit (cf Deputies report, Act 1998, pg 128). Reconsideration of these practices would, of necessity, prompt a re-evaluation of their understanding of the doctrine of the church.

Recommended Decision 4:

1. Synod West Albany 2000 decides that the FRCA, before they can offer the PCEA 'sister relations as a first step towards full unity', have to investigate whether the PCEA is willing to work towards complete unity.

Grounds for rejection:

1. The decision of Synod 1998 reads, "*to offer the PCEA sister relations as a first step towards full unity if they agree to the above mentioned statements ...*" (Art 93, Dec 2). That is, this decision as two aspects to it, viz 1, to offer the PCEA sister relations and 2, to offer these sister relations as a first step towards full unity. The PCEA will have to answer positively to both aspects. So Byford cannot maintain that the FRCA first has to investigate willingness on the part of the PCEA.

2. This goal was also expressed by the PCEA in their deputies' letter dated 1 December 1993, as printed in our Acts 1994, pg 158: "While committed to the great goal of true and complete unity in accordance with Christ's high priestly prayer (John 17), we recognise that the limitations imposed by sin and its effects, as well as the barriers of distance, will mean that this goal will not finally be realised until our Lord's return".

Recommended Decision 5:

1. Synod West Albany 2000 decides to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To communicate to the PCEA Synod's decision 1 that "Synod Launceston 1998 took Decision 2 too hastily and without sufficient grounds and acknowledges that at this point of time, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia cannot offer sister relations as a first step towards full unity;
 - b. To revise the statements re 'the supervision of the table', 'the supervision of the pulpit' and 'Children in the Covenant' in such a way that the statements are no longer open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding and that the statements also do full justice to the history of our contacts;
 - c. To investigate whether the doctrine of the visible/invisible church and the closely related notion of the pluriformity of the church is the cause which lies behind the less restricted manner of fencing the Lord's Table and Pulpit in the PCEA; and
 - d. To investigate whether the PCEA is willing to work towards complete unity.

Grounds for rejection:

1. Since the previous four Recommended Decisions were denied, it follows that the mandate requested in Decision 5 cannot be granted.

ADOPTED

Article 62

Philippines - Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines (FRCP) and Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines (RFCP)

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.2.3

Deputies report

Acts of Synod

Decision:

1. Thank the deputies for the work that they have done and discharge them from their task.
2. Appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. Keep up-to-date with any new developments among the FRCP and RFCP;
 - b. Lend support to these churches, upon their request, by means of instructive literature that may help build up their Reformed character;
 - c. If funding permits, make a visit to these churches;
 - d. Report to next Synod.
1. Advise the Dutch sister churches that these churches *not* be directed to come under the influence of the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines (CRCP).

Grounds:

1. Although these churches show the desire to embrace the reformed faith, much learning is needed for them to understand and apply it.
2. Only time will tell whether the FRCP and the RFCP are willing to follow the Scriptural and thus Reformed doctrine and practice.
3. The members of these churches have very limited resources and badly need true Reformed literature.
4. It would be beneficial to all, the FRCA and the FRCP and the RFCP to maintain some face-to-face contact.
5. There is enough evidence to show that the CRCP does not preserve Scriptures in doctrine and practice as maintained in the Reformed Churches.

ADOPTED

Deputies request that the report of the visit to the Philippines should not be included in the acts. It was also proposed to remove any personal reference from the main report.

ADOPTED

Article 63 (refer Article 73)
Presbyterian Churches (overseas)

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.3.2 Deputies report

Decision:

To recommend to phase out formal contact with the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

Grounds:

1. A church does not become faithful or unfaithful on the basis of our findings or recognition.
2. As a small bond of churches it is important for us "to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us "to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have greater responsibility." (Acts 1990, Art 58).

In limiting the mandate for deputies for relations and contact with other churches, synod recommended "to phase out contact with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress" (Acts 1990, Art. 58). It has become clear that we appear to be making no progress with these churches as mentioned in the comments above.

DEFEATED

Article 64
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.3.1 Deputies report
Agenda item 12.4.5.3 Supplementary Report

Proposed amendment:

To add decision 5 "to explore desirable levels of recognition and these implications".

Grounds:

1. So that the discussion with the PCEA may proceed in an orderly manner.

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DEFEATED

Decisions:

To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

1. To convey to the PCEA our disappointment that they did not interact with the statements accepted by Launceston 1998
2. To ascertain whether there is still a willingness with the PCEA to discuss these statements on the basis of Scripture and our mutual confessions
3. If there is a willingness to discuss these statements, if possible via face to face meetings and in a forum which is deemed most suitable by deputies
4. To assess the PCEA final response and come with recommendations to Synod

Grounds

1. Although the Inter-church Relations Committee of the PCEA resolved that copies of the statements be referred to the lower courts for their possible consideration and asked them to report back to their committee, only one of the presbyteries responded, yet did not really interact with the statements. Moreover, the Synod of the PCEA decided that there is no need for formal statements declaring our doctrinal and practical position beyond what is contained in our constitutional documents.
2. It seems there is some misunderstanding about the status of the statements. Deputies should try to remove this misunderstanding and so try to ascertain whether there still is room for further discussions.
3. In case deputies meet with willingness for further discussion, deputies should have the freedom to arrange a forum most suitable to bring these discussions to fruition.

ADOPTED

**Monday 10 July 2000
EVENING SESSION**

**Article 65
Re-opening evening session**

The Chairman invited Synod to sing Psalm 85:3,4.

**Article 66
Adoption of Acts**

The Acts Article 53 to 56 are adopted.

**Article 67
Address by Rev M Flinn**

Rev M Flinn addressed Synod on behalf of the RCNZ conveying greetings. The full text of the address is in appendix.

**Article 68
Extra privileges for Rev Flinn**

Synod decides that Rev Flinn be given the following privilege:

1. To be able to address Synod on matters regarding the RCNZ if requested.
2. To be able to request Synod to speak on matters requiring clarification.

ADOPTED

**Article 69
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) (formerly Reformed Churches of Australia) (refer article 72)**

Committee 3 presents its proposal.

Material:
Agenda items 12.4.2.1, 12.5.4.5 and 9.13 Reformed Churches of Australia

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Decision:

1. To thank the deputies for the completion of their mandate;
2. Not to reappoint deputies.

Grounds:

1. Deputies have had "a few face-to-face" meetings to convey the FRCA appeal to the CRCA sessions and Synod.
2. Synod 1996 decided not to enter official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the CRCA at this time on the grounds "... that they and we travel in a different direction ..." Further contact would thus not be meaningful but frustrating for both parties. Synod 1996 authorised deputies to send a letter of appeal to the 1997 CRCA 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. The response of the CRCA to our appeal shows that the CRCA do not take the matters addressed in our appeal seriously, but regard the matters raised as nothing more than different practices.
3. Recent decisions of the CRCA Synod regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's table and the dealings of Classis Tasmania of the CRCA with respect to Rev F J van Hulst, a minister recently deposed from one of our churches on the grounds that his teachings were contrary to Scripture show that the CRCA churches continue to travel down the path of deformation.

DEFEATED

Alternate motion foreshadowed.
Discussion adjourned.

Article 70

Adjournment

After requesting Synod to sing Ps 27:1,2, Br P Terpstra closes in prayer.

Tuesday 11 July 2000

Article 71

Re-opening

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Hymn 11:2 and 3, reads Mark 6:14-32 and leads in prayer. He reconvenes synod.

**Article 72
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia**

Material:

Agenda items 12.4.2.1, 12.5.4.5 & 9.13

Decision:

1. To thank deputies for the completion of their mandate
2. To reappoint deputies and give them this mandate:
 - a. To receive the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia's anticipated appeal to the FRCA, to seek clarification regarding this appeal if necessary, and to forward the CRCA's appeal to our next Synod with a recommended response.
 - b. To address the CRCA Synod about recent decisions of the CRCA regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's Supper, their amendment of the CO restricting the binding character of the CO, and the decision of Classis Tasmania of the CRCA to allow Rev. FJ van Hulst to preach in that classical resort, explaining why these decisions are in error.

Grounds:

1. Deputies have had "a few face-to-face" meetings to convey the FRCA appeal to the CRCA sessions and synod.
2. Extracts from the Acts of the CRCA indicate that the CRCA intend to submit an appeal to us.
3. Recent decisions of the CRCA Synod regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's Table, the change in the CO and the dealings of Classis Tasmania of the CRCA with respect to Rev. FJ van Hulst, a minister recently deposed from one of our churches on the grounds that his teachings were contrary to Scripture show that the CRCA churches continue to travel down the path of deformation.

ADOPTED

Article 73 (refer Article 63)

Presbyterian Churches – Free Church of Scotland, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

A new proposal is presented.

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.3.2

Deputies Report

Acts of Synod

Decision:

To discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

1. To study/discuss the outstanding areas of concern with FCS, EPCI and RPCI, addressing the following questions:
 - a. What weight the FRCA should give to the remaining areas of concern;
 - b. Whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contact/relations;
 - c. How in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations towards churches geographically/culturally far away; and
 - d. In what way the statements with respect to our contact with the PCEA as adopted by Synod 1998 will affect our approach towards the FCS, EPCI and RPCI.

Ground:

Deputies appointed by Synod 1998 came with a recommendation to phase out contacts/relations with the FCS, EPCI and RPCI, yet they did not adhere to the mandate give by Synod and thus this unfinished mandate should still be completed.

ADOPTED

Article 74

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer articles 76,89,and 93)

Synod has several rounds of discussion on the proposals contained in the deputies report, and the proposals of Albany and West Albany.

Article 75 (refer article 97)

Synod Budget

Decision:

To include the proposed Synod budget as part of the material to be used by the committee studying the synod financial papers.

Ground:

The budget papers were inadvertently misplaced.

ADOPTED

Article 76
Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer articles 74,89 and 93)

Further discussions on RCNZ is continued.

Article 77
Pulpit Exchange

Material:
Agenda Item 12.7 Deputy Report

- Decisions:**
1. To thank the deputy and to discharge him; and
 2. Not to reappoint a deputy for this matter.

Ground:
Since classes have now been formed, this matter belongs to their jurisdiction.

ADOPTED

Tuesday 11 July 2000
EVENING SESSION

Article 78
Re-opening evening session

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Hymn 46:1,2.

Article 79
Adoption of Acts

Acts Article 57 to 70 are adopted.

Article 80
Reply to Rev Flinn

Rev A van Delden replies to Rev Flinn's greetings to Synod. His address is included as an appendix.

Acts of Synod

Article 81

Address by Rev R ter Beek

Rev ter Beek addresses Synod on behalf of the RCN (Lib) to convey greetings. His address is included as an appendix.

Article 82

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) (refer article 87)

Decision:

To add a letter of greeting which has been omitted from the deputies' report as part of the report.

Ground:

The letter of greeting is referred to in deputies' report but inadvertently not copied.

ADOPTED

Article 83

Adjournment

Br F Postmus asks Synod to sing Psalm 68:2,12 and leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until 9.00 am Wednesday morning.

Wednesday 12 July 2000

Article 84

Re-opening

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 50:7,8 and 10, reads Mark 6:1-23 and leads in prayer.

Synod goes into closed session.

Article 85

Open Session

Synod re-opens in open session.

Article 86

Advisor

Br H Dekker, as advisor to Synod under rule 5.1, is requested to stand to indicate his agreement to the Three Forms of Unity.

Article 87

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (refer article 82)

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.4.4

Deputies report

Agenda item 12.4.5.2

Supplementary Report of Deputies

Decisions:

1. To continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, requesting deputies to give specific attention to Rules 1 and 2 of the adopted Rules for Sister Relations, viz:
 - One. *Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world;*
 - Two. *The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy;*
1. To mandate deputies to attend the next Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands;
2. To expand the deputyship with the appointment of at least two ministers to this deputyship.

Grounds:

1. While evidence exists in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands that they strive to be faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions of the Church and the adopted Church Order, evidence also surfaces that require sister churches to take seriously their obligation to be the "brother's keeper". One thinks here, for example of the adopted Marriage Form, the decision re the Day of Rest, Lord's Supper celebration in special circumstances, the patronising approach of the Dutch churches towards their historic sister churches in inter-church relations, etc.
2. Face to face discussions are generally more helpful than communications from a distance. Particularly in moments of need, going the extra mile to offer assistance is the right thing to do.

Acts of Synod

3. Doing justice of the concerns expressed above requires more manpower.

DEFEATED

An alternative proposal was tabled.

Proposed amendment:

Remove:

- (d) *“Convey to the PCEA that we were wrong in stating that the RCN does not discuss areas of concern at all with their (presbyterian) sisters”* and;
- ground 4 *“The RCN requests us to retract some statements we made towards the PCEA, ie, that the RCN does not discuss areas of concern at all with (presbyterian) sisters, but just leaves them. In correspondence with our deputies, RCN deputies actually wrote in such a way that one would adopt that conclusion. It is good to stand corrected on this matter, and this correction should be conveyed to the PCEA”* from this alternative proposal and to give this mandate to PCEA deputies.

ADOPTED

The alternative proposal as amended is presented:

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.4.4

Deputies report

Agenda item 12.4.5.2

Supplementary Report of Deputies

Decisions:

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations;
2. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Exercise sister-relations with the RCN according to the adopted rules;
 - b. According to the rules, discuss with the RCN deputies some concerns as to the developments within the RCN;
 - c. Authorise deputies to attend the next general Synod of the RCN;

d. Report to next Synod;

1. To expand the deputyship by one additional minister.

Grounds:

1. The RCN gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
2. Deputies have pointed out and given some evidence about some specific concerns. These should be addressed, according to the rules.
3. Personal visits (to Synods) is more helpful than correspondence from a distance. It also improves relations.
4. The number of items to be studied and discussed increases, and they require exegetical skills. Thus the request for an additional minister is understandable.

ADOPTED

Article 88

Retraction to PCEA

Material:

Supplementary report- Letter of deputies BBK

Decision:

To instruct deputies for the PCEA to convey to the PCEA that we were wrong in stating that the RCN does not discuss areas of concern at all with their (presbyterian) sisters.

Ground:

The RCN requests us to retract some statements we made to the PCEA, ie that the RCN does not discuss areas of concern at all with (presbyterian) sisters, but just leaves them. In correspondence with our deputies, RCN deputies actually wrote in such a way that one would adopt that conclusion. It is good to stand corrected on this matter, and this correction should be conveyed to the PCEA.

ADOPTED

Acts of Synod

Article 89

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer articles 74, 76 and 93)

Discussion continues on the proposals presented.

Wednesday 12 July 2000
EVENING SESSION

Article 90

Re-opening of evening session

The Chairman asked Synod to sing Hymn 2:1-3.

Article 91

Adoption of Acts

The Acts articles 71 to 83 are approved.

Article 92

Address by Rev Bouwman

Rev C Bouwman addressed Synod to reply to the greetings given by Rev ter Beek on behalf of the Reformed Churches of Netherlands. The address is attached in appendix 1.

Article 93

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer articles 74,76 and 89)

Material:

Agenda item 12.4.2.2

Deputies Report

Agenda item 9.10
with the RCNZ

FRC West Albany proposal regarding relations

Agenda item 9.11
RCNZ

FRC Albany proposal regarding relations with

Decision:

Not to accede with the proposals of Albany and West Albany, and to adopt the recommendations of the deputies which read:

To renew the mandate of deputies to strive relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:

- a) Encouraging the RCNZ to study the appeal sent to the RCA in order to understand why the FRCA has principle objections in establishing relations with the RCA and therefore this continues as an impediment to acknowledging the RCNZ,
- b) Continuing dialogue with the RCNZ in particular, to explain why the RCNZ's relation with the RCA proves to be an impediment.
- c) Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ to be held, the Lord willing in 2001, in order to convey greetings, discuss matters of mutual interest with the RCNZ IRC.
- d) Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in rules 6 of our "Rules for Synods" (Acts 1998, Appendix 12).

Grounds:

It becomes evident from the discussions at Synod that there is not a consensus to go forward in our relations with the RCNZ at this time, and therefore Synod decides to adopt the deputies recommendations.

DEFEATED

West Albany proposal

Decisions:

1. To recognise the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To offer to enter into a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ according to the following rules:
 - a. Fraternal relations shall be used to promote ecclesiastical fellowship with churches with which we do not yet have sister church relations;
 - b. 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);
 - c. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties;
 - d. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations;

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- e. The churches shall give account to each other concerning substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms;
 - f. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as fraternal delegates.
1. To continue to strive for a sister relationship with the RCNZ, recognising that it may take some time for the third party relationship between the RCNZ and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (former RCA) to be resolved.
 2. To thank deputies for the work they have done and charge them with the following mandate:
 - a. To communicate Synod's decision to the RCNZ, offering the RCNZ a fraternal relationship under the proposed rules;
 - b. To indicate to the RCNZ a willingness to further discuss the nature of a fraternal relationship and/or the proposed rules if they so desire;
 - c. To encourage the RCNZ to study the appeal sent to the CRCA in order to understand why the FRCA has principle objections in establishing relations with the CRCA and why this continues to be an impediment to establishing a full sister church relationship with the RCNZ.
 - d. To continue dialogue with the RCNZ to explain why the RCNZ's relation with the CRCA proves to be an impediment;
 - e. To authorise two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ to be held, the Lord Willing in 2001, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest with the RCNZ IRC; and
 - f. To invite delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod as Fraternal delegates with the privileges mentioned in rule 6.2 of our "Rules for Synod" (Acts of the 1998 Synod, Appendix 12).

Grounds:

1. Deputies have indicated that in doctrine, worship and church government, the RCNZ must be considered a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Acts of 1996 Synod, art 53). Not acknowledging the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ has caused them much disappointment (Deputies report to Synod 2000).
2. In our contacts with other churches, we basically have two levels of relationship: a corresponding relationship and a sister church relationship. Currently our rules do not allow for any progress in a relationship. The establishment of fraternal relations would allow for the recognition of a church as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ, while acknowledging that historical developments may well give

cause to stumbling blocks that prevent the establishment of a full sister church relationship (see Acts of the 1985 Synod, Art 67).

3. The reason for establishing a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ is not to take away from the goal of a full sister church relationship. Rather, it is to serve as a means of accomplishing this goal.
4. This decision is in line with Synod's decision to concentrate on relations with churches who are geographically closer to us (see Acts of the 1990 Synod, Art 58).

DEFEATED

Alternative Proposal:

Decision:

To agree in principle to the proposal of West Albany, but to postpone the implementation of this decision until next Synod in order to give deputies the opportunity:

- a. to see whether the RCNZ will enter into fraternal relationship with the FRCA;
- b. to elicit and assess responses from the churches regarding this decision;
- c. to consider what changes will need to be made to the CO (eg. Art 57) and other ecclesiastical rules and regulations regarding the establishment of fraternal relations;
- d. To appoint deputies with the new mandate:
 - i Encourage the RCNZ to study the appeal sent to the CRCA in order to understand why the FRCA has principle objections in establishing relations with the CRCA and therefore this continues the impediment to forming sister relations with the RCNZ.
 - ii Continue to dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern.
 - iii Authorise two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ.
 - iv Invite delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod.
 - v Keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ.

Grounds:

1. The delegate from the RCNZ has stated that the RCNZ do not have a second level of inter-church relations.
2. Although the proposal of West Albany is in accordance with previous Synod decisions which have seen the RCNZ's relationship with the CRCA as an impediment to sister church relations, and is in agreement

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with Art 67 of Acts 1985, the churches have not had a great deal of time to interact with West Albany's proposal since it was submitted to the churches just prior to the closing date for submissions to Synod.

3. Although the proposal of West Albany received the majority of support from the churches, it is the desire of Synod to work towards a greater consensus by ongoing discussion, according to the rules of Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 94 Adjournment

After requesting the Synod to sing Hymn 31:3-5, Rev J Poppe closed in prayer. The Chairman adjourned the Synod until 9.00 am on Thursday.

Thursday 13th July

Article 95 Re-opening

The Chairman invites Synod to sing Psalm 118:5,6, reads Mark 8:22-38 and leads in prayer.

Synod moves into closed session to deal further with matters related to Article 41 CO.

Article 96 Open Session

Synod reconvenes in open session.

Article 97 Synod Treasury

The following proposal is submitted from the appointed committee:

Materials:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Agenda item 12.3 | Synod Treasurer's Report, Draft budget for Synod 2003, Revised Draft Budget for Synod 2003; |
| Agenda item 13 | Auditors of Synod Treasurer's Books and discharge of Treasurer |
| Agenda item 14 | Calculations for church share of Synod costs; |

Observations:

Synod's Treasurer prepared a draft budget to take into account Synod's decisions.

As shown, the Revised Budget takes into account Synod's decision to form classis after Synod 2000 and allocation of funds for establishing classes.

Decisions:

1. To accept the Treasurer's statement of receipts and expenditure for the period 1 February 1998 to 31 January 2000 and recommendations regarding reimbursements;
2. To thank the Treasurer for the work done and discharge him;
3. To receive the Report of the Auditors for the Synod Treasury;
4. To thank the Auditors for the work done and discharge them;
5. To adopt the Draft Revised budget as amended by Synod;
6. To adopt the cost sharing arrangement proposed by the Synod Treasurer;
7. To approve costs for travel by Rev Veldman to attend the installation of Dr Zuiddam in Launceston; and
8. To adopt the proposal to allot \$15,000 to Classis North and \$5,000 to Classis South. This is to be a once-off for the establishment of Classes.

Article 98

Synod Audio Equipment

Material:

Agenda item 12.14 Synod Audio Equipment

Decisions:

1. To thank brothers E 'tHart and A van der Wal for the construction of a special sound system for the benefit of synod sessions, for storing and maintaining it and for operating it at this Synod.
2. To discharge the brothers and to appoint new deputies to take care of the sound system equipment for Synod.

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Ground:

The brothers have done an admirable job and have served Synod very well.

ADOPTED

Thursday 13 July 2000
EVENING SESSION

Article 99

Re-opening evening session

The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 68: 7,8.

Article 100

Adoption of Acts

Acts articles 84 to 98 were adopted.

Article 101

Appointment of deputies

In Closed Session the Executive presents a Draft Appointments paper:

Publication of the Acts – the First Clerk

Archives and Library of Synods (*Acts* Art 23) - The Church of Mount Nasura

Inspection of Archives and Library (*Acts* Art 23) - The Church of Byford

Treasurer of Synod

Ad. Hordyk

J G Versluis - Alternate

Auditors for Synod Treasury (*Acts* Art 97) - The Church of Kelmscott

Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

General Convener: Rev C Bouwman

General Secretary: J L van Burgel

All deputies will work under one umbrella. The various deputies will do their own work and are responsible for their own report to Synod. All the

deputyships will meet together as needed to inform and consult with each other regarding their work. Deputies shall present their final report for interaction and consultation by the full deputyship before sending it to Synod.

The duties of the general secretary are:

- to take care of the central post office box,
- to distribute the mail,
- to act as recording clerk for the combined meetings,
- to be responsible for the website of the FRCA, and
- to acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary to pass it on to the churches.

Sister Churches - Canada, The Netherlands, Korea, South Africa (Acts Art 33, 82, 87, 32, 31) -

Rev C Bouwman (Convener)
A M C Bruning
H J Dekker
Rev W Huizinga
Rev J Kroeze
Alternate: G B Veenendaal

**Other Churches (Reformed) - Reformed Churches of New Zealand,
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (Acts Art 69, 72, 74, 76, 89, 93)**

Rev A Veldman (Convener)
B Bosveld
J L van Burgel
Rev A van Delden
Alternate: P O Posthuma

Indonesia, Philippines (Acts Art 46, 49, 62)

Rev P K A de Boer (Convener)
J(ohn) Bosveld
W Geurts
Rev W van der Jagt
J van Dijk (snr)
Alternate: S H Terpstra

Other Churches (Presbyterian) - PCEA, Ireland, Scotland (Acts Art 63, 64, 73, 88)

Rev J Poppe (Convener)
H Olde
J Plug (Painter)
L(en) Schoof
L 't Hart
Alternate: A Mulder

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Deputies for Australian Book of Praise (Acts Art 54)

D Pot (Convener)
W Amoraal
E(Iton) Swarts

Deputies for Training for the Ministry (Acts Art 25)

Rev C Bouwman (Convener)
H Faas
M(urray) Plug
A van Leeuwen
Alternate: R(ichard) Heerema

Deputy for Revision of Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents

Rev G van Rongen
Alternate: J Eikelboom

Nominating Authorities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Acts Art 102)

S Herbert (Primary responsibility)
W Spijker

Deputies for Synod Audio Equipment (Acts Art 98)

E 't Hart
A van der Wal

Deputies for Article 48 and 76 of the Church Order

For Classis South:

Rev P K A de Boer
Rev A Veldman
Alternate: Rev J Kroeze

For Classis North:

Rev W Huizinga
Rev A van Delden
Alternate: Rev W van der Jagt

Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order - (Days of Prayer)

The Church of Launceston

Deputies for auditing the books for Deputies for Article 17 and 18 of the Church Order

The Church of Mount Nasura

Deputy for Church Visitation (to arrange Church Visits for 2000, which are to be reported to the respective classes)

Rev A Veldman

Convening church for the next Synod

Church: Rockingham
Place: Rockingham
Time: Between April - July 2003

Article 102

Civil Registration

Material:

Agenda item 12.8 Civil Registration

Decision:

1. To thank the deputies that they have completed their mandate in that the Free Reformed Church(sic) of Australia have now been registered as a recognised denomination for the purpose of the Marriage Act 1961.
2. To discharge the deputies.
3. To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* with the following mandate:
 - a. To carry out all the duties of *nominating authorities* as required under the Marriage Act 1961;
 - b. To see to a correction of the registered church name from *Free Reformed Church of Australia* to *Free Reformed Churches of Australia*.

Grounds:

1. Deputies have carried out and completed their mandate given by Synod 1998.
2. The Marriage Act of 1961 requires that there is an official appointment of Nominating Authorities.
3. Although the deputies submitted the correct name for the churches as a whole when making the application on behalf of the churches, the registrar did not register it correctly.

ADOPTED

Article 103

Report Article 48 and 76 of the Church Order

Material:

Agenda item 12.11 Deputies report

Acts of Synod

Decision:

Synod decides to receive the report with thanks.

ADOPTED

Article 104

Report Article 66 of the Church Order

Material:

Agenda item 12.12 Deputies report

Decision:

Synod decides to receive the report with thanks.

Article 105

Report from Classis

Mt Nasura reports that they conducted a colloquium doctum for Rev J Kroeze.
The outcome was satisfactory.

Article 106

Questions regarding Article 41 of the Church Order

All churches could reply affirmative for both questions.

Article 107

Personal questions

No one has any questions.

Article 108

Adoption of press release

Synod approves the second press release as read out by the Vice Chairman.

ADOPTED

Article 109

Censure according to Article 47 CO

The Chairman states that there is no need for censure.

**Article 110
Presentations**

The Chairman expresses the appreciation of the delegates for the excellent organisation and care by the convening Church. On behalf of Synod he presents a gift to J de Snoo, chairman of the organisation committee.

Br J de Snoo receives the gifts and expresses some words of thanks and also some words of advice to the next convening church.

Special words of appreciation were also expressed to others who gave particular assistance.

**Article 111
Closing Address**

The Chairman, Rev W Huizinga, speaks the following words:

In closing this synod, allow me first of all to express some words of thanks.

We give the hosting church of West-Albany big "thank-you" for the excellent preparations they have made for us. You took care of the distribution of the agenda items; you kept an accurate and orderly collection of all the materials. You provided accommodation for us and for the overseas delegates. You arranged to have the ladies serve us with refreshments, nibbles, cake and more. Those substantial, three course lunches will take some time to wear off! As our hosts you also made sure there were enough meeting rooms and computer equipment to fulfil our tasks. You prepared a lounge room for us so we could sit, have a coffee and relax. You offered some outings and much more. I am sure there were many more tasks that we may not even have noticed. Rockingham will soon find out about those tasks. In short, we owe you our hearty thanks. I would also like to express our thanks to the brothers, Eric 't Hart and Alan vander Wal, who took care of the sound equipment. We hope that the visitors especially benefited from it in that they were able to hear the discussion on the floor of synod. Well done! Our first clerk is a very capable brother, but he and the second clerk certainly would be the first to say with all of us how much we appreciated the services of our secretary, Kina Van Duyn. Thank you very much Kina for taking a holiday from your regular work and offering your services for this synod. We also thank the sexton, the guardian of the grounds and buildings here, for his work. He was always available when asked. He would open doors and greet us with his warm smile. Thank you, our smiley Jacob Berkelaar.

We approach the closing of the 21st Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We have worked for almost nine complete days. Thinking back to

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the synods over the past decade, I think that is a record for us. It could be that the agenda is shrinking; it could be that the reports of deputies are that convincing; it could be that the brothers have less to say; or it could be that the weather in West Albany kept us indoors, kept us cool and hard-working.

Over the years we have learned to appreciate one another's points of view. We have learned that we need to respect each other and to do things together. Some want to run and hurry along faster; some want to walk slowly, while others stand still. We need to adjust our pace to others, neither galloping ahead nor lagging behind. Do we need to go as slow as the slowest? Well, we were told that was not quite correct. It was compared to catching the school-bus. Be on time! Some stragglers need to hurry up and show they wish to get on board. Otherwise, we were told, the synodical driver will close the door and leave! And we did act accordingly, concerning the presbyterian churches and concerning the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, for instance. However, this does not mean that we all think alike on matters. This synod showed that on some matters, especially interchurch relations, we do not have the same mind. That is sad, but fact. Nevertheless, we did strive as much as our convictions allow to move closer towards each other. The Rules for Synods stipulate that we work towards unanimity. As it is said in Dutch, 'niet overstemmen maar overeenstemmen' (do not outvote each other but agree with each other). We said it was better to move one step ahead together than to run three steps ahead with only a few. In this quest for unanimity the delegates from overseas served us with advice, with direction, if necessary, with proddings and scoldings, and also with words of encouragement. We value their input.

These decisions now go to the churches. According to our beloved Article 31, Church Order,

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.

This means that these decisions are settled and binding. It also means that the churches should review them and implement them. If they find they are in conflict with the Bible or our Church Order then they will submit an appeal.

May the Head of the churches use these decisions so that his people here in Australia and also elsewhere may prosper! Before synod we had a prayer service. We listened to God's Word about Hezekiah, a faithful king of Israel. The Lord prospered him and Israel. The ministry of the Word, the ministry of the sacraments, prayer, worship and thank offerings to the Lord abounded. God blessed them out of his grace and generosity. May the Lord keep the office-bearers in the FRCA today faithful and diligent! Then we know that his blessings will descend. Indeed, we have heard that the ministry of the Word,

the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of godly discipline prevail in each of the ten lampstands of our bond. This is not to our praise but to the praise of God's grace. May the Head of the churches continue to walk up and down among the lampstands of our bond, in Tasmania, Albany and Perth Metro areas. He knows us thoroughly, our strengths, our weaknesses, and our offensive sins. He controls the churches. This fact heartens us. Yet He holds us responsible. We need his Spirit to equip us to discharge our offices. We pray that we may remain faithful. Hezekiah "lifted up his heart" and became proud. The same can apply to us. Yes, Hezekiah points us to Christ, as we heard in the sermon before synod. May we keep our eye on Him.

I remembered the local churches because this will be the last synod that will pay attention to visits paid to the churches. We have decided to form two classes. That means those classes will pay attention to the ministries of the office-bearers of the local churches. Yes, that was an important decision for our churches. In some ways we still wanted to hang on to the present set-up and provisions. The Tasmanian churches still want to see and hear ministers from what is now Classis South (Albany, Armadale, Byford, Rockingham and West Albany). Yet if the change was to be made we had to make it properly, thoroughly, and we did so. But it has its sad side. We in Classis South will not see as much of, at least not in an official capacity, the churches in Classis North, and vice versa. If another theological student has to be examined or if a candidate needs to be examined, this will be the task of the classis. May God bless this decision so that the desire for more contact may become reality. May this decision bring us closer to the norms of the Church Order.

We come to the end. On behalf of the officers of synod I thank you for the confidence placed in us. It was an honor and a responsibility. If in the discharge of our duties we have offended or hurt any of you by any remark or comment, please accept our apology. The grace of God cleanse us from all wrongs and offences. During this synod we often spoke from the heart. That is good. For we must love God and our neighbour from the whole heart, with the whole mind and with all our soul. Yet in speaking from the heart sometimes our emotions run away with us. God forgive us for that. We have all sought to serve our Lord and each other with our varying gifts and skills.

It is time to return to our normal duties. May God bless you in those respective duties, as elder or as minister. May the Lord give you all safe journeys back home. Some have come with families. Enjoy your holidays now that your synodical duties are finished. To those who left wife and families, I wish you health and wisdom. It will be wonderful to be reunited with our families, even though they did not expect us home as quickly!

May the Lord bless those whom synod appointed as deputies. Some of the deputyships have new names. We tried to give all the ministers tasks. We tried not to give anyone two tasks. May the Lord provide wisdom, brotherly

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love, faithfulness and love so that you fulfil your tasks and can help make the church prosper. You will have three years instead of two to do your work. That is good for you and good for the churches. The Lord bless you.

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with
exceeding joy,
To God our Savior, who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.*

Article 112

Farewell from RCNZ delegate

Rev Flinn speaks a few words of farewell to Synod.

Article 113

Closing

The Vice Chairman, Rev van Delden, on behalf of Synod, expresses appreciation for the Chairman's capable leadership in chairing Synod in a brotherly and impartial manner. He asks those present to sing Psalm 125: 1,2 and 3 and leads in prayer. The Chairman closes the twentyfirst Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Speech to FRCA Synod - Albany, Western Australia by Rev. M. Flinn on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Synod, and of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia:

It is a privilege for me to be representing our churches as an observer at your synod for a second time. When he addressed our synod in 1998, Rev. van Delden went to great lengths to explain why he should have been first choice as your delegate. He pointed out that in 1992 you sent Rev. Huizinga to New Zealand - tall and thin - and we reciprocated by sending yours truly. Then in 1996 we sent Rev. Hoyt to your synod, and it was only fair that you should reciprocate by sending a man of similar stature. In fact, Rev. van Delden assured us that he was the only minister of your federation who qualified. Well, now the tall, thin man returns. Sorry Art, I guess that means you won't be visiting our synod next time. But all you men of more modest girth are high up on the list of potential candidates.

Seriously, the fact that we have been able to exchange official observers at each other's major assemblies since 1992 shows that we have made some progress in our mutual striving for sister church relations. We have moved beyond an exchange of correspondence. We have enjoyed face to face contact and interaction and this has helped us get to know and understand each other.

In the interests of furthering that understanding, I bring you greetings on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Currently our membership stands at 3,275 souls in 17 congregations. We are served by 16 ministers at the present time and another will shortly be installed. We have three home mission works at present and it is anticipated that at least one new congregation will be instituted next year. Our churches are increasingly becoming multicultural. In my own congregation in Bishopdale, Christchurch, there are approximately 9 or 10 nationalities represented including both European and Asian cultures. This situation presents its challenges, but is also a wonderful testimony to the ascension of our Lord and the sovereign work of the Father in drawing to Christ people from every nation of the world.

The work of Christian education continues to receive prominence in our churches and also in accordance with the blessings and responsibilities of the covenant, we are continuing to maintain our catechism instruction programme to our young people and our regular preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism in the evening worship service.

In the matter of interchurch relations, we are now members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches and we are looking for ways to co-operate with the ICRC member churches, particularly in overseas missionary and diaconal work. We continue to enjoy cordial sister church relations with the OPC USA and the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands. We also maintain a sister church bond with the Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA) and have sent a delegate to their synod for the first time earlier this year. We are thankful that this relationship is developing in a positive way, especially given the large number of South African immigrants into New Zealand. We are continuing discussions with the GKN Liberated, your sister church, and with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

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In both cases, we are assessing the desirability of entering into sister church relations with them. We have discontinued our relationship with the CRC in North America and are now exploring the possibility of official contact with the United Reformed Churches.

I have deliberately left our relationship with the RCA (since their recent synod: the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia) until last, since this is something that you have raised as an impediment towards your entering into a sister church relationship with us. You have expressed to us that you are not laying down conditions for us. You are not requesting of us that we break ties with the CRC Australia, and you have encouraged, even urged us to continue to exercise sisterly admonitions to the CRC. We are thankful for this encouragement and we know that you share the same concerns as we do. At their most recent synod, our delegates expressed publicly our concerns over their reports on women in the office of deacon and on children at the Lord's Supper. Our objections had also been expressed to their Committee for Ecumenical Relations and received high profile in their committee report. However, our delegates were disappointed with some of the synod's decisions, particularly the one to allow for the ordination of women as deacons. It is not for me to speculate how our Synod 2001 will respond to these decisions. But rest assured, full reports will be forwarded to our sessions and we will seek to act in a principled manner in terms of the rules we have for sister church relationships.

Indeed, it is here that, with respect, we ask you to reconsider your approach to the establishment of interchurch relations. We recognise fully that there would be anomalies if you were to establish relations with us while we continue to have contact with the CRC Australia. We appreciate your sense of unease about that and the principled position that you are taking. However, you have recognised with appreciation that we too seek to act according to principle in our ecumenical relations. If this is the case, surely we should be prepared to accept the existence of some anomalies in this imperfect world and strive for greater unity with one another within the context of an interchurch relationship. If we cannot overcome this difficulty of triangular relations, in spite of warm personal contact and so much that we share in common theology and heritage, we will not be able to make any further progress in our discussions. That would be a great pity. We respect your position but we do not share the difficulty that you have. Since we too wish to keep the channels of communication open, and since this is for the purpose of working towards a formal relationship, we respectfully ask that you reconsider whether the existence of anomalies is sufficient warrant to prevent the establishment of sister church relations. Once again, it is my pleasure to be with you. Thank you for receiving me, showing me hospitality, and for allowing me to address the synod. May God bless your deliberations and decisions.

Rev. Dr. Michael Flinn

Response on behalf of synod by Rev. A. van Delden.

Rev Dr. Flinn:

First of all, let me underline the welcome which the chairman of synod extended towards you. We're very glad to have you in our midst. When we say this, we don't

only refer to yourself as an individual, but also to the fact that you represent the RCNZ, a federation that we feel very close to. We value your presence here, as well as your input in matters that pertain to your federation.

When I heard the number of souls in your federation, and think back to the figures from two years ago, it becomes evident that you are growing. We rejoice with you in this, especially when we hear that you grow, not only from within, but also as a result of home mission projects. I know that one of our churches is interested in establishing a home mission project. This is something relatively new to us. I know that this church, or at least members of home mission committee has interacted with one of your ministers on this matter, to learn how these home mission projects work in NZ. Here is one small fruit of our contact.

We are also very happy to hear that Christian education receives growing attention amongst the RCNZ. You will have learned from your visits here that this is also a matter very dear to our hearts, a matter that we feel is very important to the spiritual well-being of our children.

This afternoon you have heard the debate regarding your federation of churches, and about the three proposals put forward by deputies and two of the churches. You've seen the fact that we are quite divided amongst ourselves on whether we can make any progress in our relations with you. I don't think I would be saying too much if I said that we would all like to establish a sister relationship with the RCNZ. Where we differ is the timing. It's not so much a matter of *whether* we will establish sister relations with the RCNZ, but *when*. Some would very much like to offer sister relations now already, while others see that the RCNZ's relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment. I don't know for sure which way the decision will go tonight. But I hope that one thing becomes clear from our deliberations that the FRCA rejoices in the faithfulness of the RCNZ.

You have heard our decision regarding the CRCA. We will stand beside you in your struggle to bring reformation in the CRCA. We have mandated our deputies to address the CRCA concerning their recent decisions regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's table, in the fact that they no longer view the Church Order as binding upon the churches, and the fact that Classis Tasmania have permitted Rev van Hulst to preach on their pulpit. Our hope and prayer is that the CRCA will heed both your and our admonitions and return to decidedly Reformed path. But if they do not, we are confident that will continue to act towards them with the same faithfulness that you've shown when other of your relations have proven to unfaithful.

We thank you for the good wishes that you have extended to us, and we pray that God will also continue to work powerfully in the midst of the RCNZ, so that you as a church of our Lord Jesus Christ may be a powerful witness to your nation, for the glory of God and for the salvation of many.

Rev A van Delden

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Speech delivered at Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia West Albany by Rev R ter Beek on behalf of deputies Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (see Article 81)

Esteemed chairman, dear brothers, - and as I may say so as a delegate of one bond of churches addressing this broadest meeting of delegates of the other - beloved sister.

It is a privilege and a great pleasure to be here in your midst and to extend greetings in the name of Jesus Christ to this synod on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated). We thank you for your invitation to this synod. We meet as sister churches and it is good to see with our own eyes you are doing well.

We welcome the decision of this synod to remodel the bond of churches into two classes. It is a sign of growth. It makes you fit better in the Dordt church order. It will give some relief to the church councils, I suppose. We do hope this subject will appear many times at the agenda of your synods. We wish you many happy returns. We express our appreciation for the guidelines for support you accepted for the relations with our Indonesian sister churches. These guidelines will be helpful to work there in close conjunction with your churches, we expect.

We do thank you for your comments on the provisional Marriage form you have sent to the deputies that have composed the new form. I hope you agree with us and others that this new form explains the old biblical doctrine of the marriage in an understandable and modern way.

Why are we so delighted to meet you? You know there is a separational drive in human history, an urge to grow apart. Sometimes God has used it to humiliate human pride. But also Satan used and uses it to divide what belongs together in the work of God. He drives the wedge of sin between people brought together by his mercy and living in the unity of Word and Spirit. As our Saviour, God has given an opposing force according to his promises for Israel (p.e. Ezek. 37,15-28). His name is Jesus, the true Shepherd. He introduces himself as God's uniting force when He says: I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd (John 10,16). Paul reminds the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus, that they once were far away but now brought near through the blood of Christ (Eph. 2,13). He calls Him our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ... to create in himself one new man out of the two (Eph. 2,11-22). The unity created is the unity of his Spirit (Eph. 4,1-6). And the faithful hear the encouragement to make every effort to establish and to maintain this unity through the bond of peace.

That is why we so highly appreciate our relation and we like it to be as close as possible. In being with you we experience the unity Christ creates in shepherding his worldwide flock. Two months ago we were on our way to Geelong, to the synod of the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia. We had a stop in Kelmscott and Mount Nasura where we could meet with your deputies at Friday April 28 and Monday May 1. By that time we thought: perhaps that will do.

Back home we had to consider the mandate of the synod of Leusden 1999 to attend

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your synod and to give you an explanation about the offer of a sister church relation the Leusden synod made to the PCEA and to stimulate you to reconsider your withdrawal from the ICRC. We also considered what we have read in the report of your deputies: how strong they longed to visit the Leusden synod due to the concerns in our midst. They could not come. They had to confine themselves to a letter of greeting and encouragement we much appreciated. But we felt your need to see us. And now we are here, we should reckon it too great a risk if we should drift apart. And reading the report of your deputies we felt the need to meet not only the deputies but the churches and to speak to yourself. For the same reason we support the second recommendation of your deputies to this synod and earnestly ask you to include a visit to the Synod of Zuidhorn 2002 in the mandate of your deputies.

We sincerely regret that the printer of the Leusden Acts did not keep his contract to finish the job within three months after delivering the manuscript. But I can tell you the churches in the Netherlands are alive and kicking. It is not the liveliness of a child having no self-control. I reckon it to be life given by the Holy Spirit. There is a lot of spiritual and material investment in the missionary task of the church in the Netherlands as well as abroad. In our congregations there is faithful preaching and there is an attentive hearing the Word of God. Classes, regional synods and the general synod earnestly seek to submit themselves in their thoughts and decisions to the guidance of the Spirit by the Word.

What certainly is worth telling is that after many years of conversations, the Reformed Churches (liberated) and the Christian Reformed Churches finally gained a far-reaching consensus. Now deputies of both bonds of churches are working together to implement this agreement in local relations. The possibility of a federation of the two bonds of churches is now to be taken into consideration. This is a reason for joy in the Lord. It illustrates the uniting power of the Gospel of Christ. Due to the true Shepherd, his Word and Spirit, in church history not only separation and dispersion is found but union and association too. It might be an encouragement for you as well.

Let me now address you according to the mandate of the general synod of Leusden and of the deputies for relations with the churches abroad. I will have to deal with three issues. Synod has sent us (1) to stimulate you to reconsider your withdrawal from the ICRC as decided by the synod of Kelmscott (Acts 1996 art. 95); and (2) to inform you about its decision to offer sister church relations to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. Deputies instructed us (3) to make some comments on the report of your deputies regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated).

1. Your decision to terminate the membership of the ICRC

Four years ago you terminated your membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Some of the grounds attached to that decision were:

1. The membership ... has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches. This is evident in the divided deputy reports and the repeated appeals to Synod;
2. Synod has not been able to reach a consensus on whether or not Scripture forbids participation in the ICRC;

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3. The church of Rockingham asks Synod not to bind and compel the conscience of those churches who believe that their participation in and support of the ICRC is contrary to Scripture. The churches of Bedfordale and Byford have expressed the same belief that participation in the ICRC is contrary to Scripture, Confession and Church Order;
4. In the light of the past history it would be unrealistic of Synod to expect deputies to come forward with an agreed conclusion or recommendation.

Since 1996 you have this decision lying in the midst of your churches. That means that you as bond of churches do not have a sufficient answer to the conviction that participation in and support of the ICRC is contrary to Scripture, Confession and Church Order. I understand that at that time you were whole-heartedly desiring to terminate endless discussions with no perspective for unanimity. But I did not manage to accept that you as churches believe that Scripture forbids participation in the ICRC.

There is a scriptural command to seek unity with brothers belonging to the same house. You know it and you show it. But in the third ground Synod assumed it unrealistic to expect deputies to come forward with an agreed conclusion or recommendation. That is a weird thing to say for a synod. Who is to blame for not being able to agree? Deputies? The synod? The opposing churches? Not the Word of God.

As far as the ICRC is concerned you suffer from the lack of ability to find one another in submission to the scriptural exhortation, to follow the direction the Lord Jesus Christ himself has indicated: to make every effort to search the unity with one another as believers and as true churches.

I think this really is a deep crisis. The unity and peace you enjoyed since 1996 as a result of this decision will only appear to be true unity and peace if you manage as churches to find by listening to the voice of your and our true Shepherd a way to deal with churches distinctly and truly reformed but not completely compatible with our way of being reformed. You must find a way to decide on triangle ecclesiastical relations answering Christ's demand for true catholicity. If not, this might continually hinder your unconditional obedience to the commands of the Lord of the Church in this respect.

The ICRC is doing well. As a meeting place for reformed churches from all corners of the world it serves cooperation in mission and evangelism. It serves the growing of mutual confidence of churches once dispersed and far off but now brought together. The mutual exploration of reformed churches of Scottish and of European continental origin is making progress. The churches there - and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in front - are looking forward to meet you again in their midst.

2. On the sister church relation the Reformed Churches offered the PCEA

We owe you an explanation of the decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to offer a sister church relation to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. This offer was made at the 2000 Meeting of the PCEA Synod. This synod (*Minutes 2000*, art. 00.42) acknowledged with gratitude the sister-church relation afforded us by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) and affirmed

the intention to advance our mutual relations in accordance with our rules governing fraternal relations between churches (*Decision Book*, p. 19).

In the past you have asked us to be patient with you regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. So were we since 1993. In 1998 you expressed your thankfulness for that. The Synod of Launceston 1998 decided to ask the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to stay in step with the decision you took regarding to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

At that synod you adopted three statements. One regarding Fencing of the Lord's Table, one regarding The supervision of the pulpit and one regarding Children in the Covenant. The third ground you mentioned was: (3) These statements resolve the problems associated with these areas of concern in a Scriptural and responsible manner.

Your next decision was to offer the PCEA sister relations as a first step toward full unity if they can agree to the above mentioned statements. This decision to enter into sister relations is to be confirmed by the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, upon agreement and implementation of the above mentioned statements.

Grounds attached: (1) Apart from the three areas of concern, the PCEA gives evidence of faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confession. (2) The PCEA's agreement with the proposed statements takes away the concerns we have expressed.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands were aware of this, when they, too, decided to offer a sister church relation to the PCEA. In this decision is certainly not implied the reproach that you in your discussions with the PCEA consider non-essential points as fundamental. I am sure there is not implied any judgment of your decisions. But how to evaluate the differing lines of ecumenical action?

What we do see is in the first place a clear difference in approach to differences in practice between reformed churches. Secondly we notice a different position. The combination of these two factors makes it possible to explain. Our different approaches can be clarified with reference to our different positions.

As we see it your approach to the PCEA is guided by the principle: when two bonds of churches in one country acknowledge each other as true churches of Jesus Christ one way or the other, full unity has to be established. That is what the Lord Jesus himself asks of true churches living in the same country. When the Launceston Synod states the PCEA gives evidence of faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confession, we hear you say that you have met a true reformed church. And consequently you feel the urge to set up a process of growing towards unity. You acknowledge further that it may be wise to take all the time needed to reach complete unity. There may be reasons to develop such an organic unity gradually.

We do agree with your conclusion that you found the PCEA a church faithful to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confession. The Synod of Ommen 1993 already recorded that. We do understand why you take your time to develop an eventual organic unity with another reformed church you meet in Australia. We even can imagine why you put your concerns on the agenda of your conversations with the PCEA.

So where is the problem? I think it wise to make a distinction between two lines of

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ecclesiastical action. There is the quest for unity of churches belonging together because they are one in faith. And there is the establishing of ecumenical relations with closely related churches abroad. That distinction marks the difference in position.

Compare the situation you are in now with the PCEA to the situation we had in the Netherlands between the Reformed Churches (liberated) and the Christian Reformed Churches. As far as I know the RCN (lib.) never established a sister church relation with the Christian Reformed. But surely they did recognise one another as true church of Jesus Christ. Compare the position the Dutch churches have regarding the PCEA with the position you have regarding the Irish churches.

That means that you have your very own responsibility in making up your strategy for getting closer to the PCEA. You are not responsible to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), but to the Shepherd Jesus Christ who has made you one in the true faith. And you are responsible to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, your ecclesiastical neighbour, the church our Lord Jesus set on your way. We do not want to walk in your way. We prefer to leave your responsibility where it belongs. At the same time we humbly ask you to leave us our own responsibility. We sincerely hope that the reaction the PCEA-synod of this year gave to your statements will give you the frankness to look for a way to start an open and brotherly discussion in a mood of mutual trust with the PCEA. In brotherly conversations, there will be the opportunity to be convinced of the true reformed spirit of the PCEA-churches and to convince the PCEA of your true reformed state of mind. This will help you to deal together with the differences in practice and climate you will meet. It is not in an attitude of superiority I say this. In the long history of the conversations between the Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Churches, it were not only the Reformed that brought up matters of concern. The Christian Reformed had their questions about our way to deal with the appropriation of salvation and our perception of the congregation. By trying to understand one another we both learned. Our eyes were opened for the impression of one-sidedness our strong emphasis on the two-sidedness of the covenant made. I feel thankful for this. I say these things in a humble mood, because God gave us rich blessings up till now in the conversations held between the Christian Reformed Churches and the Reformed (liberated).

3. Comments on the report of your deputies

After our visit we received a copy of the report your deputies for Relations with Sister Churches have put on your table. We have some serious objections to this report. We recorded them in a letter sent to deputies (with a copy for the synod), but we feel the need to elaborate them at this occasion as well.

In 1997 your deputies asked how we do handle the differences in practice between Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Your deputies received a complete answer. But a few times we found this answer quoted in speeches and acts in a distinctly one-sided and therefore incorrect way. This answer is: we are free to address any difference in our contact with Presbyterian Churches. It is in our rules. And in fact we do so. These differences are discussed in the ICRC. We publish contributions on these subjects in *Lux Mundi*. We address them in conversations between

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deputies whenever suitable. But in the Reformed Churches we consider the doctrine of the Presbyterian standards as fully reformed. The point is: is a Presbyterian Church faithful to its standards? About differences in church order and worship we stick to our Church Order which says (art. ...) that foreign churches will not be rejected for their sake. Who says: Dutch deputies do not have the mandate to discuss differences with the Presbyterian Churches at all, is not speaking the truth. Please be careful quoting.

The report of your deputies on the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands is tuned in a mode of concern. Who are we to contest this? I appeal to this synod to instruct your deputies to specify these concerns by referring to the grounds the Leusden synod brought up for the decisions under criticism. The following points of concern can be detected: the marriage form; the day of rest; Lord's Supper in special circumstances; liturgy and hymns.

But please, brothers, concern does not justify the lack of evidence. As attachments to this report the text of decisions and their grounds had to be found. So that you as the instructor of your deputies had gotten the opportunity to control what is written. Now we read things like "this material comes across to us as a somewhat unorthodox *modus operandi*" (3), "what room is left here for effective fencing the Lords table?" and "what message is left of the will of the Lord to join the true church?" (4), and "one can be forgiven for fearing that the office of the Minister of the Word will undergo further deterioration" (4), and "given the sinfulness of the human heart, and our inbuilt unwillingness to look at our sinfulness (and hence the need for true repentance and looking to Jesus Christ alone), one wonders whether it is wise to leave room to delete the references to 'self-examination' and 'invitation and admonition'" (4), and "we puzzle at that development. The more hymns there are the greater the possibility becomes that the psalms are forgotten. Is there no wisdom in the stance of the fathers to be wary of hymns?" (5), and "we observe here a practical application of embracing inter-denominationalism" (6). Nobody can control this.

Deputies are not so very sure all the time. They 'puzzle', they 'ask', they 'wonder', material comes across. But, brothers, you know how things work. When the question enters our mind the question mark comes loose and an accusation or at least an imputation is begotten. The attachment of br. Noorts personal evaluation of the Leusden decisions is perfectly in line with this style. And we are not surprised to read that "in various matters your deputies concur with the criticism voiced by the brother". Do you really want us to challenge gossip like "there was only some compassionate talk about the sister churches abroad, who are lagging behind us for so many years". Who is fair?

We think that to keep up the good name of the churches is implied in a good relation of sister churches. We regret to confess that in that respect we cannot consider this report of deputies as a good job. We find it embarrassing that we have to defend ourselves here tonight. We are not sure someone else will stand up for us in your midst. We do not want to niggle or to split hairs. We have a problem with the way your deputies in this report manage the relation with your Dutch sister. And we plead with you in our defense. Please, do not let this mode of speaking about the churches in the Netherlands drive a wedge between two bonds of churches that belong together and that love one another.

Do not understand us wrong. We do not have any problem with serious concerns.

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We thank you for that and we hope you will deal with that in a serious way. If you share your deputies' concerns, address the coming synod of Zuidhorn (2002) with reference to the decisions and their grounds as recorded in the Acts.

Let no one make you believe that the Dutch churches consider you and treat you as their little sister, or that we want to force you into a certain direction with the decisions we have made. You have your own responsibility to the Lord of the church. We take you as a grown-up sister and we hope that was not too terrifying for you to listen to. The Lord has given you to us and us to you to assist one another to keep up the excellent name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Shepherd who brings together what belongs together in the church chosen to everlasting life. May He bless you in faithfully joining his gathering.

Thank you.

Rev R ter Beek

Reply to Dutch delegates at Synod West Albany – 2000

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Our Lord, we confess, gathers His church all over the globe. This church is holy in His sight, its members washed in Jesus' blood and renewed by Jesus' Spirit.

You have been in our midst for five days, and seen something of His work in our midst. You have seen fruits of the Spirit among us, you have seen also that works of the flesh remain. You have seen us before the face of our Lord and Saviour, seeking His way; you have also seen us speak to each other, struggle together to find the way the Lord wants us to go. You for your part have provided us with your good counsel in an effort to help us find the will of the Lord for us. In the midst of our struggles, we thank you for your presence and your counsel. More, we thank the Lord that He has sent brothers from afar to stand beside and encourage us in the discussions of the last three days. In truth, the Lord gathers a catholic church, and we are privileged to experience something of that in the fellowship we could enjoy with you these brief five days.

You have heard the decision we made in relation to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. With gratitude and unanimity we could decide "to continue the sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted rules", on the explicit ground that "the RCN gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order." We thank the Lord for His church-gathering and church-preserving work in your midst.

Appendix 1 Speeches at Synod

We realise that you in your corner of the world –just like we in ours– “wrestle against ... principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). That is why we are delighted and grateful to hear from you that “the churches in the Netherlands are alive and kicking” –your words, br terBeek!– and it’s a “life given by the Holy Spirit.” We rejoice that “there is a lot of spiritual and material investment in the missionary task of the church in the Netherlands as well as abroad.” We rejoice that in your congregations “there is faithful preaching and there is an attentive hearing [of] the Word of God. Classes, regional synods and the general synod earnestly seek to submit themselves in their thoughts and decisions to the guidance of the Spirit by the Word.” Yes, we rejoice at the work of the Lord in your midst.

Satan attacks. And we are weak. It pleases the Lord to preserve His church (amongst other means) through the care of brothers – be they close by or farther away. You have seen need to address us on particular points so that we may serve our God and Master more fully according to His revealed Word. We thank you for your input, and you may be assured that we will not simply push your words to one side. At the same time, we for our part have today adopted a decision that mandates deputies to “discuss” with your deputies “some concerns as to developments in the RCN.” Deputies in their report (says the decision made today) “have pointed out and given some evidence about some specific concerns.” In your address to us last night, you expressed “serious objections” to deputies’ report, in part because you heard in the report criticism of your recent Synod without adequate evidence. You have since heard that deputies were not wishing to be judgmental, but –within the limits of the time available to them since they received your *Acts*– were seeking to alert Synod’s attention to areas which they felt needed further investigation. Please be assured, then, that neither deputies nor the Australian churches question your integrity. Meanwhile, deputies have a mandate to do homework in relation to the concerns raised in the report. The Lord willing, we can speak further about these concerns when delegates from our midst attend your next Synod in the year 2002.

Satan attacks. In that same passage of his letter to the Ephesians where Paul speaks about wrestling against the principalities and powers, he also gives a word of instruction and encouragement to the saints of Ephesus – an encouragement that remains so true for us in the year of our Lord 2000. For the Spirit of God moves the apostle to instruct the Ephesian saints in their daily struggles to “stand” (vs 14). “Stand therefore,” he says, and that’s to say that you in the Netherlands and we in Australia do not have to duck and to find trenches and go on the defensive in the face of Satan’s attacks. For our Lord Jesus Christ has triumphed and Satan is defeated. “Stand therefore,” and that’s also to say that you in the Netherlands and we in Australia do not have to go on the offensive (as if there is enemy terrain that we still have to conquer), for –again– our Lord Jesus Christ has triumphed, is today Lord of all. All you need to do –and we too– is to “stand”, all six foot of you, stand tall in a world that *is* Christ’s. And, as Israel

Appendix 1 Speeches at Synod

repeatedly witnessed in the Old Testament, the Lord will fight the battle and preserve His Church. That's His promise.

Brothers, you are about to return to your churches and your homes. We thank you for coming, we pray that the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ go with you. Please pass on to our sisters in the Netherlands sincere greetings from your sisters in Australia.

Good bye, and God bless.

Rev. C. Bouwman.

The Free Reformed Church of West Albany
Convening Church
Synod 2000.

General Secretary's Report

Esteemed brethren,

1. Synod Kelmscott 1998 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. Deputies shall present their final report for interaction and consultation by the full deputyship before sending it to Synod. (Acts, Art 125)

Two combined meetings were held. At the second meeting the reports from the various deputies were presented and discussed. The reports enclosed are the final reports adopted separately by each deputyship after this meeting.

2. The general secretary received the following item for correspondence that did not apply to any of the deputyships:
 - a) The John Knox International Reformed Centre provided a complimentary copy of *The Reformed Family World-Wide* which included an entry on the FRCA based on information provided to the publisher earlier.
3. As per instructions from synod, a letter was written to the Lanka Reformed Church informing that we are unable to provide assistance. Br J. Bosveld and Rev. de Boer who were visiting the Philippines and India made a stop in Sri Lanka in a private capacity and were able to deliver and explain the letter personally.

J.L. van Burgel
General Secretary

Appendix 3

1. Report by Deputies Relations Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches)

1. Deputies Relations with Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches) had responsibility for the following areas:

- a) Reformed Churches of Australia
- b) Reformed Churches of New Zealand
- c) Reformed Churches in the Philippines
- d) Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI and GGMM)

2. In order to carry out their mandate, deputies divided into various subcommittees which provided reports to the full deputyship. Deputies met 15 times since Synod Launceston 1998. In addition deputies had 5 meetings with RCA deputies to present the appeal. Some items remain unfinished. Deputies intend to issue a supplementary report.

A. Reformed Churches of Australia

Appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia

The 1998 Synod, in Article 78 of the Acts, made the following decision:

1. To thank the deputies for their work and discharge them
2. To appoint new Deputies with the mandate to convey our concerns and appeal by a few face to face meetings.
3. To report back to the next Synod

Grounds:

1. Deputies have not completed the mandate given by Synod 1996. The appeal did not reach their Synod on time, and had not been dealt with by their Synod.
2. The request to have our concerns and appeals conveyed by a few face-to-face meetings is reasonable. Correspondence has been laborious and tedious. Dialogue took place between 1990 and 1992. In 1992 our Synod dealt with the common Report of dialogue. In 1994 the Reformed Churches of Australia Synod dealt with it. Since no more dialogue occurred, we waited until 1996 to react to their 1994 decisions. We would send an appeal, which we were late in sending, and it will now take until

Appendix 3 Deputies Relations Reformed Churches

2000 before the Reformed Churches of Australia can deal with it. This is a cumbersome process.

3. Face to face meetings have proven beneficial in the past. It prevents misunderstandings, which arise more easily in correspondence alone.
4. The Reformed Churches of Australia request it, and they have appointed Deputies for it so that they can respond to the concerns in our appeal.

To carry out this mandate deputies:

1. Deputies, broke down the appeal that was sent into four main points that were addressed, namely:
 - a) The *Word and Spirit* issue
 - b) Worship practices
 - c) Interchurch relations and membership in the REC
 - d) The issue of *women in office*

A further study was made of all these areas in preparation for the face to face meetings. These studies took into account further developments within the RCA since the original appeal was first written. This further study also led to greater clarity and more details concerning the reason for our appeal. This was led to a separate papers on all these areas of appeal.

2. A number of face to face meetings were held in which the above named points or appeal were presented to the RCA deputies. Attention was given in particular to points of accuracy. Attempts of the RCA deputies to refute the reason for appeal was heard and where necessary a further response was given. At the second face to face meeting the RCA, by way of letter, expressed some concern about their impression that the FRCA was busy looking for every kind of weakness in the RCA that could possibly be found and that the appeal was based more on objections which the RCNZ found in the RCA than things which the FRCA knew of the RCA. This letter is attached to this report. While speaking about this matter, it became clear that the RCA deputies thought these meetings to be more like a dialogue. In response the reason for these face to face meetings in order to present the 1996 appeal was made clear. They understood and accepted that our mandate was to present an appeal that was made a number of years ago.
3. After having presented the named points of appeal, the RCA deputies responded in writing to each point. Their response, especially in points of accuracy, was taken into account and led to some revisions the individual areas of appeal. A copy of the final points of appeal are attached to this report. These points of appeal have now been left with the RCA deputies to present to their synod.
4. Conclusions
Deputies will study the reaction of the RCA Synod to be held in April to incorporate this plus any proposals in a supplementary report.

Appendix 3(a)

1. Appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia

Section concerning Interchurch relations

Deputies drew up a working document to update and present the section of the 1996 appeal that concerns interchurch relations. That document was presented and discussed at a face-to-face meeting of the FRCA and the RCA deputies held 23 July 1999. This document comes as a result this meeting. All involved agree to the accuracy of the stated facts. The evaluation of these facts is that of the FRCA deputies.

During this meeting, in agreement with the 1996 appeal, much attention was given to the RCA membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and its indirect relationship to the Reformed Church of the Netherlands (GKN). During the discussion it became evident that it would be helpful to pay some attention to a more fundamental point, namely, what kind of difference, if any, is there in the approach to interchurch relationships.

The approach to interchurch relations

The FRCA *Church Order* says, Article 46 that *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.* The RCA *Church Order* says, Article 53 that a) *The synod shall appoint a committee to correspond with other Reformed churches abroad so that the Reformed Churches of Australia may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.* b) *The synod shall decide which denominations are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship and shall prescribe the regulations which govern these relationships.*" While the FRCA speak of entering and maintaining *sister-church relations* the RCA speak of *Christian fellowship with other denominations.*

The FRCA apply their *Church Order* article for interchurch relations in its rules as agreed upon at its 1992 synod by insisting that in such a relationship *The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.* Compare this to the RCA way of applying their *Church Order* as agreed upon by their 1997 synod. They agree that ecumenical relations should be developed and maintained with other Reformed/Presbyterian Churches on the basis of the *Reformed confessions, polity, and liturgy, both in terms of their formal standards and their actual practice.* The RCA also agree in their rules that when undertaking ecumenical relations one of the goals should be the *Mutual understanding of our shared calling as Reformed Churches, seeking always to*

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maintain confessional integrity. From this it appears that both the FRCA and the RCA want to maintain the truth of God's Word as upheld in the Reformed confessions. However, the differences mentioned do lead to some fundamental differences in practice. Namely:

1. The FRCA will only enter into and maintain an official ecclesiastical relationship with churches which prove to be faithful to God's Word as maintained in the Reformed Confessions. It must show the marks of the true church as confessed in Article 29 of the *Belgic Confession*. The RCA will enter into and maintain an official relationship with other Reformed/Presbyterian churches which it considers to be its "blood relatives" and from within that relationship encourage the other to show adherence to the Reformed confessions in doctrine and practice.
2. The FRCA have only one kind of interchurch relation, namely sister-church relationship. The RCA has two kinds of interchurch relationships: a) sister-church relationship b) corresponding relationship.
3. The FRCA will consider the validity of the relations which a church has established with other churches (i.e., so called *third party relations*) when considering to enter into and continuing relations with them. The RCA think that the relations which their sister-churches establish with other churches is not their accountability but only the accountability of that sister church.

Membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council

The following points concerning this organization is recognized.

1. In its constitution Article III 1 the REC gives as one of its purposes: *to express the Church's oneness in Christ, in whom we, together with all believers, are united and to promote the visible unity of the Church in the world.*
2. Both RCA and the GKN are members of this organization, this means that you claim to express the Churches oneness with the GKN(S) by membership in this organization.
3. The GKN deviates from the Reformed faith and practice, among other things, by permitting office-bearers and members to deny a six day creation week, permitting homo-sexual relations to continue and permitting women in office.

The RCA has been members of the REC since its inception. The RCA deputies are well aware of problems and unfaithfulness within some member churches within this organization. They say that a time may come when this

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membership will have to be severed. The question is, when. It was said that there is a difference between deciding to become a member and decided to terminate membership. Before there is termination every effort would be made to rectify the problems which are found in this organization. They make the following points concerning their membership in this organization:

1. It must be understood that the nature of this organization has changed as reflected in the change of its name from Reformed Ecumenical *Synod* to Reformed Ecumenical *Council*. In practice this means that the members churches are not bound to the decisions of this organization. Its conclusions are only advisory.
2. The RCA continues to have grave concerns about the deviations from the truth of God's Word in the GKN and as a member of this same organization calls this wayward member back to the truth. A number of local congregations within the GKN, who themselves have difficulties with what is happening among them, plead the RCA to help them from within this organization.
3. The RCA deputies think that there is very little, if any, bad influence from the REC and its member churches on their churches. This is especially true when speaking of the GKN. There may have been some such influence in the past but today the members of the RCA read very little Dutch. Some of the material published as a result of REC studies such as on *human rights* is considered to be helpful.

Concerning the RCA membership in the REC the deputies recognize the following differences:

1. While the RCA thinks that their membership in the REC may be used as an opportunity to make the Reformed faith shine among the member churches, the FRCA is convinced that the deviation of the GKN from the Reformed faith is so great that it is impossible to *express the Church's oneness in Christ* and the RCA would give a much better testimony to the GKN if it would terminate its membership in the REC. The FRCA think the RCA's continual membership in the REC as a lack of proper church discipline.
2. While the RCA is convinced that there is no, or little influence from the REC and its members upon their churches, the FRCA is not convinced this to be true. The FRCA see evidence of influence in the *Word and Spirit* issue as well as the question concerning *women in office* and *worship practices*. Moreover the FRCA is convinced that Scripture itself teaches that such influence will take place. In 1 Corinthians 5:6 we are warned: *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*

Churches with whom the RCA have ecumenical relations

The RCA have and maintain interchurch relations with churches that the FRCA would not consider to enter into relations at this time, being convinced that these churches have in historically deviated from the true Reformed faith and continue in their error. Among them are the Christian Reformed Churches of North America, the Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken, the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, the Reformed Church of South Africa (Dopper Kerk, RCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (DRCSA). The RCA is aware of the number of Christian Reformed Churches of North America (CRCNA) congregations that have left that bond and is concerned about it but has not addressed the matter in a formal way. Concerning some of the other churches the FRCA pointed at some concerns about which the RCA deputies were not aware and acknowledge need some attention.

When comparing the official ecumenical relations the RCA has to those maintained by FRCA, appears that the FRCA is more concerned about how Reformed its sister churches are in doctrine and practice. We, in the FRCA, only have official relations with those churches which show the marks of the true church as confessed in Article 29 of the *Belgic Confession*. We appeal to the RCA to hold fast the word of God as upheld in this article of the *Belgic Confession* by seriously reconsidering all its inter-church relations and exercising proper discipline by only acknowledging as true, only those churches that show the marks of the true church.

2. Appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia

Section concerning Women in Office

In our (FRCA) appeal to the 1994 RCA Synod we expressed our concern about the direction in which the RCA appears to be moving with regard to women in office. We state this guardedly, for we realise that up until this date, no decision has been made to allow women into office. Nevertheless we feel that our concern is warranted, for despite the fact that the matter has received much attention by the past four synods, no decision has been made to the effect that the offices are closed to women. Instead, the matter has repeatedly been sent back for further study. Herewith we express our concerns.

1. Our first concern pertains to the repeated deferral of a decision regarding women in office. One might consider it laudable to require an exhaustive study of all the relevant data concerning this subject. But two facts should be borne in mind.
 - 1.1. In the first place, the perspicuity of Scripture should enable the church to make a decision on a major issue on the basis a thorough study of the primary texts of Scripture without having to examine all the peripheral texts and arguments that might

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arise. In the opinion of the writers of the earlier reports (and in our opinion as well) all the primary texts have been considered, and a decision could (and should) have been made to declare that according to Scripture, the special offices in the church are closed to women.

- 1.2. In the second place, we are concerned lest the RCA follow a parallel process as the CRCNA with respect to women in office. We bring to your attention certain parallels regarding the deferral of a decision in this matter. The matter of women in office began in 1970 when Synod of the CRCNA appointed a committee to examine the exclusion of women from office. Eight years later, the CRCNA allowed women to hold the office of deacon. During all this time, Synod refused to make any decision that would disallow women from holding the office of elder or minister. Finally, in 1990, the CRCNA determined that the churches be allowed to exercise their discretion in utilising the gifts of women in all the offices of the church, and again confirmed this in 1995 when the CRCNA decided to authorise churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister and evangelist.

We note that that there are certain parallels between the CRCNA and the RCA in this matter. While the report to Synod 1997 states that the recommendation to open the office of deacon to women "*should not be seen as a first step to opening all the offices of the church to women,*" we note that like the CRCNA the RCA have not declared the two remaining offices of elder and minister closed to women, although study committees have come with this recommendation. The refusal to make such a decision makes the earlier quotation sound rather hollow, and gives us reason for concern.

We note that Synod 1994 (Art 45.2.2) defeated a recommendation to open the offices of elder, deacon and minister equally to men and women. It is clear, however, that the RCA do not regard this decision to imply that the offices are thereby closed to women. This is evident from the fact that although Synod 1994 defeated the recommendation to open the office of deacon to women, this and the next synod continued to mandate deputies to consider the Scriptural and confessional basis for the possible opening of the office of deacon to women (Synod 1994, Art 45.4; Synod 1997, Art 29.4).

We also note that while Synod 1994 (Art 45, 1.2) decided to "*endorse the biblical principle of headship according to the broad principles outlined in [Report 20 to Synod 1991]*" it defeated the recommendation "*that the Summary*

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Conclusions of Report 20 to Synod 1991 concerning 'male headship principle' be used as an interpretation" (Synod 1994, Art 45.1.3; cf. also Synod 1991, Point 4.2.3, p III-180). Thereby Synod 1994 effectively defeated Conclusion #7: *"The headship principle has particular application within the Church and its life and witness. This is the reason why women are (a) to remain 'silent' in the Churches (b) to be 'in submission' and (c) forbidden to exercise specific teaching roles which would place them in authority over men."* To this date, then, the RCA have deferred making any decision to close the office of minister and elder to women despite exhaustive reports which have put forward this recommendation.

2. Our second concern stands in contrast to our first. Whereas the RCA refuse to declare the offices of ministers and elders closed to women despite a number of in depth reports that have recommended this, there appears to be an eagerness to open the office of deacon to women on the basis of a single report which is far less exhaustive than previous reports which recommended that the offices remain closed to women. Synod 1994 gave this mandate to the committee: *"to examine the exegetical basis for the possible opening of the office of deacon to women."* This committee came with the recommendation *"to declare that there is no barrier to the appointment of women who fulfill the requirement of the Church Order to the office of deacon."* We acknowledge that Synod 1997 did not open the office of deacon to women. But Synod 1997 decided to appoint another committee to *"summarise the Scriptural and historical evidence for and against women serving as deacons, and present these to the churches for study"* (Art 29 Acts 1997). This seems to indicate that Synod would like to "test the waters" to see what response comes from the churches, a preliminary action that would only be undertaken if the RCA is seriously contemplating opening the office of deacon to women. We are grateful that Synod also appointed this committee to examine the Scriptural and historical evidence for and against women serving as deacons. It is with this in mind that we bring forward some grave weaknesses and shortcoming of the committee report to Synod 1997.

2.1. Regarding the patristic evidence of women in office, note the following:

2.1.1. We learn nothing from Pliny as far as the function or status of these "*ministrae*" is concerned.

2.1.2. The authors of the report make it appear as though Clement is quoting Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:5, which he is not. Clement spoke about ministering women (*diakonon gunaikon*), and understood these to be *ministering women*. But Paul does not speak about ministering women. He speaks about sisterly women or wives (*avdelfh.n gunai/ka*). Most, if not all,

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translators and commentators reject Clement's interpretation, and understand that Paul is speaking here about believing wives.

- 2.1.3. On the basis of Romans 16:1, Origen deduced that women were also set in the ministry of the church, in which office Phoebe was placed. But even Ryrie, from whom the committee quoted Origen, admits that Origen *"has very little to say about [the place of women] in the public and official life of the church."*
- 2.1.4. Although Tertullian regarded widows as forming a special order according to the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 5, he did not believe that women should serve in any special office in the church.
- 2.1.5. Regarding the Didascalia Apostolorum (*The Apostolic Teachings*) and the Apostolic Constitutions, the report is somewhat misleading in its omissions. For in these writings there is a clear distinction made between deacons and deaconesses. We read: *"But it is not lawful for any one of the other clergy to do the work of a deacon. A deaconess does not ... perform anything belonging to the office of presbyters or deacons, but only is to keep the doors, and to minister to the presbyters in the baptizing of women, on account decency."*¹ Here is a clear demarcation between the duties of a deacon and a deaconess. It seems to have been a custom of the early church that those who were baptised (by immersion) were thereafter anointed with oil. The deacon was to anoint the head with oil, but a deaconess was to anoint the rest of her body. *"For there is no necessity that the women should be seen by the men."*²

That women were ordained as deaconesses by the laying on of hands is used in the report to show that women were ordained to the special office of deacon. We must realise, however, that at this time the church spoke of ordination and of offices in a different way than we are accustomed to speak of them. For example, sub-deacons were also ordained by the laying on of hands. They who were appointed

¹ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book VIII, Sec. IV, Chapter XXVIII as found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers (ANF), Vol 7, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995 p. 494.

² Ibid, Book III, Sec. II, p. 431.

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to be "overseers and keepers of the holy vessels" and who were "to handle the vessels of [God's] ministry."³ Readers, too, were ordained by the laying on of hands. They were "entrusted to read [God's] Holy Scriptures to [God's] people."⁴

That the Early Church differentiated between deacon and deaconess is also evident in this quotation from the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (from which the study committee also quotes, but which quotation it failed to include): "A deacon separates a sub-deacon, a reader, a singer and a deaconess, if there by any occasion, in the absence of a presbyter. It is not lawful for the sub-deacon to separate either one of the clergy or laity; nor for a reader, nor a singer, nor for a deaconess, for they are the ministers to the deacons."⁵ Notice that a deaconess cannot appoint a deacon. The reason given is that the deaconess is a minister (or servant) of the deacon. Notice also that the deaconess is listed together with other functionaries (which the church called the clergy) such as readers, singers and sub-deacons. Once again we see the clear demarcation between the office of deacon and that of deaconess, something which the report fails to bring to the fore.

Allow us to quote the conclusion of an *Excursus on the Deaconess in the Early Church* in the well-known literary work, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. "From all this it is evident that they are entirely in error who suppose that 'the laying on of hands' which the deaconesses received corresponded to that by which persons were ordained to the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate at that period of the church's history. It was merely a solemn dedication and blessing...."⁶ The report quotes selectively from the ancient sources, and omits some crucial texts which show that the Early Church did not equate the

³ Ibid, Book VIII, Sec. III, Chapter XXI, p. 492-493.

⁴ Ibid, Book VIII, Sec. III, Chapter XXII, p. 493.

⁵ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book VIII, Sec. IV, Chapter XXVIII as quoted from ANF, Vol 7, p. 494

⁶ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 14, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, p. 41-43.

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“office” of deaconesses with the office of deacon, but clearly viewed the function of the deaconess as subservient to that of the deacon. The study committee does not find support from the Early Church for its recommendation to allow women to hold the same office and perform the same function as men as deacons.

2.2. Calvin

- 2.2.1. In his commentary on Romans 16:1 Calvin says that Phoebe held an office, a very honourable and holy function in the Church. Upon reading the word “office” we should not immediately think of one of the special offices of the church. Calvin often uses the word “office” in the sense of the “position” one receives or the “task” one is given. A perusal of his Institutes will make this very clear. For example, he speaks about the *office* of angels (1.13.10); about the *office* of the Holy Spirit (1.13.4); about the *office* of the head of a family (1.14.2); about the *office* of “things inanimate and animate” (1.14.20); about the *office* of the intellect (1.15.8). In none of these cases does he refer to one of the three special offices in the church. Calvin’s liberal use of the word “office” should make us cautious in concluding that his reference to Phoebe’s office in the church is a reference to one of the three special offices in the church. In this instance, Calvin regards Phoebe’s office as one of the officially enrolled widows described in 2 Timothy 5:9.
- 2.2.2. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 3:11 Calvin speaks about “women” (*gunaikai*) in the context of the qualifications for elders and deacons. The report says that Calvin is silent on whether this term can be applied to women deacons, and seems to use this silence in their favour. But the report does injustice to what Calvin writes, for Calvin is not silent about these *gunaikai*: they are the wives of elders and deacons. If Calvin truly conceived of women being ordained to the special office of deacon, we might have expected him to interpret the reference to *gunaikai* as “women” rather than “wives,” or at least mention this as a possible translation. But he does not.
- 2.2.3. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 5:9-13 Calvin uses the terms “*ministry*” and “*office*” when speaking about these widows over sixty years old who were officially

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enrolled by the church. He even speaks of their office as a public office in the church. In his Institutes, ⁷ Calvin identifies these widows as "deaconesses." But it is clear from his Institutes that Calvin sees deacons and deaconesses as two distinct grades of deacons. He bases this upon Romans 12:8 *he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*⁸ He sees the reference to the one who gives as a reference to the deacons, whose role is to administer the affairs of the poor; he sees the reference to those who show mercy as a reference to those who actually care for and minister to the poor.

2.2.4. In his Ecclesiastical Ordinances (1541), under the section dealing with "*The Fourth Order of Ecclesiastical Government, that is the Deacons,*" Calvin again distinguished between two types of deacon. "*There were always two kinds in the ancient Church, the one deputed to receive, dispense and hold goods for the poor, not only daily alms, but also possessions, rents and pensions; the other to tend and care for the sick and administer allowances to the poor. This custom we follow again now for we have procurators and hospitallers.... The election of both procurators and hospitallers is to take place like that of the elders; and in electing them the rule proposed by Paul for deacons is to be followed.*"

2.2.5. The report fails to acknowledge Calvin's distinction of grades of deacons when it concludes: "*It is difficult to come to any other conclusion that that Calvin accepted deaconesses in the specifically focused ministry to the poor and needy among the flock, and that these deaconesses held public offices in the church*" (2.4.5).

2.3. Exegesis

2.3.1. Regarding Romans 16:1, the report states that "*when the elements in the passage are considered, it can be seen that it is possible that Phoebe was ministering in a definite office.* This is understood as the special office of deacon. The report displays some serious weaknesses, which we illustrate below.

⁷ Institutes 14.3.9.

⁸ Institutes, 14.3.9.

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2.3.1.1. The report states that the same word is used here for Phoebe as Paul used for male deacons. It is argued that although this word is commonly used for servant, Paul uses this for several of his associates. From this it is concluded that Paul means it here in a similar way as a ministry of service in a special way. The report equates this specialised ministry to the special office of deacon. But this conclusion is not supported by the evidence given.

2.3.1.1.1. The report fails to take note of the fact that when Paul uses this word, he includes himself in it. Literally, he says that he is a deacon (diakonh) of God (1 Cor 3:5). It is clear that Paul does not have the office of deacon in mind as we know it, but as all translations render this, he is a minister. The same is true for Apollos (1 Cor 3:5).

2.3.1.1.2. Tychicus is described as a faithful "deacon" (diakonh) of the Lord. But Paul does not have in mind here the office of deacon (Eph 6:21 Col 4:7). It appears that Tychicus was a personal ambassador of Paul, conveying messages on his behalf, and accompanying Paul from place to place. We know little more about what function he fulfilled. But it is extremely doubtful that he occupied a special office as minister, elder or deacon in any church.

2.3.1.1.3. Regarding Epaphras we know little except that he was a fellow servant and faithful minister of Christ who was imprisoned with Paul. We have no knowledge whether or not he served in any of the special office of the church, such as minister, elder or deacon.

2.3.1.1.4. Timothy was a man who accompanied Paul on his

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missionary journeys. He is said to have “ministered” (diakonountwn) to Paul. He engaged in the same work as Paul (1 Cor. 16:10), that is, the work of preaching (2 Cor 1:19). As Paul’s fellow labourer in the gospel to the Thessalonians, he is called a faithful minister of God (1 Thes 3:2). Although he laboured for some time in Ephesus, Timothy does not appear to have occupied any of the special offices as minister, elder or deacon.

2.3.1.2. In the instances where this term is cited in the report, the term “deacon” (diakonh) does not refer to the special office of deacon, but refers to a more general ministry. The fact that this term is applied to Phoebe does not support the conclusion of this report, namely, that Phoebe she “*was ministering in a definite office*” of deacon.

2.3.2. While it is true, as the report states, that the formula of a participle of eimi (eimi) together with diakonos (diakonoj) might indicate an official office, the report fails to mention that the same construction is often used simply to qualify an attribute or virtue or the status of a person.. For example, we find the same construction used in the Septuagint of Gen 37:2 where we read about Joseph “*being a young man;*” or in Matt 1:19 about Joseph “*being a righteous man;*” or in John 4:9 “[*Jesus*] *being a Jew;*” or in Gal 2:3 “[*Titus*] *being a Greek.*” The phrase itself does not support the conclusion that this construction denotes an official office. Paul uses a similar construction in Col 1:17 to refer to Epaphras as a faithful servant of Christ (estin ... pistoj dia,konoj tou/ Cristou/) where it is generally translated as “servant” without reference to one of the special offices in the church. All that this construction says is that Phoebe was a diakonoj, whatever this is understood to be.

2.3.3. We have no difficulty with the statement that the genitive phrase “*of the church which is in Cenckrea*” underscores her official status. But as we saw above, the precise nature of her status is not defined. The report goes too far when it implies that this construction underscores that Phoebe held the

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official **office** in the church as we know it today. We could more easily conceive of her as a woman who fits the criterion mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:9-10, that is, one who is enrolled as a widow and officially appointed by the church to a specialised ministry of service to the poor and sick.

- 2.3.4. Regarding the word **prostatis** (prostati), the word literally means “one who stands out in front”. The masculine form of this word **prostata** (prostath) can refer to someone who takes a leading position, or it can simply refer to someone who is a guardian or protector. The report concludes “*Phoebe’s ministry at Cenchea involves leadership in some way.*” The feminine **prostatis** (prostati), however, does not take the meaning of leader, but means protectress, guardian, patroness or helper.⁹ This is the way that Paul uses it in this text. That is clear from the fact that Phoebe is said, not only to be a **prostatis** (prostati) of the church in Cenchea, also a **prostatis** (prostati) of Paul himself. Whatever her ministry to the congregation, it was the same as her ministry to Paul. Now it is highly unlikely Phoebe held and exercised a position of leadership over Paul. It is almost certain that her ministry to Paul was one of helper, as most translations indicate. Phoebe took charge of Paul’s personal well-being during his stay in Cenchea. This would be the same service that Phoebe rendered to the congregation of Cenchea.

2.4. 1 Timothy 3:11

- 2.4.1. The report argues that there is no word for female deacons. Therefore Paul used the “woman” (gunaikaj) to make his point clear. But this is hardly convincing for the following reasons:

2.4.1.1. The report argues that in Romans 16:1 Phoebe is called a “deacon” (diakonoj), which shows that the word can be used for women as well. There is no need for a separate word.

2.4.1.2. Since the word “deacon”(diakonoj) serves for both the masculine and the feminine, why would Paul make special mention of the female deacons? If women share in the same office as men, why does he deal with them separately? Why should the

⁹ A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich.

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qualifications for the female deacons be any different from the male deacons? Why should the female deacons not need to be tested, as the men were?

2.4.1.3. The fact that the word *gunaikos* (*gunaikoj*) in verse 12 clearly refers to the wives would also argue in favour of *gunaikas* (*guniakaj*) referring to wives in verse 11.

2.4.1.4. The report says that if Paul had meant “*their wives*” in verse 11, he would have written “*taj gunikoj autwn.*” But it could be argued with equal, if not greater effect that if Paul had really intended to write about women deacons in distinction from male deacons, then we would have expected him to write “*women deacons*” (*gunaikoj diakonoj*).

2.4.1.5. As far as the grammatical parallel the report points out that verses 2,8,11 are all governed by the verb *dei* (*dei*—it is necessary) as is clear from the fact that the accusative is used for elders, deacons and women/wives. The parallelism is also evident from the three-fold use of “*likewise.*” Therefore the report states “*the parallel formulation suggests that Paul is speaking of three groups of people who function in official roles within the church.*” With this we heartily agree. However:

2.4.1.5.1. If the report were to take seriously the three different groups, and maintain that these represent official roles, then the report would have to accept the conclusion that Paul is speaking about three different offices in the church --- that of elder, deacon and women. As it is, the report does injustice to the three-fold repetition of “*likewise*” by maintaining that Paul is speaking about only two offices or two official roles, namely, that of elder and deacon. They divide the latter group further in two sub groups. In numerical representation, the report looks at vv 2,8,11 as referring to 1) elders

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and 2) deacons, with the deacons being sub-divided into 2a) male deacons and 2b) female deacons. This does injustice to the three-fold repetition of the word "*likewise*." Paul is referring to three distinct groups of people with three different positions: 1) elders, 2) deacons and 3) women or wives.

2.4.1.5.2. The report uses circular reasoning inasmuch as it assumes what it wants to prove. The report assumes that Paul is speaking about *three official* roles within the church, and then uses this text to prove that women received an official role as deacons. There is no doubt that the first two groups of people hold an official office. There is no doubt that the last group also played an important role in the church as well. But there is nothing to indicate that they had an *official* role. It makes perfect sense to interpret this as the role which wives of office bearers have in the church. As Calvin says, "*[wives] must be aids to their husbands in their office.*"

2.4.1.5.3. It would make good sense, both grammatically and contextually, to interpret *gunaikas* (*gunaikaj*) as "wives." Grammatically, the verses 8-10 and 12-13 speak about male deacons. It would be unusual for Paul to suddenly speak about female deacons in v. 11 without giving some clear indication that he is doing so. It would be more natural to accept *gunaikas* (*gunaikaj*) as a reference to the wives of deacons. Contextually, this would also make good sense, since Paul regards the conduct of an office-bearer's family as of great

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importance (cf. 1 Tim 3:4,11 - children must be submissive).

We acknowledge that some exegetes in Reformed circles have views that at times conflict with the interpretation of Scripture given above (eg. Dr. J van Bruggen (Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk) and Dr. Soon-Gil Hur (Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, 1997). But we point out that, contrary to the direction which the RCA is moving in this matter, neither of these Reformed exegetes promotes the opening of the special office of deacon to women.

3. Appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia

Section concerning Worship Practices

The point in the 1997 appeal of the FRCA concerning *worship practices* was presented to the deputies of the RCA. Upon hearing it, the RCA deputies said that the appeal was not entirely fair and has become out of date. The matters addressed in this appeal reflect concerns expressed by the Reformed Church of New Zealand and appellants within the RCA. It reflected the time the RCA was dealing with the *Word and Spirit* matter. Some of the practices flowing forth from the *Word and Spirit* issue have gone away along with this issue itself and had never been received as acceptable practice in the RCA. There is understanding that these kinds of concerns were expressed by the FRCA in 1997. The 1997 RCA synod dealt with Rev. B.G. Aldridge's open letter. In this letter Rev. Aldridge warns the churches not to deviate from the Reformed path including the Reformed worship practices. This synod does not deny there to be reasons for concern when it urges office-bearers, sessions and classes to test their practices and return to the positively Reformed way of worship. The appeals of members within the RCA at that time were not dealt with because they had not been put on the agenda in the correct way. The appellants that addressed previous synods on these issues have not returned with these appeals possibly because they were satisfied that the problem has gone away.

Nevertheless there are a number of points to be made:

Preaching

1. The RCA believes that the preaching should be central to the worship services. We make thankful note of this.
2. Concerning preaching from God's Word as it is confessed in the *Heidelberg Catechism*, as a rule, this is practiced in the RCA. There are a small number of people (mainly from Presbyterian background) who have

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difficulty with this. They are convinced that all preaching should be done directly from Scripture. That some think this way is not to be understood as if they have difficulty with the *Heidelberg Catechism* or the other confessions. The RCA is contemplating changing the Church Order to also allow for sequential preaching on the *Belgic Confession* and *Canons of Dort*. Such a change would deviate from historic Reformed practice. The Synod of Dort decided that the other two confession also be binding but it ruled that only the *Heidelberg Catechism* be used as a bases from which to preach God's Word. It could mean less personal application and less attention to the way of thankfulness as taught in the Ten Commandments. The FRCA insists that all the churches maintain the preaching from the *Heidelberg Catechism* as agreed upon in Article 63 of the *Church Order*.

3. Some of the RCA churches have a Sunday school to which the children go either during the sermon or during the whole worship service. These Sunday schools cater to children up to grades two to three. Although the FRCA has no great difficulty with crèche for very young children, they are convinced that as soon as possible children should be gathered with the whole assembly of the Lord's people just like the Lord had gathered the whole congregation of His people at Mount Sinai. Even though young children do not understand everything that takes place there, they do learn the importance and solemnity of the Lord meeting with His people. The parents have the task to tell their children what happens there. The examples of Scripture gives this direction (Deut. 29:11, 31:12, Joshua 8:35, Ezra 10:1, Ps. 128, Acts 2:39).
4. The RCA (Synod 1997, Article 21) permit elders, in exceptional circumstances, to make their own sermons and preach them after it has been approved by the minister of the Word, the session or its counselor. This practice deviates from the historic Reformed practice of the only minister of the Word *preaching and administering the sacraments*. In the absence of a minister of the Word, an elder may *read a sermon* or approved student of theology or candidate may speak an *edifying word*. A distinction is made between the *official preaching* done by a minister of the Word who has been ordained to this office and a elder who reads or a student/candidate who speaks an edifying word.
5. The RCA permits ministers of other denominations, under certain circumstances, to preach the Word. For example, a minister of the Word deposed by the FRCA was permitted on the pulpit in the RCA. The FRCA, in agreement with historic Reformed practice insists that only minister of the bond and of sister churches, may be permitted to preach the Word of God.

Sacraments

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1. The RCA has adopted three forms for infant baptism and five for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. These forms show a moving away from the historic Reformed emphasis on Scriptural teaching about these sacraments to a greater concentration on congregational participation. The shorter Forms do not bring out the message of salvation as clearly as the original forms by leaving out much of the covenantal declaration of salvation and the call to faithful obedience. The FRCA deputies are concerned that by increased congregational participation the official declaration through office-bearers as commissioned servants is no longer understood and maintained. For example, in *Lord's Supper Form IV* on page 230 the congregation is made to say: "We proclaim that the Lord Jesus was sent by the Father into the world." and again "We proclaim that He is risen to make us right with God." This kind of "proclamation" is the special task of the minister of the Word who has been ordained to office. When insisting on this, the office of all believers is not denied: Their prophetic task is to *confess His Name* (see Lord's Day 12, QA 32).
2. In *Forms II and III* for infant baptism of the RCA, the first question the parents are to answer is whether they "confess Jesus Christ as Your Lord and Saviour, accept the promises of God, and affirm the truth of the Christian faith which is proclaimed in the Bible and confessed in the articles of our Christian faith as taught in this church." The FRCA especially find the expression: "affirm the truth of the Christian faith which is proclaimed in the Bible" weak. In itself these words may appear innocent enough. Although not accusing the RCA of being Barthian, after the theology of Karl Barth and the liberal tendency to find the true preaching within the Bible rather than receiving the Bible itself as historically true and the infallible word of God, we find this wording too weak. The RCA deputies refutation that by way of analogy the *Belgic Confession* would also be Barthian when it confesses that the "...Holy Scripture *contains* the will of God..." overlooks that in Barthian context the word *proclaimed* had and still continues to carry with it the insinuation that the Scripture itself is not the Word of God but that it contains its *proclamation*. The FRCA deputies do not understand why the RCA permits deviation from the more clear and historically Reformed formulation which is still found in their own other *Forms for Infant Baptism*.
3. The FRCA deputies recognize some inconsistency when on the one hand a RCA synod (1994 Art. 19) asks all the churches to abide by its CO and forms of worship and on the other hand another synod (1997 Article 20) allows local churches to administer sacraments without using the adopted forms. Although the documents do not show it, the RCA deputies say that the non-use of the *Lord's Supper Form* is meant for the afternoon worship when those who attend have heard it already. The FRCA response is that those who have not celebrated the Lord's Supper would not have been at the morning service and would not have heard it. Some FRCA churches do

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use an abbreviated form in the afternoon in which all the basic Biblical principles for the celebration of the Lord's Supper are repeated.

4. The RCA churches, according to its synod decision, permits all those who are members of good standing in evangelical churches to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper (see RCA synod Acts 1988 Article 38 and Acts 1994 Article 26). The FRCA is convinced that this should not be done. The FRCA in a recent synod address the PCEA about this matter. Concerning this matter it concluded 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 church of Christ which displays the three marks of the church." (Acts 1998, Article 983 p. 47). In practice in the FRCA only those who are confessing members of the church are permitted to this celebration along with guests of sister-churches who come with a good attestation of doctrine and life. The RCA deputies inform us that there are a number of RCA churches that practice a more restricted fencing of the Lord's Supper than others.
5. The RCA Synod 1994 Acts Articles 29 and 47 shows that the RCA is considering whether children may attend the Lord's Supper. This would deviate from the historic Reformed practice of making public profession of faith after completing catechetical instruction and reaching an age of discretion before attending this celebration.

Liturgy

1. The *Book of Worship* shows that the RCA permits many more hymns than the FRCA. The FRCA, especially after the hard lesson learned from the time of the *secession*, has given preference to the Psalms. Some Hymns rejected by our sister churches in Canada in the 1950-60's are being used in the RCA. Hymns, which are used in the worship services, reflect the theological and spiritual direction and well being of a church. We admit to not having studied all the Hymns used in the RCA but note for now that the churches which have come through the *secession* and *doleatie* have historically given preference to the use of Psalm singing in the worship services.
2. The RCA permit women to lead in reading Scripture during the worship services. When this was mentioned the RCA deputies compare this practice to how in some congregations we permit women to lead congregational singing by playing the organ. The FRCA deputies are not convinced that this is a legitimate comparison. While organ playing accompanies the singing, the reading of Scripture to the official proclamation of the Word. Even though these women who read are not ordained to an office, by reading Scripture in the official worship service

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they are participating in the duty of the office. This practice is in conflict with what Scripture teaches in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

3. The RCA permits members to request matters for prayer during the worship service. Although the FRCA will permit members to request points for prayer before the worship service they are convinced that the RCA practice leads to disorderliness which should not be in the worship service (1 Corinthians 14:40). One can well imagine the kind of disorderliness would be caused by a member making a request which the minister of the Word thinks improper and then the member begins to argue. This kind of activity undermines the holiness of the official gather of the Lord's people and can easily distract from the preaching of God's Word.
4. The RCA permits the clapping and raising of hands in worship services and say that this is permitted on the basis of Ps. 47:1, 28:2. Although the FRCA deputies know that there could be a time and place for this kind of activity, it questions whether this appropriate in the *official worship services*. The references which the RCA deputies make to the Psalms do not prove that this was done in the official gathering of the Lord's people and a quick glance through a Concordance makes us question whether it was ever done in an *official* gathering (Psalm 134:2 may be an exception). This practice does deviate from historic Reformed practice and our initial concern is that it will distract from the preaching of the Word.

Forms for Church discipline

The forms for the *erasure* of baptized and communicant members makes us wonder whether and to what extent this practice has taken the place of church *discipline*. That there is no *Form for excommunication* of baptized members leaves the impression that they were not really considered members in the first place. The RCA deputies emphasize that they do consider children to be included as members of the church. They also say that the FRCA has a form for the discipline of *non-communicant members*, which they argue, is contradictory because *excommunication* is impossible for a *non-communicant* member. They stress that by *erasure* they mean the act of declaring someone to be outside the kingdom of heaven.

Although not necessarily a part of the worship service:

Form for the solemnization of marriage

It is noted that although the RCA deputies point out that the headship of the husband and the submission of the wife taught in Ephesians 5 is mentioned in the *Form*, it is missing from the vows which are made.

Form / Guideline for Funerals

We note that even though the introduction says that funerals are the responsibilities of relatives and friends, this *Form/Guideline* shows that funeral services are held complete with *Call to worship* and *votum and salutation*. This is in agreement with the RCA Church Order Article 76 that says; "The session shall ensure that the Word of God is preached at the funeral of a deceased member of the church." We compare this to the FRCA Church Order Article 68 that in agreement with the Church Order of the Synod of Dort says; "Church services shall not be conducted for funerals." In practice the minister of the Word does speak an *edifying word* to the family members and their friends. The communion of the Lord's people are involved to comfort those that mourn. However, historically the Reformed churches have agreed that this is not be an *official worship service* called by the consistory but such an *official service* should not be held for the dead. Because it is not an *officially called* worship service, it does not have the *official preaching* either. There is good reason to maintain this Reformed distinction.

Conclusion

When reading through the Acts of various RCA Synods which urge the churches to test their practices and adhere to the *Church Order* and agreed forms of worship and noticing that there is no uniformity in the practice of fencing the Lord's table, there is reason to call the RCA to return to the historic Reformed and thus Scriptural practices of worship.

4. Appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia

Section concerning Word and Spirit

In our (FRCA) appeal to the 1994 RCA Synod we sent the following strong appeal:

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.

This was based on the contentious decision of your 1991 Synod about *Word and Spirit*. The 1991 Synod decided that:

Article 41.3. That, regarding the contemporary situation:

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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.

At the 1994 Synod of Canning there were four substantial appeals, two appeals coming from classes. Yet the 1994 Synod roundly rejected them all. 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.

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.

Our conclusion was that what one synod decided was undermined by a contrary decision the next time!

We borrowed the concerns of the RCNZ, your sister-church, on this controversial issue. They too thought that this declaration that occasional prophecy has not ceased, concerned a special gift of the Holy Spirit. 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. 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.*" 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.*" This last sentence of our common confession is important since prophecy often occurs within the context of worship and worship services.

Thus the FRCA appealed 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

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them all. Seeing the danger in this, the RCA should review and rescind its previous decision.

Thanks to the face-to-face meetings held jointly during 1999 we have gained a better insight into your decision of 1991 and also your last decision of 1997 about this important issue. The decisions of your 1991 Synod were apparently designed to protect your churches from Pentecostal practices. In summary the synod ruled:

1. no one is allowed to say "God told me..."
2. no one has the right to call himself a prophet;
3. "prophecies" have no authority among us;
4. "prophecies" are not to be referred to as revelations;
5. "prophecies" have no place in public worship services;
6. "prophecies" should not be sought; and
7. "prophecies" are not the norm for the believer.

According to what we heard from your delegates, these decisions served your bond well, for example, compelling the Coldstream congregation either to change their (pentecostal) practices or leave the bond. They chose to leave. Yet confusion reigned in the aftermath of the 1991 decision. What exactly did synod mean? Appeals to your 1994 Synod against this decision misunderstood its intent, and consequently synod denied them. Our appeal too misread the 1991 decision. What then did "occasional prophecy today" actually mean?

In our joint discussions an example was used.

During one worship service in a forest (in Russia before glasnost), one man suddenly came under the conviction that the KGB was on its way to disrupt their meeting and to arrest the worshippers. He went to the pastor, interrupted the sermon, and told him what he believed the Holy Spirit had told him. The pastor called the elders together, and after a minute of praying, the elders and pastor were also convinced that this was a warning from the Holy Spirit, and so the worship service was disbanded. Within minutes of the worshippers having dispersed in to the forest, the KGB arrived.

Some called this guidance or providence but the synod called it 'occasional prophecy'. The synod used biblical language, but made it clear that this in no way threatens the closure of the canon or the sufficiency of Scripture. The guidelines made that clear. However, this decision still caused much controversy and division.

After the 1994 RCA Synod two classes worked together to resolve the impasse. At the 1997 RCA Synod a 'Revised Word & Spirit Pastoral Guidelines' (art.14) were unanimously adopted. This decision replaced, i.e. superseded, the 1991 decision and guidelines. The statement, "the NT does not appear to indicate that occasional prophecy has ceased," does not reappear. The canonicity, sufficiency, clarity and infallibility of the Scriptures were clearly upheld and stated. "Only that which the Holy Spirit has caused to be recorded in the

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While the FRCA is correct in saying that some of our practices differ from those spelt out in the Church Order of Dordt, they have not been able to demonstrate that any of our practices are contrary to the Scriptures (or confessions).

In the light of this we do not believe that worship practice issues are a genuine hindrance to further dialogue.

5.3 Women in Office

In its appeal document on Women in Office, the FRCA raises concerns which have also been raised at times by delegates to our own Synods. We acknowledged that the hesitancy of the RCA in making any firm decision on the issue of Women in Office lends itself to the interpretation that we are *warming the church members to the idea of women in office*, but we do not believe that this is an accurate interpretation. (In discussions, the FRCA brothers repeatedly expressed the perception that the RCA is going about this matter in the same way as the CRCNA). We conveyed to them that the status quo remains in our churches and our churches are very committed to being faithful to the Word of God, and therefore we want to be meticulous in our study of Scripture, irrespective of how long it takes.

We believe that their concerns about aspects of the Women in Office Report to the last Synod would be shared by a significant number of our members and ministers. We appreciated the effort the FRCA deputies expended in researching the material.

5.4 Word & Spirit

With the decisions made at the 1997 RCA Synod, the contents of the original FRCA appeal in this area were largely superseded. We appreciated the FRCA deputies careful interest in the details of what was a difficult time in our churches, and they were genuinely thankful to God that this time of turmoil and confusion is a thing of the past for our churches.

In their final appeal document on Word & Spirit it will be noted that their main concern with us now is that we leave open the possibility for the continuation of the so called "extra- ordinary" gifts. The FRCA is calling the RCA *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.*

The FRCA deputies felt that our revised (1997) position leaves the door open for the issue of prophecy to resurface in our churches, since we acknowledge that there is some disagreement amongst us as to the precise nature of the non authoritative "prophecy". They feel that the devil will exploit this "weakness" and

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was that they considered our practices and direction to be so contrary to their own, as to make further discussions "frustrating" to both sides. We have pointed out to the FRCA that some of their "concerns" with us, are actually practices in some of their own sister churches! The case of having Sunday schools running concurrent with the worship service is a case in point.

As deputies we believe that the concerns of the FRCA about our sacramental forms are in reality minor issues, and some we would consider to be non-issues. For example they assert that it is inappropriate for the congregation to "proclaim" what God has done for them in Christ, (Book of Forms p 230), and is not in keeping with the Reformed understanding of the prophetic role of the believer. We argued that every believer has the role to proclaim what Christ has done. Scripture never limits proclamation to the minister. Indeed, by partaking of the Lord's Supper, Paul says we *proclaim his death until he comes* (1 Cor 11:26)

Similarly their concern that our Synod has approved the limited non use of the LS form (provided the scriptural exhortation is read) seems petty when their own synod allows an abbreviated use of their form.

The fact that our Book of Worship has more hymns than theirs; that we allow people to raise their hands in worship; that we allow members to provide prayer points during the worship service etc should hardly be a barrier to further discussions!

We consider all these as interesting observations, but we reject the notion that such trivial points can genuinely hinder the possibility of further dialogue.

Genuine differences:

We do not wish to minimise the differences: There are some genuine differences: But we believe that these are limited to:

Lord's Supper

The FRCA is more exclusive in the way she fences the Lord's Supper when it comes to visitors. We allow members in good standing from other evangelical churches to join us at the Lord's Supper, whereas the FRCA requires visitors to have documentary evidence of being a member in good standing in a sister church.

Role of women in Worship

The FRCA considers women reading the Scriptures in church to be a violation of 1 Cor 14:34-35, yet the context of this passage is not an issue of reading Scripture but of asking questions during the worship service.

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It seems to us that your understanding of calling us to faithfulness with regard to inter church relationships, is that you see faithfulness in terms of isolating yourself from those with whom you disagree. Our attitude is: engage yourself with those with whom you disagree.

We note the FRCA warning (final para) calling us to *only acknowledging as true, only those churches that show the marks of the true church*. We believe that the RCA Synod would heartily concur, and would believe that this is already happening. However, it is our assessment that the FRCA in practice interpret the "marks of the true church" as meaning "doing things our way". This approach is causing them to become increasingly isolated within the international family of Reformed churches.

5.1.2 REC Membership

Their concern about our on going membership in the REC is something that significant numbers of our own members and sessions also share. However, we were unable to convince the FRCA deputies that our membership in the REC does not have a theologically corrupting influence on our members and churches. Likewise they were not able to present any substantial evidence to support their contention.

We consider the FRCA ICR appeal document to be a helpful summary presentation of the issues on which we differ in this area.

5.2 Worship Practices.

In the subject area of worship practices our discussions proved very helpful in allaying some of the misconceptions which had found their way into the original (June 97) "appeal" document. We consider the FRCA appeal document on worship practices (see appendix) reflects well their approach to worship practice issues.

During our discussions with the FRCA deputies we repeatedly encountered what we might describe as an unwarranted elevation of the Church Order of Dordt to almost confessional status. This was evident in our discussions about the possibility of the RCA allowing the sequential preaching from the other confessional documents other than the Heidelberg Catechism, and the nature of funeral services. It is also reflected in their appeal paper.

While some of the differences in FRCA and RCA worship practices are interesting, we believe that most of the issues the FRCA raised in their revised appeal on worship practices, are at best trivial, and we fail to see how these differences can be a genuine barrier to further dialogue or discussion with the FRCA. (The term "dialogue" for the FRCA means discussions with a view to moving towards sister church relationship, while "discussions" is a looser term). It should be borne in mind that the reason for the original "appeal" by the FRCA

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forwarded to us, and we responded to it (usually in writing) and then we met to discuss their paper and our response. Subsequent to this, the FRCA brothers would then further revise their paper, and we were asked to bring these final documents expressing their concerns in a particular area, to the attention of the RCA Synod.

This procedure served us well, and their four final "appeal" papers are presented as an appendix.

5. The Issues:

The concerns the FRCA has about the general direction of the RCA lie in four broad areas: our inter church relationships, worship practices, women in office and Word and Spirit. The comments below should be read in conjunction with the FRCA final papers found in the appendix.

5.1 Inter church Relations (ICR)

5.1.1 Underlying differences

We believe that the following quote from our response to the FRCA clarifies the underlying, fundamental difference in our approaches to ICR:

The RCA holds the view that all true churches have a God given unity in Christ. This unity is not something that we seek to establish: It is something which is God given, and this unity exists on account of our being one in Jesus Christ. (John 17) Our duty before God is to give practical expression to the God given unity.

As RCA we therefore seek to give expression to this God given unity by considering what might be an appropriate level of relationship, given the geographical distance, our historical ties, and the practicality of maintaining the ties.

The difference between our philosophy of inter church relationships and yours could be described as the RCA accepting its blood relatives for who they are, while the FRCA wanting to choose its family.

*Thus we tolerate a wider range of levels of relationship. We note that you insist that before you can have a sister church relationship with any church, it must only have relatives that are acceptable to you. We note from reading *Una Sancta* that this philosophy is increasingly isolating you from other Reformed Churches. The very fact that the PCEA has entered into sister church relationship with the Free Reformed Church in the Netherlands is creating problems for you, since you have declined to form a sister church relationship with the PCEA.*

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The FRCA Deputies prepared their letter of "appeal" (dated 26/6/1997) to our Synod and to each RCA session. Our Synod 1997 (Art 39:10) decided to write to the FRCA to express:

- 1. Our thanksgiving to the Lord that the difficulties pertaining to the events of 1944 are no longer a barrier to further dialogue*
- 2. Our belief that the decisions of their recent Synod and 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 FRCA Synod 1998 dealt with this request. It agreed (Art 78:2) to *appoint new Deputies with the mandate to convey our concerns and appeal by a few face-to-face meetings.*

This then paved the way for a series of 5 meetings in the latter half of 1999.

3. Meetings

At the first meeting we conveyed to the FRCA deputies that within our churches there had been wide spread joy that the events of 1944 were no longer a stumbling block to our relationship. But when the FRCA decided not to continue discussions with the RCA, the perception in our churches was that the FRCA was looking for an excuse to avoid further contact.

We also expressed our personal disappointment, that given the good relationships we had established through the earlier dialogue (re 1944), not one of their deputies had bothered to even informally discuss some of the issues contained in their original "appeal". We pointed out that by means of an informal chat we could have eliminated many of the misconceptions and factual inaccuracies which their original "appeal" contained.

The meetings were held in a very friendly atmosphere, and the FRCA provided excellent hospitality for the meetings, which were chaired in a very helpful way by Rev W Huizinga. We felt that the FRCA deputies were genuinely interested in knowing the state of affairs in the RCA and listened attentively. The value of the meetings is clearly visible in the very different nature and tone of the 4 revised "appeal documents, when compared to the original "appeal". Many of the misconceptions were removed, and many misunderstandings were clarified.

4. Procedure:

The FRCA deputies pointed out that their Synod had mandated them only to present the original appeal to us. As some things had changed due to the passage of time, they agreed to revise the "appeal" by presenting 4 working papers under the headings of: Inter church relations, Worship Practices, Women in Office, and Word and Spirit. These had been the four main areas of concern in the original "appeal". As each working paper was prepared, it was

Appendix 4a

Report to RCA Synod

Part of Committee for Ecumenical Relations Report to RCA Synod 2000

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

We, the FRC Dialogue sub-committee of the CER, respectfully submit our report to Synod under the following headings:

1. Personnel
2. Background
3. Meetings
4. Procedures
5. The Issues
 1. Inter church relations
 1. Underlying differences
 2. REC Membership
 2. Worship practices
 3. Women in Office
 4. Word and Spirit
6. Conclusion

1. Personnel

The Synod 1997 appointees to this sub committee (Rev Peter Abetz, Brs Victor Eikelboom and Nick Hemelaar) were all willing to serve in this role. However, as FRCA committee consisted of 7 men, it was considered prudent to coopt BR J de Hoop and Rev P Kossen. Both these brothers provided valuable experience and insight in the course of our discussions.

2. Background:

The 1991 Synod had sought to again make meaningful contact with the FRCA. This led to deputies being able to prepare a mutually agreed statement about the events of 1944 and the way the RCA dealt with these events in its early history. Our Synod 1994 (Art 61:6) adopted the statement. The 1996 FRCA Synod did likewise, noting that this *ends the discussion concerning the events of the fifties and sixties.* (Art 71:1).

Rather than paving the way for further discussions with a view to coming to a better understanding of each other, the FRCA Synod 1996 instructed its 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.* (Art 71:2)

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- b) To instruct the CER to coopt several members to prepare appropriate responses to the FRCA appeal documents, and to forward these, via the deputies for dialogue with the FRCA, to the FRCA.
- c) To appoint deputies for further dialogue/discussions with the FRCA in the hope that the FRCA agrees to discuss the issues in our letter of appeal and the documents that will be prepared by the personnel from the study committees.

Deputies have not yet received the responses mentioned in the decision, nor the appeal regarding our view of the New Testament Church.

3. Deputies note from press reports that Rev. F.J. van Hulst has been examined by the RCA Classis Tasmania to allow him to preach in their churches. The official decision on this matter was not available in time for inclusion in this report.

Brotherly greetings,

J.L. van Burgel
(Secretary)

13 June 2000.

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mercy. In smaller sessions deacons may be invited to be present to assist the session in a non-voting capacity.

Synod also gave sessions the freedom to admit both men and women to the Diaconate. Those who are admitted to the diaconate are to be ordained and installed. A revised form for the ordination of deacons will be prepared. A separate Pastoral letter will be formulated by Synod for the benefit of the churches. Sessions were advised to exercise pastoral sensitivity in implementing this decision.

A letter of "appeal" will be sent to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia requesting that they re-examine their understanding of the nature of the NT church, as their view is increasingly isolating them from other Reformed churches worldwide.

As the historical reasons for the barriers between the Presbyterian Church of Australia and our churches are no longer issues, Synod agreed to regard the Presbyterian Church as churches in partnership with the RCA. (This is the lowest level of being churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, and allows for occasional pulpit exchange, and acceptance of one another's members after some inquiry with them.

The request to change the name of our denomination from Reformed Churches of Australia to Christian Reformed Churches of Australia was adopted.

A copy of the actual decision regarding the Free Reformed Churches was obtained:

Article 51. Committee for Ecumenical Relations.

Synod decided:

- a) To forward a "letter of appeal" to the FRCA Synod containing the following points:
 - i) Thanking them for allowing their deputies to have some face to face discussions with our deputies;
 - ii) Commending them for the positive and genuine manner in which the discussions were held;
 - iii) That we recognise that there are areas in which we have different practices, but that we believe those differences should not prevent further discussions;
 - iv) Appealing to them to re-examine their understanding of the nature of the New Testament church (their view of the nature of the church is increasingly isolating them from other Reformed Churches world wide);
 - v) Requesting that they authorise their deputies to meet with our deputies in face to face discussions on the issues raised in our appeal.

Appendix 4

Supplementary Report on Reformed Churches of Australia

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches)

P.O. Box 191, Armadale, Western Australia. 6112.

Fax: 61 9 497 3280

To Synod of the Free Reformed Churches Of Australia,
Convening Church West Albany.

Dear Brothers,

Please find the supplementary report on the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA).

1. Attached (**appendix 4a**) is the report from the "FRC dialogue sub committee of the CER" of the RCA to their synod. Our appeal to the RCA was added to that report as an appendix.

2. The RCA Synod met in May 2000 and the following decisions were reported in their official press releases:

On the matter of children attending the Lord's Supper, it was agreed that the position taken in Reformation history is that children were not to partake in the Lord's Supper until such time as they had professed their faith. This view had been based on their understanding of 1 Corinthians 11. It was agreed that where a session is satisfied that a child (10+years) has genuine faith, appropriate to their age, then a child may be admitted to the LS upon public profession of faith, using the existing forms, in which Q2 is slightly modified by adding "to the best of my understanding". Pastoral guidelines were adopted. A study committee was appointed to conduct a Biblical and historical study of the issues raised by the second question of our profession of faith forms, and to relate the results to the question of children and young people making profession of faith and or partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Synod agreed to change the structure of sessions. Sessions will now be made up of minister(s) and elders. The session will be responsible for the spiritual well being of the church members and for the general government of the church. The diaconate will be composed of the deacons of the church. Those tasks, which belong distinctively to the office of deacon, are the responsibility of the diaconate who shall be accountable to the session for their work of Christian

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the ICRC. After these reports from the different deputies, the items of the agenda were discussed, in total 23 items.

Three committees were appointed. I was also appointed to one of them. It dealt with many items: review of the C.O., relationship between the GGRI and GGMM, deputies report on I.C.R.C., candidates for deputies, household rules for deputies for relation abroad, house for home stay Kupang in connection for a house for Rev. Madah- Biha and report on the Adat.

In conclusion I can say that there was great appreciation that the deputies had sent someone to their synod. Bonds were again renewed and new bonds laid. I like to recommend that these ties, which we have, remain and if anything, be strengthened. Let us as much as possible be a hand and a foot to each other, where we see in that part of Jesus Christ's Church gathering work a struggle to remain faithful to God's Word.

With brotherly greetings J.Bosveld.

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reformed education. A special mention was made about the support that the churches receive from the Australia churches.

A group of about 18 families have broken away from the GMIT who has a liberal tendency, and these now have some strong contact with the GGMM. Synod accepted them as a church group and will take spiritual care for them. They had started to build their own church building and synod will encourage the churches to hold collections for them. The estimated cost is Rp. 15,000,000.

A discussion took place to change the name of the church from GGMM to GGRM, which stand for Gereja Gereja Reformatie Musyafir. In principal it was decided to accept it, but explain it first to the congregations, and call another synod together in a years time to make the final decision. They still haven't been officially accepted by the government, and are continuing to fight it.

On Friday night Deputies were announced, and classis were formed. Synod was closed. On Saturday we travelled back to Kupang by boat. On Sunday I visited the Musyafir church in the morning and in the afternoon the Reformatie (GGRI) church in Bakunase.

On Monday afternoon 23 August at 4pm the Seminar and the Synod of the GGRI was opened by Rev. Mada Biha by prayer and scripture reading Phil. 2:1-11 This was followed by a sermon on this part of Scripture, which would also be the theme of the synod.

After the different addresses from Holland, Irian Jaya, Australia and the GGMM, the official opening took place by a government official. In between we were entertained by a choir from the GMIT, a neighboring church. After the opening we were served with refreshment

The next day the Seminar was opened on the topic "Leadership." There were four speakers, all with allotted time. After every speech a discussion took place with only half an hour for lunch. The whole day was taken up by it. The first speaker A. Watuwaya spoke about leadership in general, and emphasized that nobody was born as a leader, they need development and the learning on the way. The second Rev. Oosterhuis spoke about Christian leadership. And explained the difference between church and secular leaders, and than pointed out the offices in the church and their interrelationship. Rev. Madah Biha was next, he pointed out that in the last decade in spite of growth in the churches, the church leaders are still unable to excise the Presbyterian system of church government. The reason is: lack of comprehension on church order and doctrine and that causes the lack of control toward the ministers. The ministers then exercise dominocratie. The last speaker Rev. Y. Dethan spoke on the practical approaches, which cause a lot of discussion. In the evening an evaluation of the day took place, with a positive conclusion.

On Wednesday morning the moderators were chosen. Rev. Doko was chosen as chairman. All day was taken up by reading the acts of the previous synod, for correction, and what items had to be put on the agenda.

Thursday, after opening in a Christian manner, Bible reading, prayer and devotion. Synod dealt with a few reports, the Theological school, Jacobson, and

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The relation with the Australian churches was discussed at length. I was asked to give the reason why we as Australia churches have not accepted them as sister churches. In the first place I mentioned that we are still not sure about the position of women in office, although we realize that they are under different circumstances than we are. We all have to apply and live by what Scripture teaches us in all these things. Another item that concerns us is the observance of the Sunday. I then referred to what had been stated in my address to them, that we as churches in Australia are very willing to help and assist them. I also reminded them of the credential letter where in the Australian churches express themselves of their willingness to help.

Disappointment was expressed that they never had an official letter of reply to their request, to be accepted as sister churches. In reply to that I pointed out that the Australian churches had sent two delegates, in Sep. 1997, especially to talk this over with them. I pleaded with them not to push the issue of sister church relationship too much. Let there be a growing toward each other. I put the question to them why they are in a hurry for this sister church relation. In conclusion they drafted the following letter.

To the Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

GGMM in NTT
Synod 1999 in Elim - Kolla - Nggodimeda - Central Rote.

By the grace of the Triune God, the synod of GGMM - NTT on August 19-20 made the following decision.

After reading and evaluating of the decision made on April 12 - 13 1996, in Ebenhaezer - Tarus church building, regarding the relationship with the FRCA to be developed as sister churches relationship. And after hearing the explanation that the FRCA has not accepted us as sister churches, explained by Br. Bosveld, also concerning the Sunday's observing and women in office the Synod is thankful for these kinds of information's and objections.

Therefore, the Synod decided to keep the last decision made in April 1996, and we still pray and leave this matter to the Lord according to His time and will. We also like to keep the contact in every respect of church life with the hope that the FRCA, as the upholder of the torch of the Reformation, may be willing to guide and direct the GGMM in NTT by giving suggestions and support in order to improve, help solve the weakness and problems where necessary.

Synod of GGMM 1999

Chairman
Rev. J. G. Dethan. M. Div

Secretary
Rev. M. Z. Bulan.

Rev. Eli Fangidae as deputy gave an overview of the work that had been done. The relation with the government, the visit to the I.C.R.C. and Remy Fanggidae's proposed travel to Holland under a special scheme for further

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this item. They asked me who should sign these minutes as they called them. I explained to them that I was very surprised, and that it was foreign to me that they discussed these acts to approve them. I promised I would send them the book from Rev. Van Oene "With common consent" so that they could study this matter further. The position of two ministers was discussed. One had left the church, namely Rev. C. B. Bagu who left to join the G.K.S. And the other case was Rev. Paujay from the Goosen group who wants to join. Three ministers will further examine him, because his knowledge is limited. It was very nice to experience all this, that it was discussed in a brotherly way. At eight o'clock at night I addressed the classis on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. After this, the classis was adjourned to the following Monday because the agenda was not finished. The next day I travelled back home, back to the land of plenty. How good it is to make these visits and encourage the brothers. Although the synod was not held, the visit was well worthwhile. Let us be thankful that we are allowed to be a help to each other.

Second part of the visit from the 17th to 28th August.

The Synod of the GGMM (Musyafir Churches) took place on the Island of Roti, on the 19th and 20th of August. At 3 o'clock Rev. Dothan opened the gathering with a sermon on Ps. 121. The theme, "Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." The deputy for relation with churches abroad, Rev. Eli Fangidae, then addressed the brothers. The representatives of the churches from the Netherlands, Australia and G.G.R.I. then had the floor to address the synod. After this the representative from the government opened the synod on behalf of the government. He pointed out that both the church and the government are God's servants, the church must preach the gospel and the government must see to it that people live a good and moral life. He used as example the eighth commandment. The church must preach that people are not allowed to steal so as to prevent that people are doing wrong, whilst the government punishes people if they do wrong. He then declared the synod open.

At seven o'clock we started again. There were representatives from seven churches. The first point was who belongs to the synod and who not? Is it only the delegates from the churches or also the deputies appointed by the previous synod? After a long debate it was decided that only delegates had voting rights. Rev. Dethan was chosen as chairman. The churches had sent three letters of instructions.

The first item next morning was the relation with the Reformation church (GGRI). The relationship seems to be growing, both in church and socially. Next item was the Theological school. Rev. Oosterhuis gave an update on the situation of the school property in Waimarangu. Both Rev. Doko and Rev. Radja received their degree in Surabaya. The school is still not registered but they are seriously busy with it now. To register a foundation needs to be formed and this item is on the forthcoming GGRI synod.

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through this custom and tradition. A deaconess has had her position already for twenty five years and with it also being treasurer of the church. Now they are trying to teach them the difference between the office in the church and other commitments. This is also, according to Yonson, part of the result of last year's office bearer's conference, where I held the paper on the task of the elder in the church. In connection with all this Yonson asked if we would have any study material or a course for the training to be an office bearer.

Another struggle concerned whether to hold the synod. I could encourage them to stick to the church order. We have to follow the decision of the major assemblies, unless it conflict with God's Word Art. 31. It was very good, and of great benefit, to have these talks and be able to stimulate each other. Synod was postponed and nearly cancelled, for the wrong reason. Remy and Yonson seem to stand up against this and want to follow the reformed way. I reminded the brothers that they are shepherds of the flock and must lead them and guide them and teach them the way of the reformed tradition, for that is the basis on which we have contact with each other. I reminded them of Isaiah 28:16 " That he who builds the rock that is laid in Zion, Who ever believes will not act hastily."

On Friday 25th and Saturday 26th, I was allowed to address the Youth Conference, on the subject that we are " God's Fellow Workers." There was a good attendance of about 85 youth and also very good participation. In this field also you feel that there is a limited understanding, although some of the questions had a lot of depth to them. Hopefully we have sown some seed for further thought on this subject, at least because of this conference. Mission Aid will help some to try to fulfil their task as God's fellow worker.

With Br. and Sr. De Man, who came the previous day, we attended the Galilea church of the GGMM on Sunday morning. Rev. Remy Fanggihdae led the service and there was a very good attendance. In the afternoon the catechism preaching and psalm singing has been introduced. The attendance for the afternoon service has risen from about 25 last year to 75 at the moment. In the morning the attendance was round the 200. In the morning they have hymn singing, for the psalms are unknown. That is the reason why they try to implement it in the afternoon service, with Mary-Lynne playing on the organ. In the afternoon I attended the Reformation church in Baku-nasie. After the sermon they celebrated the Lord's Supper. Sunday evening we had another very nice get together.

On Monday morning I left for Sumba, stayed for three days with Rev. Doko, and visited a lot of brothers. On Tuesday I attended a classis meeting and was straight away promoted as adviser, so I could sit with the brothers at the tables and share meals with them. It was a good experience. The items were discussed thoroughly and in a brotherly manner. One item surprised me very much. The minutes of the previous classis were read and discussed at length, and after each church agreed, they were adopted. It took nearly two hours for

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Geraja Gereja Musayfir Reformasi (Pilgrim Reformed Churches, with 'Reformed' replacing 'Evangelical'). If this is not accepted by the government, they then discuss joining up with the GGRI. In that way they would automatically become our sister churches.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRI and GGMR subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI and GGMR in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
4. To financially support Pila Njuka (along with his wife) to study at Hamilton, and to monitor his progress;
5. To adopt the "Guidelines for Support" and to ask the deputies to keep refining these guidelines;
6. To monitor and report developments in the GGMR;
7. To provide limited support to Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him;
8. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 3,4 and 7 above,
9. To confirm the decision of deputies to pay from the synodical treasury the travel costs of Rev Madah Bia, and
10. To send delegates to the next Conference of the Indonesian churches.

Report of J. Bosveld's visit to Kupang and Sumba from 21-6-99 to 1-7-99.

Arriving at the airport of Kupang on the 22-6-99 at twelve o'clock in the afternoon, I was welcomed by Rev. Remy Faggidae, Rev. Yonson Dethan and his wife Mary-Lynn, and a few others from the Musyafir churches.

For the next three days we had a lot of personal talks about church life etc. There is a struggle in the church concerning quite a few items. The Musyafir churches are trying to implement the requirement that office bearers have a three-year term. Although both the Reformation churches of Indonesia (GGRI) as well as the Musyafir churches have the same church order as we have, in practical terms it has always been difficult to implement a three-year term of office. One of the main reasons is that it comes down to feelings, that if a person after three years is replaced he would feel demoted. This could well come from being a tribal nation, that once you have a position, you do not lose it unless something drastically has gone wrong where by you automatically lose your position. Now the Musyafir churches have called for nomination for office bearers. It is remarkable that out of the ten names for the nomination for the office no sisters are on the list. We must keep in mind that some positions in the office are held for twenty five years or more, and that it is difficult to break

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learn English, then to learn the biblical languages in English rather than in Indonesian, readjustment to the home culture upon return, and the choosing of a partner from another culture, while in Canada, were highlighted. To send someone to Indonesia was seen as more effective one man can teach more than one student at a time, a minister can also help in the normal, junior theological training as well as offer other assistance, and he can be very useful for deputies at home. However, since the conference did not take place, we have not been able to discuss this with the churches in Indonesia. They need to discuss this possibility, adopt the idea, and request such help. Also, if they did request it, it was suggested that such a minister should be installed as minister of our sister-churches in Indonesia, rather than remain a minister of one of our (sister-) churches. This would respect their existence as a bond of churches and also help the minister in his work as well as expedite visa applications. Once more, these possibilities need to be explored with our sister-churches in Indonesia. At this point we raise it to keep the churches informed.

- f **“To provide limited support to Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him.”** On a continual basis we support Yonson monthly for his computer, telephone as well as a little for travelling expenses so he can fulfil his task in the instruction of other people. The email contact has been very effective and helps us greatly in keeping up-to-date with events in the churches there. Yonson helps build up the reformed character of the church in Kupang (Galilee church) but also helps build up the other churches in the bond. He visits them, teaches their leaders, and gives instruction. He also contacts the churches that left the bond, to see if reconciliation and return is possible. Yonson’s wife travelled to WA during the tense and terrible times when many E Timor refugees came to West Timor. She was in danger. Her time in WA was used fruitfully to organise help for these refugees.
- g **“To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.”** The reports on visits to these churches give information how we have exercised sister relations.
- h **“To monitor and report developments in the GGMM.”** The relationship between the two federations (GGRI & GGMM) seems to be growing. They have some pulpit exchanges - this of course is possible only in Kupang, Timor. The youth at times organise events together. Yonson has been invited to teach in Waimarangu, the theological training center of our sister-churches. So the acceptance of each other improves. Since the split of the GGMM in Dec. 1995, they have been trying to be recognised by the government under their original name, but without success. The other group was allowed to keep the name with a small alteration. This led the GGMM to hold a special synod on the 19-12-1999 where it was decided to apply to the government for a new name, namely GGMR, which stands for

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- (2) Support should occur only if the supporting church(es) cannot reasonably be expected to do it, and if the support is essential or important for building up church-life;
 - (3) Support should respect and maintain the responsibility of the churches supported;
 - (4) Support should help to activate churches rather than make them inactive;
 - (5) Support should aim to make itself superfluous, i.e. not become permanent;
 - (6) Support must not engender jealousies, i.e. it must be given evenly and consistent with that offered to other parties;
 - (7) Support should be aimed at the spiritual level of those supported;
 - (8) Support should be in agreement with the laws of the country, unless those laws conflict with the Word of God;
 - (9) And support should be supervised, and an accounting including an evaluation of its effectiveness should be given.
- f) The deputies at home shall keep the churches, which offer this support, informed so that support can also be accompanied with prayer for these churches. Such information should be offered at the start of a project, during the time a project is in progress and at its completion. At its completion an evaluation of the project can be given.
 - g) The deputies shall report to the next synod about any support given.
 - h) The deputies will have an independent, competent third party audit its books and this audit will be passed on to the churches.
- e) **“To send delegates to the 1999 Conference of the Indonesian churches.”** This conference should have taken place in July/99 in Boma, Irian Jaya. Owing to difficulties at that place, the conference was not organised. This meant that our planning for it did not materialise. At this time we do not know when it will take place. This conference would have discussed setting up a bond of Reformed Churches of Indonesia which would meet in a general synod once every three years, and with the three areas each having their own regional synod. Also, it would spend much time on theological training, something in which we are heavily involved. We can report that some preparation has been done on our part. The Dutch deputies were contacted for their input. The faculty at the Theological University at Kampen responsible for missiology were also asked. While in Hamilton, one of our deputies spoke to the faculty at the Theological College about this matter. In all cases the advice was the same, namely, that it is much more effective to sponsor a well-trained minister to go Indonesia to offer theological training, also at a senior level, to students there in their culture and in their own language, rather than take them out of their culture and language to Australia and then to Canada for a lengthy period of time. Practical problems such as the years needed to

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up to standard. All this led us to decide to send him to Canada. Pila takes English and Greek at Redeemer College in Hamilton and studies Hebrew with a tutor, a theological student at the Hamilton Theological College. At the moment 3-3-2000 he is waiting for the result of his English TOEFL test. The indications are that he would have scored enough points for being allowed at the college in Hamilton. With Greek he is also doing well. Recently he had a exam for his Hebrew (he gets private lessons), and the result that he scored was 81%. Hopefully he enrolled at the Theological College in Sep. 2000 for the four year course in senior theological studies.

- d **“to formulate a draft policy regarding the support to these churches (GGRI & GGMM), which is to include**
- **guidelines defining the nature of support to be given**
 - **a reporting framework for information back to the churches**
 - **a way of measuring the effectiveness of support given.**

Your deputies consulted the guidelines used by the BBK. It is essential that uniformity of purpose is maintained since we both support the same churches. Also, deputies used the existing mandate (to build up the reformed character of the churches there), since it was felt that our limited support should have a specific aim. The following guidelines are proposed. The term ‘guidelines’ is taken purposely since your deputies feel that this proposal is a first attempt and will need refining. We also feel somewhat out of our depth on this matter. Doing this type of work from one’s armchair, without a representative in the field, is very difficult. Yet we have drafted the following GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT.

- a) There shall be good cooperation and coordination with sister-churches, who also offer support to the same churches. The same principle applies to aid-organisations within our own churches.
- b) Each request for support must be channelled via the respective deputies of their churches. Support will be sent via these deputies, who will be asked to supervise its distribution and use and who will be asked for a report and an account.
- c) Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.
- d) Each request for support should be well documented and include
 - (1) what initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - (2) what purpose the project has;
 - (3) what length of time it will take;
 - (4) and the expected goal of the project.
- e) Support given must keep in mind certain practical principles:
 - (1) Support shall be directed as a matter of preference to the whole bond of churches rather than to specific churches or to individuals;

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elders' conference and youth seminar has been arranged for late May, beginning June 2000. The subject for the youth conference is "You are Gods Stewards," and the topic for the elders' conference is yet to be decided.

- b **"To support the GGRI (and GMM) in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches."** Your deputies and the Free Reformed Australia World Relief Fund as well as privately could support these churches in being able to hold their synods and conferences as well as looking after a lot of refugees from East Timor. During this inter-synodical period much support needed to be given for Pila and Yohana Njuka and therefore less aid was given for other projects. We hope in the time ahead to support these churches again with reformed literature. Also, in combination with the BBK of our Dutch sister-churches we are sponsoring Rev Madah Bia of the GGRI (Kupang, Timor) to come to the 2000 Synod and to stay for about three months for English studies. The BBK will support him for the English studies, while we will pay his travel costs. The deputies of the GGRI have also recommended a student, Yawan, to come to Australia for English studies.

- c **"To financially support Pila Njuka (along with his wife) to study at Hamilton if it is considered responsible to do so, and to monitor his progress."** Soon after Synod 1998 Pila and Yohana's visa ran out, and they had to return back to Indonesia, this period was from Sep. 1998 to Jan. 1999. During this time a synod took place in our sister-churches and the question came up there whether Pila indeed should be further sponsored after his marriage. Their synod upheld their recommendation of Pila for further studies. Thus he was invited to come back to Australia in January/99 when he took up his English lessons again. In this period of time he also received lessons in Greek from the Rev. Huizinga and in Hebrew from Rev. De Boer. In May Pila did his TOEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language). Although according to the teachers from the College he did quite well, his score (three attempts were made altogether over some years) was not high enough to be able to go to the Hamilton college. After review we decided that our expectations had been unrealistic. It takes some years even for our students to become competent in the required languages. We should not expect more, but rather less from a student in Indonesia. So we decided to persevere with Pila, but a problem arose. Pila's score in English was not high enough; he had not as yet received enough instruction in Greek and Hebrew, and their visa was running out again. An attempt to extend his visa so he could study half-time in English and half-time for Hebrew and Greek was turned down by the government authorities. Thus we turned to Canada, where English, Hebrew and Greek studies were possible. Also, the Hamilton Theological College provisionally accepted him as student on condition that his languages were

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Our final adventure in the Philippines had to do with the taxis that were to take us from the nation to the international airport in Manila. After landing in Manila, as instructed, we flagged down a taxi to take us to the international airport. He was going to charge us the ridiculous price of 500 rupees. We decided to walk. However, before going very far we realized that our bag were not all that light so we went back and talked with some else and got a taxi, specifically set up for those going from one terminal to the next. The cost was 90 rupees! Quite a difference and real reminder of the need to be on our toes when visiting these countries.

We boarded Singapore airlines flight number SQ 73 and left the Philippines behind. With this comes the conclusion of the report of the visit to the Philippines and the beginning of the report of the visit made to India.

This report has been written in a diary like format but it appears to us the most helpful way in which to report to you what has actually happened. A more formal proposal for deputies will accompany this report.

The visitors:

J. Bosveld

P.K.A. de Boer

D. Indonesia.

REPORT ON THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN INDONESIA – GGRI & GGMM.

This report follows the mandate given by the last synod. The mandates from synod concerning our sister-churches, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) and for the Gereja Gereja Musayfir Masehi (GGMM) are combined in certain areas for convenience, because the mandate was the same, and also because our work was done in combination for both bonds.

- a **“To continue to visit the synods of the GGRI subject to available finance” and “if invited, to continue to visit the synods of GGMM, subject to available finance.”** Our contact with the Indonesia Churches has been very good, with both the GGRI and the GGMM. Our deputy, br. Bosveld, was able to attend both of their synods (see attached reports). And on a personal basis he was invited to attend and deliver a paper on their elders' conference. The subject was "The Elder as Watchman." This was arranged for both federations of the churches in Sep. 1998. Also this brother was invited to attend and deliver a paper at a youth seminar, with the subject, "You are Gods' Fellow-Workers" (see report for this). Another

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meet in the hotel around 5:00 to briefly talk about what we have all observed. Seeing that we had nothing else to do, in the morning we walked through town to the docks and watched some ferries come and go. We went back to the hotel and rest for a bit. Later in the afternoon we walked over to a shopping mall and browsed in a book store there. Back in the hotel for a shower and then we went down stairs to meet with br. Zuidema and Rev. Oosterhuis. We explained to them the events of the previous day. Rev. Oosterhuis had been unsure whether he should still meet with Rev. Vingno. Br. Zuidema was even more unsure. We encouraged him to go that extra mile to speak with Rev. Vingno and Rev. Salem also because they had recently received the letter from the Dutch churches. Rev. Vingno who knew that Rev. Oosterhuis was in the Philippines said something about him not even bothering to look him up while in the past he, even though they did not always agree, had shown hospitality. At this meeting no decision was made. We left our comments with these Dutch brothers for their own discretion. We also talked about what the role of the Australian churches might be in the Philippines. Br. Zuidema again stressed the need for good reformed literature in the English language would be very helpful. The magazine, *Thy Way* was mentioned as a possible tool. Some sample copies will be sent.

This meeting was cut short because we had to hurry over to the home of Ray and Linda for dinner. When we arrived dinner was still being prepared. These people live next to the cemetery. Because it was *All Saints Day* there was a big "celebration" at the cemetery. Family members of the deceased lit candles by all the graves. We walked through the cemetery to see what was happening. At one end a stage was set up where a band played and gospel rock was sung. It proved that Roman Catholic superstition is still very much alive in the Philippines. It was really sad to realize that these people who live in much greater financial poverty than we do must also suffer this kind of spiritual poverty. We went back to the house and enjoyed dinner and said our farewells.

After dinner we were brought back to the hotel. Rev. Niangar stayed with us for a while giving us an opportunity to talk about his book of sonnets that he had given. We also talked a bit about the pamphlets published by Rev. Vingno, one about his suggestion for a *Reformed Political Alternative* and the other entitled *Kristoism*. This second pamphlet will need some more study but the initial impression is that that it mixes theology too much with philosophy. After bidding farewell Rev. Niangar left and we headed for bed.

The next morning after breakfast and catching up on making some notes, sr. Zuidema brought us to the airport. Rev. Oosterhuis and br. Zuidema had headed for one of the other islands where they hoped to meet some from the PCP. At the airport we briefly met with sr. A. De Vries. She had come on the same plane on which we would be heading back to Manila.

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We were back in the hotel by 7:00 and before finishing our dinner Rev. Vingno and Rev. Salem came in. A little later Rev. Niangar also came. We now heard a bit more of the troubles they have had with the GKNV. Rev. Salem had brought with him a article of *Lux Mundi* about the work that was being done in the Philippines. It said that the author was br. R. Zuidema. They were upset because this article spoke about the good and successful work they were doing in the Philippines while in fact nothing much had been done yet. A few issues later there was an apology in this paper saying that the author was not R. Zuidema. They were not happy with this apology because their point was not who had written it but much more, what had been written. They said that this shows the kind of people that were helping them, namely those who could boast about the good work they were doing abroad and by it appeal to others to support it who in turn would also feel good about themselves. We briefly tried to explain to them that what is printed in the press at times tends to be exaggerated and that they should not be making such an issue of this point. They were also upset that the Dutch churches had decided to terminate their sister church relations with them on the grounds that were given. One of the grounds was that the FRCP federation was not functioning. They insist that it is functioning quite well. After all, they just had a classis meeting a few days ago. The other ground, that one can really no longer speak about a federation of FRCP, they contend, was simply not true. They gave us a copy of the letter in which they address the Dutch churches about this whole matter. In this letter they do express the desire to be fair to br. Zuidema and think that he might be too busy with his work in the FRCP so that he overlooked some of the things happening among them in the FRCP. They reiterated that they could do quite well without Dutch churches. At the time, we did not consider ourselves competent to make a fair determination about the whole situation.

After Rev. Vingno and Rev. Salem left, Rev. Niangar told us that what we heard was not entirely true. According to him the problem really started with questioning some of Rev. Vingno's teachings. These teachings have been talked about at a classis meeting. However, this was a classis meeting at which Rev. Niangar did not attend and from what we understood, did not make a pronouncement about the teachings that were being questioned. It was already getting kind of late when Rev. Niangar left. After briefly talking over the events of the day with the two of us and making some notes it was more than bed time.

The concluding talks

Nothing was scheduled for the next day, Monday. We did not rush in the morning. We had breakfast and then attended to some personal needs, doing laundry. We called the Zuidema's home because the prepared schedule said something about meeting someone from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. We were told that this was cancelled. It was suggested that we go for dinner to the home of Ray and Linda that evening. Before going there we would

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We arrived at the Bacolod FRCP a few minutes before the service began. We introduced ourselves to Rev. J. Vingno and were introduced to the members that we waiting for the service to begin. The service proceeded in much the same way as the one in Talisay. The text was from Luke 16 about the rich man and the poor Lazareth. We were first told that there is some difference of opinion whether this is a parable or not. The conclusion was that it really does not matter so long as the message was understood. Perhaps that it is okay to say that about this particular passage but the stress on the importance of understanding the message and not worry about whether this is a parable or not left us too much with the concern of how some teach that it really does not matter whether various parts of Scripture are historical or not, so long as the message is understood. The sermon continued to explain how a rich man could have fun watching the poor Lazareth pick up the crumbs like a dog. It becomes like a game for him. This was applied by speaking of how the rich often abuse the poor. In the end we were left with the impression that more of a social gospel than the gospel of forgiveness through Christ's blood was being preached.

After the service we sat down together for a while and again explained who we were. It did not take very long for us to understand that they suspected we were there as a ploy of the Dutch brothers to get them back on board. We assured them that we are from a different bond of churches. We openly told them that we have our differences with them as well. Mentioned were ICRC membership, the new form for marriage the Dutch churches have adopted and that they let the women vote for office-bearers. Rev. Vingno mentioned, with appreciation, how the Australian delegates had spoken up in the ICRC meeting in Canada about the Apartheid question. Concerning the Dutch churches, they thought that they were too imperialistic and that they can rule over all these churches by telling them just how they must do things. We were told that they can do fine without the Dutch churches and do not need them. When asked just where the problem lay, we were told that it mainly had to do with money. It was getting past lunch time and we agreed to meet in the hotel that evening at 8:30. We walked from the venue of this church service to the hotel. We suggested inviting also Rev. Niangar and Rev. Oosterhuis. Concerning Rev. Niangar they had no problem but did not really say anything about Rev. Oosterhuis. We thought it would be better just to ask Rev. Niangar to be there and see what happens from there on. After a bite to eat in our rooms we took a Sunday afternoon snooze.

At 4:30 we were picked up for the evening worship service in the RFCP Bata. The sermon was on 1 Peter 3:14-18. There was clearly a good concentration of exegesis of the passage but we must admit that we found it a bit hard to follow because of the moving back and forth from Ilongo to English hindered the continuity too much. We did miss the actual pronouncement of the benediction by laying on of hands.

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After these phone calls we had to hurry downstairs. We waited in the restaurant for the Rev. B. Niangar and Rev. B. Pakingking family whom we had invited to dinner. They came around 7:00. After introduction to the wives and children and ordering the food the discussion first was a continuation of the seminar with regard to the frequency of the Lord Supper. In the context of emphasizing how the Lord uses the means of grace to bring His people to faith and that the preaching is the first means that has been given, attention was focused on how often among the church eternal election receives a distorted emphasis. This distorted emphasis undermines the use of the means of grace. Rev. Niangar told us that this was very true for the Baptist who tend to focus all attention on regeneration and it becomes too automatic. He also told us of contacts he has had with someone of the Protestant Reformed Church of NA who now lives in Singapore. Rev. Niangar stressed that they too, along with so many others, tend to quit reading the letters to the Romans after chapter nine while they must go on to chapter 10. This led to further discussion about the relation between election and the covenant. We were very impressed especially with Rev. Niangar's understanding and acceptance of the Reformed faith. In this discussion we also let on that we were not very happy with what we saw of the CRCP. Rev. Niangar was so kind to give us each a book of sonnets that he had written.

Contacts with the FRCP

It was up in time on Sunday morning to head for Talisay. We arrive there at just about 9:00. The congregation was already singing. We found a place to sit, were given hymnbooks and along with the others tried to sing along with the lead singer. This was obviously a practice session to learn the melodies of these hymns. After singing several of them the worship service started. Before the salutation we were introduced and asked whether we would speak a few words afterwards. We agreed on this. The church service proceeded in a very orderly way. We were quite impressed. It reminded us a lot of our services, including the reading of the law, prayer, Scripture reading, singing and as the central part, the preaching of the word. We missed the offertory and were afterward told that they do not agree with offerings during the worship service but use a box in the back of the church for that purpose. The preaching was from the first part of Revelation 13. Rev. Salem declared that this vision of the beast speaks of a Satanic attempt to imitate Christ and what He has accomplished. He applied it by pressing on the hearts of the congregation the need to remain faithful to the Lord while we know that the world continues on to the last days. After the service came to a close with the benediction I was asked to say a few words. It was an opportunity to briefly explain who we are. Being aware of that they have had some difficulties with ours sister churches in the Netherlands it was also explained to them that we are a different bond of churches. Words of encouragement for them to continue in the ways of the Lord were added. After the service we talked briefly to some members and then hurried into a car and off to Bacolod for the 11:00 service.

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We walked backed to the hotel where Rev. Oosterhuis met us a little later and we had lunch together. We talked about our impressions of the CRC and made no secret of our impression that it would be better to direct the RFCP and if possible the FRCP away from contacts with the CRCP. We also talked about possibly visiting some of the FRCP. Rev Oosterhuis showed some hesitation and thought it might be better not to do so but he would not prevent us from doing so.

The Seminar in the RFCP Bata

After lunch we were picked, at 2:30, to attend a seminar to be held in the Bata church building. There were about twenty people in attendance. Some attention was given to the roof of the building that had been recently renewed with help from DVN and BBK. At the seminar a book being translated from Dutch to English [*The Living Congregation*] was used. The first point of discussion was the distinction between the office of minister and elder and the centrality of the preaching in the worship services. The discussion centered around the supervision of the preaching and how an elder can possibly approach a minister of the Word about the content of the preaching. In Philippine society it would be very difficult for a elder and even more so for a member of the congregation to question a minister about his preaching. It was suggested that it may help to consider all the elders as "pastors" for they all have a pastoral task who work together with the "pastor" that has been given the special task of preaching the Word. What also received some attention was the special days as agreed upon in the Church Order and in connection with that the use of the church year in selecting texts for preaching. The following point was about the scheduling of the Lord's Supper. This gave some discussion because those who had come from the Baptist churches were used to celebrating it every Sunday. They had already reduced the frequency to once a month and were wondering whether it was necessary and good to reduce it even more. In connection with this the need for time to exercise discipline was mentioned. From there the discussion focused on admonishing one another which, we were told, was very difficult to do in Philippine society and especially when speaking about someone who had a more senior position in society. The need to overlook these barriers and rather obey the Lord was stressed but it was realized that it is very difficult to apply in practice. All in all the seminar was very impressive and it appears to us very beneficial. We can only commend br. Zuidema for the leadership he gives in this and thank the Lord that in this way the reformed faith is being taught and applied to practical daily life.

We were back in the hotel by about 6:00 and had a quick shower. We did some phoning around and managed to get hold of a Rev. Salem who is minister of the FRCP of Talisay. He told us that their worship services begin at 9:00. Afterward he would take us to church where Rev. J. Vingno preaches begins at 11:00. We agreed to do that.

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The trip back to Bacolod was uneventful except that we thought it may be a good idea to meet with some of the FRCP and we asked Rev. Niangar for his phone number. He did not have it but said would try to get it for us.

We were back in the hotel around 8:30 where Rev. Oosterhuis joined us for dinner. This gave an opportunity, upon his request, to speak about our mission work in India. This discussion is in the report of the visit to India. Rev. Oosterhuis was picked up from the hotel at about 10:00 and we went to our rooms to use the time in writing notes and catching up with some of the world news.

The Reformation Day convention

Originally nothing had been planned for Saturday morning. However we were told that a *Reformation Day* convention held was to be held in town. We had breakfast in the hotel at 8:00 and then walked to the place we were told. We found it without too much trouble.

Walking in reminded us a lot of the evangelic meeting of the CRCP we had attended before. A speaker system was being put up and there was a band playing the same kind of rock like music. We met br and sr. Zuidema, Rev. Oosterhuis and Rev. Niangar here. There was first some hymn singing and introductory speeches included introducing the participating churches. The program showed that this convention was organized by the CRCP Classis Negros north and south. This was followed by Scripture reading and then the guest speaker (preacher) was given the floor. The speech (sermon) focused on the change of the millenium. What we could understand from the speech which was done in both English and Ilongo was Scriptural. Although this was a convention in some ways it appears to be a worship service because it started with a call to worship, it included a congregational prayer and the giving of tithes and offerings and closed with a benediction. The impression was given that no clear distinction is made or understood between the official worship services and other meetings or conventions. Before the benediction, some of the youth came to the fore and performed a mime (silent play) in which one was dressed in white and played the part of the Lord Jesus. He had red hankies which dropped down to illustrate blood. Two were dressed in black playing the part of the demons. There were others who played the part of a drunk, a greedy business man, a believer (who turned out to be a hypocrite) and a pimp. Two of them repented and were saved. The other two did not repent and taken away by the black dressed demons. We found this kind of playing with the word of God offensive. We left after the morning session. The convention would continue on in the afternoon. The program included folk dance and interpretive dance. In the end one wonders where the Reformation from the Roman Catholic Church remains. It was hardly mentioned.

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The Theological Committee meeting

After diner we headed for the cottage of br. Zuidema where a meeting of the *theological committee* of the RFCP was to be held. Present at this meeting were Rev. B. Niangar, Rev. E. Rosal, Rev. Ben Pakingking, elder E Donasco, br. R. Zuidema and as guests, Rev. Oosterhuis, br. J. Bosveld and Rev. de Boer. Rev. Niangar led this meeting. In his opening prayer he laid before the Lord how saddened they are for the division among the churches and asked that He would grant that they may again be joined together. After prayer he read Romans 12:1-21. The minutes of the previous meeting were not available and therefore were left till a next meeting. However, it was remembered that the question of where to send theological students to study was to be on the agenda

After the minutes, the first point of the agenda was the translation of the *Heidelberg Catechism* into Ilongo. A translation done by the CRCP had been scrutinized and the question arose whether this translation could be recommended for use among the churches. No one thought that there was any real doctrinal problem with this translation but it was not considered to be very good, as a translation. One example that was given was that the word *comfort* is translated into the Ilongo word meaning *joy* and it was said that *comfort* and *joy* are not the same thing. The meeting decided that Rev. Niangar would make a revised translation to be scrutinized by the members before the next meeting.

It was also decided that for the next meeting Rev. Niangar would lead a discussion on Dr. J. Van Bruggen's book, *Ancient Text of the New Testament*.

The discussion concerning where to send theological students followed but led to no definite conclusion. It was generally agreed that the academic level was better at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. However, the CRCP Seminary is more conveniently located in Bacolod and students who attend there could do so while remaining under the supervision of the theological committee.

The next point of the agenda was the request of a brother to be examined with view to becoming a minister of the Word. There were some questions about who and how this letter was written as well as the motivation of this brother. Some questions were also asked about the task of this committee concerning this matter. In the end it was decided that this brother would be approached about the whole matter.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

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Our first impression was, this is typical CRCNA and RCA? Why bother and hinder those who have recently come to the faith with this kind of approach? We were told that what we saw was Philippine culture. It was suggested that this kind of hymn singing and approach more suitable for their culture. Our opinion is that it was more American than Philippine. In reply they suggested that in many ways present day Philippine culture is derived from America.

It was near midnight before we could snuggle under the covers of a warm bed in a nice air-conditioned hotel room. It had been a long day. We could hardly believe that we had only been in Bacalod for about twelve hours. The next morning we had to be up by six because we were going to go to a town somewhere down south.

Visit to the Reformed Free Church of Inayauan

The next morning, Friday 29th October we were picked up at 7:00 and started down the highway leading south. After about a thirty-minute drive we picked a Rev. Baltasar Niangar. He learned that he takes care of a small congregation on Guimaras Island. He did not say much and snoozed while we drove. The scenery was beautiful. We stopped at a high outcropping from where we could look over the ocean. After taking a few photos we carried on to a town named Inayauan (near Cauayan).

In Inayauan we first took a look at a Reformed Free church building that is being renovated. This renovation is being subsidized by BBK/DVN which is paying for all the materials while the church members donate time to the workers who receive 50% of their usual pay and meals. The renovations were well underway and substantial. It looked more like rebuilding the whole building over the wreckage of the old. While looking at this project we talked with some of the workers.

It was nearing 12:00 o'clock. We were invited to the home of Rev. Ezequias Rosal where we were first given coffee and then had dinner. During dinner the conversation was about the renovations of the church building and some attention was given to elder Eduardo Donasco who was talking about perhaps becoming a minister to start a church among mostly family members in Si-Alay Bulanda (?). He was told that it would be much better for his family members to join the church at Inayauan. The problem of distance and travel was discussed for some time while also giving attention to the church not being a social or family organization but the flock of the Lord. The need for good reformed instruction and literature was mentioned and emphasized. What is especially needed is some kind of on-going instruction material. The magazine, *Thy Way* used by the youth in Australia was mentioned and it was said that especially something like that would be very helpful.

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Contact with the CRCP

We booked in at the Business Inn Hotel which br. Zuidema had been kind enough to arrange for us beforehand. It was very nice hotel with reasonable rates. After a quick refreshing shower and a few minutes of rest and recuperation we were picked up at 4:30 to head for the agreed upon restaurant. After waiting for fifteen minutes or so Rev. Kruis and his family came along. Coffee was ordered. While sipping coffee and after introductions Rev Kruis informed us that he had been sent from the CRCNA. He had his education at Dort College and Calvin Seminary. Right now there are thirty-seven or thirty-eight organized and twenty-one unorganized CRCP congregations. They have five classes, two on the Island of Negros, one on Panay and two on Luzon. The total membership is about four to five thousand. That the number is not more definite reflects poor record keeping as well as poor discipline. Rev. Kruis said that he found this one of the main problems in the CRCP. In principle church discipline is known and confessed but it is very difficult to implement. The problem is especially that the Philippine people never want to offend anyone in any way. People who have not practice the faith remain on the membership list for years afterward because no one dares remove it. We also learned that the CRCP are sister churches of the CRCNA, the RCA and are members of the REC. Rev. Peter Tuit of the RCA usually works among them but at the time was on leave.

Our discussion was broken off when a few minutes before eight o'clock because we had to rush off to a CRCP evangelical meeting which was to take place up stairs of the same building. When we came up there a number of people were milling about. Near the front speakers were being put into place. The meeting began with singing some hymns. This singing was accompanied by a band played through a somewhat crackly sound system to deafening decibels. The hymns themselves had a rock-like beat. During singing some were "lifting up their hands." To us it certainly did not appear like a historic reformed approach to bringing the gospel. After quite number of hymns were sung Rev. Kruis read a number of Scripture passages followed by prayer and a speech (sermon?). The speech itself stressed how much the Lord has done for us and therefore we should be willing to give our time and effort to Him. The conclusion of this speech was that people of their own country and culture are best equipped to bring the gospel. This speech ended with a request for all would do something for the Lord to raise their hand. A special prayer would be made for them. After this a group of youth that had been involved with some mission project were presented. This was followed by more hymn singing. After the meeting was over refreshments were served.

By 9:30 we were back in the hotel with we enjoyed dinner with the Zuidema's and Rev Oosterhuis. We discussed what we witnessed that evening.

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us. When we could see something again it was almost as if the plane was skimming over the water. However, there was a thump of landing of solid ground. We could now see that the runway extended like a dam into the ocean. We rolled onto land and toward the terminal. It was quite small and not very modern. There were no covered gates. When disembarking we were all given an umbrella because it was raining quite hard. We followed the procession of passengers to the building door that led into a cage like covered area where we had to wait for our baggage. While waiting, I noticed two men of Caucasian complexion. Once our eyes met, one of them came forward to ask if I were John Bosveld. I corrected them and extended a hand through the bar like wires of the cage like a monkey in a zoo and met br. Roland Zuidema and Rev. M. Oosterhuis. Br. John Bosveld had in the mean time found our baggage. He joined us to also shake hands with the men on the other side of the fence. Upon having our baggage checked we joined them outside.

Discussions on interchurch relations

We all together got into br. Zuidema's vehicle and drove to his home. His home is in a guarded part of the city, that is to say, fenced all in with armed guards at the entrances to the subdivision. The house itself was fine. The temperature was hot and it was humid. We were invited to sit in the lounge area while lunch was being prepared. Before, during and after dinner there was much introductory discussion. We were told some things that we knew already. The Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines started as a result of some within the Baptist church becoming acquainted with the reformed doctrine and beginning to understand that the Baptist teaching is really Arminian. As a result they left the Baptist church and formed Reformed Churches. They were in contact with the churches in the Netherlands especially after one of their members visited there. At the time the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKNV) were not aware of other reformed churches in the Philippines. They have now found that there is a bond of Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines (CRCP) This bond had come about as a result of mission work done by the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) and cooperation of the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA). They also found Presbyterian Churches of the Philippines (PCP) that are the result of Korean mission work. The deputies of the GKNV are mandated to look into these churches. When we were informed of this the conversation focused on interchurch relations and the different approach between the GKNV and the FRCA. Attention was given to whether churches that practice open Lord's Supper can be received as sister churches. We pointed out that by accepting those who practice open Lord's Supper, in an indirect way, the divergent views those attending are accepted. With this practice, in the end all confessional binding means nothing. No consensus or conclusion was reached. By 3:00 we hurried to book in at the hotel because we were going to meet a Rev. Stanley Kruis in a restaurant at 5:00.

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Arrival in the Philippines

We left Singapore a little late but arrived in Manila a few minutes early at 8:09. By this time it was dark so when coming down not much could be seen but the city lights. Our itinerary told us to make our own way to the *Philippine Village Hotel* for one night's rest. At the airport we found someone who knew of this hotel and we were directed to a vehicle which took us there. The entry of the hotel was impressive but the smell was quite musty. We made our way to the front desk where we started to fill in some guest registration papers and at the same time made inquiries about the cost. We had been told that we were pre-booked, each for a room that would cost \$ 142.00 A. each. We asked about a single room for two and were told that it would cost us \$ 198.00 Australian dollars. We thought it was crazy to pay that much and decided to walk out. A taxi was flagged down and he took us to a cheaper hotel. The drive there showed that there are many small and dirty shops along the way. The taxi driver offered to first drop us off at a bar where we could view some beautiful girls. We declined the offer and told him that this was not the kind of place where we who are Christians go. We arrived at a hotel of which the entrance was not as impressive and the smell just as musty but we only had to pay \$ 42.00 American for one room with two beds. At least, it was a place to sleep. Before going to bed, being curious about Manila, we decided to go for a walk. By now it was getting close to 10:00 but there were still many vendors with their goods on the sidewalks. We had to walk around them the heaps of garbage they left behind. We walked around for about forty-five minutes, took a beer from the in room fridge, which was sure refreshing. After a shower it was time for bed.

The next day, 28th October we got up at 7:00 to be sure that we would not miss our flight from Manila to Bacolod. We showered and got dressed but did not bother with breakfast. Our plan was to find something to eat at the airport. We had arranged with the taxi driver who brought us to this hotel that he would take us to the airport the next day. He was going to come at 8:00. Waiting for him gave an opportunity to look through the morning newspaper. There were a few striking articles in it, including an editorial with the title: *Coincident or Miracle?* This article gave a good Scriptural conclusion that things, which we often consider to be coincidental, are really all governed by God. It was amazing to find this kind of editorial in a daily newspaper. It left us with the impression that there must be quite some Christian influence in the Philippines that must leave some impact.

The taxi came a little late but he brought us to the national airport in time. We boarded the Philippine flight to Bacolod. Even though it was a bit cloudy when we left, much could be seen in between the clouds. From high in the air it is obvious enough that the Philippines consists of quite a number of islands. It seemed that one particular mountain had a volcanic crater which is well possible because there are a number of volcanoes on these islands. When we approached the island of Negros on which Bacolod is located clouds engulfed

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- d. to give guidance to the work of br. Zuidema with especially with respect to church edification within the established framework in cooperation with DVN.
- e. in consultation with br. Zuidema , to develop and carry out a plan of theological preparedness and support.
- f. in consolation with br. Zuidema to develop and carry out a plan to investigate possible eventual ecclesiastical advance towards and cooperation of the RFCP and the churches of the FRCP with other reformed church bonds in the Philippines.
- g. in the correspondence and in the context of ecclesiastical edification continue to work with the RFCP and the churches of the FRCP on good ecumenical attitude towards each other and eventually toward other reformed church bonds.

Grounds:

1. it is determined that it is no longer possible to speak of the FRCP. The federation is no longer taken serious by the member churches. Among them are churches that appear to attach no value to good functioning sister-church relations.
2. some member churches of the FRCP that with word and deed show they would like to continue working together, should not be left to their own devises.
3. recent developments with the FRCP give reason for renewed determination of the support question.
4. the close relation between word and deed, where it is a matter of support of foreign churches and the overlapping task of the BBK and DVN, leads to a unified mission and approach now that there is no clear opportunity to send a second full time support worker.

within the Reformed churches in the Philippines there is great need for organization and education of ministers and elders.

While reading through these reports time was taken to enjoy the *Singapore Airlines* cuisine and other refreshments. Coming through the clouds towards Singapore airport the large city with its river and adjacent bay was beautiful to see. The neatly lined trees below gave the impression of a well-organized city. The landing was fine. The airport proved to be very modern. After being confined to an airplane seat it was nice to stretch the legs and get some blood circulating. The airport has quite a few interesting shops and a bookstore is always a nice place to browse while awaiting the next flight.

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with representatives of the FRCP of Old Sagay and the RFCP of Bata, Guimaras and Inayauan.

The combined fourth and fifth quarterly report shows that the FRCP of San Pedro decided to no longer wish to work together with DVN and BBK. On the other hand, the consistories of the FRCP of Old Sagay and Las Pinas as well as the RFCP of Bata Guimaras and Inayauan all agreed that the course, *The Living Congregation* be given at their local congregations. This report also shows that work is being done to teach the youth, obtain Reformed Literature, the setting up of a co-operative shop and attempts to help in agricultural ventures. A *Form of Subscription* is attached to this report. This form is identical to the one found in Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene, *With Common Consent* expect that the reference to "synod" is omitted. Reference to synod is obviously missing because the churches in the Philippines do not have a synod at this time.

The sixth report shows that contact remains with mainly four of the churches, namely the RFCP of Bata, Guimaras and Inayauan and the FRPC of Las Pinas. These are the only churches to whom this report is now sent and these are also churches in which seminars based on the course *The Living Congregation* is ongoing. Along with some other practical things like building a roof on the Bata church building, mention is made of reformed literature which is being subsidized for 50% of their cost. This report also mentions a "new assignment" namely, in agreement with the Synod being held in Leusden to investigate and describe the functioning of other Reformed Church federations in the Philippines.

Decision of Synod Leusden

This plane trip from Perth to Singapore also gave the opportunity to look through the decision of Synod Leusden about the Philippines. Here it follows in full: (my translation)

Synod decide:

1. to consider the sister-church relations with the FRCP as a federation terminated.
2. to mandate the deputies
 - a. to continue the contact with the member churches that are willing and when carrying out this contact to also include the member churches of the RFCP
 - b. not to honor the request of the churches joined together as the RFCP to enter into a sister-church relation at this time, but to continue contact with these churches in the same manner as with the FRCP.

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3. The members of these churches have very limited resources and badly need true Reformed literature.
4. It would be beneficial to all, the FRCA and the FRCP and the RFCP to maintain some face-to-face contact.
5. There is enough evidence to show that the CRCP does not preserve Scriptures in doctrine and practice as maintained in the Reformed Churches.

Appendix 3c

Report of visit to the Reformed Churches of the Philippines 27 October – 2 November

We left the Perth airport at 8:55 am. The flight to Singapore was good. It gave an opportunity to read through the reports of Roland Zuidema that he was kind enough to send by e-mail. These reports were very informative.

Reports of work being done in the Philippines

From the first of these reports we learn that a classis of the *Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines* RFCP was established in April 1998. At this classis it was agreed that a survey would be done of the churches to determine their spiritual and material well being. Representatives of the local churches would be trained to do this survey. The *Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines* (FRCP) of Talisay and Old Sagay will participate in the training for this survey. On another date, together with the RRCP of San Pedro and Las Pina another seminar on "social research" has been scheduled.

The second report informs us of some practical needs and activity. In this report we are also told that the planned seminar was held on July 10 and 11 with representatives of the FRCP of Talisay and Old Saga and of the RFCP from Bata, Guimaras and Inayauan. Another seminar is still planned for 31 July and 1 August for the FRCP of San Pedro and Las Pinas. Br. Zuidema also delivered a speech for the student of the *School of Jesus*. Br. Zuidema also delivered a sermon in the Bata Church when ordination of elders and deacons took place. He was also invited to the RFCP at Guimaras on 14 August and on 13 September he delivered a sermon at this place.

The third of these reports inform us that the FRCP of Bacolod and Talisay decided "not to work any longer with BBK and DVN in the Self Help program despite the fact that both these churches earlier agreed with the work instructions of the Zuidema's." The result was that all contact with these churches have been broken off. With the RFCP of Bata, Guimaras and Inayauan and the FRCP of Old Saga and San Pedro (the last one along with members of the FRCP of Las Pinas) it was agreed that the course *A Living Congregation* would be given. On October 24 a general convention was held

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- g. in the correspondence and in the context of ecclesiastical edification continue to work with the RFCP and the churches of the FRCP on good ecumenical attitude towards each other and eventually toward other reformed church bonds.

Visit to the Philippines:

1. In agreement with the synod decision, deputies sent a delegate to the Philippines. Rev. P.K.A. de Boer was appointed to make this visit. Br. J. Bosveld of his own initiative accompanied him. (please see attached report of this visit --appendix 3c).
2. This report shows that:
 - a) Both the RFCP and the FRCP show a desire for the true Reformed faith as maintained in the confessions. However, there is a great need for further instruction in how to apply the Reformed faith in daily practice.
 - b) Some more attention needs be given especially to the doctrinal differences between the FRCP and the RFCP.
 - c) Contacts with the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines (CRCP) shows that these churches, like their sister churches in America, lack true historic reformed doctrine and practice.
 - d) There is continual need for Reformed instruction and literature.

Proposal for Synod:

1. Thank the deputies for the work that they have done and discharge them from their task.
2. Appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a) Keep up-to-date with any new developments among the FRCP and RFCP.
 - b) Lend support to these churches, upon their request, by means of instructive literature that may help build up its Reformed character.
 - c) If funding permits, make a visit to these churches.
 - d) Report to next synod.
3. Advise the Dutch sister churches that these churches *not* be directed to come under the influence of the CRCP.

Grounds:

1. Although these churches show the desire to embrace the Reformed faith, much learning is needed for them to understand and apply it.
2. Only time will tell whether the FRCP and RFCP are willing to follow the Scriptural and thus Reformed doctrine and practice.

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4. In 1992-1993 some difficulties developed among these churches. There appeared to be two main points of contention:
 - a. Some of the teachings coming from the *Christians Brethren of the Philippines*, in particular from Rev. J. Vingno.
 - b. The distribution of support given by the DVN and BBK

A brief summary of events that took place after Synod Launceston and led to the present day situation

1. The above mentioned contention led to a split among the churches in 1998. Out of the nine churches six formed the *Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines* and the other three became the *Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines*.
2. Delegates were sent by both BBK and DVN in an effort to mend the breach, but without success.
3. DVN decided to send a full time worker to the Philippines. This worker is also supported by BBK and has become a field worker for both organizations. The intention was for this worker to work among both the FRCP and the RFCP. However, most of the FRCP declined the help offered. Most of the help is now given to the RFCP.
4. The recent synod of the Dutch sister churches, Synod Leusden, 1999, decided:
 1. to consider the sister-church relations with the FRCP as a federation terminated.
 2. to mandate the deputies
 - a. to continue the contact with the member churches that are willing and when carrying out this contact to also include the member churches of the RFCP
 - b. not to honor the request of the churches joined together as the RFCP to enter into a sister-church relation at this time, but to continue contact with these churches in the same manner as with the FRCP.
 - d. to give guidance to the work of br. Zuidema especially with respect to church edification within the established framework in cooperation with DVN.
 - e. in consultation with br. Zuidema, to develop and carry out a plan of theological preparedness and support.
 - f. in consultation with br. Zuidema to develop and carry out a plan to investigate possible eventual ecclesiastical advance towards and cooperation of the RFCP and the churches of the FRCP with other reformed church bonds in the Philippines.

C. Philippines

Mandate given by Synod Launceston 1998

Decision:

1. To instruct deputies to correspond with the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with each other, and see whether we can be of spiritual assistance to them;
2. To authorize deputies to pay a visit to these churches for the above purpose.

Grounds:

1. Our Dutch sister churches attest that these churches exhibit the marks of a true church;
2. These churches are a young, small and weak bond which has many problems and needs. We could possibly offer them help from our Reformed heritage;
3. These churches are geographically close, and should therefore receive more attention than (established) churches far away.
4. In the given situation it is premature to mention the goal of sister relations. This will also avoid raising unrealistic expectations in their minds.

A brief summary of the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines as deputies reported it to Synod Launceston 1998.

1. The Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines came about when some within the Baptist Churches, upon the study of God's Word as maintained in the *Canons of Dort*, could no longer maintain their Arminian approach to theology. There was resistance to those who had received this insight and were defending it.
2. Under the leadership of Rev. Joy Vingno, along with some fellow professors and their students a number broke away from the Baptist Church and started the *Christian Brethren of the Philippines*. This brotherhood defends and promotes the Reformed faith. Contact was made with the Netherlands and this organization received financial support from *De Verre Naasten* (DVN).
3. The Committee for *Relations with Churches Abroad* (BBK) of our Dutch sister churches sent a delegate who informed these churches of Reformed Church polity and with his guidance a church bond, with a classis, was set up. These churches were also given financial support via BBK.

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- b) that the guest is a communicant member in good standing in his own church.
- c) that the guest lives a repentant, upright and godly life.

The RCNZ realise that some congregations have a more restricted approach to the Lord's table than other congregations. One congregation would not admit a guest to the Lord's table that another would. The intent of these guidelines was to come to greater agreement regarding the admission of guests. As observers, we found these guidelines to be an improvement on the previous guidelines, though something of a "middle road" between the two differing positions. Some of the delegates (or churches) would have preferred a more positive statement under #2, requiring the guests to agree with the truth that is taught in their confessions, and under #3b, requiring guests to be communicant members in good standing in another true church. (This would be more in line with the position paper on Fencing of the Lord's Table which our most recent synod decided to submit to the PCEA.) It also seems to us that the above guidelines are open to different interpretations, with the results that the desired conformity which these rules sought to achieve might not be achieved after all.

The RCNZ also have differing views amongst themselves as to whether discipline should proceed in the case of members who withdraw themselves from the church while under discipline. This matter has been on the agenda of a number of successive synods. This synod could not resolve the matter, and has given it back to deputies for further study.

The RCNZ are looking for a new song book. They considered many books, including our *Book of Praise*. While speaking highly of the *Book of Praise*, they thought it would be unacceptable to the members of the RCNZ because of the Genevan Tunes, and because of the few hymns that it contains. It was decided that the 1987 Psalter Hymnal (Ecumenical Edition) of the Christian Reformed Churches in North America be commended to the churches for further evaluation in the inter-synodical period. Particular attention was drawn to the fact that the new Psalter Hymnal contains gender-inclusive language with reference to man. No firm decision has been made.

We admired how the delegates of RCNZ synod sought to find each other when making decisions. The "middle road" is not always the pathway of faithfulness, and there is not always room to compromise. But we observed no compromise to faithfulness to God's Word; only an earnest desire to find common ground on which to work further, a desire that seemed to prevail at our most recent synod as well.

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Our last synod decided, however, that *“our churches have difficulty in establishing sister relations with them because of their sister relations with the Reformed Churches of Australia”* For *“as past Synods have stated, ‘The relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia is an impediment for us to establish official relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.’”*

It is incorrect to conclude, then, that the FRCA *cannot* recognise the RCNZ because the marks of the true church are lacking. Rather, the FRCA *have not* officially recognised the RCNZ because their relationship with the Reformed Church of Australia is an impediment to offering sister-church relations with the RCNZ. And we have decided that we will not officially declare any church to be true and faithful unless we can offer them sister-church relations.

In the mean time, the RCNZ have decided to keep the avenues of communication open between our two federations. They will encourage us to do what we can from our side to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of a relationship with the Reformed Church of Australia. We are happy with this decision, since our Synod has already decided to have a few face-to-face meetings with the deputies of the RCA to convey our concerns and appeal. This decision allows us to communicate with the RCNZ deputies about the response of the RCA to our appeal, and to explain to the RCNZ what obstacles, if any, still separate us from the RCA.

The RCNZ synod also dealt with the matter of guests at the Lord's Supper. An earlier synod (1992) adopted these guidelines:

1. It is the responsibility of the session to identify guests in order to supervise properly the Lord's Supper.
2. It is the responsibility of the session to inform guests as to the requirements for participation in the Lord's Supper and as to the consequences of partaking in an unworthy manner (1 Cor 11:27-29).
3. It is the responsibility of the session to ascertain the following before it grants permission to guests and visitors to participate in the Lord's Supper:
 - a) that they are communicant members in good standing in their own church.
 - b) that they live upright and godly lives

Synod 1998 adopted these guidelines, building upon those of 1992:

1. The corporate unity expressed in the Lord's Supper is also a unity in the truth that we profess.
2. Sessions should ensure that guests to the Lord's Supper do not openly oppose the truth that is taught in our confessions.
3. It is the responsibility of the session to ascertain the following before it grants permission to guests to participate in the Lord's Supper:
 - a) that the guest trusts in Christ, and in Christ alone, for his salvation.

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- a) to begin correspondence with the URCNA with a view to assessing the feasibility and desirability of a sister church relationship.
- 5. Netherlands Reformed Churches (Buiten-Verband)
 - a) to discontinue correspondence with the NGK
- 6. Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Liberated)
 - a) to express gratitude towards the GKN (Lib.) for their desire to heal the wounds of the past and for their desire to establish a sister church relationship with the RCNZ.
 - b) to request the Interchurch Relations Committee to provide for the GKN (Lib.) further information regarding our relations with other churches in our region.
 - c) to explore further the pastoral and practical value of establishing a sister church relationship with the GKN (Lib) taking into consideration our relationship with the CRC/Neth and their relationship with the GKN (Lib.).
- 7. Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia
 - a) to re-establish dialogue with the PCEA with a view to assessing whether a sister church relationship would be mutually beneficial
 - b) to send an observer to one of the next PCEA synods.
- 8. Free Reformed Churches of Australia:
 - a) to express disappointment to the FRCA that they have not been able to recognise us officially as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b) to keep the channels of communication open by:
 - i) asking the IRC to engage in dialogue with the FRCA, especially encouraging them to work diligently to do all they can to remove the obstacles that separate them from the RCA, and
 - ii) sending an observer to the next FRCA synod.

Their decision regarding our bond of churches is worthy of further commentary. Some delegates at Synod were offended by the fact that the FRCA were not able to officially recognise them as a true and faithful church. It seems to us that some have interpreted this to mean that we *cannot* acknowledge them as true and faithful because the marks of the true church are lacking. This is a misinterpretation of our decision.

In 1996 *"Synod declared its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the RCNZ."* As grounds, Synod stated *"Deputies have indicated that in doctrine, worship and church government the RCNZ must be considered a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Synod has not decided that it cannot acknowledge the RCNZ as true churches because the marks are lacking. But Synod has refrained from making an official declaration about the RCNZ because in 1985 Synod decided *"our recognition of another Church as being 'true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ' has as a direct consequence that a sister-church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realization of unity"* (Acts 1985, Art 67).

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set of guidelines for ecclesiastical assemblies in formal adjudication of written and formal appeals.

One item that is sure to receive approval from our ministers (though perhaps not from our consistories) is the three-months long service leave granted to ministers after every fifteen years of service in the ministry. There is a synodical fund that provides some financial assistance during long service leave.

The RCNZ earnestly seeks to fulfil its missionary mandate. Although the missionaries or mission workers are sent by and responsible to individual sessions, the financing of such endeavours comes under the jurisdiction of synod. Therefore mission matters found their way onto the table of the RCNZ Synod. The RCNZ support Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). Prior to Synod, they also had a couple working in Karachi, Pakistan. They have sent a student from Pakistan to receive theological training at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia. They have "seconded" a sister to the Far East Broadcast Corporation (FEBC). Her task is to produce educational and evangelistic radio programs, and to train others to do so. A couple has also been seconded to the Overseas Mission Fellowship (OMF) International to work at the Mission's International Head Quarters to improve and update the communications infrastructure for effective communication on mission fields. They also decided to investigate and authorise the Overseas Mission Board to implement an appointment for a part-time position of Home Mission Worker.

The RCNZ continue their contractual relationship with the Reformed Theological College in Geelong. Students who study at Geelong are required to serve a one year term of practical experience under the guidance of an experienced minister and his session. These student pastors are called 'vicars.'

As far as inter-church relations are concerned, the RCNZ made the following decisions regarding these churches:

1. Reformed Church of Australia:
 - a) to continue sister church relations with the RCA
 - b) to express encouragement to the RCA over their positive response to our concerns to date.
 - c) to lift the extraordinary pulpit restrictions imposed by Synod 1995,
 - d) to monitor the RCA's study on the area of women in diaconal ministry.
2. Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid Afrika (Dopper Kerk):
 - a) to continue sister church relations with the GKSA
3. Christian Reformed Churches of North America:
 - a) to acknowledge with regret that we can no longer continue our sister church relationship with the CRC/NA
4. United Reformed Churches in North America:

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The service itself was conducted by four ministers—one led in prayer, one read the Scriptures, one proclaimed God's Word, and, finally, one led in prayer after the proclamation of God's Word. Rev John Rogers chose as text 2 Timothy 2:19 *"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'"* The central message which we derived was that the subjective judgment of a person's heart must be left to God. The church can only make an objective judgment based on the fruits borne in a person's life, be they good or evil. Again, we left church edified by the scriptural message that we heard.

From Monday through to Friday afternoon, the Synod worked its way through the agenda. As observers, we wanted to learn the secret to completing an agenda in just five days, since our synods customarily run from ten to fifteen days. It didn't take long before we discovered the secret. Prior to Synod, each individual session (or consistory) discusses or debates the matters to be decided at Synod. The delegates from each consistory then communicate the sentiments of their session (consistory) at Synod. During the discussions we often heard delegates say something to this effect: *"When we discussed this in session, we felt that..."* or *"Our session is in favour (or opposed) to this proposal."* While delegates have the right to vote contrary to the sentiments of their session, we observed that for the greater part the delegates voted in line with them. Because of the level of discussion at the session level and because of the tendency to vote in line with the sentiments of one's session, there is far less discussion on a given matter at a synod of the RCNZ than at our own. This system will only function, however, as long as each consistory is represented. Judging from some of the delegates, the RCNZ are quite pleased with this system, and have given no thought to change it.

As far as the agenda of Synod is concerned, we learned something of church life in the RCNZ. Most of the congregations have Cadets (for the boys) or Calvinettes (for the girls). This is an evening of fellowship for the youth when they study the Scriptures and enjoy some recreation. It is based somewhat on the pattern of Boy's Scouts or Girl Guides, but then with a Christian basis and purpose. This would be somewhat comparable to our Youth Clubs, although our club evenings are devoted only to the study of Scripture. This matter comes to the table of Synod, for it is operated by a national board which has synodical liaisons.

The RCNZ have established an Education Resource Committee which provides resource material for Sunday schools, Catechism and adult Bible Study material. The Synod has also appointed a Political Contact Committee which submits letters to elected government officials. During the last inter-synodical period, letters were sent regarding matrimonial property legislation regarding homosexuals and de facto marriages, human assisted human reproduction, and abortion. As a supplement to the Church Order, synod approved a simple

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two delegates from the Reformed Theological Seminary in Geelong, Victoria, two delegates from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid Afrika (also known as the Dopper Kerk), and one delegate from the Christian Reformed Churches of North America. There was still enough room for us, the two observers from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The first thing that struck us was the fact that although they had seventeen congregations, which are divided into three presbyteries (or classes, as we would call them), they nevertheless maintain the practice of each church sending two delegates. If the sentiments expressed by some delegates in private conversation is characteristic of the whole federation, then the RCNZ have no desire to change this. They appreciate the idea of each church being represented at Synod. We mention this in light of a decision of our most recent synod, which in the year 2000 could possibly see the FRCA abandon the practice of each church delegating two members in favour of having each of two classes sending a delegation of 6-8 men.

Just as at our Synod, the delegates and observers were asked to rise to show their agreement to the Confessions of the Church. Soon after, it dawned on us that for the first time in our lives the two of us had publicly stated our agreement, not only to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, but also to the Westminster Confession which is one of the confessional standards of the RCNZ.

The Saturday afternoon session saw the appointment of the synod executive. Rev John Haverland was elected as the moderator; Rev Gary Milne as vice-moderator, Rev Bruce Hoyt as first clerk, and Rev Michael Flinn as second clerk. Soon after the Saturday session was closed.

On Sunday morning we attended the church service at Silverstream. Due to Synod, the ministers of the area exchanged pulpits. Rev John Haverland from Christchurch led the morning service. We listened to a sermon on Jeremiah 17:9 *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"* This was a sermon in a series on the Canons of Dort. This one focused on Chapters III/IV, 1-3 and dealt with the totally depravity of fallen man. We were both edified by the message proclaimed.

The church service was similar to ours in most ways, with only a few distinctions. For example, the elder read the announcements prior to the commencement of the worship service. He welcomed Rev Haverland to the pulpit, as well as the guests in the pews. The elder then took his seat. The minister then read a few verses of Scripture as a *"Call to Worship."* This was followed by a brief period of silent prayer. For the remainder, the liturgy was similar to our own, with the exception of the duty elder reading the Scriptures.

On Sunday afternoon, there was a prayer service for Synod in Wainuiomata. Half an hour prior to the service, the local church choir sang a few selections.

3. Recommendations

Synod decides:

To renew the mandate of deputies to strive for sister relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:

- a) encouraging the RCNZ to study the appeal sent to the RCA in order to understand why the FRCA has principle objections in establishing relations with the RCA and therefore this continues as an impediment to acknowledging the RCNZ,
- b) continuing dialogue with the RCNZ in particular to explain why the RCNZ's relation with the RCA proves to be an impediment.
- c) authorising two delegates to attend the next send of the RCNZ to be held, the Lord Willing in 2001, in order to convey greetings, discuss matters of mutual interest with the RCNZ IRC.
- d) Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in rules 6 of our "Rules for Synods" (Acts 1998, Appendix 12)

Appendix 3b

Report on the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Synod Wainuiomata—October 17-23

Rev. A van Delden / L van Burgel

God's own country! That's how Dick Vanderpyl, one of the patriarchs of the Reformed Church of New Zealand, so proudly described his country as we sat in the back seat of Joce's hatchback. He had taken the same Saturday morning flight into Wellington as we, and both he and we were chauffeured by the same cheerful young lady.

After a twenty-minute drive to Upper Hutt (one of the outlying suburbs of Wellington), we were welcomed into the home of our hosts, Gary and Tineke Heersping. Amazing! We immediately felt at home with this godly couple with whom we had no prior acquaintance! But then, no wonder. We share the same faith. After a cup of coffee and few speculaas biscuits, we decided to catch up on a couple hours of sleep that we missed on our night flight from Perth to New Zealand. In just a few hours, Synod would begin—Saturday afternoon, 3:00 pm.

Synod was opened by Rev Gary Milne, chairman of the Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, just outside of Wellington. Like us, each of the seventeen consistories sent two delegates for a total of thirty-four delegates. In addition, there were two fraternal delegates from the Reformed Churches of Australia,

Appendix 3 Deputies Relations Reformed Churches

Synod Wainuiomata was furnished with a most favourable report regarding the decisions of the 1997 RCA synod regarding the three W's: Word and Spirit, Women in Office and Worship Practices. Whereas we may have liked a more careful approach, seeing if the decisions of the 1997 RCA Synod will indeed stand, the RCNZ synod instead took a gracious approach and decided to remove the restrictions imposed by their previous synod.

As our deputies have reported previously, the RCNZ is most consequent and principled in their approach to interchurch relations. They are not afraid to speak out if they see error and will draw the conclusions as required. They broke off relations with the GKN (syn) many years ago and also withdrew from the REC, eventually becoming members of the ICRC. They suspended relations with the CRCNA last synod and this synod now broke ties completely. This is in contrast to their cross-Tasman sister who continues in the REC and maintains her relationship with the CRCNA. The RCNZ also has now ceased contact with the NGK (Buiten-Verband) and will intensify relations with the GKN (Liberated).

Although the RCNZ already has the RCA as a sister church in Australia it has also declared the FRCA as a true and faithful church. Consequently synod Wainuiomata decided to encourage the FRCA to remove the obstacles that lie between the two Australian churches. They are aware that the FRCA has sent a letter to the RCA appealing to them return from the unreformed direction the RCA was taking e.g. including amongst others the matter of the three W's. Incorporated in this appeal were similar objections voiced by the 1995 RCNZ synod. They are also aware our latest FRCA synod has decided to present this appeal to the RCA in a number of face-to-face meetings.

The Inter Church Relations Committee of the NZRC now can observe the outcome of the contact between the FRCA and the RCA. The result of these discussions may have implications for the RCNZ regarding their view of both the RCA and the FRCA. It is the observation of the delegates that the FRCA, living side by side with the RCA, has a deeper insight into the difficulties within the RCA than does the RCNZ. It can be expected that the FRCA/RCA discussions will lead to a deeper understanding by the RCNZ about the impediment which keeps the FRCA and RCNZ from developing sister relations and therefore it may be that a greater commitment by the RCNZ to removing that impediment may grow.

2.3 Delegates to Synods

Deputies have sent an invitation to the RCNZ to attend the forthcoming synod of the FRCA in West Albany. The RCNZ has already decided at its synod to send an observer. The next synod of the RCNZ is expected to be held in 2001 and deputies consider that it will be fruitful to again send observers from the FRCA.

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2. Synod 1996 saw need to send a letter of appeal to the RCA in an effort to urge the RCA to *“return to a distinctly reformed direction”* and is thankful that the RCNZ do the same.
3. Contact between the FRCA and the RCNZ is necessary if we are to work towards sister relations.
4. The membership of the FRCA should be informed about the RCNZ so that they are prepared for sister relations if and when such a relationship is formed.

2. Activities

2.1 Visit to RCNZ Synod

Two delegates, Rev. van Delden and L. van Burgel were delegated to attend the synod of the RCNZ held at Wainuiomata in October 1998. A report of their visit was published in the *Una Sancta* and is attached to this report.

During their visit, the delegates took the opportunity to pass on to the RCNZ the decisions of our Synod, Launceston and to have a meeting with their Inter Church Relations Committee. Understandably, the IRC was preoccupied with synod matters and our meeting was confined to a single meeting held during a lunch break. During this meeting and on numerous other informal occasions we were able to discuss and explain Synod Kelmscott 1996 and Launceston's 1998 decisions re the RCNZ. Especially the decision not to acknowledge the RCNZ as a “true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ” had caused disappointment and this was subsequently reflected in their synod decision which was as follows:

- a) *To express disappointment to the FRCA that they have not been able to recognise us officially as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- b) *To seek to keep the channel of communication open by:*
 - i) *Asking the IRC to engage in dialogue with the FRCA, especially encouraging them to work diligently to do all they can to remove the obstacles that separate them from the RCA, and*
 - ii) *Sending an observer to the next FRCA synod.*

2.2 Relations RCA and RCNZ

The FRCA has consistently stated that the RCNZ's sister relations with the RCA remains an impediment to the FRCA establishing a sister relation with the RCNZ. Synod Avondale 1995 placed restrictions on the relationship with the RCA. Synod 1998 fully restored these relations. It may seem that this would be seen as a step backward in removing the impediment between us but our delegates did not feel the desire for the FRCA and the RCNZ to seek sister church relations has been reduced or compromised.

B. Reformed Churches of New Zealand

1. Mandate

Synod Launceston 1998 decided:

1. To thank deputies for the work they have done, and to discharge them.
2. To reaffirm its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the RCNZ.
3. To mandate deputies to strive for sister church relations with the RCNZ by:
 - a) continuing dialogue with the RCNZ in order to:
 - i) to explain to the RCNZ by means of face to face meetings the difficulty that the FRCA have in establishing sister church relations with the RCNZ because of their sister-church relations with the RCA.
 - ii) to express its appreciation for the principled approach that the RCNZ have shown in dealing with the RCA, and to encourage the RCNZ to continue to exercise sisterly admonitions over the RCA where needed.
 - b) authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ to be held DV in Wainuiomata, 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.
 - c) inviting delegates from the RCNZ to the next Synod of the FRCA as observers with the privileges mentioned in Acts Synod Launceston 1998, Art 64
 - d) providing information to the membership of the FRCA about the RCNZ.

Grounds:

1. As past synods have stated, *"the relationship of the RCNZ and the RCA is an impediment for us to enter official relations with the RCNZ"* (cf Deputies Report to Synod 1996, Acts, Appendix B3, 5.3, p. 101). As the Synodical and Correspondence Committee of the RCNZ itself points out in a report to their Synod (Mangere, 1986) *"Relationships must be true in all dimensions. ... 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 relationships 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."*

Appendix 3 Deputies Relations Reformed Churches

people. Satan can exploit problems with spiritual gifts, and with prophecy in particular, in exactly the same way. For a “half-way” solution between charismatics and the reformed position on the matter of prophecy has become fashionable. Wayne Grudem in his book, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, has attempted to do that, and his approach is spreading. He defines prophecy by ordinary prophets, that is, by ordinary church-members in the NT, as “not equal to scripture in authority, but was simply a very human – and sometimes partially mistaken – report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone’s mind.” Thus, overagainst the charismatics, he claims it is not a direct word from God. At the same time the reformed principle of the canonicity and sufficiency of Scripture is kept intact. Such ‘prophecy’ does not add to God’s Word. He thus challenges the charismatic claim that the Spirit still speaks today authoritatively. But he also challenges the position of the Great Reformation that the special gifts of the Spirit have ceased after the age of the apostles. He argues that “all christians are given permission to prophesy in church if God so prompts them.” Can reformed churches move to this “middle ground?” How does the RCA tackle this very problem, which seems to us to be the exact problem you face!? Prof. Norris Wilson of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Northern Ireland carefully examined Grudem’s book and in a paper entitled, “*Prophecy Today?*,” for the 1993 International Conference of Reformed Churches found it weak and misleading on many points, e.g.s. that NT prophecy differs fundamentally from OT prophecy, his handling of Eph 2:20 & 3:5 are not persuasive, his treatment of 1 Cor 12-14 is not convincing, his usage of Agabus to downgrade NT prophecy is not persuasive, nor are his arguments that prophecy is available to all christians, and neither is his exegesis of 1 Cor 13:8-13 about ongoing prophecy till Christ’s return. Instead of repeating his arguments we recommend this paper to you and attach it for your consideration, since it deals with the very issues of which some of you seem to be unsure. Wilson concludes that this dualistic approach to prophecy (one for the whole people of God and another for individual use) is wrong. By returning to the whole-hearted reformed position, without leaving room for a half-way approach, we leave no room for the Devil to invade and upset the sheepfold.

The Devil looks for our weaknesses and exploits them. If uncertainty on this matter persists, and a definitive position is delayed, the Enemy will find this chink in your armour. Thus we appeal to the RCA to decide definitively on the matter of prophecy and other special gifts of the Holy Spirit, not to be led by a “happy middle-road,” but return to the reformational principles and guidelines.

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question whether we should classify certain actions of the Holy Spirit in protecting, guiding and leading the churches and church-members as guidance or as 'occasional prophecy' should always be answered, as the guidelines say, by insisting that everything must be tested by Scripture. Providence never becomes a norm for Scripture is our only norm.

We also read in your Acts of the 1997 Synod,
There is disagreement as to whether these refer to a phenomenon distinct from the office of the prophet, which is foundational to the church according to Eph. 2:20, and so is of an occasional and non-authoritative kind, and if so, continues today. We agree that nobody can claim to reveal the true infallible and authoritative Word of God in addition to the Scriptures.

At your synodical level, this matter is not finalized. A complete set of guidelines among you was not possible. Thus there is a certain degree of uncertainty and disagreement. This is where Satan can target you. In the time of the Great Reformation one of the most vicious attacks came from the side of the anabaptists who downgraded the Scriptures and spoke warmly about the "inner voice" or the Spirit speaking to my spirit. They did not want the pope in Rome replaced with a "paper pope." They misused texts such as found in 2 Cor. 3 (*the letter kills but the Spirit makes alive*). Satan is still active today. From our discussions we learned that our appeal was not altogether wrong. Satan, with some success, was testing and troubling a number of RCA churches. There was much discord in your midst. You conceded that.

Another synodical decision, Art. 34. Healing, Signs & Wonders of your 1994 Synod, set pastoral guidelines on a related matter. It dealt not only with prophecy but with more spiritual gifts. And it concluded as follows:

7. Healing, Signs & Wonders were closely connected with the apostles and there is no evidence in the New Testament for encouraging a continuation of such a ministry today. At the same time we would not want to rule out the possibility of Healing, Signs & Wonders today in special circumstances under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. We would also certainly not discourage people from seeking Healing, Signs & Wonders from the Lord in answer to prayer.

These guidelines as a whole and the one quoted above have not been rescinded nor superseded. It means that the church should not discourage believers from seeking "signs" in general, of which prophecy is one (1 Cor.12). Signs continue, although only in special circumstances. This decision gives ground for re-opening the matter of prophecy and special signs. Though disclaimers are put up to protect the flock, this open-ended conclusion can keep igniting the debate. Thus the matter still hangs in the air. It makes us urgent in appealing to you.

Unless this matter is firmly resolved it can quickly resurface. When Israel did not firmly defeat the Canaanites, the enemy kept coming back to trouble God's

Appendix 3 Deputies Relations Reformed Churches

Scriptures is unquestionably God-breathed and absolutely trustworthy among us. We do not need, nor should we seek, any other authority (Guideline 4)." The following guideline is also important to note:

- A. *Apart from the context of expounding the Holy Scripture, no one should give the impression that they speak authoritative messages from God by introducing their words with "Thus says the Lord."*
 - 1. *In the case of pastoral problems there is no substitute for patient and competent counselling, faithful preaching and prayer.*
 - 2. *Understandings of the Lord's leading by any means which are tested by Scriptural principles and deemed acceptable may be responded to as guidance and/or encouragement, and be grounds for praise and thanks to God.*
 - 3. *Since our understanding is fallible and stained by sin and the Scriptures alone are infallible, we need to approach the spiritual and pastoral problems in the church on no other basis and with no other authority than that of Scripture.*

Statements were also made in a reformed manner about the closure of the canon. Regarding the availability of the gifts today a biblical survey of various aspects of prophecy are given. Then it is openly stated that a common mind among leaders in the RCA has not been reached on the interpretation and significance of passages such as 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 and the occurrences and mention of prophecy recorded in Acts 20:23; 21:4 and 9 as well as 1 Cor. 11:4-5 and 1 Thess. 5:20.

There is disagreement as to whether these refer to a phenomenon distinct from the office of the prophet, which is foundational to the church according to Eph. 2:20, and so is of an occasional and non authoritative kind, and if so, continues today. We agree that nobody can claim to reveal the true infallible and authoritative Word of God in addition to the Scriptures. The Scripture rules over, defines and interprets all contemporary statements and claims.

Thus the controversial statement of 1991 that occasional prophecy has not ceased today has been withdrawn. Instead it receives mention only as the standpoint of some. Even they see it as non-authoritative. While these have freedom to teach and act, this freedom has boundaries, namely, the Scriptures and the confessions as well as the synodical guidelines. Synod also urged all to promote peace and harmony in the churches.

The deputies from the RCA assured us that in the local churches this issue is now well and truly put to rest. No present controversies or disturbances exist because of it. The issue is dead. Also, no 'prophecies' occur in worship services, as the 1991 Synod had already made clear (but the guidelines were not always followed in the past). The 1997 Guidelines concludes that prophecy in the sense of being able to speak wisely and with knowledge from the Scriptures is something that all Christians must seek more and more.

All this might allow all to relax. Would that be right? It would have been better for the RCA to keep a clear distinction between *prophecy* and *insight*. The

Appendix 4 - Supplementary Report regarding RCA

so they are urging us to come to a definitive position that reflects what they understand to be the reformatinal principles and guidelines.

Conclusion:

The difference in tone and content of the four FRCA appeal papers, when compared to the original "appeal" amply demonstrate the value of the FRCA and the RCA deputies meeting together to discuss the issues.

It is our view that the discussions, and the FRCA appeal papers demonstrate that the differences between our churches in these areas are not as great as the FRCA had originally believed. Consequently we believe that while there are some differences, these are not of the nature which would prevent us from having meaningful dialogue.

Respectfully submitted

Rev Peter Abetz (convenor & reporter)
V Eikelboom
N Hemelaar
(coopted members: J de Hoop, Rev P Kossen)

We respectfully recommend that Synod decides:

1. To write to the FRCA
 1. To thank them for allowing their deputies to have some face to face meetings with our deputies.
 2. To commend them for the positive and genuine manner in which the discussions were held.
 3. To convey to them that we recognise that there are areas in which we have different practices, but that we believe those differences should not prevent further discussions.
 4. To indicate our desire to continue to have regular discussions (either formal or informal) as these have proved helpful in removing misunderstandings, and could also help in preventing misunderstandings from developing.
2. To appoint several members from the appropriate study committees to prepare appropriate responses to their appeal documents, and to forward these, via the deputies for dialogue with the FRCA, to the FRCA.
3. To appoint deputies for further dialogue/discussions with the FRCA

Appendix 5 Deputies Relations Presbyterian Churches

TO: Free Reformed Churches of Australia Synod 2000
FROM: Deputies for Relations with other Churches - Presbyterian
DATE: 29 February 2000

Deputies have been active in fulfilling the mandate given by Synod 1998. The work was done in two streams. The first in relation to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and the second regarding the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and Ireland.

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

The mandate from Synod was:

1. to personally communicate Synod's (1998) decision about the statements mentioned in Decisions 1 and 2 to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
2. to indicate to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia that deputies are willing to discuss these statements with them if they so desire
3. to visit a Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia synod if an invitation is received
4. to assess the response of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to the three adopted statements and come with recommendations to synod.

Deputies communicated the statements to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in writing and followed this up with a personal visit to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia synod 1999 to further explain and discuss the statements. For further details see Attachment 1 being a report written by Rev A Veldman and J Bruning dated 27 April 1999. As the report mentions, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia 1999 synod decided "That the "Statements" provided by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for our consideration, as printed in the Synod Reports, be referred to lower courts for their possible consideration and report to the Inter-Church Relations Committee before 31.12.99."

Deputies have not yet received any formal response to the statements from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is scheduled to hold its 2000 Synod "in April or May". (Free Reformed Churches of Australia) Deputies will submit an update to the synod when information from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia synod becomes available. Until that time deputies cannot make a recommendation to synod.

Free Church of Scotland, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

Synod 98 Mandate regarding the FCS, the EPCI and the RPCI

FCS = Free Church of Scotland

EPCI = Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

RPCI = Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Decision 4

- I. to assess the areas of concern with respect to the contacts which the FRCA have with the FCS, the EPCI and the RPCI. (These areas of concern are: the supervision of the Lord's table, the supervision of the pulpit, the position of children in the covenant, covenanting and purity of worship.) This assessment should include:
 - A. In what way the statements referred to in Decision 1 affect our relations/contacts with these churches.
 - B. How in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations towards these churches since they are geographically/culturally far away (cf *Acts 1994*, Art 111).

Grounds:

- I. Our method of approach to the PCEA will affect our approach to other Presbyterian churches.
- II. Deputies were not able to complete their mandate regarding the FCS, EPCI and the RPCI given by the previous synod.

ADOPTED

Current Level of Contacts with the FCS, EPCI and RPCI

Free Church of Scotland

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1994, p.168

Deputies report that "it appears that our offer of TEC [Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact] has been accepted. As deputies, however, we were somewhat mystified as to whether the FCS considers our mutual relation to be regulated by our rules for TEC or their rules for Inter-Church relations."

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Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Acts of Synod 1990, Article 147

Observations

3. The EPCI have accepted our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Acts of Synod 1992, Article 157

Recommendations

2a. To maintain contact with the RPCI at a low level until such time as we can conclude an investigation of the RPCA [Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia].

FCS, EPCI, and RPCI

Acts of Synod 1994, Article 111

Synod decided:

2.4 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.

Ground 2 states:

2. To phase out contact with the RPCI, as proposed by the majority of Deputies for Relations with Presbyterian Churches would not be justified until the study is finalised. To break off relations with the EPCI and the FCS can only be done if these churches are found to be unfaithful.

Assessing the areas of concern

Synod mandated our deputies to assess the areas of concern with respect to the contacts that the FRCA have with the FCS, the EPCI and the RPCI. (These areas of concern are: the supervision of the Lord's table, the supervision of the pulpit, the position of children in the covenant, covenanting and purity of worship.)

As part of this assessment synod instructed our deputies to see in what way the statements made with respect to the PCEA affect our relations/contacts with these churches. These statements concerned the supervision of the pulpit, the supervision of the Lord's table, and the position of children in the covenant.

Appendix 5 Deputies Relations Presbyterian Churches

Below deputies give a historical overview of our contacts with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI. Special attention is given to what previous deputies have reported and previous synods have said about the areas of concern. If we as the Free Reformed Churches of Australia desire to pursue a further relationship with these churches, synod will have to evaluate to what extent the various areas of concern need to be pursued with each of these churches.

Free Church of Scotland

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1990, p.266

This report addresses the matter of the manner in which the sacraments are administered in the FCS. It shows that the admission to Holy Supper is well regulated. This report states,

“Holy Supper is celebrated twice a year. In some churches, especially in the highlands, the preparation starts already on the Monday before. In services held throughout the week the nature of the supper is extensively dealt with as well as the admission to the supper and the consequences of partaking with a regenerate heart...”

This report also speaks about the position of the children in the covenant, and acknowledges that some in the FCS have difficulty with this concept.

This report also addresses in some detail the matter of purity of worship. The basic point is that “in the FCS they do not sing uninspired hymns, nor is instrumental music included in the congregational praise.” “These conclusions are based on the principle that nothing is to be admitted in the worship of God, but what is prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.”

Acts of Synod 1992, Art.150

Synod considered that “the concern about... the children in the covenant and the fencing of the Lord’s table were sufficiently answered so that they did not (re)appear in the mandate to new deputies. However the matter of certain views regarding the ICRC and pulpit exchanges remained areas of concern, and were included in the mandate.”

Acts of Synod 1998, Art.93

In the statement re: the supervision of the table reference is made to the manner in which the FCS fences the Lord’s table. Our statement reads,

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 fellowship with the congregation in which that

Appendix 5 Deputies Relations Presbyterian Churches

minister 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).

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1987, p.A10f

The EPCI has adopted a document called 'The Code.' This can be considered as a kind of elaborate Church Order. With regard to the position of children in the covenant, the Code states:

"Children of such members – though not yet admitted to full communion – are, because of God's covenantal promise, received as infant members of the congregation in the sacrament of baptism."

Acts of Synod 1987, Art.79

Under considerations C9 the EPCI is evaluated with respect to the three marks of the true church. In this evaluation use is made of the reports of deputies in our Dutch sister churches, the confessions to which the EPCI subscribes, and the Code which the EPCI has adopted.

On the basis of this Synod considers in C10 that "there is therefore a basis for reconfirming the decision of the 1983 Synod to regard these churches as faithful."

Synod does admit in C11, "The deficiency of the deputies' report is that no first-hand evaluation is made of the marks of the church." In connection with this a visit to the EPCI is suggested.

Report of Deputies, Acts of Synod 1990, p.260

In this deputies report the contact between the EPCI and the RPCI is mentioned. From this contact it is clear that the EPCI does not hold the same position as the FCS and the RPCI on the matter of purity of worship. The following sentence is worthy of note,

"Unfortunately, the matter of 'purity of worship' (no instruments and hymns in the worship services), to which the RPCI adheres strictly and to which the EPCI does not subscribe, seems an insurmountable barrier to union between the two federation[s] of churches."

Acts of Synod 1990, Art.147

Synod considers,

1. We ought to be very thankful for the very positive news concerning the EPCI. All the information indicates that here is a faithful church of our Lord which submits itself to the Word of God and is steadfast in faith.

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2. Their position concerning children in the covenant does justice to God's reliable promise and his pertinent demands.
3. Over the years it has become quite clear that the EPCI cherishes and displays the three marks of a true and faithful church.
4. Although there has been a very fruitful visit, more and personal contact is desirable before a sister relation is offered. Within our churches we must leave time for a better understanding to develop concerning the EPCI.
5. New deputies should be mandated to discuss and explain our current rules for sister-churches, with the EPCI.

Synod recommends,

2. Synod decides to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. To express thankfulness to the EPCI for the acceptance of the relationship of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact;
 - b. To use this contact to continue discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other and with the aim to be able to come to a recommendation to synod to extend full sister relations.

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1992, p.221

In this deputies report the contact between the EPCI and the RPCI is again mentioned. From this contact it is clear that the EPCI does not hold the same position as the RPCI on the matter of purity of worship and covenanting. The following sentence is worthy of note,

"The EPCI advise that their contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI) are developing and growing all the time. Whilst there are differences between them over matters such as exclusive Psalmody and the Covenants, yet the EPCI report that they are united in the fundamentals of the Reformed faith. The EPCI are not sister churches but are involved on the level of 'fraternal relations'."

Acts of Synod 1992, Art.138

Synod recommends,

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

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1994, p.161f

In a response to a letter sent by our deputies "the EPCI politely declined our request for more discussions on the ground that 'the amount of time and effort involved in entering such discussions over such a distance would outweigh their practical usefulness.' Instead of maintaining such a discussion, they

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propose to 'maintain our current relationship through an annual exchange of reports and greetings and in the context of the ICRC'."

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1992, p.170f

This report gives detailed information about the practise of covenanting. This practise dates back to a historical situation in Scotland in the seventeenth century. At that time a conflict arose between the church and state. The report states,

"King James contrived to overthrow the Presbyterian system and introduce a law which became known as the articles of Perth. This law was rigorously enforced. However, being contrary to the beliefs of the Presbyterians, they responded in 1638, with a national covenant in which the church pledged to recover the purity and liberty of the gospel as it was established and practised before the articles of Perth. Presbyterianism was restored, and the Articles of Perth annulled. Five years later, in 1643, a Solemn League and Covenant was signed by the Scottish Presbyterians and the English Parliament. Both parties pledged to "preserve the reformed religion in Scotland and to work for the reformation of religion in doctrine, worship, disciple, and government according to the Word of God... The Solemn League and Covenant was brought from Scotland [to Ireland] in 1644 and warmly approved and signed in many places. Thus too the name given to the RPCI as Covenanters."

A little later the deputies' report explains what is involved in the practise of covenanting. It states,

"The RPCI is known as a Covenanter Church. They believe in the practise of covenanting in which they bind themselves as church in solemn covenant to God to observe and apply His Word in every day life.

'We, as a church, believe that the covenants our church and nation entered into with God in the 17th century are not just interesting bits of history, They oblige us today. By them we are bound by Covenant to God to do three things:

- 1. Promote and defend the Protestant, Reformed faith;*
- 2. Bring our nation back to Christ as Lord and King and*
- 3. Give ourselves as church and individuals to the Lord Jesus Christ'.*

(Covenanter Witness June 1991).

This deputies report also evaluates the RPCI on the basis of the three marks of the true church. In this evaluation use is made of the reports of deputies in our Dutch sister churches, the confessions to which the EPCI subscribes, and the

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'Code' and 'Testimony' of the RPCI. What is particularly noteworthy is the manner in which supervision is exercised over the Lord's Table. The report states,

"The Code stipulates that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated at least twice a year in the following manner:

The date is to be publicized in advance and preparation services are to be held at convenient times. Tokens are presented to those who wish to partake, including the visitors whose profession and practise are known to the Session. On the actual day the minister 'Fences the Table' from an appropriate place in Scripture, reads the terms of membership of the RPCI, gives solemn words of warning to intending communicants urging careful self-examination and then gives words of loving invitation and encouragement to those who are truly repentant. The communicants take their places, the tokens are collected, the minister takes bread, gives thanks and breaks and distributes it and the wine. A suitable address is then given. Sometimes following the celebration of the Lord's Supper, a service of thanksgiving is held."

The deputies' report also mentions that the RPCI holds a specific position on the purity of worship. It states,

"The singing in church is exclusively Psalm singing without the accompaniment of instruments. This practise is based on the principle that nothing is to be admitted into the worship services other than that prescribed in the Word of God."

Acts of Synod 1992, Art.157

Synod considers,

1. The evidence of deputies regarding the marks of the true church, combined with their sentiment that 'the investigation is finished', give reason for the FRCA to adopt the recommendation of deputies 'to recognise the RPCI as true and faithful churches of the Lord,' and consequently offer to them a sister relation...
2. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia is a 'daughter' church of the RPCI, having received autonomy from the Irish church not 20 years ago. This means that we have virtual RPCI's in our own country. Given that we have (had) no contact at all with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Australia, it is not prudent to recognise the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland at this time. To do so could place us potentially in the same anomaly in which we currently find ourselves in our respective relations with the FCS and the PCEA.
3. The material available in deputies' report concerning what impact covenanting would have on future sister relations reveals that this distinctive would affect sister relations in as much as ministers accepting a call to that church will be bound beyond the Three

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Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards. Because a supra-confessional binding is implicit for ministers who would go to the RPCI, it is worthwhile to investigate whether the practise of covenanting would bind one above Scripture.

4. As there is no request from the churches to establish any contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, this Synod cannot instruct deputies to investigate these churches. Such investigation will have to wait until (one of) the churches requests it.

Synod recommends,

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

Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1994, p.165f.

Deputies report that they received a reaction from the RPCI on the question of whether the practise of covenanting would bind a minister joining that church to a 'supra-confessional binding'. On this point the RPCI responded,

"In the practise of covenanting there is no 'supra-confessional binding'. Covenanting binds to nothing additional, but it does bind additionally. In other words it is the strongest way of binding oneself to the doctrines of grace set forth in the Confession and catechisms and particularly of pledging one's loyalty to Christ our King."

Deputies outline three options about how we as churches could proceed in our contact with the RPCI. They are:

- a. Leave the contact with the RPCI at its current low level.
- b. Proceed to sister relations.
- c. To phase out contact with the RPCI.

The deputies recommended to synod that they "be instructed to write to the RPCI to explain why the FRCA has phased out contact with the RPCI." As grounds they give the following reasons (abbreviated here):

- Previous contacts with other churches have ceased due to the difficulty of sustaining good communication.
- The churches in Synod 1990 decided "to phase out contact with churches with whom we seem to be making no progress" (Acts Art 58). Instead the FRCA should "concentrate on relations and contacts

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with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility.”

- The RPCI is member of the ICRC...

Acts of Synod 1994, Article 111

Synod decided:

2.4 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.

Ground 2 states:

2. To phase out contact with the RPCI, as proposed by the majority of Deputies for Relations with Presbyterian Churches would not be justified until the study is finalised. To break off relations with the EPCI and the FCS can only be done if these churches are found to be unfaithful.

How to fulfil our obligations to the FCS, EPCI, and the RPCI in a responsible way

Part B of the mandate given to deputies by Synod 1998 was:

“How in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations towards these churches since they are geographically/culturally far away (cf *Acts 1994*, Art 111).”

In our past Synod decisions we have created a tangled web for ourselves. Our churches have made decisions that have a bearing on how we can proceed today in our contacts with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI. We note the following decisions:

Acts of Synod 1985, Art.67

DECLARATION CONCERNING THE MEANING OF “TRUE AND FAITHFUL CHURCH”

Synod declare

that our recognition of another Church as being “true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ”

1. means that both our churches, and that recognised church, stand on the foundations as expressed in Articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;
2. has as a direct consequence that a sister-Church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity;
3. and that our church members must join that church, and vice versa, in the case that such a church is their nearest church, in accordance with Article 28 of the Belgic Confession.

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Acts of Synod 1990, Art.58

LIMITING MANDATES FOR DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS AND CONTACTS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Recommendations

Synod decides to follow the policy with respect to the mandates for deputies for relations with other churches:

- a. to limit the requirements of the relative mandates to a manageable level;
- b. to limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad and with churches we have recognised as true and faithful to the minimum level necessary for us to remain acquainted with their situation and to fulfil our obligations made to them;
- c. to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility;
- d. to phase out contact with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress.

Acts of Synod 1992, Art.95

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD DECLARATIONS, RULES AND REGULATIONS

Recommendations

5. To discontinue offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact" and ask deputies to work towards sister relations with those churches with whom we presently have temporary ecclesiastical contact.

Acts of Synod 1994, Article 111

Synod decided:

2.4 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.

Ground 2 states:

2. To phase out contact with the RPCI, as proposed by the majority of Deputies for Relations with Presbyterian Churches would not be justified until the study is finalised. To break off relations with the EPCI and the FCS can only be done if these churches are found to be unfaithful.

Comments from deputies:

Option 1 Entering into a sister church relationship with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI

One option that we have is to continue discussions with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI to try and resolve outstanding issues, and thus enter into a sister church relationship with them. To do so requires us to address certain areas of concern that we have with these churches.

The problem with this is that these churches are in a geographical region that is much closer to our Dutch sister churches, and have been recognised as sister churches by the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (see Acts of Synod 1998, p.116). The incentive for them to discuss matters with us is not very great. In fact, "the EPCI politely declined our request for more discussions on the ground that 'the amount of time and effort involved in entering such discussions over such a distance would outweigh their practical usefulness.' (Deputies Report, Acts of Synod 1994, p.161f).

Deputies question the purpose of entering into a sister church relationship with churches that are far removed from us. Intensive relations and contacts on our part with churches that are closer to our sister churches are a needless duplication of efforts (Acts of Synod 1990, Art.58, Consideration 6). **Thus we do not recommend this option.**

Option 2 Phase out formal contact with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI

A second option would be to phase out formal contact with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI. One problem with this is that Synod 1994 stated that "to break off relations with the EPCI and the FCS can only be done if these churches are found to be unfaithful." (Acts of Synod, 1994, Art.111). Despite this obstacle, deputies consider this to be the best option available to us.

Furthermore, Synod has previously decided that we should "concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility." (Acts 1990, Art.58). The FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI are geographically very distant from us.

In limiting the mandate for deputies for relations and contact with other churches, synod recommended "to phase out contact with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress." (Acts 1990, Art.58). It has become clear that we appear to be making no progress with these churches. The FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI have all advised the FRCA deputies in writing that they do not consider it appropriate to have discussions on the areas of concern that have been identified.

In a letter dated 8 January 1993, the EPCI declined to have discussions with us (see earlier section of this report for details). The FCS sent deputies a letter on

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3 Feb 1994 signed by Rev Prof C Graham advising that the FCS Committee on Ecumenical Relations "did not see fit to engage in any inquisitorial discussions with you." The RPCI sent a letter dated 25 April 1994, written by Rev Professor F S Leahy. The letter noted that the FRCA deputies were recommending that the FRCA phase out contact with the RPCI and others. As a result Prof Leahy writes: "I feel that at this time it is best for us to maintain contact and fellowship at the level of the ICRC."

RECOMMENDATION

As deputies, we recommend to phase out formal contact with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI. As grounds for this recommendation we propose the following:

1. A church does not become faithful or unfaithful on the basis of our findings or recognition.
2. As a small bond of churches it is important for us "to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility." (Acts 1990, Art.58).
3. In limiting the mandate for deputies for relations and contact with other churches, synod recommended "to phase out contact with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress." (Acts 1990, Art.58). It has become clear that we appear to be making no progress with these churches as mentioned in the comments above.

Report prepared by Deputies

Rev A Veldman (Convener), Rev J Poppe, Rev W vander Jagt, J Bruning, H Olde.

ATTACHMENT 1

TO: FRCA DEPUTIES FOR CONTACT WITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES
FROM: REVEREND A VELDMAN AND J BRUNING
DATE: 27 APRIL 1999
RE: VISIT TO PCEA 1999 SYNOD

On 20-21 April 1999, we attended the PCEA 1999 Synod held at Collaroy Beach, a suburb of Sydney. We were asked to attend the Synod by the Deputies to bring the FRCA's greetings and provide information to the synod about the FRCA 1998 Synod decision regarding the PCEA.

On Wednesday morning 21 April, Reverend Veldman was invited to address the Synod. Reverend Veldman then delivered the prepared speech as agreed by the Deputies.

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The moderator of the PCEA Synod, Reverend John McCallum, invited questions and comments from the Synod floor in response to:

1. The Interchurch Relations Committee Report to Synod.
Section 4.2 of that report deals with the FRCA. The report has appended to it the FRCA Synod's three statements - taken from the FRCA 1999 Synod Acts, Article 93.
2. The speech delivered by Reverend Veldman.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:

1. The Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN), the FRCA's Sister Church, recognised the PCEA as true and faithful [which is a recognition without immediate Sister Church relations]. The FRCA has not recognised the PCEA despite urgings from both the PCEA and the GKN. Why?

2. The PCEA feels aggrieved that you have not recognised it as a church of Jesus Christ. The PCEA has recognised the FRCA as such. Recognition provides a basis on which we can work to address the areas of concern before full fraternal relations. If the PCEA is not recognised as a true church by the FRCA, what are we then? An unfaithful church, a false church?

3. I cannot accept the FRCA's statements. They are too extreme; too logical; too rational. The statements contain much I can accept, but the conclusions have been carried to a logical extreme. I believe the statements go beyond Scriptures. For example: To say that no-one should be invited to preach unless they are a minister in a church we have recognised as a true church is going too far. I do not like the relationship that the statements made between membership of the true church and inviting ministers onto our pulpits. Someone like George Whitfield would then not have been allowed to preach in our churches. I do not think our churches will accept this. The basis is too narrow.

4. I value discussions with the FRCA. I want to understand the FRCA. I do not see any difficulties with the statement "The position of children in the covenant". I do have problems with the other two. They are so tied up with the doctrine of the church, that it creates problems. We need clarification regarding this doctrine. We must, however, try to understand the FRCA. The FRCA implies that the PCEA's practices of fencing the Lord's Table and supervision of the pulpit are symptomatic of a divergence of doctrine. This is incorrect.

5. I agree with earlier speeches. If the PCEA had used the same criteria as the FRCA, the PCEA would not have recognised the FRCA as a true church. It is too narrow to demand that only those can attend the Lord's Supper who have made Public Profession of the Reformed Faith and who are a member of a true church. The PCEA says they must be a member of an evangelical church. The FRCA would not have accepted at their Lord's Supper table some of the great

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figures in Church History. The PCEA would. The FRCA should study Article 26 of the Westminster Confession (The Communion of Saints). The PCEA tries to give expression to this statement of faith by opening the Lord's Table to true believers. The FRCA statement restricts this. Similarly the statement regarding pulpit supervision would not allow me to invite whomever I consider suitable to preach in my congregation.

6. Furthermore regarding children: How strong do you tell your children to embrace Christ in order to be saved? Are your children conceived and born in sin? Do FRCA parents tell their children they must be born again?

REVEREND VELDMAN AND J BRUNING COVERED THE FOLLOWING IN THEIR ANSWERS (Summarised):

1. This was partly covered this in the address. The reason why we do not (as yet?) recognise the PCEA as true and faithful is because:

a. We believe that recognition as true and faithful is really the same as offering Sister Church relations. If we say yes to true and faithful, it must eventually follow that we will also have Sister Church relations. We have identified areas of concern (as outlined in my speech) which prevent us from offering you Sister Church relations at present.

The FRCA does not see the PCEA as a false church; our Synods have said that we see in the PCEA a real desire to serve God. The fact that we come to attend your Synod, and raise these issues with you, is evidence that we seek true unity. We invite an open dialogue with you on the points we have raised. That is not to say the statements are a discussion paper - they are formal statements by our Synod.

b. Are the statements beyond Scripture? I don't believe so, but please study the material and then let us discuss it. We are willing to make time to speak face to face again. If we are wrong and you can show this from Scripture, please tell us.

c. As to the matter of pulpit exchange, if you allow a Reformed Baptist on the pulpit, you are saying it is okay to attend that minister's church. That will erode your own church's standing as a true church. Last night, discussing the reports of 'Church and Nation Committee', some have said that it does matter which church people join. The PCEA is a true church and there is where people belong. By inviting ministers from other denominations in your pulpit you undermine this very statement.

d. Regarding the fencing of the Lord's Table, through the Lord's Supper celebration, we express true unity between believers; we say that there is unity in doctrine and conduct of life. You have to be sure that is the case, or the table

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will be profaned. Regarding the refusal of church fathers, eg Whitfield or Spurgeon, on the pulpit or at the Lord's Table: It is better to examine the issues with a study of Scriptures and Confession to establish the principles, rather than start with a practical situation.

e. We too believe that children born in the covenant are conceived and born in sin. They are also sanctified in Christ. Christian parents have the duty to instruct their children in the riches of God's covenant. It is the Holy Spirit who will work faith in their hearts. When they have come to spiritual maturity the children have to respond to the promises God has given to them.

In Presbyterian circles sometimes the expression is used "we have to lead our children to Christ." This can give the impression that they are as yet not Christ's. In discussions with the late Prof. McMillan I have come to understand that you do not mean this and that basically you mean the same as when we say, "we have to raise our children in the christian faith."

The PCEA delegates indicated they had a lot more questions which would be raised at a later date.

The moderator thanked us for our frankness. He commented that the discussion had given him a greater appreciation of the FRCA's position on the issues, and that the issues were of a serious nature. He asked us to convey the PCEA's greetings to the FRCA.

THE PROPOSED DELIVERENCE TO THE PCEA SYNOD REGARDING THE FRCA READS AS FOLLOWS:

"That the 'Statements' provided by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for our consideration, as printed in the Synod Reports, be referred to lower courts for their possible consideration and report to the Inter-Church Relations Committee before 31.12.99."

This was adopted by Synod.

After this point, Reverend Barry James, who attended the PCEA Synod on behalf of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ) urged the PCEA to 'put their teeth' into the FRCA statements. He added that the three issues in the statements could have an effect on the RCNZ/PCEA relations. (Reverend James added later to us both that he was sure that the RCNZ was going to raise the same issues with the PCEA).

During informal discussions, we were able to discuss the issues in more depth. Other issues were also discussed, including the need to discuss Doctrine of the Church; the instruction/education of Covenant Children; Profession of Faith; and 'Confessional Membership'. We were heartened by the solid support of

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Reverend James, and the support for our position on the statements by one of the PCEA ministers.

SPEECH BY REVEREND B JAMES:

Reverend B James addressed the PCEA Synod on behalf of the RCNZ. He brought greetings and expressed the desire for a closer working relationship between the two churches. He mentioned in particular the mission work. The proposed deliverance regarding the RCNZ (5.3) was adopted by the PCEA Synod.

SPEECH BY REVEREND D BAIRD:

Reverend D Baird addressed the PCEA Synod on behalf of the Reformed Churches of Australia. He brought greetings and covered the following points in his speech and answers to questions:

a. The RCA wants to work closer with the PCEA at a local level. This has started, eg through a monthly Reformed Ministers' Fellowship, which is attended by one of the PCEA ministers. They have also commenced joint prayer meetings.

b. The RCA recognises it is living in changing times. There is a real need to understand these changes. As a result of these changes, old challenges (eg how to do outreach work) have to be revisited.

c. The PCEA and RCA have a common heritage, but different approaches to some things. This opens the door for mutual correction and encouragement.

d. The RCA remains a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). The RCA Synod instructed Deputies to attend the Athens 1992 REC Meeting, and convince the REC to expel the GKN (Syn) because of doctrinal error. The REC did not expel the GKN (Syn). The RCA Synod has not given Deputies new instructions about this issue or its own membership of the REC.

e. The RCA have also written to CRC (North America) about concerns the RCA has about developments in the CRC; the creation issue was mentioned.

The proposed deliverance regarding the RCA (5.5) was adopted by the PCEA Synod.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE:

The Church and Nation Committee proposed that an Identity Statement about the PCEA be adopted. (Section 1 of their report - page 23). This led to a

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discussion about the 'health' and direction of the PCEA. Some of the pertinent points made during the discussion were:

a. Do all the members of the PCEA have a common vision about their church and the church's functions?

b. We are here to save souls; we have to tell people about the gospel whenever we can, even if they end up in another church. So long as they believe in Jesus Christ and go to a church, we should be very happy. (Spoken by a minister).

c. Another responded to this, stating that it does matter which church they join. The PCEA is a true church and that is where people belong. If we do not say this (and some of us indeed see this incorrectly), then we may as well not have a PCEA. (This is the statement referred to above)

d. Our first priority must be to equip ourselves to talk to our neighbour. If we cannot witness to our neighbour, how can we ever bring the gospel to the world?

e. We must try to understand society. It is changing rapidly. There is a generation of people that knows virtually nothing about the Bible. How does the phenomenon of multi-culturalism affect the way we witness? We have to be very simple and direct in our witnessing. Do not use difficult or archaic language; it both frightens our own church members to speak to others, and outsiders will not understand.

f. Let us not get stuck in the defense mode, ie not put all our energy into preserving what we have. Let's be very excited about the Gospel message - and show this to the community through warmth, concern and love for others. The Gospel should release us - not restrict us - we have to openly live our Christian beliefs. We must be very serious about our faith and walk of life. We need a revival starting with ourselves (Psalm 67).

g. The Roman Catholic Church is undergoing a huge crisis of authority. It is losing attendance at an alarming rate. It is now in reactionary mode.

h. The PCEA has had zero growth since the 1930's. We have lost many members to the large cities where, until recently we had very few churches. If we do not reverse the current trend, there will not be a PCEA in another generation. We have to rethink our methods of evangelisation.

i. The moderator summed it all up as follows: "We all know what to do - but the price is too high for us to pay".

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EVALUATION:

The visit was valuable from several viewpoints: -

1. It was good to be able to personally convey our message to all the PCEA Synod representatives, and to answer questions. It was clear that there were questions, and some negative feelings about the FRCA 'putting words into the mouth of the PCEA', ie by asking the PCEA to adopt the three Statements. Our personal presence, the effort and cost of traveling to the Synod did, however, indicate to the PCEA that the FRCA is both serious and sincere about the issues. This was appreciated and helped to remove scepticism and convince some delegates to take the issues home for study and contemplation. (Previously only the Committee for Inter-church Relations dealt with the issues raised by FRCA Deputies. It appears that for the first time, all sessions will now deal with our concerns).
2. Through informal contact/discussion, we built up a report with the delegates, which in turn enabled us to discuss in more detail the thinking behind the statements. We were also able to broach a number of other subjects, such as Reformed Education and Confessional Membership.
3. Our presence made an impression on the RCNZ Representative, who in turn urged the PCEA to 'put their teeth into the issues'. We are thankful to God for this RCNZ response. It is also quite possible that it will give the RCNZ more reason to formally ask the PCEA to address these issues. Our Deputies for contact with the RCNZ should be advised of this.
4. Our presence at Synod has possibly opened the door for us to discuss the issues in more detail with the PCEA. Let us pray that this may happen.
5. The PCEA is not growing; they have frequently discussed this at their Synods. Despite the concern, there is little progress.
6. Several of the younger ministers appear to be more open to our proposed statements and other issues discusses informally, such as Confessional Membership.
7. It became evident (as it has been before) that many delegates knew very little of the FRCA.

Appendix 6

Deputies Relations Presbyterian Churches Supplementary Report

TO: Free Reformed Churches of Australia Synod 2000

FROM: Deputies for contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

RE: Supplementary Report

As mentioned in our previous report to Synod dated (29 Feb 2000) the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia synod was held in early May 2000. Hence this additional report to Synod. We have now received both the standing committee reports to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia synod and the synod decision regarding contact with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

SUMMARY OF STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS TO THE SYNOD OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA 2000.

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Synod members will recall that FRCA Synod 1998 adopted three 'Statements.' The PCEA was to be offered 'sister-church relations as a first step towards full unity if they can agree to the above-mentioned statements. '

PCEA Synod 2000 resolved that copies of the 'Statements' be 'referred to lower courts for their possible consideration and report to the Inter-Church Relations Committee before 31.12.99.' We report that only one response was received by the deadline, from Southern Presbytery. A copy of this is appended to this report.

The Committee does not believe that there is any necessity to adopt formal statements declaring our doctrinal and practical position beyond what is contained in our constitutional documents. However the Southern Presbytery response provides some useful comments in relation to the FRCA 'Statements,' and we propose that Synod endorse it as generally descriptive of our Church's position, and forward it to the FRCA for their consideration.

PROPOSED RESPONSES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO FRCA SYNOD-ADOPTED STATEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

We preface our response by the following quotations concerning the unity of the church. The first is by Zacharias Ursinus (1534-83), one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. Ursinus writes:

When spoken of as visible, it means an assembly of persons who embrace and profess the entire and uncorrupted doctrine of the law and gospel, and who use the sacraments according to the appointment of Christ, and profess obedience to the teachings of God's word. The visible church consists of many who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the word unto eternal life, and many also who are hypocrites and unregenerated, but who nevertheless consent to the doctrine and conform to the external rites of the church... The invisible church consists of those who are chosen unto eternal life, who are also regenerated, and belong to the visible church. It lies concealed in the visible church.

Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism (1852 reprint) pp.286/287.

To the same effect is a representative Scottish theologian Thomas McCrie (1772-1835):

It will help us in forming correct notions on this subject, if we attend to certain distinctions which are commonly made in treating it. ...it is usual to distinguish between the *invisible* and the *visible* Church - it means, that all who make a profession of the faith compose the Church considered as visible, while those among them who are endued with true faith constitute the Church considered as invisible. The former includes the latter; and it is sometimes spoken in Scripture under the one and sometimes under the other view.

The Unity of the Church (1989 reprint) p.15.

We certainly reject the definition of the church in terms of visible/invisible in a manner which avoids the obligation of ordering the church according to the pattern given in Scripture. At the same time, the fact that a person may be regenerate though in a body not fully organised according to Scriptures should caution us against exalting the external, or failing to press the necessity of obedient response to God's promises on all our people.

I. SUPERVISION OF THE TABLE.

We agree with points (a) and (b) and the most of (c).

In regard to (c), in *The Practice of the Free Church of Scotland* there is no reference to the position of guests from another church, but what is stated in

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the PCEA-Handbook: is the typical and long-standing practice of the PCEA (and the FCS). Please note, both books are more textbooks descriptive of practice than law books.

The FRCA requires an attestation from another church within the same federation or from the local church of a sister-federation. The PCEA is less specific as to the mode of attestation, does not employ the same sister-church procedure, but welcomes those in good standing in certain other churches, giving greater discretion to local Sessions in their precise manner of supervision. Given the small size of PCEA congregations the practical effect of these differences is not such as in our view corrupts the purity of the church, and there is certainly no intention to minimise the importance of the distinctive testimony of the PCEA but to reckon in some measure with the complexities arising from the present divided state of the Christian church by which its reality as 'one body' is not perfectly expressed. In a situation where there is something of a disordered state many things may be suffered which in other circumstances would be disallowed. Note WCF 26 re the communion of saints as having some bearing on this matter too.

2. THE SUPERVISION OF THE PULPIT

We agree in general with points (a), (b) and (c) but consider (d) draws a conclusion which does not adequately address the presently disorganised state of the Christian church. The view has also been expressed that the tenor of this section sounds as if the preacher must be 100% in agreement with FRCA belief and practice. If Martin Luther was available to preach in one of our pulpits, confining himself to the doctrines of our Confession, would we decline this opportunity? Surely not.

We would delete the last sentence in (d) and replace the second last sentence "Recognition of a church is recognition of its preaching" with the following: 'Recognition of a church in the sense of holding sister church relations, implies recognition of its preaching, but recognition of preaching in other circumstances does not imply recognition of the church from which that preacher comes so as to nullify in any way the Confession of the host church.

3. THE POSITION OF CHILDREN IN THE COVENANT.

We are not quite sure what the FRCA statement is aiming at. However, we agree that God's covenant is established with all who profess the true religion and their children. It is a sincere promise and those professing subjection to Christ who do not act faithfully are covenant breakers as are children of believers who grow up to spurn the covenant. Consequently, we accept that the covenant youth need to be instructed and in a variety of ways to see that this is done.

CONCLUSION

We think a response to the FRCA along the above lines will be in order. On the whole, we consider those who know their history and Reformed Confessions and principles will not find it necessary for any more formal statement than our official Standards and Handbook of Practice. A shorter statement on the first two points could be drafted if it was thought necessary.

There is a danger of over exalting small differences in practice to a wrong status, or inferring that they imply errors specifically rejected. The marks of a true church are important but cannot be absolutised as if a church is only true if free of errors or sins. We consider some aspects of the worship of the FRCA to be contrary to the Confessions and the example of the best reformed Churches of Reformation times (eg. use of organs and uninspired compositions in the praise portion of public worship), yet we refuse to make their failure in this area a ground for rejecting the true church character of the FRCA.

Respectfully submitted,
Rowland Ward (On behalf of presbytery per meeting 19/10/1999)

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Synod 2000 decision

Free Reformed Churches of Australia Deputies received advice that the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Synod 2000 decision was:

The Southern Presbytery response to the 'Statements' provided by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia for our consideration, as printed in the 1999 Synod Reports, be endorsed as generally descriptive of our Church's position, and forwarded it to the FRCA for their consideration.

COMMENT FROM DEPUTIES TO FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA SYNOD

Deputies comments:

1. The PCEA does not show any willingness to interact with the statements agreed upon by FRCA Synod 1998
2. Deputies regret that the PCEA synod did not interact with the statements, but only made a few comments and for the rest simply passed on the comments made by the Southern Presbytery.
3. Deputies also regret that the decision taken by the PCEA synod hardly leaves any opening for further discussions.
4. Some of the statements adopted by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Synod are somewhat puzzling in the light of our previous contact. These include:

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"We are not quite sure what the FRCA statement is aiming at" under the heading "Position of Children in the Covenant."

We have previously made it clear what our Synod's concerns are on this point. Reference is made for example to a meeting in Melbourne, where Rev. Jonker had a paper on "Children in the Covenant" and also to a paper made by Rev. Bosch and sent by previous Deputies, to which little response was received.

"There is a danger of over exalting small differences in practice to a wrong status, or inferring that they imply errors specifically rejected."

We have previously said that the issues raised are not small differences in practice.

Recommendations:

To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

- 1) to convey to the PCEA our disappointment that they did not interact with the statements accepted by Synod Launceston 1998
- 2) to ascertain whether there still is a willingness with the PCEA to discuss these statements on the basis of Scripture and our mutual confessions
- 3) if there is willingness to discuss these statements, if possible via face to face meetings and in a forum which is deemed most suitable by deputies
- 4) to assess the PCEA final response and come with recommendations to Synod

Grounds:

- 1) Although the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the PCEA resolved that copies of the statements be referred to the lower courts for their possible consideration and asked them to report back to their committee, only one of the presbyteries responded yet did not really interact with the statements. Moreover the Synod of the PCEA decided that there is no need for formal statements declaring our doctrinal and practical position beyond what is contained in our constitutional documents.
- 2) It seems there is some misunderstanding about the status of the statements. Deputies should try to remove this misunderstanding and so try to ascertain whether there still is room for further discussions.
- 3) In case deputies meet with willingness for further discussion deputies should have the freedom to arrange a forum most suitable to bring these discussion to fruition.

Appendix 7 - Deputies for Contact with Sister Churches

Introduction

1. To date, deputies met a total of 4 times in carrying out the mandate received from Synod Launceston.
2. At this time in our mandate, we have received one request for a testimony from one of our ministers 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 1998 was sent to all the sister churches, as well as to the Theological Colleges in Kampen and Hamilton. Invitations to Synod West Albany 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.*

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- 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 Bedforddale 1992, Article 95.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Mandate (Acts, Article 81):

1. To continue sister relations with the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika in accordance with the established rules;
2. To express thankfulness to these Churches for sending a delegate to this Synod;
3. To authorise Deputies to send a delegate to their Synod, subject to available finance."

Correspondence:

Copies of the Acts of Synod Launceston have been sent to the relevant deputies in South Africa. In a covering letter, appreciation was expressed to these churches for sending Rev Viljoen to our Synod and so for the concern they showed for the well being of our churches. Deputies also endeavour via the reading of *Kompas* to stay abreast of developments in the South African sister churches.

Synod Pretoria:

Two Synods were held in Pretoria, one in 1997 and another in 1998. Deputies have received and perused the Acts of these Synods. Our summaries of these Acts can be found in an appendix to this report (Appendix 7.1).

Visit

Synod "authorise[d] Deputies to send a delegate" to the next South African Synod, "subject to available finance". In a later decision, Synod itself determined that finance was available (Art 124, Decision 6). Deputies have received an invitation from South Africa to be present at their coming Synod to be held, the Lord willing, in Bethel from May 2 to May 4, 2000. Consequently, deputies have delegated Rev C Bouwman to visit South Africa. We hope in a supplementary report to provide some information on this visit.

Recommendation

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

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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.

Presbyterian Church of Korea

Mandate:

"To continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) in accordance with the established rules" (*Acts*, Article 67).

General Assembly

Deputies received an invitation to the 49th General Assembly 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.

From Dr Hur, a member of the Fraternal Relations Committee, we received an email in March 1999 about the 48th General Assembly. While we are thankful for the reconciliation related in the beginning of the email, we find the remainder of the material too brief to work with responsibly. So we pass it on in its entirety to Synod in Appendix 7.2.

Other Material:

We also received a letter dd 15 December 1999 from the new president of the seminary, Seung-Mi Lee. He relates that the seminary's "thirteen full-time faculty members and twenty staffs, supported by the general assembly both in finance and in spirit, have been doing their best to educate the 497 seminarians so that they may be well-equipped as ministers who will serve the twenty-first century churches armed with the Reformed theology and martyr's faith."

We refer at this point also to what is written about the Presbyterian Church of Korea in Appendix 5 of this Report.

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:

"To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules" (Art 68).

Synod Fergus:

Synod Kelmscott had instructed deputies to send a delegate to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev C Bouwman travelled to Canada to be present at the Synod of Fergus in May 1998. His report to deputies of his visit to this Synod came to late for deputies to pass it on to Synod Launceston. We include his address to Synod as Appendix 7.3 to our report, and his report of the visit as Appendix 7.4.

Deputies have also received the *Acts* of this Synod. Our digest of these *Acts* is attached as Appendix 7.5.

Other material:

Deputies have endeavoured to stay abreast of literature from the Canadian Reformed Churches in order to be informed of developments there.

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

Deputies have no report at this time on these churches, since the Acts of Synod Leusden were received only last week. We hope to come with a supplementary report in due time.

Appendices

Appendix 7.1: Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Synod Pretoria, 1997:

This ad hoc Synod had to deal with two matters:

Rev JA Breytenbach

Rev Breytenbach came to the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa from the Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk. He had seen need to call this church to repentance, but his labours were rejected. He therefore separated himself from this church and joined our sister churches. An examination resulted in his being declared eligible for call within the churches.

Theological College

A previous Synod (1996) had decided that "if it is at all possible, it is our calling to begin our own theological training in South Africa." Deputies now came with a concrete proposal to begin an own training.

The churches in Synod considered that an own training in South Africa was feasible, be it with some assistance and encouragement from the Theological University of the Dutch sister churches in Kampen. Consequently, Synod decided to establish a Theological College for the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, beginning on 1 January 1998. Five of the ministers of the bond were appointed to teach (all part-time) the various disciplines required for a training for the ministry.

Synod Pretoria, 1998:

The biannual Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa was held in Pretoria from 30 April to 1 May, 1998. The following points of interest are noted:

- The Theological College is up and running, with curators and regulations in place.
- The five churches of the South African bond feel a need to have more contact together, but no consensus has yet arisen as to how this should be done. Deputies were appointed to consider the matter further.
- The numerous mission fields in South Africa prompted discussions in the churches about whether an office of 'evangelist' is to be recognised. The discussion is incomplete, with deputies mandated to continue their research.
- A committee is to come to Synod 2000 with a proposal for more hymns for the worship services.

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- The sister churches have decided to support an effort in South Africa to come to a contemporary Bible translation based on the formal equivalent method of translation.
- The South African churches see a task within their country to be of assistance to any and all in their land who wish to be reformed. To that end, the churches also have a deputyship mandated to offer assistance wherever that may be needed. There are contacts with multiple concerned churches throughout South Africa. Deputies are mandated to explore what more can be done to assist the disconcerted of other churches.
- While local churches are encouraged to take up contact with local churches of the GKSA (Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika; so-called 'Dopperkerk'), deputies are also to speak with the GKSA on the national level. This is with a view to coming to a conclusion whether the GKSA is to be regarded as a true church or not.
- Sister church relations was maintained with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Brotherly contact is maintained with the GGR1 in Indonesia and the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Contact is sought with, among others, the Lanka Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of New Zealand.

Appendix 7.2: Presbyterian Church of Korea

Dear brothers in the Lord,

Hereby we sincerely apologize our belated information regarding the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church held at Seemin Church in Ulsan in September, 1998.

This time there were not so many heavy items. We have one thing in particular to mention in great thankfulness. For years there was an invisible division between brothers within our churches. That has been always making some troubles in the life of our church federation. But during one prayer meeting the Holy Spirit worked irresistible repentance within the hearts of brothers, and they asked forgiveness to each other. So there was a beautiful reconciliation between brothers, and the spiritual unity within church was restored by God's grace. That was a great blessing of the Lord in this age of division and conflict. That was also a great harvest of the General Assembly 1998.

The General Assembly was held at Seemin Church in Ulsan, which is the city of Hyundai Car Industry on Sep. 21, 1998.

The elected moderamen;
Chairman; Rev. Jong-Sam Kim
Vice-chairman; Rev. Kung-Chun Cho
Vice-chairman; Elder Mr. Kee-Yong Park
First secretary ; Rev. Han-Suck Lee

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Second secretary ; Rev. Young-Ho Kim

Treasurer; Elder Mr. Un-Sik Park

Important decisions;

1. Not to ordain a brother whose wife is unbeliever as deacon according to the words of 1 Tim.3:8-17
2. For each member to contribute 1000won (equivalent to USD 1 for planting church by means of the Evangelism Committee of the G. A. apart from the contribution for the evangelism by a local Church.
3. To standardize the wages of personnels who are employed for Seminary, University and Hospital.
4. to collect money for the fellow countrymen of North Korea.
5. To request professionals to investigate proper management of University and Hospital.
6. To request the Committee of Theology in order to evaluate the Re-revised edition of Korean Bible.

Further there were discussions regarding pensions(of ministers), regulations of the G.A. etc.

Some other news;

1. Presently there are 38 chaplains who are activating for evangelism within army.
2. August last year, our Seminary was shifted from Pusan to Chunan 80 kilometer south from Seoul. We have now better facilities than before; auditorium with 1600 seats, roomy classrooms, large library etc. 500 students are accommodated at Dormitory. We are very happy with the blessing of the Lord!

Soon-Gil Hur, Chairman,

Fraternal Relations Committee of the Korean Presbyterian Church.

(Received via email, March 1999)

Appendices 7.3,7.4,7.5: Canadian Reformed Churches

Address for Synod Fergus - 1998 - on behalf of the FRCA

Esteemed brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is distinctly a pleasure for me to be in your midst. It's a pleasure for me personally, for it's most enjoyable to be back in the town of my youth and make acquaintance again with so many with whom I've grown up. I note with delight that there are brothers at this Synod with whom I used to cavort and discuss at Young Peoples' Society in this very building – and I like to think we're none the worse because of it! Equally, it's a great pleasure to renew contact with various with

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whom I've spent time at the Theological College – and I admit: it brings back many pleasant memories! And possibly what gives me the greatest pleasure in being here is the opportunity to observe that Australian blood is well and truly represented amongst the delegates to this Synod – undoubtedly for the great benefit of this meeting!!

All of that, Mr Chairman, illustrates something of the warmth and closeness of the bonds existing between the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches. It's that closeness that also prompted our previous Synod in Kelmscott two years ago "to send a delegation to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches" on the ground that "the degree of common interests we have with the Canadian Reformed Churches makes face to face contact desirable."

"The degree of common interest we have," said our Synod. Yes, brothers, our bonds go far beyond the ties of friendships and family. You in Canada (and I admit: even after being gone for ten years it sounds strange to me to speak about "you in Canada"!) and we in Australia have a common origin and so a parallel history. As one of your delegates to our 1994 Synod said it: "we are churches that have developed through immigration from a common ancestral home, with a common confessional heritage.... That history of immigration presents us with common difficulties and challenges...." You in Canada have established a Theological College for the Training of the Ministry, and we in Australia reap the fruits, for the majority of our ministers received their training at this institute. You in Canada have developed a *Book of Praise*, and we in Australia make grateful use of it, Sunday by Sunday in the church services and daily in our homes and schools. You in Canada have a reformed teacher training institute, and we in Australia eagerly accept graduates from Covenant College to teach the covenant children in the schools we've received. You in Canada produce reformed literature in the English language, notably *Clarion* and *Reformed Perspective*, and these magazines find their way into very many of our homes and hearts. You in Canada raise the young men and the young women, and we send our boys and girls to your land to steal them for ourselves... – and, O yes, we do send some back to assist in cross fertilisation too.... In so very many ways, then, we in Australia benefit greatly from the gifts the Lord has given to our bigger sister in Canada, and it is only fitting to thank the Lord in your hearing for what He in mercy has given to us in you over the years. It is our heartfelt prayer that the Lord will continue to use the Canadian Reformed Churches as a source of blessing for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We are a small bond of churches, consisting of nine congregations with some 3300 members, and so very much feel the need for warm contact with the churches in Canada to whom we are so close.

Yes, we are small. But both Canada and Australia are historically members of the British Commonwealth, and so have inherited from Great Britain the same language, the same legal system, the same political system. The result is that there are no pronounced cultural differences between Canada and Australia –

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except in those areas that relate to climate. As the children of the first Free Reformed migrants grew up and knew themselves to be dinkie-die Aussies, their sense of affinity to Holland and what that land had to offer to Australian church life lessened in favour for growing affinity with Canada. We understood in Australia: we have so much in common with Canada that bonds with Canada need to grow and be strengthened. We understood too: it is not necessary for us in Australia to do for ourselves what you have already done in Canada. We see, then, no need today to begin our own Training for the Ministry. It is for us no problem to send our young men to the Theological College in Hamilton. I may mention that the College in Hamilton receives regular mention in our prayers as well as collection rosters, so much so that we in Australia refer to the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches as “our” College. We remember with deep appreciation the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches sent Dr Faber to visit us at the time of his retirement, and our upcoming Synod needs to consider a proposal from our Deputies for the Training for the Ministry to invite one of the professors of the College to come to Australia in order to raise the profile of the College in our midst still more. For my part, our Deputies for the Training for the Ministry requested me to take the opportunity while in Canada to meet with the faculty of the College, and I may mention that the meeting was very helpful as we set ourselves to encouraging and preparing our young men for studies in Hamilton.

The same may be said in relation to the *Book of Praise*. You in Canada have laboured for years to develop a Book for the churches, and we in Australia see no need to do that work again. One travels, then, as far away from Fergus as is possible in physical miles, and the church service is the same, with the same confessions, the same psalms and hymns, the same liturgical forms – word for word (be it, as some would say, in purer English pronunciation). It prompts the question: as you consider further developments for the *Book of Praise* –and I notice that suggestions to this extent are on your agenda– might it be possible that ways and means are found for our two bonds of churches to work together in developing the *Book of Praise*? Admittedly, that course will not be without its challenges. Our last Synod, for example, 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. Similarly, the large majority of our churches are using the New King James Version, while you prefer a different translation. Such decisions on our part are not meant to be criticisms upon your decisions. Instead, they represent the fact that we are two separate bonds of churches, both responsible for affairs within our own lands. At the same time, such differences do not preclude close consultation and cooperation. We would ask, therefore –given the great amount on interaction between us– that where our decisions differ from your decisions as recorded in a valuable resource as the *Book of Praise*, you grant us the honour of giving our decisions your careful consideration – even as we have considered and will consider your decisions carefully.

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I observe that your Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad has informed your assembly that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided in their 1996 Synod to terminate membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches – of which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches were both charter members. In time past we have requested from your deputies some assistance in coming to grips with the implications of our ICRC membership, and I take the opportunity today to thank you and your deputies for the assistance given. Precisely because we have requested your assistance, it seems to me correct to give some account of why we decided to terminate our membership.

Our Synod mentioned as *Ground* for our decision primarily this: “the membership of the FRCA in the ICRC has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches.” This 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 numerous 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 sister churches on the doctrine of the church. (Consciously we seek to prevent that our relative geographic isolation be a handicap to us!) Yet we could not persuade each other that membership in the ICRC was either commanded by God or forbidden by Him. When Synod Kelmscott, 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. And I may mention to you that our decision to farewell the ICRC has indeed served to restore more harmony and peace within our churches.

Still, 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. Allow me to mention a couple of reasons.¹ Possibly the reason easiest to explain is this: all member churches of the ICRC consider each other, by virtue of their ICRC membership, to be true churches of the Lord.² This reality gave problems in our midst because we have been striving for numerous years to come to the point where we could recognise the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a true church of the Lord – and have not been able to. So, within the international forum of the ICRC we were saying

¹Deputies’ 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.

²See 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” (p 76).

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that the PCEA was a true church, but within our own country –where the FRCA and the PCEA both live– we could not say that the PCEA was a true church. This tension between saying Yes and No at the same time heightened pressure in our midst to step out of the ICRC. Did Jesus not said that our Yes must be Yes, and our No, No? (cf Mt 5:37). A second reason relates to the urge of the stated aim of the ICRC Constitution, where the members are encouraged to seek contact and unity with fellow members. So the ICRC was seen as the engine that determined with whom the FRCA ought to establish and formalise contact.

Before we withdrew from the ICRC, concern was communicated to us by sister churches that departing from the ICRC would cause us to be isolated. It is now two years ago that we have withdrawn our membership, and to date there are no indications that we are becoming an island to ourselves. We continue to have contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, to the point that our coming Synod needs to consider a concrete proposal concerning how to make progress with this church. (For that reason we are also keenly interested in what you will decide regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church – and why you will decide it.) Further, our previous 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” (*Acts* 1996, Art 68). Again, regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Synod 1996 could declare its “gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies found in the RCNZ” and instruct deputies to “strive for a sister church relation with the RCNZ” (*Acts* 1996, Art 53). We are also very heavily involved with our sister churches in Indonesia, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia, and have also been involved in giving assistance to the so-called Musafir churches in Indonesia.

You will notice: we are concentrating our contacts to churches in our quarter of the globe. We are small, and so can not be all things to all men. Accordingly, we decided in 1990 already to develop new contacts only with churches who were geographically close to us, for whom we therefore have a greater responsibility. Other churches around the world we would leave to our existing sister churches living in proximity to the new church (see *Acts* 1990, Art 58). Our current practice, then, resembles what your Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad has recommended to this Synod.

Asto mission work, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have for years been busy in Papua New Guinea. Of late responsibility for the work that's been done in Port Moresby and Ekoro has passed to Toronto – here's an example of helping each other. We for our part are investigating possibilities in the PNG city of Lae. Efforts are also under way in our midst to establish mission work in India and in China. There certainly is enormous scope for mission work in our part of the world! Maybe, just maybe, we can do more work together in mission.

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Dear brothers in the Lord, I must come to an end. Your sister churches in Australia greet you in the name of the Lord, and wish you God's indispensable and promised blessing on all your labours. May we meet more often, consult together more often, do more things together. When all is said and done, we need each other as brothers of one culture, one language, one heritage, one faith.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

C Bouwman
8 May 1998

Report to Deputies re Visit to the Canadian Reformed Churches

The 1996 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided "to send a delegation to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches" because "the degree of common interests we have with the Canadian Reformed Churches makes face to face contact desirable" (Acts, Art 20).

The Canadian Reformed Churches met in General Synod in May 1998, beginning on Tuesday, May 5. Sixteen delegates from two regional synods attended the meeting. After the election of the executive (chairman, Rev R Aasman; vice-chairman, Rev W denHollander; 1st clerk, Rev GH Visscher; 2nd clerk, Rev PG Feenstra) and the Constitution of Synod, I was heartily welcomed as delegate from the sister churches of Australia, and accorded the rights and privileges that belong to a fraternal delegate.

According to the habit of the Canadian synods, the first number of days were used primarily for committee work. For my part, I was left free to attend the various committees at will. I used the opportunity gratefully, attending specifically those committees that were dealing with topics that touched on the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, ie, sister relations, Theological College, relations with Presbyterian churches.

On Friday evening, May 8, I was granted an opportunity to address the meeting on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. On the grounds of the great degree of common interests between our two bonds of churches, I laid before the brothers particularly the need for greater contact and consultation between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, particularly in relation to matters of mutual interest, as the Theological College and the Book of Praise. From conversations with the delegates, it was evident that my urging was well received. The text of my address is attached to this report. On behalf of Synod, Rev J Moesker replied. His address too is attached.

Directly after these two addresses, the committee proposal concerning the FRCA was tabled. Synod decided "to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA..., in accordance with the adopted rules." Synod also expressed deep appreciation for "the generous support" given by the FRCA to the Theological College in Hamilton.

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When the Free Reformed Churches of Australia considered withdrawing from the ICRC, we were told not only that our concerns were ill-founded, but also that we would end up in ecclesiastical isolation. As it turned out, though, I felt very much at home with the brethren at Synod Fergus, and was much encouraged to note that this Synod unanimously adopted a proposal that places the Canadian Reformed Churches on record as being unhappy with the existing Constitution of the ICRC. The decision adopted by Synod attempts to tie together in the ICRC an acknowledgment of true church to recognition as sister church. I witnessed also that Synod made a decision concerning the Reformed Church of the United States that did not go as far as deputies recommended (they recommended Ecclesiastical Fellowship = sister relations). Instead, Synod's decision exhibited caution while at the same time acknowledging gratefully "the commitment of the RCUS to the Word of God and the Reformed heritage." I was delighted to note that the delegates of the RCUS expressed great appreciation for the cautious manner in which the CanRCs proceeded in their inter-church contacts; their comment was that "you take inter-church relations seriously." The committee of Synod responsible for preparing a recommendation on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church also worked very cautiously and systematically through the material submitted by the churches in order to come to a mature and responsible decision about relations with the OPC. At the time of this writing, their proposal to Synod has not been finalised, but establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC is not at all a foregone conclusion – since the "Agreed Statements" formulated by combined deputies of the CanRCs and the OPC are not adequately clear.

It is further of interest to note that so many of the issues before this Synod parallel issues discussed in Australia. Various churches in the federation drew Synod's attention to developments in the sister churches in the Netherlands. Accordingly, deputies received instructions to take up with the Dutch brethren the concerns mentioned by the churches. No small mandate! Women's voting rights is on the agenda, too.

It should be mentioned also that various appeals had to be dealt with relating to alleged injustice in the minor assemblies. The care with which the brothers dealt with the appeals, in their efforts to do justice, was encouraging.

In a word: I very much appreciated the opportunity to listen to and speak with the brethren in Canada. Though we are separated by thousands of miles of ocean, we are distinctly one in the faith once delivered to the saints. The words of encouragement and the shared concerns were a source of reassurance in the continued battle both to *be* reformed and to *be reforming*. May this trip serve to strengthen still farther the close bonds that exist between the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Finally, the brethren ask that greetings be passed on to the churches in Australia.

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C Bouwman, Fergus
13 May 1998

PS: as requested by Deputies for the Training of the Ministry, I visited the Theological College and met with the faculty. I have reported separately to them.

Summary of Acts of Synod 1998 of the Canadian Reformed Churches

The latest tri-annual Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches was held in May 1998, in the town of Fergus, Ontario. We pass on for Synod's information the following decisions of this Synod.

Bible Translation

Synod decided "to continue to recommend the NIV for use in the churches." At the same time, Synod decided "to continue to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use other translations that received favourable reviews in the reports." Deputies have the mandate to "monitor developments in the NIV as the text is revised." Synod considered that "the fact that the [International Bible Society] even considered producing a 'gender-inclusive' edition of the NIV is not encouraging" (Art 121).

Book of Praise

As the CanRC have recommended the NIV for use in the churches, a revision of the *Book of Praise* to incorporate this change is probable. Deputies received the mandate "to prepare the Prose section of the *Book of Praise* with NIV Bible references, and to present the revision to the next General Synod." In the considerations leading to this decision, Synod expressed the desirability of involving the Australian churches for their input (Art 140, IV). A revised version of the Nicene Creed was also adopted, and will appear in subsequent printings of the *Book of Praise* (Art 140, VII).

Theological College

Synod received reports from the Board of Governors regarding the instruction given by the professors of the College. On the basis of the reports received, Synod expressed gratitude "that the work at the Theological College continues without interruption and that all instruction is given in harmony with the Word of God and in agreement with the Confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches" (Art 84). The churches "in Canada, the United States of America and Australia" faithfully give financial support for the operation and maintenance of the College (Art 86). A proposal to expand the facilities of the College was also adopted (Art 87).

Of interest is also a decision by Synod to direct the Board of Governors to proceed, on a trial basis, with implementing a program that would give students

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at the College more practical, hands-on experience in the work of the ministry before they graduate from the College. This program would see students labouring for a number of weeks in a congregation (vacant or not) under the oversight of the congregation's consistory. The thought that this program might require additional manpower for the College staff was also mooted. Next Synod should receive a more detailed report on this interesting development.

Discipline

Synod dealt extensively with an appeal relating to the dismissal of a minister. Tragic as the material of the appeal was, the positive element in Synod's deliberations the matter was the careful way in which Synod sought to do justice to the parties concerned.

Interchurch Relations

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Synod Fergus discerned that the correspondence and *Acts* from our churches give reason to conclude that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is "faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions, and the Church Order," and so decided to continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA. Synod also "commended" the FRCA "for the generous support they give to the Theological College in Hamilton." (Art 34)

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

The FRCSA were also found to be "faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions, and the Church Order," and so Ecclesiastical Fellowship was maintained with this federation (Art 34).

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Synod decided "to continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCN in accordance with the adopted rules and to be vigilant in applying these rules in regards to any concerns coming to their attention." In fact, the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad was mandated "to discuss the points raised above" concerning the RCN, viz, their discussions re an alternate Form for the Solemnisation of Marriage, women's voting rights, and teachings by particular ministers that appear to conflict with Scripture and Confession. The CRCA is also to inquire about the matter of the 'blessing elder' (Art 40).

Presbyterian Church of Korea

The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad reported to Synod that they have received regular letters of invitation to attend the General Assembly of the PCK, but "have no longer been receiving an English summary of the PCK's decisions and activities." Your deputies note that Australian deputies have the identical experience.

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The CRCA recommended to Synod to continue a relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK on the grounds that "the Acts of sister churches in Australia and the Netherlands as well as impressions received at the ICRC in Seoul" indicate that "the PCK continues to conduct herself as a faithful church of Jesus Christ." Synod decided "to continue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK." Further, deputies are mandated "that every attempt be made to improve communications between our respective churches" (Art 120).

In relation to the ground mentioned above, your deputies note that Australian deputies reporting to our 1996 Synod lamented the lack of contact and recommended "to continue relations with PCK according to the established rules" on the negative ground that "no evidence has arisen suggesting that the PCK has departed from the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions or the Church Order." Synod took over this recommendation with its negative ground (Art 25). The reference in the CanRC Acts to Australia, then, comes down to using another's hesitant decision to support one's own decision. Here a word of caution is in place. In as much as the FRCA in the past has given weight to the decisions of sister-churches as we made decisions about other churches, we shall do well to avoid leaning too much on each other's decisions as long as substantial contact with the church in question is lacking.

In a separate decision, in response to an overture, Synod decided "to include in the mandate of the CRCA a further investigation of the practices regarding the fencing of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership in the PCK and report to the next Synod" (Art 108).

Free Church of Scotland

Synod decided to "continue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS" (Art 120). In response to an overture, Synod considered that "the CRCA could, however, be instructed to seek further clarification on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relationship to the church" (Art 119). For reasons unclear to the reviewer, this consideration did not reappear in the decisions of Synod and hence has no place in the mandate to the CRCA.

l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec

In relation to the ERQ, Synod decided not to develop a formal relation at this time, since the ERQ is "in the beginning stages of church development." Instead, deputies were instructed to "clarify and discuss" particular points, viz, nature and status of deacons and deaconesses, the matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance, the fencing of the Lord's Table, the need for confessional binding for members and office-bearers, the differences in rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRC, as well as the question whether federative unity is possible. Deputies are also to respond to specific requests for assistance from the ERQ (Art 97).

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Reformed Church in the United States

A budding relationship with the RCUS did not develop into a sister relationship at this Synod. Synod could “acknowledge with gratitude the commitment of the RCUS to the Word of God and the Reformed heritage.” However, concerns expressed by a number of churches prompted the Synod to instruct deputies to “resolve the matter of proper supervision of the Lord’s Supper so that only those who confess the Reformed faith will be admitted” and “discuss the matter of Sunday observance and the doctrine of the church” (Art 51).

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

For many years the Canadian Reformed Churches have had contact with the OPC with a view to establishing a sister relation together. Deputies had reported to Synod Fergus that deputies from both churches had agreed to statements re the two outstanding issues, viz, fencing of the Lord’s table and confessional membership. Deputies recommended that Synod adopt these two statements, so that in turn the way could be open for the CanRC to “invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches.”

Synod did not adopt the recommendation of deputies. Synod instead tightened the two statements so as to diminish unrest in the CanRC and assist the OPC “to function in a manner that is suitable to one of the Churches of the Reformation” (Cons C.2). Specifically, the statement on Fencing of the Table was strengthened with this addition: “This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required.” Further, the words “and confirmation of a godly life” were added on the grounds that elders need evidence that the applicant to the table does not simply say ‘Lord, Lord’ without living that confession. The statement on Confessional Membership was altered in such a way as to clarify that adherence to the doctrine of the Bible implies adherence to the confessions (Cons C.3). The final statements on the two points as adopted by Synod Fergus now read (Recommendation F):

CONCERNING FENCING THE LORD’S TABLE:

The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord’s supper should not be profaned (1 Cor 11:27, see Heid. Cat. Lord’s Day 30, Q & A 82; Westminster Confession ch. 29.8). 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. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guest. This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord’s Supper.

CONCERNING CONFSSIONAL MEMBERSHIP:

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The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible as the patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostle's Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be willing to be instructed in it.

These two statements were (unanimously) adopted together with the understanding that "should the General Assembly of the OPC adopt the Agreement on Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership as stated above, to invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches."

International Conference of Reformed Churches

The Canadian Reformed Churches have been members of the ICRC since its inception, and advised the FRCA not to withdraw from the ICRC. Synod Fergus, however, has expressed concern with the ICRC's recent change to its Constitution. Article IV, 1 used to read: "Those Churches shall be admitted as members which: a. adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis." This sentence now reads: "Those churches shall be admitted as members: a. which faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed faith." Synod considered that "the new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis. It leaves open the question 'What is the Reformed faith?' The concept of 'the Reformed Faith' could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away from the need for a confessional basis...." Hence Synod decided "to mandate the CRCA to convey to the next meeting of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches disapprove of the change made in the Constitution Article IV.1.a. and to recommend that this Article be changed in such a way that the concerns of the CanRC are addressed."

The CRCA was also instructed from now on "to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations." Meanwhile, two delegates will represent the CanRC at the next meeting of the ICRC in 2001 (Art 52).

CCCA/CRCA

Synod decided to divide the work of contact with other churches over two committees, viz, the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA) and the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA). The CCCA is responsible for "establishing and maintaining relations of ecclesiastical

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fellowship with churches located in North and South America.” The CRCA is responsible for relations with churches outside of the Americas. It was noted that there are an ever-increasing number of relationships developing around the world, leading to a workload and responsibility beyond the ability of the CanRC. Hence Synod reiterated a consideration of Synod 1992, viz, that priority to development of new contacts should be given to churches in the home environment. From now on, then, “a request for contact will be followed up in consultation with a sister-church in the part of the world from which the request originated.” (Art 72). Synod accordingly “advise[d] the CRCA to consult the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and/or the Presbyterian Church in Korea to take up contact with the Lanka Reformed Church” (Art 133).

With this decision, the CanRC have decided to follow a policy similar to that adopted by the FRCA in Synod 1990: “to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility” (Art 58), and Synod 1994: “In making contacts and relations with other bonds of member churches in the ICRC, which are geographically distant from us, to wait for sister churches closer to those other churches to take the initiative and to make decisions before we become involved” (Art 83, Decision 6).

Ecclesiastical Unity

The CanRC had appointed Deputies with the mandate to pursue ecclesiastical unity with those who had departed from the Christian Reformed Church. There appear to be various points of contact among the Canadian Reformed congregations with congregations from the United Reformed Churches of North America. Reports about these contacts are positive. Consequently, Synod decided to give deputies the mandate “to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity.” Deputies should also have contact (if invited) with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches “with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity.” Further, these deputies are available to give advice to local churches in their contacts with a URCNA or an OCRC church (Art 96).

These same deputies also received the mandate to “take up contact with ... the Free Reformed Churches of North America” and “initiate fraternal dialogue with the FRCNA with a view towards establishing federative unity” (Art 98).

In Conclusion

Deputies appreciate the care with which the Canadian Reformed Churches are handling their inter-church relations. In their established as well as developing relations, these churches give evidence of seeking to act consistently as they “assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world” and “care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.”

Appendix 8

Supplementary Report

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Mandate:

The mandate given by Synod Launceston to deputies regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands is embodied in the following decision (*Acts*, Article 102):

1. *To continue sister relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the established rules;*
2. *To thank the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland for being patient with us regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia; inform them of our decision with respect to the Presbyterian church of Eastern Australia, and ask them to stay in step with that decision;*
3. *To encourage the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland to remain faithful, and note with appreciation the assurance given at Synod, Berkel & Rodenrijs 1996: "to maintain the relationship of sister church with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, giving special attention to their questions as to developments within the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands."*

Synod Leusden

Your deputies received an invitation to attend the 1999 Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands during the week of May 17-22. We had no mandate to attend this Synod, and no monies had been allocated for travel expenses in relation to a visit either. Yet, due to the concerns in our midst (see also Point 3 of the mandate above), your deputies thought it right to send a delegation to this Synod. Instead, though, of deciding unilaterally to send a delegate, your deputies thought it correct to use the option made available in the mandate mentioned in Art 125 of the *Acts* of Launceston:

"All Deputies will work under one umbrella..... The three deputyships will meet together as needed to inform and consult with each other regarding their work....."

Accordingly, we requested a meeting with the other deputies on February 26, 1999. The meeting deemed a trip to the Netherlands inappropriate. We acted according to that sentiment. Attached you will find the letter of greeting and encouragement we sent to the Dutch Synod.

We also mention that we requested the Australian churches to give consideration to mentioning the Dutch Synod in prayer in their worship services on Sunday April 4th, 1999.

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Further, we have received a letter from a member of the Dutch sister churches, addressed to our Synod. This letter was originally sent to Synod Leusden, as an appeal to return to the way of Scripture. We attach the letter, including covering letter, as Appendix 1 to this report (in the original as well as in English translation). We consider that a letter from an individual member of a sister church to our Synod is not the customary way of doing things. However, for two reasons we include the letter:

1. the letter is addressed to Synod, and came via the correct channels (ie, via deputies), and
2. the contents of the letter form an urgent plea for assistance in relation to perceived backsliding in a sister church.

Your deputies have prepared the following report without the above letter in the forefront of our minds. Nevertheless, it will be clear that in various matters your deputies concur with the criticism voiced by the brother.

Acts of Synod

Synod Leusden was very lengthy, not coming to a close till December 1999. To date the *Acts* of this Synod have not been published. Deputies requested and received in March 2000 an e-copy of the Synod decisions – though not the reports to Synod. We have only received a copy (in April, 2000) of the report of Deputies for Churches Abroad (including Supplementary report). On the basis of this material, we present the following digest of Synod Leusden.

Marriage Form

As indicated in our report to Synod Launceston, your deputies took up with the Dutch deputies the decision of Synod Berkel & Rodenrijs relating to the alternative marriage form given into the freedom of the churches for testing. As our concerns came to paper too late for interaction by deputies (their report had to be sent to the churches by August, 1998), we sent our concerns both to the deputies concerned as well as directly to Synod.

Our concern at the time was that the alternative form did not instruct the bride to submit herself to her husband, in accordance with the command of the Lord in passages of Scripture as I Cor 14:34; Eph 5:22; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1. The bride was instead instructed to “entrust herself to” her husband (“vertrouw u aan hem toe”) (Art 67).

In an effort to communicate to the Dutch brethren what our concern was, we prepared a study on what the Scriptures say about the relation between man and woman in marriage. This study was also printed in *Una Sancta* for the interest of the church membership (15 & 29 May 1999).

The Synod decided to adopt a new marriage form for use in the churches. The earlier forms adopted by Synods 1996 and 1981 were retracted, in favor of the newly adopted form. The new form does not make mention of the Lord’s instruction to the wife to submit to her husband. The new form does make mention of the husband’s task to be head of his wife, but the notion of headship

is substantially weakened from its traditional understanding. We read (in translation):

“...Within this unity man and wife also have their own place. The apostle Paul brings a deep meaning to light, when he compares their relation to the relation between Christ and His church. Christ is the Head of the Church and answers for her.¹ By giving Himself completely, He loved her to the end. In imitating Christ, the man must, with love and self-denial, be head of his wife. As the one carrying the prime responsibility, he must guide her in living with the Lord. He shall care for her well-being, and give her security.²

The wife from her side maintains the unity by doing justice to the place of the man. As the church entrusts herself to Christ and lets herself be led by Him, so the wife must entrust herself to her husband and follow him in the service of the Lord. She shall help him in all things that agree with God’s will, and share life with him in love.”³

We note that the headship role of the man is defined here in terms of love and self-denial, instead of in categories of authority. We cannot see how this can be reconciled with the pattern of Scripture. Eph 5, for example, instructs the wife to “submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church” (vss 22f). This is much more than a headship characterized by love and self-denial; Christ’s headship distinctly includes authority. That is why the church submits to Christ. It is certainly true that the headship of the husband must be exercised within parameters of love (cf vss 25ff), but love does not exhaust what headship is all about. It is telling that Paul mentions the notions of headship and submission *before* he speaks of the husband’s love for the wife.⁴

Your deputies are disappointed with this development. We think the matter should be taken up again with the Dutch churches.

¹ As the Nederlands-Engels Woordenboek translates the expression “staat borg voor haar.”

² Geborgenheid.

³ “Binnen deze eenheid hebben man en vrouw ook ieder een eigen plaats. De apostel Paulus brengt een diepe betekenis aan het licht, als hij hun relatie spiegelt aan die tussen Christus en zijn gemeente. Christus is het Hoofd van zijn gemeente en staat borg voor haar. Door Zichzelf helemaal te geven, heeft Hij haar liefgehad tot het uiterste. In navolging van Christus behoort de man met liefde en zelfverloochening hoofd te zijn van zijn vrouw. Als eerstverantwoordelijke moet hij haar voorgaan in het leven met de Here. Hij zal zorg dragen voor haar welzijn en haar geborgenheid geven. De vrouw bewaart van haar kant de eenheid door recht te doen aan de plaats van haar man. Zoals de gemeente zich aan Christus toevertrouwt en zich door Hem laat leiden, zo moet de vrouw zich toevertrouwen aan haar man en hem volgen in het dienen van de Here. Zij zal hem helpen bij alle dingen die naar Gods wil zijn, en liefdevol het leven met hem delen.”

⁴ See here also the helpful editorial from Dr J deJong in *Clarion*, June 11, 1999.

Day of Rest

A minister within the bond of churches said in a sermon on Lord's Day 38 the following concerning the Sunday:

"Let others know how important this day is to you. As far as I'm concerned, [ground its importance] not on the ground of an absolute, divine command. But because it is good to rest together on one day of the week, according to the example of Israel's Sabbath."⁵

That sentence captured the drift of the sermon; the minister in question based the need for a day of rest not on God's command, but rather on benefits we can get from a day off.

That stand-point prompted a congregation member to raise concern with the consistory, to the effect that this point of view was unscriptural since God had commanded us in the fourth commandment to rest from our labors. But the consistory in question stood by the minister, and so the concerned congregation member appealed to classis that his consistory had wronged him. The classis stood by the consistory, and so declined to say that what the minister had said was unscriptural. The congregation member, though, was not convinced that classis was correct, and so in turn appealed the decision of classis to the regional Synod. The regional synod said concerning the teaching of this minister that indeed, it did not agree with Lord's Day 38;⁶ the concerns of the brother who appealed were well-founded. Said the regional Synod,

"the church in her confession, Lord's Day 38, when she calls the sabbath a day of rest, builds on the command to rest which the Lord Himself gave verbatim in the fourth commandment."⁷

Whereas the minister, then, said that the Sunday as day of rest was not based on God's command, the regional synod said it was.

The Consistory of the minister concerned appealed the decision of regional synod to the recent General Synod. This General Synod said that it could not condemn what the minister had said, namely, that the Sunday as *day of rest* is not based on a divine command.⁸

Deputies have received from the church of Mt Nasura a request to address the Dutch churches on this matter. The church of Mt Nasura has supplied argumentation demonstrating why this decision of Synod was incorrect. Deputies are working with this material and intend to bring up the matter with the Dutch churches.

⁵ "Laat merken hoeveel die dag je waard is. Wat mij betreft, niet op grond van een absoluut, goddelijk gebod. Maar wel omdat het goed is samen een dag in de week rust te nemen, naar het voorbeeld van Israels sabbat." See *Acts of Synod Leusden*.

⁶ "dat afwijkt van Zondag 38 HC."

⁷ "De kerk gaat in haar belijdenis, Zondag 38 HC, waar zij de sabbat de rustdag noemt, uit van het gebod om te rusten, dat de Here zelf woordelijk geeft in het vierde gebod."

⁸ "de opvatting van ds nn dat de zondag als *rustdag* niet gegrond is op een goddelijk gebod, niet te veroordelen is."

Determination of Synod Agenda

Reformed church polity has the agenda of major assemblies determined by the churches through the way of the minor assemblies (be it that one Synod can appoint deputies relating to an agenda item do some work and report to the next Synod). Deputies find striking that the *Acts* we have read relate no less than two instances where an item was placed on the agenda and dealt with despite not arising from the churches.

1. In relation to the Theological University of the churches in Kampen, Synod Leusden decided to alter dramatically the governing structures of the church's training for the ministry. (For details the reader is referred to Rev vanderJagt's article in *Una Sancta*, 27 November, 1999.) The *Acts* state expressly concerning this decision that it did not come forth from an explicit mandate of previous Synod. Nor do the *Acts* give any indication that the revision was requested by the churches. Instead, we learn from the *Acts* that the Board of Governors requested the change; indeed, Synod did nothing more than approve the changes implemented by the Board of Governors. This material comes across to us as a somewhat unorthodox *modus operandi*.
2. In relation to graduates of the Theological College who are ready for the ministry but have opted to delay entering the ministry in favor of some years of doctoral study, Synod decided to give opening for these men to speak an edifying word. Synod decided "to handle the matter, but make only a temporary regulation for three years" on the ground that "this concerns a matter which has not been subjected to the preparatory judgment of the churches." Instead, it was a request tabled by the Board of Governors.

Lord's Supper in Special Circumstances

The Dutch churches have involved themselves for years via a deputyship (and if possible a minister) in the pastoral care of church members who serve in the military. This Synod made the decision that the military chaplain was permitted to celebrate the Supper of the Lord provided

1. the gathering maintained the character of a Christian congregation;
2. the chaplain invites only those who are permitted to attend in their home congregation; and
3. the chaplain directs the participants to their personal responsibility in doctrine and lifestyle.

The decision was made on the grounds (amongst other) that adherence to the Church Order is not possible in situations of war or crisis. The *Acts* relate that the decision is temporary in nature and deputies must come with recommendations to the next Synod so that definitive instructions can be given. Synod recognized the need for the matter to receive thorough investigation, but considered a trial period advisable.

Deputies from BBK visiting us (see details later in this report) informed us that this regulation would allow for the administration of the sacrament outside the

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supervision of the elders and outside the official worship service. They told us too that other protestant Christians may not (by government regulation) be excluded in such a celebration. Comparison was made with the right extended to the missionary to administer the sacrament to those he knows on the mission field without elders in attendance.

We are aware that there are historical precedents for celebrating the Lord's supper outside the direct supervision of a Consistory. However, we puzzle how it is possible for a faithful Minister of the Gospel to administer the sacrament to any who claim to be protestant Christians. What room is left here for effective fencing of the Lord's table? And what message is left of the will of the Lord to join the true church? Does the law of the government here not take precedence over the law of God?

Deputies consider that this matter too needs further attention.

Blessing Elder

Synod 1993 had decided (without regard for the matter arising via the proper ecclesiastical channels!) to allow a reading elder to lay the blessing of the Lord upon the congregation. Synod 1996 denied a number of appeals on the matter. Synod 1999 also found the matter on its agenda ..., and decided "that any brother called by the Consistory to lead the worship service has the right to lay the blessing, in unaltered form, upon the congregation, including the raising of hands." The grounds include the statement that there are no specific criteria one must meet to be allowed to lay the blessing on the congregation that differ from the criteria needed to read the law or lead in prayer, etc.

We note that previous requests to have the matter subjected to a thorough study have been denied (again). Instead, the decision of the past (to allow the elder to lay the blessing on the congregation with raising of hands) is now extended to anybody authorized by the Consistory to be on the pulpit. This development was inevitable; once the link was severed between authorization to preach the gospel and authorization to lay the blessing on the congregation, the conclusion had to follow that anybody authorized to be on the pulpit may lay that blessing on the people. It remains regrettable that the matter has not been subjected to the necessary study. One can be forgiven for fearing that the office of Minister of the Word will undergo further deterioration.

Liturgy

Synod Leusden added to the adopted Orders of Worship (so-called Middelburg and Kampen; A and B in our *Book of Praise*, pg 581ff) a third Order of Worship, designed to allow for increased celebration of the Lord's supper. In connection with this decision, Synod also released for use in the churches three new (shorter; very short) Forms for the Celebration of Holy Supper. Room is left too to use the existing abbreviated form minus its references to "Self-examination" and "Invitation and Admonition". At the same time, Synod stipulated the classic

form (the existing lengthy one) must be used "a few times per year",⁹ since "it is of such beauty that it, despite its somewhat archaic language, must not end up being unused."

Given the sinfulness of the human heart, and our inbuilt unwillingness to look at our sinfulness (and hence the need for true repentance and looking to Jesus Christ alone), one wonders whether it is wise to leave room to delete the references to "Self-examination" and "Invitation and Admonition".

Hymns

Synod 1996 had instructed deputies to come with a selection of more hymns for the churches. In the course of their mandate, they presented to the churches 255 hymns. Numerous submissions were received from the churches (and members) in relation to details surrounding these hymns, which the Synod judged itself incapable of judging.

Other submissions on the matter, however, Synod could judge. As a result, of the 255 hymns presented to the churches, Synod approved 121 as suitable for use in the worship services. The remaining 134 can also be used, but the Synod cautioned the churches to be reserved in their use of them, since Synod has said neither Yes or No about them.

Your deputies have not seen a copy of these hymns. However, we puzzle at that development. The more hymns there are the greater the possibility becomes that the psalms are forgotten. Further, it is a fact well-proven in church history that heresies are sung before they are preached. Is there no wisdom in the stance of the fathers to be wary of hymns?

Bible Translation

The Dutch churches use a translation of the Bible dating from 1951. Because of developments in language, this translation is deemed insufficient (the language used is too archaic), and so the Dutch churches have given assistance to a project to come to a new translation. This translation, however, is not expected to reach completion till 2004. A request to permit the use of the Dutch Good News Bible in the regular worship services was rejected, but its use "in special circumstances" was granted – though the churches never made careful study of this translation. Though the term "special circumstances" is not defined in the decision, the relevant article suggests that one is to think of evangelism projects or places in the country where numerous foreigners attend the worship services.

Article 14 CO

A detailed decision was made to regulate the stipulation of the Church Order re dismissal of ministers from their congregations.

⁹ "enkele keren per jaar"

Appeals

To ensure that justice is done to parties who feel aggrieved by a decision of Regional Synod, Synod Leusden decided to appoint a deputyship for appeal matters. As appeals for the consideration of a General Synod are lodged with the convening church, the convening church shall pass these appeals on to this deputyship, who shall in turn –through a process of consultation with the parties concerned, and evaluation of the material received– present a proposal to Synod concerning what answer Synod should give to the appellant. Instructions given to these deputies were tentative, with the mandate to come with improved instructions to the next Synod.

Refreshment Course for Ministers

Synod agreed to a request that it is necessary for ministers to receive further training to stay up to date. To achieve this goal, Synod appointed deputies mandated to report to next Synod about how new ministers, all ministers and ministers-in-need might be better equipped and guided to carry out their offices.

Divorce

The 1996 Synod had adopted guidelines relating to how to deal with cases of marital breakdown resulting in divorce. Synod 1999 amended these guidelines somewhat. As these amended guidelines may be of benefit to the Australian churches, deputies present a translation of the directives:

1. The synod (of Berkel and Rodenrijs 1996) advises the consistories to carefully consider the deputies' report (see *Acts GS Berkel and Rodenrijs 1996*, appendix IV) and the committee report (*idem*, appendix V).
2. When church members are involved in a divorce the consistory shall show her pastoral care towards them in the way of comfort, encouragement and admonishment. When the consistory, through discussions with both parties, is able to form an opinion over the situation, the consistory will ensure that this opinion, as well as the reasons for coming to this opinion, are well noted in the minutes.
3. The consistory is not allowed to bind the consciences when a case cannot be clearly proven from Scripture.

If there continues to be a difference of opinion between the consistory and the church members involved (mentioned as special cases under Startingpoint 4) about the question whether divorce and/or a second marriage is allowed in the light of

God's Word, the consistory shall ask the classis for advice in accordance with Art. 41 CO.

4. When (one of) the parties leave(s) for another congregation the consistory in that place will give no more information as is necessary to take over the pastoral care.

Before the other consistory is informed, the brother and/or sister involved shall be told of the content of this information. When the divorce has become a fact the attestation will have the following entry: "this brother/sister was married. The marriage has been dissolved due to divorce. He/she was at that time a member of the Reformed Church of _____."

If a consistory needs more information, particularly when judging a case of re-marriage, he shall, after having informed the involved party, approach the consistory that issued the attestation.

5. Consistories who are involved in the same marriage breakdown and divorce shall consult with each other. The result of such consultation shall be kept in writing.
6. When the consistories involved have a difference of opinion in judging a marriage breakdown and they do not agree with regard to church discipline and/or the solemnization of a new marriage, the classis of the church that must make the decision shall be asked for advice.

Evangelism

To foster evangelism and cooperation amongst evangelism committees, a deputyship was struck with the mandate to assist the local churches in developing their own missionary character. They also are to support consistories in their efforts to teach their congregation members in the work of evangelism. Further, they are to supply material, means, method and manpower to assist in evangelism work.

Other churches - national

Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken

The barriers mentioned by previous Synods have not been taken away, and so there is no basis for the RCN to speak with the NGK on a national level with a view to ecclesiastical unity. This was cause for sadness and disappointment at the Synod.

At the same time, Synod decided that in particular localities, were there was extensive agreement and cooperation between a congregation of the RCN and one of the NGK, this agreement and cooperation could receive expression in

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celebrating the Word and sacrament together, even if on the national level things are not at all that far.

Deputies note that worshipping together, let alone celebrating the Lord's supper together with churches with whom there is no official relation, represents a shift from past practices. The reasons for this shift are not argued in the *Acts*. We observe here a practical application of embracing interdenominationalism.

Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken

Synod expressed gratitude for growing unanimity noticed between the GKN and the CGK, and acknowledged that another milestone has been passed along the road to ecclesiastical unity in the agreements reached relating to appropriation of salvation, vision on two-fold child of God, the relation between Word and Spirit, and how to view the congregation. At the same time, concerns remain on a couple of outstanding matters, particularly relating to the authority of Scripture. Meanwhile, given the progress, Synod expressed willingness to participate in discussions about how ecclesiastical unity could be practically achieved.

Church Unity

Deputies were appointed (again) to monitor ecclesiastical developments in churches and groups throughout the Netherlands, and respond positively where applicable. They are also to investigate whether there are means to come to a forum where various churches and groups of reformed confession can exchange relevant information.

Other churches – international

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Concerning developments at our previous Synod, Dutch deputies reported to their Synod as follows:

“This Synod was overshadowed by the difficulties that arose around the teachings of Rev FJ vanHulst of Launceston. After investigation, Synod decided not to receive this minister as a delegate, since his teaching was considered to contradict Scripture and Confession. Deputies feel that at this moment they are not called to give a judgement about the points in question, but call upon the Synod and the churches to commit the Australian sister churches before the Lord in this difficult time, as well as to make supplication for Rev vanHulst, his family and his congregation.”

Your deputies advise Synod West Albany that, other than these sentences, nothing has been heard from the Dutch sister churches in relation to developments around Rev vanHulst. We add that, after Rev vanHulst was deposed, we sent a letter to each of the sister churches mentioning this fact.

In relation to our Synod's decisions with respect to the PCEA, Dutch deputies advised Synod that, in their opinion, the decisions of Synod Launceston do not constitute “a break-through in the impasse in the contacts between the FRCA and the PCEA.” Concerning the statements re pulpit exchange and Lord's supper, deputies state that they provide no new insights and offer little

perspective that the two churches will grow closer together. Deputies fear that the PCEA will reject the agreed statements.

With respect to further relations with the FRCA, Dutch deputies advise Synod that regular contact with the FRCA is imperative. They add that, when Dutch deputies come to Australia, those deputies do well to give good attention to the matters or questions raised by the Australian deputies.

Synod in turn decided to maintain sister relations with the FRCA, together with a decision to have deputies attend the FRCA's 2000 Synod in order to explain the decision re the PCEA. The FRCA is also to be stimulated to reconsider membership in the ICRC. Further, contact is to be maintained with the FRCA about support to churches in this part of the world.

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Synod Launceston 1998 had urged the Dutch churches to stay in step with the FRCA with respect to the PCEA. Dutch deputies advised their Synod of the Launceston decisions, but "doubted whether the statements in fact will form a basis for the desired agreement." They feel that these statements simply reiterate well-known FRCA positions, which the PCEA has already discounted in the past. Deputies add that the PCEA's reaction to these statements makes no difference to their intentions with respect to the PCEA, for the Dutch churches have long ago agreed to a policy of recognizing other churches before agreement is reached on such like points. Altogether, then, deputies cannot see any reason to postpone establishing sister relations with the PCEA for another three years.

Synod Leusden in turn decided to establish sister relations with the PCEA on the grounds that

1. Synod 1993 and Synod 1996 had already declared that the PCEA was a true church;
2. Synod Launceston of the FRCA declared that this church "gives evidence of faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confessions" (Art 93, Dec. 2, Ground 1), with the exception of three areas of concern. The Dutch decision notes concerning these three areas of concern that "successive synods have declared that these form no hindrance for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to establish a sister relation with presbyterian churches";
3. Delaying a decision to establish a sister church relation with the PCEA is not responsible toward these churches;
4. A relation has existed for years already that must be further developed in concrete terms.

Further, Synod decided that this decision must be relayed to the FRCA, since these churches –given the concerns they have expressed on the matter– have the right to an elaborate explanation.

Your deputies note that the "third party relations" feared by Synod Launceston (*Acts*, Art 102, Ground 2) have now materialized.

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Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Synod wishes to maintain and expand the existing relation with the RCNZ with a view to establishing sister relations. Deputies are to investigate what implications or complications might be involved for the FRCA in the RCNZ relation with the Reformed Churches of Australia. Contact would also be sought with the FRCA and the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken re the RCNZ. Further, deputies are to visit the RCNZ in 2001.

Training Institute

Synod instructed deputies to investigate whether a training institute for reformed studies could be established in the Far East. This was to be done in conjunction with the Presbyterian Church of Korea, involving also the Reformed Church of Japan, and the Covenant & First Evangelical Churches of Singapore.

Overview Further Relations

Sister Church Relations maintained with:
Canadian Reformed Churches
Eglise Reformee Confessante au Congo (was Zaire)
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
Free Church of Scotland
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia
Iglesia Cristiana Fe Reformada
Igreja Reformada da Colonia Brasolanda
Presbyterian Church of Korea
Reformed Church of the United States
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Northern India
Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

Sister Church Relations established with:
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales
Evangelical Reformed Churches Union of Russia
Free Church of Central India
Orthodox Presbyterian Church ¹⁰
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
Reformed Presbyterian Church North East India (was Manipur)
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Cardiff

¹⁰ Deputies were instructed to advise the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church of the United States of this decision.

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Correspondence Relations maintained with:
Reformed Church in Japan

Sister Relations were actively sought with:
African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
Eglise Reformee Confessante au Benin
Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil
Lanka Reformed Church ¹¹
Nongo u Kristu u Ken Sudan Hen Tiv
Reformed Church of Eastern Africa (Kenya)
Reformed Churches of New Zealand
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
United Reformed Churches of North America

Other Contacts in Various Stages of Development:
Bat Tsion (Israel)
Eglise Refomee Evangelique Independante (France)
Eglise Reformee du Quebec
First/Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)
Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
Gereja Gereja Maseli Musyafir
Greek Evangelical Church
Iglesia Presbiteriana Independiente de Mexico
Iglesias Cristiana Reformada
Iglesias Reformadas de Espana
Igreja Crista Presbiteriana de Portugal
Igreja Evangelica Reformada do Brasil
Igreja Reformada de Portugal
Norwich Reformed Church
Presbyterian Church Pakistan

Church Relations Ceased
Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka
Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines
Reformed Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong) ¹²

¹¹ This church is seen as the reformed continuation of the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, with whom relations were ceased.

¹² No contact, and the church seems to have no recognizable structures.

Meeting with Delegates from the BBK

Deputies from BBK traveled to Australia to attend the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. En route to Melbourne, they paused for three days in Perth in order to meet with Deputies responsible for relations with sister churches. Since the topic of the meeting involved particularly the PCEA, we requested deputies responsible for contact with Presbyterian Churches to join the meeting. We met together in Kelmscott for 4 hours on the evening of April 28, 2000.

We had an open and frank discussion about our differing approaches to . The Dutch brothers reiterated that they first recognize another church as true before they discuss matters as we've raised with the PCEA – despite the fact that the Dutch agree that (some of) our concerns are legitimate. They add that, though they have no explicit mandate from Synod to do so, they do continually engage their sister churches in discussions about areas of concern. But the outcome of those discussions in no way would affect the good relations with that sister church. The Dutch brethren were urged to impress on the PCEA brethren to take seriously the statements adopted by Synod Launceston 1998 and supply a response to these statements.

According to their mandate, they also impressed upon us that the Dutch Synod mandated them to stimulate us to reconsider membership in the ICRC. By their judgment, the ICRC is doing well.

As to the decisions of Synod Leusden, the Dutch brethren had not yet received the *Acts* and so could not give us more information (with the exception mentioned above re the Lord's supper in the military).

Recommendations:

- 1) to continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, requesting deputies to give specific attention to Rules 1 & 2 of the adopted Rules for Sister Relations, viz,
 - One) *Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.*
 - Two) *The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.*
- 2) To mandate deputies to attend the next Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands;
- 3) To expand the deputyship with the appointment of at least two ministers to this deputyship.

Grounds:

- 1) While evidence exists in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands that they strive to be faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions of the Church, and the adopted Church Order, evidence also surfaces that require sister churches to take seriously their obligation to be the "brother's keeper". One

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thinks here, for example, of the adopted Marriage Form, the decision re the Day of Rest, Lord's supper celebration in special circumstances, the patronizing approach of the Dutch churches towards their historic sister churches in inter-church relations, etc.

- 2) Face to face discussions are generally more helpful than communications from a distance. Particularly in moments of need, going the extra mile to offer assistance is the right thing to do.
- 3) Doing justice to the concerns expressed above requires more manpower.

Appendix 9

Supplementary Report to Synod 2000

Deputies for Contact with Sister Churches

Further to our earlier report entitled *Reports to Synod West Albany 2000 by Deputies for Relations with Other Churches*, we present more material for your further consideration. This material represents the work we have done since March, 2000.

1. We have sighted a declaration from BBK in the Netherlands that Rev Karlo Janssen is a minister in good standing within that bond of churches. He has since preached the gospel in our midst from various pulpits.
2. A report concerning the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, together with recommendations, was finalized and sent to the convening church by electronic mail at the end of April.
3. A delegate from our churches has traveled to South Africa to be present at the Synod of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika, held in Bethal from May 2 to May 4. Rev Bouwman's address is attached as Attachment 1, and his report on Synod and other aspects of his visit is Attachment 2. In our earlier Report, we had recommended "to continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules" on the ground that "the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order." After having read the delegate's report, your deputies wish to add a second recommendation, as follows:

"2. To authorize deputies to visit alternate Synods of the VGKSA."

Grounds:

1. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika are both small bonds of churches confronted by very real challenges in this modern world. Their recent visit to us and our recent visit to them has shown that we can support one another, as well as learn much from each other.
2. Synod 1990 decided "to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us" (*Acts*, Art 58). Of our historic sister churches, South Africa is certainly the closest to us geographically.

With brotherly greetings,

C Bouwman

AMC Bruning

HJ Dekker

PO Posthuma

June 3, 2000

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Attachment 1

Address to Synod Bethal, South Africa

Dear chairman, brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ!

For years and decades, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have had a sister relation with the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika. But truth be said, we've seen you as a distant sister; our focus was first heavily directed to the Netherlands, and of late increasingly directed to Canada.

But things have changed. After the church in Launceston called Rev vanHulst some seven years ago, interest grew amongst us for what the South African churches were all about. And when Rev Kleyn accepted the call to Pretoria, interest for your churches was reawakened. The church in Legana scanned the world for help in their vacancy, and found Rev Boessenkoel willing to assist – and his work has been enormously appreciated. But what really focused the South African churches in the minds of the Australians was your gesture two years ago to send a representative to encourage us in our difficulty. Brothers, that you, our smallest sister, you, the sister with whom we in Australia have had the least contact over the years, that you would share the pain and grief we felt, and come over with a word of encouragement and offer of assistance – my brothers, words can scarcely convey the gratitude to God that filled the Australian churches for the grace He was showing us through you. In his response to Rev Viljoen's address to Synod Launceston, Rev Veldman on behalf of Synod asked your delegate to "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." I am sure Rev Viljoen has done that. Yet it seems to me fitting and proper that I express the same gratitude to you face to face today. Indeed, thank you so very, very much, brothers, for the expression of brotherly love you showed for your Australian sister-churches through sending Rev Viljoen. The gesture, as well as his work, was enormously appreciated. Baie, baie dankie!

We sensed from Rev Viljoen's visit that you shared our hurt and pain. So many of you knew Rev vanHulst well, had worked with him for years, even as shepherd and teacher. We experienced it as difficult to find one of our own guilty of doctrinal deviation. How much more difficult will the news of Synod's findings have been for so many of you in South Africa! Yes, then it was good to grieve together, and encourage each other together to go forward in the way of the Lord. The positive spin-off to it all has been that the South African churches and the Australian churches have met each other face to face, and come to know each other better. It is my hope and prayer that this beginning of real contacts may lead to increased assistance to each other as we seek to serve our common Lord and Saviour in our modern world.

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The Free Reformed Churches of Australia very much appreciated that you sent a man to encourage us in our difficulties, and thought it proper to respond in kind. Synod Launceston authorized Deputies "to send a delegate to [the] Synod [of the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika]" and gave this ground (and I quote):

"Seeing that they also are a small federation of churches going through trying times, a personal representative to encourage them and exhort them as churches of God in this world is warranted" (Art 81).

That quote makes reference to "going through trying times". We are aware that the political situation of your country has undergone some radical changes in the last years. We are equally aware that these changes have consequences for your churches. We in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have recently received into our midst a number of migrants from your country. And that's to say nothing of others who have gone elsewhere in the world. Recently I spoke to a young gentleman from your country who was convinced that this country offers no future for young men and women, so that numerous youth were keen to emigrate.

I think I can understand the desire of the young to establish their families in lands where the future looks economically and politically healthy. Yet I want to say expressly that the Lord would have us fix our eyes not on freedom or prosperity, but on His lordship and His covenant promises. I was born and raised, for example, in a country that is the envy of many millions around the world. Today I live in an equally prosperous and free land, one also the envy of millions. I'm thankful for the freedoms and opportunities I enjoyed over the years, and still enjoy. But I am not optimistic about the future of Canada, nor of Australia. Both of these countries –and there are many more such lands around the world– have aggressively and consciously thrown overboard the confession of the fathers that the Lord God is sovereign in Jesus Christ. That public departure from God and His law can –for God does not change!– have no other consequence than that those two countries so dear to my heart shall increasingly experience the plagues God has promised to pour out on those who knowingly depart from His Word. South Africa may be uncomfortable for the young who look for prosperity and freedom. But the materialism and worldliness rampant in our culture make very clear that Australia is definitely not the Promised Land. To be Christians in that land will in time to come not be any easier than it is for you in South Africa. The Word of the Lord is clear that we shall find no Paradise on this side of the return of our Savior. Instead, we remain strangers and pilgrims in a world that is ultimately opposed to God and His church.

Precisely there, I'm convinced, is the mandate for your young people and ours: live faithfully as children of God in this apostate world – whether it be for you in South Africa or for us in Australia. In a world of darkness, the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to make His kingdom come – even through the plagues that result upon covenant breaking. His church is the beachhead in the advance of His kingdom. So it is for you in your land and for us in ours to be faithful to the

Appendix 9 Supplementary Report FRCSA

Spirit who has broken our hard hearts, and show to others what the redeeming and renewing work of the Lord is all about.

At his visit to us two years ago, Rev Viljoen painted for us a picture of what was happening in your churches. Brothers, we rejoice with you that the Lord gives you an active place in the ecclesiastical developments within South Africa. We thank God that He has given you a vision that encompasses your whole land, and the means – be it small in human terms – to begin realizing that vision. I can understand the difficulties that arise for the ministers in doing a full-time minister's work, and at the same time staying abreast of developments in their appointed field of responsibility at your College, let alone teaching the students. I can imagine the challenges for the Consistories as they need to come to the assistance of their ministers in taking over some of the pastoral work. Allow me then to encourage you to carry on with the work of the Lord as the Lord lays it on your path. It is our hope and prayer that the Lord will bless your efforts so that many in your land who now are spiritually malnourished in their churches will receive the fullness of the Bread of life. I do not know whether the Australian churches can assist you in practical terms as you face these challenges, but maybe that's a topic about which we can speak further in the coming days.

It has pleased the Lord to go a different road with His churches in Australia than with His churches in South Africa. Though there are parallels in the history of your churches and ours (due to our common background and migrant situation), the histories of our respective lands differs enormously. And that in turn cannot but affect the development of the churches.

We are currently 10 congregations, numbering some 3000 members, in a land of 17 million people – in area one of the largest countries of the world. Our 10 congregations are located in three distinct pockets. In the city of Perth on our western shore there are six congregations, all close together. On the south coast 400 kms away, in the town of Albany, are two more congregations. And 4000 kms east, on the island of Tasmania, are the other two congregations. By the grace of the Lord the covenant children of the congregations receive reformed education till Grade 10, and in some cases till Grade 12. Thereafter these young people are discharged into the world in which we live, some for further education, some into the work force. By the merciful and powerful working of our God, so very many of these young people – like their parents before them – give in their daily activities a good account of the faith God has worked in their hearts. Seldom do these church members make a big splash in the world, and rarely do the media report the faithful activities of these children of God. But that's not so important either. They are a light in their world, and a blessing where God places them. That is God's work in their hearts and lives, and for that we thank God sincerely.

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As to our inter-church relations, you will know of us that we have withdrawn our membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. When we were still discussing the matter some years ago, your deputies encouraged us to maintain our membership. And your 1996 Synod earnestly requested us to reconsider our decision to withdraw. It is fitting that I thank you on behalf of our churches for your input and interest in the matter. I may tell you that the decision to withdraw from the ICRC has restored a great measure of peace in our churches. So many in our midst could not reconcile how, within the framework of the ICRC one could consider another church a faithful and true church of the Lord while outside that framework a recognition of that other church was not possible. The dishonesty sensed by that two-fold manner of speaking about a given church produced too much friction to warrant continued membership.

I hasten to add that the decision to withdraw from the ICRC has not, in our judgment, placed us on an ecclesiastical island – despite prophecies to that effect. We continue to have contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and hope that our latest overture to them will result in progress with this church. Further, we have a developing relation with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, we're heavily involved with our sister churches in Indonesia, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia, and have also been involved in giving assistance to the so-called Musafir churches in Indonesia. Efforts are underway too to see what can be done to assist churches in the Philippines. All this is beside the sister relations we maintain with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Presbyterian Church of Korea, and, of course, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. For a small bond of churches, this still, we think, represents an aggressive agenda. We realise too that we cannot be all things to all people.

As to mission work, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have for years been busy in Papua New Guinea. Some three years ago responsibility for the work that's been done in Port Moresby and Ekor has passed to Toronto. We for our part are doing further work in the PNG city of Lae. A mission field has also been opened in India, with an indigenous man on the field there. In our midst plans were under way for some years to set up mission work in China via radio; I saw that Rev DM Boersma informed your membership of that development in a recent issue of *Kompas*. Those plans, however, will not materialize as we had hoped, for br Dong has accepted a call amongst the Canadian sister churches to work among the Chinese of Vancouver. Maybe, just maybe, this development means that there is possibility for some Australian churches to give you assistance in your extensive mission work in your country.

Dear brothers, your sister churches in Australia greet you in the name of the Lord, and wish you God's indispensable and promised blessing on all your labors. May we meet more often, consult together more often, do more things together. When all is said and done, we need each other as brothers of one heritage, one faith.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

Thank you, br Chairman, for your time.

C Bouwman
June 3, 2000

Attachment 2

Report to Deputies of Visit to South Africa

From Saturday, April 29 to Thursday, May 12, I (with the good company of my wife) visited the sister churches in South Africa. Synod Launceston had authorized Deputies "to send a delegate to [the] Synod [of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika", and gave this ground (and I quote):

"Seeing that they also are a small federation of churches going through trying times, a personal representative to encourage them and exhort them as churches of God in this world is warranted" (Art 81).

I saw as my mandate, then, the need to "encourage them and exhort them as churches of God in this world." In carrying out this mandate, I addressed the Synod of Bethal (see Attachment), and used what opportunity I could to encourage the ministers, members and congregations of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Zuid-Afrika. Specifically, I received opportunity to address the congregations of Cape Town and Johannesburg about church life in Australia, and used the opportunity to encourage both congregations from the Word of God.

The Challenge facing the Churches

As a result of the visit, I conclude that the South African sister churches are living in exciting and challenging times.

Afrikaner

I learned that the culture of the Afrikaner is distinct from other cultures in a way that Australian culture is not. Over the centuries that the Afrikaner has lived in South Africa, he has learned to weld faith and land, church and state together so that both are seen as his rightful heritage. Historically, the Afrikaner was a Christian, a member of one of the "three sisters" (the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika). He believed that the God of the faith has given him –true Christian that he was– the South African soil together with the right to govern it. In practice, the Afrikaner reads the Exodus account of Moses in very personal terms; he's had his own exodus when he was delivered from bondage to the English (de Grotetrek at the end of the last century). He's been through the wilderness (crossing the desert of central South Africa) and entered the Promised Land – the Transvaal. This history of the Afrikaner has produced a mythology that has

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reached deep into his psyche. Of late, it should be added, the reformed character of the Afrikaner Christian has become very superficial. This is a result of Methodistic and Pietistic influences over the years, so that of late the historically reformed Afrikaner has little (if any) resistance against today's strong anti-Christian influences. Outwardly he may retain the show of reformed religion, but inwardly the power of the faith is absent.

In 1994, with the accession of Nelson Mandela to the office of President, the Afrikaner found the bond between faith and land, church and state severed. The result was a perceived loss of identity for the Afrikaner: who I am? Why am I here? Where do I go? He felt threatened too by the huge majority of non-whites in the land. But the churches –the “three sisters” of late have embraced liberal theology (be it to greater or lesser degree)– were not filling the vacuum in the minds of the members. So some Afrikaners found their new identity in secularization, others in radical politics, others by turning with renewed interest to the gospel. But the pulpits are not feeding the people.... So some have sought contact with the VGKSA. Currently, of the nine ministers serving in the VGKSA (including mission), five are Afrikaners with roots in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk. Various other families too have joined the VGKSA – and, of course, one Afrikaner congregation (Bethal).

The sister churches see a task here within the “three sisters”, particularly the NGK. They have various contacts with concerned persons within these churches. Indeed, they see more work amongst these churches than they can cope with at the moment. So serious consideration is being given to calling a minister whose work would be to give pastoral guidance to the disenchanting in the NGK. Here, I am told, is enormous need and enormous scope for work.

Mission

The situation amongst the coloured people of Capetown appears to be this. Indigenous peoples from the East Cape are migrating to Capetown (government initiative) at the rate of 1,000 a week. The government is building homes for them (with water and electricity; the homes are made of blocks, 4 m X 5m), and giving them the home for a cheap price. From there on the people have to maintain the home, and can sell it or add to it. Meanwhile, countless thousands can't afford such a home, or there is no home available for them yet. The situation amongst the blacks around Pretoria and Johannesburg is similar. People arrive in the black townships from the country, or from lands to the north where they flee unrest and civil war. Again, the government is attempting to provide housing, but there are countless more people than houses.

These people have maybe heard about the Lord, and maybe not. If they have heard, they still retain large portions of the animistic religion with the Christian faith. These people used to be subsistent farmers, and now find themselves in the city looking for work – but there is not much work. It comes down to this that the mission field has moved from the scarcely accessible country to the city. There is an almost endless amount of work that could be done amongst these people.

It should be added: these people are largely supporters of the new government. But they are learning that the new government is not delivering the goods promised in 1994. That disappointment in turn provides opening again for the gospel.

Summary

For years the VGKSA existed in South Africa without an understanding of why God placed them in this country. The youth were taught, South Africa was made their own country, but a real understanding for why they were here was not present. There were also countless internal struggles – tests from the Lord as to whether they would remain faithful.

After many years, the Lord has directed persons disenchanted in the NGK to the VGKSA; they find the truth of God's Word defended in this church. Furthermore, the mission fields are around the corner. These two factors suddenly give the VGKSA a specific task in the South African context. Instead, now, of just existing (be it faithfully), the VGKSA now sees a very distinct task in the land, and opportunity to carry out that task.

Synod Bethal

Synod began Tuesday morning at 8:15. Synod began in the same way as we're used to. Rev Pieter Nel was elected as chairman, Rev C Kleyn vice chairman, and br K Bijset clerk. Rev Nel mentioned straightaway that this is a momentous event, for five years ago the Bethal congregation was not known to the VGKSA, and now her minister, Rev Nel, is chairman of Synod!

Delegates were welcomed, credentials checked (three from each church for a total of 15 brothers), then rising to assent to the Three Forms of Unity. I too was welcomed as delegate from the FRCA.

Address

Directly after Synod was constituted I was asked to pass on greetings from the FRCA, which I did with a three-page address. The chairman immediately thanked me sincerely for the encouragement received, and requested a copy of the address for the Acts.

In the course of the Synod, the brothers expressed great appreciation for the presence of a delegate from Australia. They noted we've had sister-relations together for years, but it's meant nothing. Now to meet each other face to face, discuss issues together, and seek means to encourage/assist each in the service of the Lord was enormously appreciated. This sort of thing needs to happen more often. Indeed, the South Africans hope to be able to visit the Australian churches with a regular frequency (every second Synod).

I felt very much at home with the brothers in South Africa. We have a lot in common, be it in our reformed heritage, be it too in our migrant situation. I could speak openly with the brothers about various matters that concern also our own bond of churches. Much information could also be related about the

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FRCSA (as well as about the Canadian Reformed Churches and the decisions of Synod Fergus).

A note re language: the country is moving to English as its *lingua franca*. As a result, all the brothers present at Synod could understand English, though not all were able to express themselves in English. That meant in practice that I could participate without problem by conversing in English. For my part, I could follow the Afrikaans satisfactorily. Only the true Afrikaner members of Synod required extra effort to follow.

Preparatory Examinations

Two brothers sought to be examined by the churches with a view to being declared eligible for call in the VGKSA.

Mendel Retief

This brother with a varied church background (including NG) wanted to become available for call in the VGKSA. After contacts with various churches, he found the truth of God's Word preached and defended only in the VGKSA. He joined the church in Bethal, and is active in the community amongst the disgruntled members of the "three sisters". After considering a sermon on Ps 73 and a thorough examination in church history and church polity, Old Testament & New Testament exegesis, dogmatics and symbolics, Synod declared this brother available for call in the churches.

Charles Nicholson

This brother was missionary for numerous years in the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (not to be confused with the NGK; the NGKA is the "black" NG Kerk) in the area of Paul Kruger National Park. Increasingly he saw problems arising in the NGK(A), but did not know where to turn. He concluded that there was no true bond of churches in South Africa. By the providence of the Lord, he came into contact with a member of the VGKSA in Pretoria. As a result, he moved to the proximity of a VGKSA where, to his delight, he faithfully heard preaching according to the Bible. So he joined the VGKSA, and after some time sought to be admitted to the ministry – with a view to doing mission work for the VGKSA. Already he is assisting Rev Breytenbach in mission work in Belhar, near Capetown.

His sermon on Luke 4:21 was found sufficient, and the rest of the exam also. He was examined in church history and church polity, Old Testament & New Testament exegesis, dogmatics and symbolics.

I found it striking that in examination of both brothers, the events of the Liberation of 1944 were specifically brought into the discussions, as also the doctrine of the covenant. That is because the brothers in South Africa, particularly those with NG background, realize that through the Liberation the Lord God gave His churches an enormous heritage – one that lays open the riches of the Scriptures and so supplies the answer to the needs of the disconcerted of the "three sisters".

Theological College

In answer to the challenges facing the VGK in South Africa, the churches established their own training for the ministry three years ago. Several of the ministers form the teachers of the College. The College of the churches has now been in operation for two years, and was reported to be running well. One student is currently in his third year, and two new students have just begun the first year.

Synod decided that students approaching the fourth year may speak an edifying word in the churches, provided the senate is satisfied with the maturity of the student.

Deputaten Werk onder Verontrustes

Deputies for Action amongst the Disconcerted supplied an extensive report that Synod appreciated very much. The churches are struggling seriously to fulfil the vision they have for encouraging reformation in South Africa. Synod opened the door for a church to call a minister according to Art 12 CO (VGKSA) for work amongst the disconcerted of other churches. At the same time, each church was encouraged to work in their local area with the disconcerted, be it in conjunction with the Deputies.

Relations Churches Abroad

Synod adopted a recommendation from Deputies to

- Maintain relations with the three historic sister-churches (Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, Canadian Reformed Churches, and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia).
- Focus efforts for further contacts in English-speaking Africa, south of the Sahara
- Use the ICRC for maintaining further relations, and pursue relations with ICRC member-churches whose contact would benefit the VGKSA.

Deputies had to advise Synod what the practical implications of ICRC membership might be for the VGKSA. Deputies saw as consequence that Consistories need to receive room to permit non-VGKSA ministers (of ICRC member churches) to VGKSA pulpits. This proposal, however, found no favour at Synod, on the grounds that the bond of churches need to be involved (according to the Church Order) in determining who may be on the pulpit. Similarly, deputies proposed to give Consistories room to permit members of other (ICRC) churches to the Lord's supper table. This too was also not accepted, on the grounds that the Church Order covers the matter adequately (FRCA Art 57). In other words, the responsibility belongs to the local consistory.

Previous Synod had requested deputies to provide Synod with Guidelines to be used in relations to persons shifting out of the country. The following Guidelines were advanced and adopted:

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1. Consistory must draw the person's attention to the responsibility of the member(s) concerned to join a sister church in the area to which he moves, or to join a church of which the initial Consistory is reasonably sure that this church shows the marks of the church of Christ.
2. If no 'true' church communion can be identified, the VGKSA member should be discouraged from settling in that area.
3. In case the member opts to settle there anyway, the VGKSA consistory has the mandate to stay in regular contact with this member, and were possible extend pastoral care to him.
4. Deputies church abroad should where possible supply the Consistory with needed information about the church concerned, so that this consistory can make a responsible decision.

FRCA

Synod decided to maintain sister church relations with the FRCA. Further, since deputies had concerns/questions re Synod Launceston's handling of Rev vanHulst, Synod permitted deputies to raise their questions with deputies from the FRCA. This decision was made on the grounds that it is proper that one investigate fully – contrary to what was done by various sister churches of the Netherlands in the struggles of the 1940's. Finally, Synod also instructed deputies to provide/exchange more information between these two churches.

The concerns/questions mentioned in the Deputies' report to Synod revolved around the formulation of the questions placed at Synod Launceston before Rev vanHulst. Further, some of the 'errors' mentioned by Committee 1 were, according to Deputies, actually not errors. I spoke with some deputies (individually: C Hieberg & DM Boersma; Rev C Kleyn was eventually added to this deputyship) and attempted to answer as follows:

- At the beginning of Synod, Synod was convinced there were grounds to submit Rev vanHulst to an investigation according to the Subscription Form. However, precisely what the doctrinal errors were was not yet clear. So the questions of Committee 1 were necessarily investigative, vague.
- After Rev vanHulst gave his written answers to the Committee, the Committee entered into discussion with Rev vanHulst in an attempt to understand him properly. In the process the answers were clarified/expanded. As a result, the answers do not directly line up with the questions.
- Since the work of the Committee was done within a week, it of necessity has evidence of work quickly done.
- Synod did not adopt the report of Committee 1, simply because Synod did not wish to raise the report of the Committee to a semi-confessional level. Synod was simply satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to question Rev vanHulst's ability to express agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. So he could not be received as a delegate to Synod.

My impression was that these answers satisfied the deputies so that we need not anticipate further correspondence on the matter.

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

The VGKSA retained sister relations with the RCN. However, it was obvious from the deputies' report, conversations with Synod members, and the questions put to the Dutch delegates present at Synod (Rev M Brandes and br H Olde), that many concerns exist within the VGKSA about the sister churches in the Netherlands.

ICRC

The Synod decided to retain membership in the ICRC. The report made no mention of the change made by the previous ICRC to the Constitution. The VGKSA will offer to host the 2005 ICRC.

I add here that my comments in my address re why some in the FRCA had troubles with ICRC membership were an eye-opener for many. Few understood these concerns. Since the Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Afrika (so-called Dopperkerk) has applied for membership, various realize that the VGKSA could soon be in the same dilemma in which we found ourselves some years ago.

Other Churches

Synod decided to cease contacts with Indonesia since their focus will be on Africa and no one in the churches can speak Indonesian. The same decision was made concerning the Presbyterian Church of Korea. Similarly, contact with the Dutch colony in Brazil was terminated.

At the same time, contacts were sought and advanced with other churches in Africa south of the Sahara, specifically in Malawi, Kenya, and Nigeria. Further, contact was sought and desired with the OPC (because of mutual interests in Africa), URCNA, and RCNZ.

Churches within South Africa

GKSA

Deputies were encouraged to maintain and promote contacts with disconcerted persons faithful to Scripture in order to encourage reformation in the GKSA. Scripture criticism in the GKSA must be addressed, and if not satisfactorily answered their request for membership in the ICRC must be opposed. Application of church discipline is also to be discussed with the GKSA.

The local churches were encouraged to continue contact with local GKSA's. An invitation to the next GKSA Synod was also desired.

I noted that considerable displeasure was present about moves from the Dutch sister churches to foster warmer relations with the GKSA.

Calvin Protest Churches

These churches, located on South Africa's west coast, have a history reaching back to 1950, when a group left the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk.

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Deputies were instructed to pursue further contact with this group of churches. Deputies are to explore also what role the Theological College of the VGKSA can play within these churches.

Afrikaans Protestantse Kerk

Synod received greetings from the APK, via the local minister in Bethal. There are no official contacts between the VGKSA and the APK, but the APK is seen as fully Biblical and solidly reformed – with the exception of their insistence that membership in their church is for whites only. This minister characterized the VGKSA as insisting amongst other churches on the duty to return to the Word of God. He encouraged the VGKSA to persevere themselves also in being faithful to Scripture.

Mission

As the mission work continues to grow, Synod appointed deputies to look into how future leaders of the mission churches are to be trained (same level as own ministers' training? Via own College?), what place potential churches are to have viz a viz the VGKSA (members of one bond? Sister churches?), and such like matters.

Synod accepted an arrangement whereby financial support is promised by churches in the Netherlands.

How Synod works

I add a word here about how Synod works. The agenda, including two examinations, was completed in three days. The brothers worked together in great harmony. There was a good spirit, and openness between the brothers.

I noted that there was no formal voting. The chairman tabled a report/submission, summarized it very briefly, then put its proposals into discussion (each report came complete with recommendations). Each delegate could speak his mind, and in the process a consensus grows. The discussions were generally rather brief, with only a few brothers participating in any given discussion – unless the matter was weighty. The chairman, on the basis of the discussion, formulated the (altered) proposal, asked the meeting whether all were happy with that course of action, watches the faces, and that was that. The clerk's task was to put the decision to paper. He was not expected to have the *Acts* finished by the time Synod was closed. In fact, no *Acts* were adopted during Synod. The clerk would need to do enormous polishing on the *Acts* once he returned home. I was told that the completed *Acts* will be submitted to the ex-members of Synod in due time for their comment before the *Acts* are finalised and published.

Synod times were 8:30 to 12:30 (with a break from 10:00-10:30), 2:00 to 6:00 (with a break from 4:00-4:30), then 7:00 to 8:30. Both meals were offered at the church. Maybe, ultimately, the secret for working through the agenda so quickly

was that most delegates were housed in the local jail – for want of better accommodation in this small congregation.

Seriously, I think the ideal is somewhere between the South African tempo and our speed. In my opinion, some issues could have done with more discussion.

Strengthening Mutual Ties

The trip was distinctly profitable. I'm very thankful for the opportunity I received to see first hand something of the Lord's church gathering work in South Africa and to taste something of the excitement generated in the churches by the challenges before them. The question invariably arises: how can we assist the sister churches in South Africa? To word the question differently: how can cross-fertilization be encouraged? The following thoughts come to mind.

1. The South African churches have agreed to visit the Australian churches at a frequency of one visit per every two (Australian) Synods. I think we should adopt a similar policy.
2. Deputies should pass on more information to the churches about developments in South Africa.
3. Some of the Australian churches are looking for mission fields. There is endless opportunity for mission work in South Africa. It should certainly be possible to offer assistance to the South African churches in their mission work.
4. Some of the contacts the South African churches have seek English literature. We in Australia are oriented to English books, while the South African ministers are not. Here we can supply titles and guidance.
5. The Training for the Ministry demands very much energy from the ministers in the bond of churches. As the students can speak English, maybe something can be done to offer assistance, eg, in ministers from our midst doing some lectures in a particular field of study.

There is also much we can learn from the South Africans. Over the years, the VGKSA sought to be faithful to God's Word in the face of the struggles they encountered in normal church life. But their input into the country-as-a-whole was, humanly speaking, negligible. But at His time, the Lord gave a broader task, and with the task a vision and a willingness to pursue the vision. Here we can learn. It is for us also to be faithful in the (limited) task we today have in our country, and meanwhile wait patiently for the Lord to give further opportunity. It will not do for us to become activists, striving for greater influence. It is for us instead, as with the sister churches in South Africa over the years, to be faithful and obedient. And the Lord will show the way forward and in His time and manner cause His own to be a blessing in their surroundings.

C Bouwman
June 3,2000.

Appendix 10

To Synod 2000 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia:

Esteemed Delegates:

Synod 1998 made the following decision: "to defer a decision regarding adoption of a revised edition of the Nicene Creed until the version adopted by the 1998 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches is available," and "to appoint a deputy to report to Synod on this adopted version." Please find below the decision of our Canadian sister churches regarding the new edition of the Nicene Creed, with some of my remarks interspersed as footnotes, and finally my recommendation.

The Decision of the Canadian Reformed Churches regarding the Nicene Creed

Article 138 VIII.NICENE CREED

A. Observations

1.General Synod 1995 decided, "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." The revised edition of the Nicene Creed is found in the Acts, Recommendation F. Four churches responded to the Standing Committee. Typographical errors in punctuation were corrected and the appearance of the text in printed form was adjusted to facilitate the reading of the text. The Committee presents the final form of the text of the Nicene Creed to Synod.

The Standing Committee sent a late report to Synod as an interaction with the church at Langley's submission and several letters from other churches. The Standing Committee a careful response to the submission of Langley and does not concur with any of its suggestions. A final form of the text of the Nicene Creed is presented with some corrections in punctuation and a suggested layout of the text (indentations) as it would appear in the Book of Praise.

2.The church at Orangeville requests that a drastic revision of the Nicene Creed not be undertaken. It can agree with a limited linguistic revision. Orangeville points out that the present version of the Nicene Creed has not been proven to be unscriptural and that a revised edition of the Nicene Creed would hinder ecumenical contacts with other churches.

3.The church at Taber is not convinced that a change in the Nicene Creed be made from the singular "I" to the plural "We."

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4.The church at Langley asks Synod to consider their submission regarding the Nicene Creed which had been sent earlier to all consistories and the Standing Committee.

5.The church at London and the church at Carman express their concurrence for the proposal re Nicene Creed as proposed by the church at Langley. Carman expresses its agreement with the proposal. London states that the translation of the Nicene Creed submitted by Langley is linguistically sound, faithful to the originals, and sensitive to the longstanding version used in the English speaking world.

B. Considerations

1.The revision of the Nicene Creed is not a drastic revision, as the church at Orangeville states, but it is as Synod 1995 stated, "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." The present form of the Nicene Creed does not have to be proven unscriptural in order to have a linguistic and structural change. Revising the Nicene Creed into modern English does not create a hindrance in ecumenical contacts with other Reformed churches who subscribe to the same confessions.

2.The Standing Committee has satisfactorily addressed the concern of Taber. The Committee demonstrates that the Greek text of the Nicene Creed uses the plural form (cf. Acts 1995, Art. 44 Considerations D.2).

3.The letters of the churches at Carman and London give no proof in their letters to show that the Langley translation of the Nicene Creed is to be preferred over the translation of the Standing Committee.

4.The Standing Committee has satisfactorily addressed the submission of the church at Langley. The final form of the text of the Nicene Creed as presented by the Standing Committee is to be preferred.

C. Recommendations

Synod decide: To adopt the revised version of the Nicene Creed, as recommended by the Committee, which reads as follows:

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We ¹ 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;²
God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God;³
begotten, not made,
of one substance with the Father;
through ⁴ whom all things were made.
Who, for us men and our salvation,
came down from heaven
and became ⁵ incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man.
He ⁶ was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;

¹ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "I." This is repeated throughout the creed. In this and the following footnotes, I will quote the Greek text (as found in J.N.D. Kelley, *Early Christian Creeds, Third Edition*, Longman Group Limited, 1972, p. 297) which is the text read out at the second session of the Council of Chalcedon 450 AD. With respect to changing the pronoun "I" to "we," the Greek version of the Nicene Creed reads, "Πιστευομεν" *We believe....*

² The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "worlds." The Greek text reads "αἰώνων" which Liddell and Scott define as "*a period of existence, a long space of time, an age, epoch, era.*" While the NKJV occasionally translates this word as "world(s)," it usually translates it as "age(s)."

³ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "very God of very God." The Greek has "αληθινον" *true, real.*

⁴ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "by." The Greek reads, "δια" followed by the genitive "ου" which is well translated by "through"

⁵ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "was." The Greek has "σαρκοθεντα" (verb participle aorist passive of σαρκώω, which according to Liddell and Scott means "*to make flesh.*" There is no difference in meaning between the old and the new translation. It would seem that the change has more to do with correct English.

⁶ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "...and was made man; and was crucified. The new translation begins a new sentence, and replaces "and" with "He." The Greek does not begin a new sentence here ("He was crucified" is in Greek the participle σταυρωθέντα). It would appear that the change has to do with correct English.

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He suffered and was buried;
and the third day He arose ⁷, according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven, and sits at ⁸ the right hand of the Father,
and He will ⁹ 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 ¹⁰ from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified;
who spoke through ¹¹ the prophets.
And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness ¹² of sins;
and we look forward to ¹³ the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Recommendation: to adopt the same translation of the Nicene Creed as adopted by our Canadian sister churches and found in the *Book of Praise*

⁷ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "...arose again." The Greek is ἀναστάντα (verb participle aorist passive of ἀνίστημι) which means "to arise." It would appear that earlier translations incorrectly took the prefix ἀνα to mean "again," which it does in other cases. But in this case ἀνα conveys the idea of upward motion.

⁸ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "sitteth on." The change removes archaic English.

⁹ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "shall." The change has to do with correct English.

¹⁰ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "proceedeth." The change removes archaic English.

¹¹ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "by." The Greek reads, "διὰ" followed by the genitive "τῶν προφητῶν" which is well translated "through."

¹² The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "remission." This change appears to have been made with a view to Bible translation currently in use in many of our Canadian sister churches. In the NIV, this word ἀφεσις is routinely translated as "forgiveness." In the NKJV it is often translated as "remission." Translating it as "forgiveness" will not pose a problem, since both translations are correct.

¹³ The old translation of the Nicene Creed reads "...look for the resurrection...." The Greek προσδοκῶμεν followed by the accusative means, according to Liddell and Scott, "to expect or look for something." With reference to something future, the word "expect" is more correct. But to translate this phrase as "we expect the resurrection" does not convey the eager anticipation with which the saints expect it. The translation "we look forward to" captures the meaning well.

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Grounds:

- 1) In the humble opinion of your single deputy, the translation is faithful to the original, and an improvement on the present wording of the creed.
- 2) We should endeavour to retain the same translation of the creeds and confessions as the Canadian Reformed Churches, our only English speaking sister church, especially in light of the fact that we use their *Book of Praise* in which the Nicene Creed is found (cf. Acts 1994, Art 124, Ground 1c).

Yours in Christ,

Rev. A van Delden

Appendix 11

Deputies for Synod Archives and Library

Appointed by Synod Launceston 1998

To Synod of
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
at West Albany

May 5, 2000

Esteemed brothers,

The synod of our Churches held in 1998 at Launceston appointed the church at Mt Nasura as deputies for Synod Archives and Library (*Acts*, Article 125).

Deputies are pleased to submit the report received from the Librarian (sister J van der Plas) and draw attention to her recommendations concerning the developing shortage of space in the fireproof cabinet. Consistory did not however adopt her recommendation regarding Deputies correspondence.

With brotherly greetings,

for the Church of Mount Nasura

J. Eikelboom
(acting clerk)

16th February 2000

Consistory of the Free Reformed Church at Mt Nasura

REPORT ON ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD

Esteemed brothers,

As archivist and librarian of Synod, I hereby submit my report in accordance with 'Instructions for the Archivist', Acts 1992, Appendix K, point 3 (as confirmed by Synod 1996, Article 26, Decision 5): "*The archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; and who has received or seen items and the items involved*".

STORAGE SPACE

I bring to your attention that the four-drawer fireproof filing cabinet, in which the synod archive collection is stored, is filled to capacity. Synod Archives, for the years 1954 – 1998 fill two drawers and the remaining two drawers are filled with Acts of Synods of FRCA and sister churches, and files of correspondence of deputies. In view of the fact that the purchase and delivery of a similar cabinet will cost approximately \$2,800 (quote received from Keywest Lock Service and Sales) and that floor space in the high school library is already at a premium, would you please consider the following in order to free up some space in the current cabinet:

- Must files of deputies' correspondence be kept indefinitely? (These fill up half a drawer.)
- The contents of some general administrative type documents received for storage in the archive collection (e.g. agendas, credentials, letters of discharge & appointment) as well as deputies' reports, one also finds printed in Acts of Synods. Is it really necessary therefore to keep such documents from previous and future Synods in the archive collection? If not, could such documents be culled from the collection, preferably in consultation with a member of consistory?

CONTENTS OF SYNOD ARCHIVES

ADDITIONS TO ARCHIVES AFTER SYNOD 1998:

Synod 1998: Items 98.0 – 98.126

Synod 1990: Item 90.81 (= Acts of Closed Sessions)

CONTENTS OF SYNOD LIBRARY

ADDITIONS TO LIBRARY AFTER SYNOD 1998:

Acts of the 1998 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia -
Launceston

Acts of the 1992 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches – Lincoln

**** A detailed chronological listing of all documents added to the archive collection since Synod 1998 can be found in Appendix One and on the enclosed computer disk.*

LOANS FROM ARCHIVES

The following items were loaned from the archives:

J Eikelboom:	11/10/99:	Item 80.16	Report from deputies to revise the Church Order
		Item 83.2.5	Report - Revised Church Order for the FRCA
M Plug:	07/12/99:	Item 87.35	Report - Deputies: Training for the Ministry

OUTSTANDING ITEMS

Items not yet received for Library: (cf Acts 1996, Article 26, Decision 4):

Acts of Synods of Sister Churches in:

- Canada: 1998
- The Netherlands: 1987/1988, 1999
- South Africa: for synods held between the years 1978 and 1992; for synods held after 1994.

INSPECTION

The archives were inspected by two representatives of Byford on 15th February, 2000.

With sisterly greetings,

J. Vanderplas

APPENDIX ONE

**CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX
TO SYNOD
(ITEMS ADDED AFTER
SYNOD 1998)**

**SYNOD 1998 - Agenda,
Credentials, Instructions**

98.0	Agenda
98.1	Credentials FRC Albany
98.2	Credentials & Instructions FRC Armadale
98.3	Credentials FRC Byford
98.4	Instructions FRC Byford
98.5	Credentials FRC Kelmscott
98.6	Credentials (for 2/6/98) FRC Launceston
98.7	Instructions FRC Launceston
98.8	Credentials (for 8/9/98) FRC Launceston
98.9	Credentials (for 2/6/98) FRC Legana
98.10	Instructions FRC Legana
98.11	Credentials (for 8/9/98) FRC Legana
98.12	Credentials & Instructions FRC Mt Nasura
98.13	Credentials FRC Rockingham
98.14	Credentials FRC South Africa
98.15	Credentials FRC West Albany

SYNOD 1998 –

Correspondence Inward

98.16	West Albany - appeal against Art. 95, Acts '96
98.17	Albany - appeal against Art. 95, Acts '96
98.18	L'ton - proposal re Rules for Synods (Voting)
98.19	L'ton - proposal re Annual Conferences
98.20	L'ton - proposal re women's voting
98.21	Rev. G. vanRongen - request to use Synod Acts
98.22	Byford - daily re- opening of Synods
98.23	K'scott - R. C. Janssen's request for examination
98.24	K'scott - response to report of Deputies PCEA
98.25	K'scott - response to L'ton's proposal re women's voting
98.26	Legana - request for pulpit supply
98.27.1-3	J. Dykstra - appeal
98.28	Byford - Statement 2, Art. 95, Acts '96
98.29	Byford - L'ton's contact with the Reformed Church of L'ton
98.30	Mt Nasura - overture/appeal re Church relations
98.31	Mt Nasura - rules for Synods (proposed rule 7.8)
98.32	Mt Nasura - instruction to Deputies for sister relations with CanRC (re: infant baptism discussion in Clarion)
98.33	Mt Nasura - appeal against Art. 89, Acts '96

Appendix 11 Synod Archives

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|--|
| 98.34 | Mt Nasura - rules for Synods: chairman of successive synods | 98.48 | Synod Treasury - Auditors' Report |
| 98.35 | West Albany - proposal: Formation of Classes (Art. 38, Acts '96) | 98.49 | Relations with other churches |
| 98.36 | West Albany - instruction to Deputies for relations with other churches (re: Lanka Reformed Church) | 98.50 | Contact with Sister churches - supplementary report re: South Africa |
| 98.37 | Copy of correspondence between Legana and Rev. vanHulst | 98.51 | Relations with other churches (Reformed) - The Geneva Reformed Church |
| 98.38 | Legana - request to include Rev. vanHulst's book <i>"De Achillespees van het Calvinisme"</i> as appendix to 98.37 | 98.52 | Relations Churches abroad (Reformed) - supplementary report |
| 98.39 | CanRC: Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad - letter of greeting | 98.53 | Training for the ministry |
| 98.40 | PCEA: Inter-Church Relations Committee - letter of greeting | 98.54 | Nicene Creed |
| 98.41 | Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland - letter of greeting | 98.55 | Pulpit Exchanges |
| 98.42 | Geneva Free Reformed Church (New Zealand) | 98.56 | Civil Registration of the FRCA |
| | | 98.57 | Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod |
| | | 98.58 | Formation of Classes |
| | | 98.59 | Ecclesiastical Documents |
| | | 98.60 | Article 48 & 76 Church Order |
| | | 98.61 | Article 66 Church Order |
| | | 98.62 | Auditing the Books for Deputies for Article 17,18 Church Order (Training for the Ministry) |

SYNOD 1998 – Deputies

Reports

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 98.43 | Archives and Library of Synods |
| 98.44 | Inspection of Synod Archives |
| 98.45 | Synod Treasury - Financial Report |
| 98.46 | Synod Treasury - Draft Budget Synod '98 |
| 98.47 | Synod Treasury - Revised Draft Budget Synod '98 |

SYNOD 1998 –

Correspondence Outward

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 98.63 | Attorney General's Dept. re Registration of Marriage Celebrants (Appt of S C Fokkema & S Herbert as nominating authorities) |
|-------|---|

Appendix 11 Synod Archives

- Replies to Correspondence Received:

- 98.64 West Albany (cf 98.16,35,36)
98.65 Albany (cf 98.17)
98.66 L'ton (cf 98.18-20)
98.67 Rev vanRongen (cf 98.21)
98.68 Byford (cf 98.22,28,29)
98.69 K'sctt (cf 98.23-25)
98.70 Legana (cf 98.26,37,38)
98.71 Mt Nasura (cf 98.30-34)
98.72 Geneva Free Reformed Church (New Zealand) (cf 98.42)
98.73 Correspondence from Synod to Rev. vanHulst and FRC L'ton: (2 copies):
1) Decision and Grounds contained in Article 28
2) Questions put to Rev vanHulst by committee 1
98.74 Rev. vanHulst re Synod decision concerning his teachings about the law
98.75 FRC L'ton re Synod decision concerning Rev vanHulst's teachings about the law.

- Letters of Thanks

- 98.76-82 Letters of thanks to the convening Church: FRC L'ton, support committees and some individuals

- Letters of Appointment / Re-appointment to Deputyships

- 98.83-110 Church Order: Articles 48 & 76: Rev PKA deBoer (convener), PO

Posthuma, Rev A Veldman
Church Visits (Art 44, CO): Rev A Veldman (convener),
Civil Registration of the FRCA: SC Fokkema, S Herbert
Nicene Creed: Rev A vanDelden
Pulpit Exchanges: Rev A Veldman
Relations with Other Churches: General Convener: Rev C Bouwman; General Secretary: JL vanBurgel
Relations with Other Churches (Presbyterian): Rev A Veldman (convener), J Bruning, H Olde, Rev J Poppe, Rev W vanderJagt; (Alternate = P Terpstra)
Relations with Other Churches (Reformed): Rev W Huizinga (convener), J Bosveld, Rev PKA deBoer; W Guerts; JL vanBurgel, Rev A vanDelden, J vanDijk (Alternate = SH Terpstra)
Sister Churches: Rev C Bouwman (convener), ACM Bruning, HJ Dekker, PO Posthuma (Alternate = GB Veenendaal)
Synod Audio Equipment: E 't Hart
Training for the Ministry: Rev C Bouwman (convener), M Plug, AT Schiebaan, A

vanLeeuwen (Alternate
= R Heerema)

Treasurer of Synod:
A Hordyk (Alternate
= GJ Versluis)

SYNOD 1998 - OTHER

- 98.111-25 SEE: 1998 CLOSED
SESSIONS
98.126 Photograph of
Synod delegates (2
copies)

SECRET ARCHIVES

1990 CLOSED SESSIONS

- 90.81 Acts of Closed
Sessions

1998 CLOSED SESSIONS

- 98.111 Acts of Closed
Sessions
98.112 J. Dykstra – appeal
Church Visitation
Reports:
98.113 Albany 25.10.96
98.114 Armadale 28.11.96
98.115 Armadale 26.09.97
98.116 Bedforddale 14.11.96
98.117 Byford 01.11.96
98.118 Byford 25.09.97
98.119 Kelmscott 07.11.96
98.120 Launceston 18.11.96
98.121 Launceston 28.10.97
98.122 Legana 20.11.96
98.123 Legana Nov. '97
98.124 Response from Legana
to report Nov. '97
98.125 West Albany 20.09.96

CONTENTS OF LIBRARY

**ACTS OF SYNODS OF
SISTER CHURCHES**

AUSTRALIA
1998

CANADA
Lincoln 1992

Appendix 12

Report Deputies Article 48 and 76 Church Order

This is the Report of deputies for articles 48 and 76 Church Order as appointed by Synod 1998 Launceston Acts Article 125 sub 15.

Mandate as formulated in Article 48 of the Church Order

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. ... All deputies shall keep a proper record of their work and submit a written report.

Mandate as formulated in Article 76 of the Church Order

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory he shall be suspended from office by the judgement of his own consistory and of classis church. If he hardens himself in 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 ... The second -appeal church, *with the advice of deputies of synod*, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

Activity

1. As second appeal Church for the Church of Launceston the consistory of the Church of Kelmescott meeting as classis church on 4 and 8 March 1999 invited deputies to be present to give advice in the request from the Church of Launceston to depose Rev. F.J. Van Hulst from the office of minister of the Word.

1.1. Deputies gave concurring advice to the following decision:

1.1.1. In consideration of the material provided by the Free Church of Launceston, second appeal church judges that Rev. F.J. Van Hulst ought to be deposed from his office as minister of the Word in the Free Reformed Church of Launceston.

1.1.1.1. Rev. F.J. Van Hulst is guilty of "false doctrine or heresy".

1.1.1.1.1. In its Synod of June 1998, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have found particular teachings from Rev. Van Hulst to be in error (c.f. Acts, Article 28). The Consistory of Kelmescott has

Appendix 12 Report Deputies Art 48 and 76 CO

- scrutinized this decision of the churches, and found it to be in agreement with Scripture and confession.
- 1.1.1.1.2. The Consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Launceston concurring with Synod's decision that Rev. Van Hulst's teachings were contrary to Scripture and confessions. The Consistory also showed Rev. van Hulst where he has erred, and requested him to abide by the promise he made in the Subscription Form (letter to Rev. Van Hulst, dd 5 September 1998).
 - 1.1.1.1.3. Rev. Van Hulst writes that "indeed", I have not retracted my teachings. I abide by them" (letter to Consistory, dd 3 November 1998). Equally, when asked by his Consistory whether he would cease preaching "until we have resolved the matters of doctrine in which we found you in error", Rev. Van Hulst replied: "No. Ultimately this is a simple matter. It is a matter of truth and error. I am preaching and teaching the truth... Consistory is in error" (Minutes of Consistory meeting with Rev. Van Hulst, dd 4 February 1999).
 - 1.1.1.2. Rev. Van Hulst is guilty of "public schism".
 - 1.1.1.2.1. In a meeting with Consistory dd 14 November 1998, Rev. Van Hulst "declared his intention to preach the next day, Sunday 15 November" (letter to second appeal church dd 13 February 1999).
 - 1.1.1.2.2. The document dd 23 November 1998, as well as the Minutes dd 4 February 1999, confirm that Rev. Van Hulst, contrary to the explicit instructions of his Consistory, in fact has the congregation worship in a place away from the supervision of the office-bearers God has given this flock.
2. A request was received from the Church of West Albany, as convening church, to be present at the special Synod convened on 1 March 2000
- 2.1.1. Deputies decided not to honor this request because Synod 1994 (*Acts Article 16*) decided to formulate Article 6 A 1.b. of the *Church Order* to read: *following a peremptory examination of the candidate by Synod with satisfactory results* thus, for the time when there is no classes, the words *with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod* have been deleted. The ground given by that synod for this decision is: "Deputies of synod mentioned in the proposed text are the Ministers of the

Appendix 12 Report Deputies Art 48 and 76 CO

Word and are present at synod. Mentioning them separate is superfluous.

- 2.1.2. Deputies also considered that seeing synod is the most broad assembly in the bond of churches, there is no other assembly to which deputies can report activity done at a synod.

Humbly presented to synod by deputies

Rev. P.K.A. de Boer

Rev. A Veldman

Br. P.O. Posthuma

Appendix 13

DEPUTIES TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Appointed by Synod 1998

REPORT TO SYNOD 2000

Esteemed Brothers

1.0 MANDATE

Synod 1998 gave your Deputies the following mandate:

- To:
- a) collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them 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 for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the Colleges and the training of students.
 - d) continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 of the Church Order, and as agreed in Art 50 of the Acts of Synod 1992.
 - e) finalise and implement plans for inviting a guest lecturer from the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
 - f) investigate whether the amount the churches contribute to the Hamilton Theological College is appropriate.

2.0 FINANCIAL SUPPORT HAMILTON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

In compliance with Synod 1998 decision, deputies have collected from the churches and forwarded to "Hamilton" \$39.00 per communicant member per annum, calculated from the 1st July 1998 (refer 8.0 Finance)

3.0 CONTACT WITH THEOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY HAMILTON 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 1998 and 1999.

Appendix 13 Deputies Training Ministry

3.2 Contact with the Theologische Universiteit Kampen remained low key. Other than the above greetings, deputies received the 1999-2000 study guide.

3.3 The existing close contacts with Hamilton Theological College were allowed to further blossom, especially through the visit of Dr C VanDam (refer item 6.0). Over the course of the past term, the faculty made every effort to keep deputies up to date via the customary annual reports as well as the more frequent press releases provided for publication (refer item 4.0). Furthermore in May 1998 (just after deputies had reported to Synod 1998) Rev Bouwman formally visited the College on behalf of the Deputies. He addressed with the Professors several questions relating to the general level of preparedness of Australian students entering the College and the ties between "Hamilton" and the FRCA. In his brief report to deputies, Rev Bouwman stated that: "The members of the faculty went out of their way to express deep appreciation to the Australian churches for the financial support we give."

3.4 This report forms an appropriate opportunity to advise that an invitation plus offer of a free return airfare has been received for one of

the deputies to attend the opening of the new library facility currently under construction. This gesture was made to:

- a) Express appreciation for the generous contribution received from within our midst as well as to
- b) further strengthen the ties between "Hamilton" and our bond of churches.

4.0 PUBLICATION AND PROMOTION.

In November 1998 deputies published an article in *Una Sancta*, which carried information about the College and about the progress of Brs F Dong and C Vermeulen, the two Australian students undertaking studies in Hamilton at the time. This article was followed by several articles under the heading "College Corner", authored by the then Principal Dr N H Gootjes and the current Principal Dr J De Jong. Through these articles, our church membership was kept well informed concerning the "goings on" of the College, its staff and students.

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 details of their commitments to any student of theology, which allowed deputies to calculate fair and equitable assessments. Upon careful consideration additional aid was granted to one of the two students in order to :

- a) cover significant unforeseen medical costs and to
- b) bridge a justified time delay of three months between completion of college studies and the classical examination.

One of the students , Br F dong has since graduated from the College.

6.0 VISIT DR C VAN DAM

As mandated, your deputies finalised arrangements for a guest lecturer from Hamilton Theological College. During the months of June and July of 1999, Dr C VanDam (together with his wife, whose airfares were funded by the College) visited our Bond of churches. Dr VanDam had a full itinerary, which in addition to numerous speaking engagements in Albany, Launceston and the Perth Metro area, saw him fill the pulpit once in every congregation. In each of the above centres, Dr Van Dam held a College information evening and he also spoke on the topics "Clean and unclean" and "What is worship?" (Efforts are being made to have the text of these lectures made available in print). In addition to this, he addressed the officebearers at conferences held in Armadale and Legana, the students of the John Calvin High schools in Albany and Armadale and the Tertiary Students Club. It was our privilege to be instrumental in the organisation of this venture, which was funded from Synod Treasury. The Van Dams were most appreciative of the lodging and transportation arrangements and felt right at home within our churches. As deputies, we believe that under the Lord's blessing this undertaking has been a success and we implore Synod to mandate deputies to organise a similar venture every four or five years.

7.0 CONTRIBUTIONS TO HAMILTON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Synod 1998 mandated your deputies to investigate whether the \$39 Per Communicant member per annum being the amount the churches are currently contributing to Hamilton Theological College is

Appendix 13 Deputies Training Ministry

appropriate. The ground for this mandate was found in the Synod Launceston 1985 decision for the churches to budget for amounts similar to those contributed by our overseas brothers and sisters (Acts art 58) Our Canadian brothers and sisters are currently assessed in the vicinity of \$63 Can, which at the current exchange rate computes to approx \$70 per communicant member.

A brief overview of the history of financial support to Hamilton since 1985 can be found in appendix C. Having considered these facts, we recommend that:

- a. assessments be brought in line with the amount paid by our Canadian brothers and sisters.
- b. in view of the considerable increase, this step be phased in over two years
- c. assessments be reviewed by each consecutive Synod.

8.0 FINANCE

- 8.1 Support Theological College Hamilton.
Refer appendix A
- 8.2 Support needy students.
Refer appendix B

9.0 BOOKS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Following the visit of the Rev Viljoen from our South African sister churches during the course of 1998, deputies were made aware that these churches would greatly benefit from good Dutch reformed literature for use by their recently established theological training facility. As this is connected to the promotion of the training for the ministry, your deputies took upon themselves to seek donations of suitable books from within our circles and to forward them to the brotherhood in South Africa. A crate with a substantial number of books was sent off in the middle of last year.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Deputies recommend that:

- 1 Synod decide to phase in increased contributions to Hamilton Theological College and thus to assess the churches \$54.50 per communicant member per annum from the first of July 2000 and \$70 per communicant member per annum from the first of July 2001 for the maintenance of the College.
- 2 Synod decide to discharge deputies and to 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) ensure that relevant information is published concerning 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 Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
 - e) make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" once every four or five years.
- 3 Synod decide to fund guest lecture events from the Synod Treasury and to set aside an ongoing budget allowance.

With Brotherly greetings

Rev C Bouwman, M Plug, A T Schiebaan, A VanLeeuwen.

Deputies Training for the Ministry Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Hamilton Theological College Fund

Statement of Receipts and Payments from February 1998 to February 2000

Opening Balance \$ 5590.33

Receipts \$				Total \$		Payments		
<i>Albany</i>	3876	3876	4314	4212	16278	<i>Loan to NSF</i>	6761.27	
<i>Armadale</i>	5396	5538	5596.5	5596.5	22127			
<i>Byford</i>	3287	3287	6000	1340.5	13914.5	<i>Stamp Duty</i>	105.58	
<i>Kelmscott</i>	5664.5			6786	12450.5			
<i>Launceston</i>	6699			3510	10209	<i>Transfer Fees</i>	75	
<i>Legana</i>	1167.5	2014	2014	1379	1326	7900.5		
<i>Mount Nasura</i>	6764		6992		13756	<i>Bank Fees</i>	12	
<i>Rockingham</i>	2394	2457	5031		9882			
<i>West Albany</i>	2679	2679	2995.5	2925	11278.5	<i>Books Theol Studies South Africa</i>	100	
<i>West Kelmscott</i>			481	1443	4329	6253		
<i>NSF Repay</i>					6761.27	6761.27		
<i>Interest</i>		148.77		235.25	171.06	555.08	<i>Hamilton Theo Coll</i>	123000
<i>CVanDam</i>				3025	3025			
<i>(Synod Treas)</i>							<i>CVanDam Visit</i>	3096.25
<i>Books Sth Afr</i>				100	100			
<i>TFN Refund</i>					82.95	82.95	<i>TFN W/H Tax</i>	82.95
Totals	37927	19999.77	33424	30562.25	12670.28	134573.3	Total	133220.2
				Total Received	134573.3			
				Bank per Febr. 1998	5590.33			
				Sub Total	140163.63			
				Less Expenses	133233.06	ANZ V2 Plus A/C	3113.71	
				Balance March 2000	<u>6930.58</u>	ANZ Pass Book	3816.87	
						Total	<u>6930.58</u>	

A Van Leeuwen
 Treasurer Hamilton Theological College

Appendix B

Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry

*Needy Students Fund
Statement of Receipts and Payments
February 1998 - February 2000*

Opening balance	\$4039.90
<i>Receipts</i>	
Albany	9551.10
Armadale	13123.70
Byford	9821.20
Kelmscott	18000.00
Launceston	826.00
Legana	4499.32
Mt Nasura	5549.00
Rockingham	7126.30
West Albany	5527.70
West Kelmscott	2174.00
Interest	97.09
Total:	76295.41
<i>Payments</i>	
Support to students	76782.25
Bank Charges	323.00
State Duty	51.18
Total	77156.43
Balance:	3178.88

Appendix C

Australian commitment to Hamilton Theo. College.

Deputies Training for the Ministry were instructed by Synod Launceston 85 to budget similar amounts to those contributed by sister churches overseas. The following synod Albany 1987 agreed to a contribution of \$aust 30.00 per communicant member. The discrepancy in the contributions between the Aust. and Can. was \$14.00 per communicant member; Aust. contributed \$30 per communicant member, whilst Can. contributed \$44 per comm. member.

Deputies Report to Synod Albany gives some insight into the matter.

At that time the deputies were considering both the college in Hamilton, and Kampen. Whilst their recommendation was to support Hamilton (and encourage the churches to collect for Kampen), it became obvious that they were not prepared to put all their eggs in the one basket as yet. As quoted from the mentioned report:

To budget for amounts similar to those contributed by our overseas brothers and sisters we suggest:

- a) *to set our contribution for Hamilton to be \$A 30.—per year per communicant member and to give two years notice if this support will be discontinued.*
- b) *to encourage churches to hold regular collections for the Theologische Hogeschool at Kampen in the same way as hitherto has been done and expect to receive information and documentation.*

This approach means that it is still possible to make a definite commitment to the College in Kampen of the same amount as the members of our Dutch sister-churches. Such a commitment would include the amounts derived from collections suggested above.

With or without a formal commitment to supporting the College in Kampen, our suggested approach would lead to support for training for the ministry similar to our Canadian brothers and sisters.

Appendix 13 Deputies Training Ministry

It is good to note that at that time, the commitment of the brothers and sisters in the Netherlands was 16 guilders per member (Deputies Report to Synod 87, 4-1-3).

The difference between the Canadian and Australian churches is now obvious. The deputies were working with the intent of Synod 1985 at face value: \$30 + 16 Guilders.

The amount sent to Hamilton went up in increments, usually \$3 - \$5 per synod. The 1990 figure of \$35 seems to be determined according to inflation rate (Deputies Report to Synod Armadale 1990).

In 1992, Synod Bedfordale recommended the churches to collect for the Theological Seminary in Pusan. Whilst Kampen appreciated the monies received from Australia, it was not needed. Consequently the shift from Kampen to the Theological Seminary in Pusan.

Synod Kelmscott 1996 decided to no longer encourage the churches to collect for the Theological Seminary in Pusan.

It seems to be that Synod Kelmscott 1996, when it decided to no longer encourage the churches to collect for Theological Seminary in Pusan, overlooked its immediate obligation to re assess the Aust. churches to a level equitable to that in Canada. This would be in keeping with the decision of Synod Launceston 1985.

Deputies consequently recommend that assessments be raised to correspond with the amount currently paid by our Canadian brothers and sisters.

Appendix 14

Deputies for the Formation of Classes

To: Synod of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Esteemed brothers, Deputies for the Formation of Classes are pleased to submit their Report. In summary, Deputies recommend that the churches in Synod establish Two Classes.

1. Deputies' Mandate

The text of the mandate is printed at the end of this Report.

2. Observations

Considering previous material, Deputies observe:

2.1 The establishment of Classis (Classes) moves the organization of the bond of churches more in line with the adopted Church order (Article 28), which requires three ecclesiastical assemblies: *the consistory, the Classis and the Synod*, of which the latter two are 'the major assemblies' - the term 'major' referring to the fact that the Classis is a meeting of a number of neighbouring churches, and the Synod a meeting of all the churches in the bond. Because the Church Order presumes that there is more than one Classis in the bond (Article 45), a choice based on this organization model would favour the Two Classes option.

2.2 Article 41 of the Church Order speaks of the Classis as a meeting of *neighbouring churches*. Because of the great distances between the two Tasmanian churches, the two Albany churches and the six churches in the Perth area, the establishment of Classes can hardly be seen as satisfying this particular requirement of the Church Order.

2.3 Previous material shows that right from the beginning (1956) the churches have seen the need to establish Classes. In the early years this recognition was probably based more than anything else on the desire to adhere to the letter of the Church Order. In recent times however, there has been a growing conviction that the bond urgently needs a mechanism that allows the churches to exercise closer and more effective contact than what can be provided by a Synod once every two years - hence the increasing attention paid to this need. In this context we quote from Kelmscott's submission to Synod 1996 (see Appendix M, commencing on page 202 of Acts 1996):

Appendix 14 Formation of Classes

"... Wezel appreciated most positively the functioning of the bond of churches through the ecclesiastical assemblies. Here is no narrow-minded mentality in which people speak with disdain about Synods. In fact, this positive appreciation turns out to be the introduction to the articles formulated at this convent the brothers wanted to promote exercising of the bond of churches: 'since...it shall be most beneficial to achieve and maintain uniform agreement in doctrine as well as in regulating ceremonies and discipline, we consider that, as much as possible, frequent meetings of neighbouring churches ought to be organised. So that each arising item can be discussed at such meetings, we consider that all efforts must be made to divide the various Dutch provinces into fixed Classes. In this way each church will know with whom she must interact and consult about the more important matters which, by her judgment, affect the common interest. (I. I)"

We are to note that the fathers at Wezel, in this first article of their proposed Church Order, judged ecclesiastical meetings necessary for the sake of the promotion and preservation of the truth of Scripture, both in terms of doctrine and in terms of the regulations of ceremonies and church discipline. For ecclesiastical meetings to promote and preserve this truth, the fathers stipulated that there were to be "*frequent meetings of neighbouring churches*". Contact and discussion was not to be minimised. Minimising of contact is what happens in systems of hierarchy as well as in systems of independentism. But Reformed church polity seeks to maximise contact between the churches, so that, by frequent contact and discussions, increasing consensus arises. Here is an application of the words of Prov. 15:22: "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in die multitude of counsellors they are established." (quotation from pages 204, 205)

The establishment of Classes must therefore be seen as much more than organisational adjustment to satisfy the Church Order; and in making a choice between One Classis and Two Classes the churches ought to consider what should be the ultimate goal that is to be achieved by this re-organization. The question is pertinent, which of the two - One Classis, Two Classes – provides the best means for *the promotion and preservation of the truth of Scripture, both in terms of doctrine and in terms of the regulations of ceremonies and church discipline.*

Only with the One Classis option, will **each** church meet frequently with **every other** church in the bond. Only the One Classis option gives each church the opportunity of (assisting in) watching over, or be watched over by, **all** the other churches in the bond (see Article 41 of the Church Order). In our situation of the churches living far apart, the churches might well consider that the benefit of involving **all** the churches in this frequent contact should not be foregone.

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2.4 Some of the items that belong on the agenda of a Classis are mentioned in Article 41 of the Church Order. These are:

- ensuring that the ministry of the office bearers is being continued;
- ensuring that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured;
- inquiring whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church;

More agenda items are found in other Articles of the Church Order, as follows:

- arrange church visitation and receive (consider) church visitation reports (Article 44);
- deal with matters that could not be finished in the minor assembly (Article 30);
- several tasks relating to the calling, examination, installation, dismissal etc of ministers (Articles 3-15), and the institution of new churches (Article 38);
- hear appeals (Article 31), appoint counsellors (Article 43), provide advice in matters of church discipline (Articles 74-79), as well as some other matters.

Considering whether both options (One Classis, Two Classes) can be expected to perform these tasks to satisfaction, Deputies believe that the answer is positive with the possible exception of the examination of candidates by a Classis consisting of five churches geographically spread far apart - whose manpower is likely to be inadequate, creating the need for help from office bearers in the other Classis.

In the matter of appeals, the Two Classes option is superior, in that it conforms with the organisational model of the Church Order (in terms of minor and major assemblies). This option offers two stages of appeal (the Classis and the Synod). The One Classis option is inferior in this respect, as it is not a true 'major' assembly. This shortcoming can however be overcome by retaining the Classis Church as the 'first' appeal stage, and making the meeting of all the churches (whether Classis or Synod) the final appeal stage. This arrangement offers the advantage of a faster appeals process (assuming the Classis meets six-monthly). With two stages of appeal, there is no need for a 'second-appeal church'.

2.5 Other factors that need to be taken into account in making a choice between the One Classis and Two Classes options are:

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- In the Two Classes option, the smaller number of delegates would offer more discussion time and more personal contact;
- The Two Classes option can be operated at lower cost than the One Classis option;
- Under the Two Classes option, Synods will have less delegates;
- The One Classis option can easily lead to Classis taking on work that belongs to Synod;
- With the One Classis option - both Classis and Synod being composed of two delegates from each church - there are too many of the same people involved.

3. Recommendations.

3.1 Frequency of meetings.

- Article 41 CO requires the churches to meet in **Classis** at least once every three months. The high cost of three-monthly meetings, and on the other hand the need to deal with business in a timely and efficient manner leads the Deputies to recommend that Classis shall meet at least six-monthly, with the proviso that half way down each six months' interval some categories of business (to be specified in the Classis Regulations) may be dealt with by way of a telephone or video hook-up. Adoption of this recommendation requires a change to the Church Order.
- Article 45 CO provides that after the formation of Classes the frequency of Synod meetings reverts from once every two years to once every three years.

3.2 Delegation to Classis.

The provision in Article 41 CO for each church to delegate a minister and an elder to Classis (or two elders in case a church has no minister) can remain unaltered.

3.3 Delegation to Synod. As long as there is one Classis the present method of each church delegating one minister and one elder to Synod should be retained. As soon as a second Classis is established the provision in Article 45 CO for each Classis to delegate two ministers and two elders to Synod applies. This would however result in Synod having eight members. Deputies believe that this number is too small for the following reasons:

- (1) After the appointment of the four man moderamen, at least three of whom are to carry the substantially extra workload of that office, an eight member Synod is unlikely to have the necessary manpower to -

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achieve the required degree of depth and breadth in dealing with the variety of material that may be placed on its agenda.

(2) The small number of delegates (eight) is likely to hamper a balanced decision-making process.

Accordingly, Deputies recommend that as long as there are two Classes the churches adopt the method used by the Canadian sister churches for delegation to their Provincial Synods (see Article 47 of their CO, page 665 BoP), thereby ensuring that a Synod shall always have a minimum of 12 members. This would require the following amendment to Article 45 CO: After the words "Each Classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to Synod." Insert the words: "As long as there are two Classes, each Classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders."

While this amendment overcomes to a degree the stated objections against a Synod with as few as eight members, Deputies believe that owing to the smallness of the bond this form of delegation still has the weakness that can easily result in a situation of too many decisions being made too often by the same few people. Deputies therefore recommend that a further amendment be put in place under which the delegation to Synod be spread over the greatest number of churches. (As an example, with five churches in a Classis, one delegate must be chosen from each church before a second delegate can be chosen from one of the five churches; if a Classis has six churches, one delegate must be chosen from each church; with seven or more churches in a Classis, no more than one delegate can be chosen from a church.) This further amendment can be inserted in Article 45, as follows: "This delegation shall be spread over the greatest number of churches."

Note: On this point Deputies received the following two submissions from the churches.

(1) In reformed church polity, the delegates to a major assembly are not representatives of local congregations. That is to say: their task at a major assembly is not to speak the mind of the people they 'represent', but is instead to judge a matter on the basis of God's revealed will. The notion of representation has its roots in principles of democracy, and those principles run counter to the principle that the Lord governs His church through His Word and Spirit. Though it may be 'nice (for the sake of a sense of ownership) that each church has a representative at Synod, Classis should not be bound to choose one delegate from each church before a second from a given congregation can be chosen. Classis should be free to delegate those brothers who classis judges are best equipped to lead the churches further in the will of the Lord. Besides, the stipulation you suggest promotes in the minds of the churches the unscriptural principle that the Synod is to express the will of the people.

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(2) It appears to us that with synod being constituted of delegates from the classis/classes, there would be diminished instead of increased contact between the churches, as there would no longer be any occasion for them all to meet together. The recent Van Hulst case could scarcely have been dealt with by any of the classis options yet proposed, and showed the need for a major assembly as currently constituted. We suggest that deputies examine the feasibility of continuing the current practice of the churches rather than the classis/es sending delegates to synod. This would allow all churches in the bond to continue to maintain direct contact with all the others.

Deputies forward these two submissions for your further consideration. Regarding submission (2), although an organization of this nature would be possible, it requires further amendment of the Church Order which embodies the principle of a major assembly being made up from delegates chosen by the next lower assembly. There would also be additional travel costs.

3.4 Costs of Classis meetings.

These are shown in the Appendix, for both options.

In summary, the annual cost for the One Classis option is \$13,800.

For the Two Classes option, Model 1 (3P2A and 3P2T) will cost \$ 10,000 per year, while

Model 2 (3PIAIT and 3P1A1T) will cost \$16,100.

It must be noted that in Model 1 of the Two Classes option, the costs for the two Classes 3P2A and 3P2T are in the ratio of 1 to 4, necessitating the cost sharing arrangement mentioned in paragraph 4.

4. Additional recommendation for the establishment of the Two Classes option.

- Deputies' mandate mentions two examples for possible composition of the two Classes. Example 1: Classis 1 is made up from three Perth churches plus two Albany churches (3P2A), and Classis 2 from three Perth churches plus two Tasmania churches (3P2T), and
- Example 2: both Classes are made up from three Perth churches plus one Albany church plus one Tasmania church (3P1A1T).

For convenience these two examples will hereafter be referred to as Model 1 and Model 2.

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(More different compositions can be thought of, but none of these comes anywhere near the balanced arrangements offered by Models 1 and 2.)

In making a choice between the two Models, the following should be considered:

- Having the two churches of Albany (Tasmania) together in the same Classis, as in Model 1, is more in keeping with the Church Order's principle (in Article 41) of the Classis being a meeting of *neighbouring* churches;
- Article 41 CO requires church visitation to be conducted annually. With Model 1, church visitation in Albany (Tasmania) can be done by one Perth plus one Albany (Tasmania) office bearer, thus requiring only one office bearer to travel. Because church visitation can be timed to coincide with Classis meetings, this travel is needed only once every two-and-a-half years. With Model 2, two office bearers will have to travel from, Perth to Albany (Tasmania), twice every two-and-a-half years, making the cost four times higher than for Model 1.
- Looking at the total costs of the two Models, it is clear that a decision in favour of Model 1 brings with it the need for a cost sharing arrangement between the two Classes. The Deputies recommend that in that case a separate Treasury be set up for this purpose.
- To decide which church is to belong to which Classis, the provision of Article 41 CO that a Classis is a meeting of neighbouring churches, should be observed as much as possible.

Deputies suggest for a possible method:

For Model 1, Classis 1 to be formed by having the three Perth churches closest to Albany (Armadale, Byford and Rockingham) join with the two Albany churches; while Classis 2 would be made up from the remaining three Perth churches (Kelmscott, Mount Nasura and West Kelmscott) and the two Tasmanian churches.

For Model 2 the idea of neighbouring churches can be maintained for the Perth churches, but is more difficult to implement for the Albany and Tasmanian churches. One possibility is to have the Albany church (building) which is geographically closest to Armadale, Byford and Rockingham join with them in Classis 1, and the Tasmanian church (building) which is geographically closest to Kelmscott, Mount Nasura and West Kelmscott join with them in Classis 2. The remaining churches in Albany and Tasmania would then join Classis 2 and Classis 1 respectively.

Another option which disregards the principle of neighbouring churches, is to go by some sort of alphabetic order of church names, which places Albany, Armadale, Kelmscott, Launceston and Rockingham in Classis 1, and Byford, Legana, Mount Nasura, West Albany and West Kelmscott in Classis 2.

5. Other considerations and recommendations.

5.1 Once a decision has been made in this matter, Synod has no further role to play in how Classis (Classes) run(s) its (their) business. Every Classis is individually responsible to draw up and adopt its own set of Classis Regulations.

5.2 In the case of two Classes, a rule is needed for deciding to which Classis a newly instituted church shall belong. One possibility is that it join the Classis to which its 'parent' church belongs; another is to keep Classis sizes balanced.

5.3 The small size of our bond of churches and the continuing likelihood of office bearers hearing appeals and sitting in judgment on their own decisions leaves much to be desired in respect of both the perceived and factual impartiality of our appeal system.

Deputies therefore recommend the adoption of a rule which would stop a person from voting in an appeal on a decision he voted on in the minor assembly. This would require an amendment to Article 32, where the following words should be added: "No one shall vote in an appeal on a decision he voted on in a minor assembly."

Note: On this point Deputies received the following two submissions from the churches. They are forwarded for your further consideration.

- (1) Regarding the recommendation in paragraph 5.3, "No-one shall vote in an appeal on a decision he voted on in a minor assembly", Synod Leeuwarden 1920 made a decision to the contrary. We quote:

In geval van appel op een meerdere vergadering tegen een uitspraak van een mindere vergadering kan aan de afgevaardigden van die mindere vergadering het recht om mede te oordelen niet worden ontnomen, behoudens de toepassing van art. 32 K. 0.: 'Afgevaardigden naar meerdere vergaderingen zullen ... stemrecht hebben. Bij zaken die henzelf of hun eigen kerken betreffen, moeten zij echter buiten stemming blijven. (quoted via Bouma, Kerkorde van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Groningen: De Vuurbaak), II-Art. 32-2. 6

Though we don't have access to the grounds used to support this decision, we think that at the least deputies will have to refute this decision of the churches as found in our heritage. Further, we consider that it would be wrong to compel every delegate, no matter the details of his earlier involvement, to abstain from voting. After all, one can envisage a situation

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where a delegate was previously involved in such a minor way as to be negligible. Further, it should be remembered that every delegate to a major assembly is called to listen to arguments, and base his decision on God's Word: what does the Lord want the churches to do in this instance. The arguments presented may well change his mind. For these reasons, we think there is greater wisdom in leaving the decision to vote to the delegate in question (or possibly to the meeting itself).

and (2)

If, as deputies suggest, Article 32 is amended to ensure that "no one shall vote in an appeal on a decision he voted on in a minor assembly". it appears to us that this would have as a consequence that in practice classis 2 would decide on an appeal to synod against a decision of classis 1 (or vice versa).

The whole issue of appeals should probably be reconsidered if the bond is not to make a retrograde step in this regard. We are concerned that with the options proposed, the second avenue of appeal to which we have access under the current structure would be lost. In addition we have some reservations about the appeals time-frame, as appeals would first have to be dealt with by classis and only then by synod, which could be up to three years later. Again, the recent difficulties with van Hulst illustrate the need for a system which can act promptly and decisively; a more cumbersome classis/synod system could have proved detrimental to the churches with the possibility of an outcome pending for three years or more.

5.4 Upon the establishment of Classes, the italicised text in the Church Order is no longer in force. With the restoration of Article 31 to normal operation, there is therefore no longer a place for Classis churches and second-appeal churches. If however Synod would decide in favour of the One Classis option, there may be a need - as mentioned earlier on in this report for the Classis Church to continue in operation until there is more than one Classis in the bond.

In addition to the deletion of the italicised text, the following changes are required:

- If Synod adopts the recommendation on voting (in paragraph 5.3), the following words must be added to Article 32: "No one shall vote in an appeal on a decision he voted on in the minor assembly."
- If Synod adopts the recommended frequency of Classis meetings (in paragraph 3.1), Article 41 should be made to read: "at least once every six months." instead of- "at least once every three months"
- In Article 41 the indented sentence at the bottom must be deleted.
- If Synod adopts the recommendation regarding the Classis delegation to Synod (in paragraph 3.3), the following words must be added to

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Article 45: "As long as there are two Classes, each Classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders."

- If Synod adopts the further recommendation regarding the Classis delegation to Synod (in paragraph 3.3), the following words must be added to Article 45: "This delegation shall be spread over the greatest number of churches."
- With the establishment of Classes the text of various Ecclesiastical documents need amendment.

6. Three more submissions from churches were received while this Report was being finalised. Deputies decided to append the full text of one of these, for your consideration.

To: Deputies for the Formation of Classes.
From: The Free Reformed Church of Legana

Re: Report on the Formation of Classes

Dear Brothers,

We apologize for the delay in answering your letter, but due to an oversight, the material below was not forwarded to you as planned. We hope that you will still take our submission into account.

We have perused your report, and appreciate the work you have done. We realize that the situation is a difficult one, and that the solution you offer seems the best one in your evaluation. We have, however, some grave difficulties with this proposal. As you correctly note, classes should be meetings of neighbouring churches, but this is not achieved by this proposal. We also note that Legana may become a needy church. In this way the costs of this classis arrangement might possibly fall heavily on the other churches. We would therefore like to come with a counter proposal for your evaluation. We prefer to continue with the present arrangement, but in the case where the majority feel we ought to move towards another arrangement, we propose:

1) that three classes be established.- one of the Perth metropolitan area, one of the Albany area, and one of the Launceston area This would fulfil the criterion that churches of one classis should be neighbouring churches (your points 2.1 - 2.3).

2) that representation at the classes where only two churches are represented be determined by the participating churches, but with a minimum of four delegates from each church.

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3) that synod appoint an appeals classis for all classes, but especially for the two classes which are composed of delegates from only two churches, for the cases where no agreement is possible, or a church is prevented from voting due to conflict of interest

4) that each church still send two delegates to synod so as to avoid the two smaller classes dominating the one larger classis.

5) that classes be held every three months, and Synod once every three years.

6) that the matters relating to ministers (Articles 3-15) and institution of churches (Article 38) be dealt with by the classis, or in the case of a two church classis, that these decisions be made with the aid of two delegates from the appeals classis (point 2.4, group 2, bullet 3).

7) that counsellors for vacant churches in a two church classis be drawn from the appeals classis if that is necessary. (your point 2.4 group 2 bullet 4).

8) that at least one of the church visitors be drawn from the appeals classis in the case of a two church classis.

The advantages of this arrangement are:

1) that it would significantly reduce the costs and the amount of time ministers would have to absent themselves from their congregations.

2) that classis churches would have a better idea of what is living in the other churches which make up the classes.

Yours in Christ

The second submission asked whether Deputies could make a recommendation on which model to choose. In the Draft Report on consistory's table there was a one-line recommendation of that nature, but unfortunately it dropped out in the re-write to the churches. It has now been re-inserted and appears (again) at the very beginning of the Report. Deputies apologise for the omission.

The third submission reminds Deputies of the need "*to do justice to the initial purpose and criteria put forward in the original proposals, ie. to promote harmony and to avoid polarisation in how we combine churches in a classes.*"

Respectfully submitted:
PKA de Boer (chairman)
KA Wieske (clerk)

Appendix 14 Formation of Classes

Date of finalisation of this Report: 22 March 2000.

Date of despatch (2 copies each) to the Churches: 27 March 2000.

Deputies' mandate

Synod 1998 appointed the church of Mount Nasura as Deputies for the Formation of Classes, with the following mandate (Acts, Article 95):

- to evaluate, using the proposal of West Albany, the Deputies' Report and past Reports/submissions with the comments made on them, which model - one Classis or two Classes - is preferable;
- to work out the details for the implementation of both one Classis and two Classes after Synod 2000. Deputies are to evaluate the practical arrangements for Classes:
- the frequency of meetings of Classis (e.g. once, twice or thrice per year and how this would affect the frequency of Synods;
- the possible use of teleconferences or video conferences in place of face-to-face meetings;
- the number of delegates to Classis (e.g. a minister with one elder, or a minister with two elders) and the number and identity of delegates from Classis to Synod;
- for the model of two Classes consider the composition of each classical resort (for example: three Perth churches with one Albany church and one Tasmanian church; or three Perth churches with the two Albany churches; and the two Tasmanian churches combining with the other three Perth churches)
- by calculating the costs for the implementation of each model
- whether it would still be necessary to use Classis-churches and second appeal churches
- how the Church Order will need to be revised
- Deputies are further to explore what other details may require attention in the implementation of Classes, and supply recommendations
- to send their Report to the churches six months before next Synod so that the churches can have some input into this matter before the final Report is sent to Synod;

Cost estimates for classes.

Estimates are based on the following assumptions:

- Air travel between Perth and Tasmania will be \$800 per return trip.
- Car travel between Perth and Albany will be reimbursed at \$200 per return trip.
- Air travel between Perth and Albany will be \$250 per return trip.

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- Loss of income for delegates will be reimbursed at \$150 per working day.
- Video conferencing will cost:
 - Perth to Tasmania - \$500 per hour
 - Perth to Albany - \$450 per hour
 - Perth to Albany and Tasmania - \$700 per hour.

Two scenarios are considered:

1. Two classes made up of
 - Model 1 - two classes:
 - Classis 1: 3 Perth Churches, 2 Albany Churches (3P2A)
 - Classis 2: 3 Perth Churches, 2 Tasmania Churches (3P2T)
 - Model 2 - two classes, both made up of
 - 3 Perth Churches with 1 Tasmania Church and one Albany Church. (3PIAIT)
2. One classis made up of all. 6 Perth Churches, the two Albany Churches and the two Tasmania Churches. (6P2A2T)

It is assumed there will be two face to face meetings per year and one video-conference link up. Tele-conferencing is also possible and will be cheaper.

Cost reductions by combining travel

- At present Tasmania has pulpit supply from Perth/Albany is every 2 months.
- The cost of pulpit exchange between Perth/Albany is carried by the local churches.
- Church visitation between Perth and Albany normally involves 3 trips per year. (\$600)
- Church visitation between Perth/Albany and Tasmania normally involves 2 trips per year. (\$1600)
- With judicious planning of classis meetings, church visitation (CV) and pulpit exchanges (PE) can be combined with classis meetings.
- With Model 1, the Tasmania/Perth classis CV and PE can be combined in each case and for Perth/Albany classis, 2 CV trips of the 3 could be covered. This represents a saving to synod/classis budget of 52000 per annum.
- With Model 2 classis, and also for the model of only one classis the saving would be 40% of above, that is, \$800 per annum.

Classes cost estimates summary

Classes	Churches	Cost per annum	Total cost per annum	Savings on CV and PE	Net cost pa (rounded)
Model 1 Classis 1	3P2A	\$2,310	\$12,211	\$2,200	\$10,000
Model 1 Classis 2	3P2T	\$9,901			
Model 2 Classis	3P1A1T	\$16,920	\$16,920	\$800	\$16,100
1 Classis	6P2A2T	\$14,580	\$14,580	\$800	\$13,800

Synod and classes costs are estimated to be:

Synod costs per session		Cost per annum based on 3 yearly synods		
Perth/Albany synod	\$20,000	Classis Model 1	Classis Model 2	1 Classis
Tasmania synod	\$30,000			
Average synod		\$7,600	\$7,600	\$7,600
Classis model 1		\$10,000	0	0
Classis model 2		0	\$16,100	0
1 Classis		0	0	\$13,800
Dep Contact Other Churches		\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Church visitation and pulpit exchange		\$2,200	\$2,200	\$2,200
Other deputies		\$300	\$300	\$300
Total cost per annum		\$28,100.00	\$34,200.00	\$31,900.00
Cost per confessing member per annum based on 1500 members.		\$19	\$23	\$21

Some suggested travel rules:

1. Church visitation and pulpit exchange visits should be arranged to coincide with classis meetings to minimize travel costs.
2. Travel Perth/Tasmania should be planned and booked well in advance to make maximum use of discount fares. Fares can vary considerably, e.g. a 14 day advance purchase fare travelling at night after 7pm is

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\$589. A 21 day advance purchase fare \$689 and a 14 day advance purchase fare \$789.

3. Delegates/deputies should have the freedom to avoid the "midnight horror" flight if they so desire.
4. Single travellers from Albany to Perth may opt to fly if necessary, however, when two can (need to) travel together, car travel should be chosen, as it is less costly to travel together in one car.
5. Although these budgets are based on one car per church travelling between Perth and Albany, there will be situations where two churches could travel in one car, allowing for further reductions in costs.

Appendix 15

Deputies for Civil Registration

**Free Reformed Churches of Australia -
Marriage Celebrant Secretariat
PO BOX 593 Armadale WA 6992**

Synod 2000
C/o Free Reformed Church of West Albany
PO Box 5029
ALBANY WA 6332

13 March 2000

Esteemed Brothers

Herewith is the report of Deputies for Civil Registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

22nd September 1999 the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, William Deane, declared the Free Reformed Church of Australia (sic) to be a recognised denomination for the purposes of the Marriage Act 1961.

Hence, with the above mentioned declaration, The Lord has allowed deputies to fulfil their mandate: thus far.

25 January 2000 Reverend J. Poppe, as corresponding clerk of the 1998 Synod, informed the Attorney General's Department that Mr Spike Fokkema and Mr Stephen Herbert have been appointed as Nominating Authorities. These Nominating Authorities sign nominating forms on behalf of the FRCA and take responsibility for the administration of the responsibilities required by the Marriage Act 1961.

The Attorney-General's Department has advised that ministers of our churches already registered as celebrants should also be nominated to the department. Presently, our ministers are registered with the Attorney-General's department. The West Australian Registrar General's department has these ministers recorded as 'belonging' to the Attorney-General (with an "A" number) rather than belonging to a denomination (with a "W" number). The WA Registrar General has been contacted and the procedure to register our ministers appears straightforward.

Appendix 15 Civil Registration

01 March 2000, letters were sent by Deputies to serving ministers. The letters outlined the procedures for registration and enclosed the relevant proforma. The WA Registrar-General had been contacted and the wording of the letters was advised to be appropriate. These forms are to be returned to the deputies for forwarding to the WA Registrar- General.

Several Ministers advised deputies that they have occasional need to perform marriages in Tasmania. These Ministers expressed concern that by relinquishing their "A" numbers they may not be able to continue to perform interstate marriages. Delegates contacted the WA Registrar General on this matter and were advised that a state registration allows the celebrant to perform marriages in all states and territories. Thus, a "V" celebrant may perform occasional marriages in Tasmania. However, a celebrant changing residence to Tasmania would need to obtain a "T" number.

The WA Registrar-General advised that they had registrations for Reverend Hur and Reverend van Rongen. The Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott may, if it deems it

appropriate to do so, inform the WA Registrar-General that Reverend Hur no longer performs marriages within the bond of churches. Deputies contacted Reverend van Rongen who advised that he has performed his last marriage-deputies advised the WA Registrar-General of this on his behalf.

Deputies propose to send the relevant pro-forma and instructions to Reverend Kroeze in March 2000.

Recommendations.

1. The deputies' report be received.
2. Synod discharge the present deputies,
3. Synod appoint new deputies, officially designated "Nominating Authorities", to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961.

Your deputies commend the report to Synod and pray for the Lord' s guidance in your work.

S. Herbert

S.C. Fokkema

Enclosed.

Marriage (Recognised Denominations) Proclamation 1999.

Letter from Rev J. Poppe, Second Clerk 1998 Synod, to Attorney-General's Department 25 January 2000.

Letter from Legal Aid and Family Services dated 22 November 1999.

LEGAL AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

November 22, 1999

S Fokkema
Free Reformed Church of Australia

RECOGNISED DENOMINATIONS FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

I am pleased to inform you that the Free Reformed Church of Australia was proclaimed by the Governor-General in Council as a recognised denomination on 22 September 1999 (See attached proclamation).

2. This proclamation enables the church to nominate ministers of religion directly to the state and territory registries for authorisation as marriage celebrants to serve the congregations. It will be necessary for the church to appoint a person as nominating authority to sign the nominating forms on behalf of the church and to take responsibility for the administration of the process.

3. Nominating authorities can be appointed for the whole of Australia or for a limited responsibility like a state or a diocese. They are expected to take responsibility for ensuring that their celebrants are suitable and they must inform the registrar if they are no longer able to take responsibility for a celebrants they have nominated, e.g if a celebrant ceases to be a minister of their church.

4. When nominating clergy for authorisation as celebrants, the nominating authority must use the form (form 10/11) specified in the Regulations to the Marriage Act 1961. Supplies of this form are available from the Australian Government Publishing service phone (toll free) 132447 and have the catalogue number 95AG662. Nominations are made to the registrar of the state or territory in which the minister to be authorised resides.

As well as new celebrants, ministers of the church who have been authorised already as celebrants under section 39 (20 of the Act should be nominated to the registrar for appointment under section 29. Please let this Department know when these ministers have been authorised so that they can be removed from our list.

5. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Clem Dick Team Leader (Celebrants Unit)

Appendix 16

DEPUTIES FOR NEEDY CHURCHES

appointed by Synod West Albany, March 2000.

To Synod of
The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
at West Albany, in July 2000.

May 3, 2000

Esteemed brothers,

The Synod of our Churches held in March 2000 appointed the Church of Mount Nasura as Deputies for Needy Churches.

Article 12 of its *Acts* reads:

**Article 12
NEEDY CHURCHES**

The Church of Legana requests Synod to appoint deputies to deal with needy churches. Synod decides to appoint Legana's Classis church to function as deputies for needy churches, with the following mandate:

1. to assess the churches for the funds required by Legana, if such request is received;
2. to give account to next Synod;
3. to provide next Synod with a set of guidelines for future deputies.

Deputies are pleased to submit their report.

Because no request for financial help was received, points 1 and 2 of our mandate required no attention.

A set of Guidelines for future Deputies is attached.

With brotherly greetings,

for the Church of Mount Nasura:

J Eikelboom
(Acting Clerk)

GUIDELINES FOR DEPUTIES FOR NEEDY CHURCHES

OBJECTIVE

Synod shall appoint deputies to enable churches, who have requested financial support from their classis, (in order to be able to satisfactorily provide for their ministers) to do so in a responsible manner according to the following guidelines.

GUIDELINES

1.

The deputies shall consist of at least three members (convener, secretary, and treasurer) from at least two churches which are in close geographical proximity.

2.

2.1 The church(es) that have decided to apply for support as a Needy Church must do so yearly and send their request to the deputies in writing.

2.2 The deputies are to receive this request at least 13 weeks before the classis in which the Needy Church resides.

2.3 The Needy Church shall send a copy of her request to this classis. Churches who apply for assistance shall:

2.4.1 explain the reason for their request.

2.4.2 submit financial and statistical information as listed under item 3.

2.4.3 specify the amount of support needed.

3.

Having received a request from a Needy Church the deputies shall ensure that they obtain the following information:

3.1 the budget for the new financial year.

3.2 the financial statement of the previous year (together with the explanatory notes if applicable).

3.3 a list of all assets and liabilities of the church, including details of the changes that have been made in the past year (included under all assets and liabilities are also all reserves and funds. e.g. building fund, organ fund, repair and maintenance fund, etc).

3.4 a financial statement of the deacons.

3.5 a statement of collections for other purposes.

3.6 the number of contributing units (defined as "members who have a regular income as family or a single member").

3.7 the average monthly contribution to the church by the contributing units.

Appendix 16 Deputies Needy Churches

- 3.8 the number of contributing units that support Christian education (John Calvin Schools).
- 3.9 the average monthly contribution that these contributing units pay towards this Christian education.
- 3.10 the total number of confessing members at the time of making the request.

The deputies shall inquire conscientiously into the financial capacity of the Needy Church as well as into her past expenses to determine that church's need, and shall pay attention to:

4.

- 4.1 the objective. i.e. the support needed to be able to provide satisfactorily for all the needs of the minister.
- 4.2 the church contribution rate per confessing member (including fixed voluntary contribution, school contribution and all collections). These contributions are to be compared with those of other churches.
- 4.3 the stipend of the minister including all other allowances. e.g. motor vehicle expenses, book allowance, insurance, housing etc.
- 4.4 previous budgets.
- 4.5 budgets 'of other churches to ensure that:
 - 4.5.1 there are no abnormal entries such as one-off large gifts or extraordinary expenses.
 - 4.5.2 the church presents a normal budget that is neither too prudent nor extravagant.
 - 4.5.3 the minister's total remuneration package is reasonable.
 - 4.5.4 the refinancing of existing loans has been considered
 - 4.5.5 the church has no unnecessary disposable assets.

5.

The deputies may, if necessary, invite the consistory of the Needy Church for a discussion to clarify some of the information received.

6.

The deputies shall also request information as per item 3 from all the churches and construct an equability formula based on this information, which is to be used for assessing the needs of the church that applied for assistance.

7.

The deputies shall serve the first upcoming classis, in which the Needy Church resides with advice, submitting all necessary information. This information shall be passed on to the convening church four weeks prior to the convening of classis.

Appendix 16 Deputies Needy Churches

8.

The deputies shall execute the decision of classis by requesting all the Australian churches to render their part of the assessed amount on a quarterly basis.

9.

The deputies shall submit a written report annually to the classis or three yearly, to synod under which the Needy Church resides.

10.

The classis of the Needy Church shall appoint auditors to check the books of the deputies annually. Auditors shall submit a written report to the classis / synod.

12.

GENERAL RULES

12.1 All churches shall be levied an equivalent amount per confessing member.

12.2 When a church with a minister becomes a Needy Church through unforeseen circumstances (i.e. by losing members, impoverishment of the congregation, combination of problems, etc) there may be certain expenses that can not be reduced. The deputies may then have to advise according to the circumstances, as they think fit.

12.3 When a church which is vacant intends to call a minister and can anticipate that she will become a Needy Church, either immediately or within two years because of a budget deficit, then this church should, before she begins her calling work, consult with the deputies and give full information about the state of affairs by providing the financial statements as mentioned under item 3. The support shall be to a maximum of 25% of the cost associated with the provision for a minister. (By "cost associated with the provision for a minister" is meant stipend, holiday loading and all other allowances. i.e. motor vehicle expenses, book allowance, telephone allowance, housing etc.)

12.4 When a church as indicated under 12.3 is still not able to balance her books, she may try to combine with another church.

12.5 Changes to these Guidelines can be made on request of the Churches or whenever a classis / synod deems this necessary for maintaining good order, but these proposed changes must first be presented to all the Churches at least six weeks before the next classis / synod.

Appendix 17

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY**

c/o 55 Rushton Terrace
Mt Nasura WA 6112

The Secretary
Free Reformed Church of West Albany

Esteemed Brothers,

BUDGET FOR SYNOD 2000 (As amended by Synod 2000).

In accordance with Synod Treasurer rules, I forward a 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 three year period. I have also included figures for classes operation based on the report submitted to Synod by deputies so that Synod can assess overall costs. Actual costs submitted in this budget for classes are slightly higher than in the classes report because I have allowed for GST and some increase in costs. Should Synod make a decision as recommended in the report that a separate treasury be set up for classes, these budget figures will have to altered accordingly. However, if Synod decides that the costs of classes be shared over all the Churches, then it will be much simpler to have one treasury for all. If each classis has its own treasury, naturally, two more treasuries (one for each classis) will have to be set up.

Of interest is that the total cost for Synod 1994 was \$30,476 and for 1996 it was \$30,390 and Synod 1998 (2 meetings) \$43,000). This Synod is expected to cost in the order of \$30,000.

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 the 2000 year book statistics and these will be adjusted each year to reflect that particular year's statistics before the annual accounts are sent out. Accounts to the Churches are spread evenly over the Synod period (assumed 3 years) and will be forwarded to the Churches in the second half of each year.

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 change to 1998 increased only 0.8% and Synod agreed that the loss of income reimbursement remained at \$130 per day. CPI for wages generally has now increased 5% since March 1996, so a new rate of \$140 per day is proposed. If Synod considers the reimbursement too high or inadequate, Synod will need to advise the Synod Treasurer of any changes. Synod and delegates should note that the reimbursement is not an automatic reimbursement. Synod will reimburse delegates for loss of income up to \$140 (or whatever is adopted by Synod 2000) per day maximum. Claims should be lodged in writing to the Synod Treasurer, countersigned by another synod delegate. If a delegate's loss of income exceeds this amount he can claim the extra from his own church. Delegates should also note that Synod is not an employer and payment is a reimbursement for loss of income, and as such Synod does not deduct tax. Taxation remains the responsibility of the applicant.

Reimbursement of travel costs between Albany and the Perth metropolitan area.

The CPI for transport dropped between 1996 and 1998 but now the overall increase since 1996 is 7.5%. All vehicle running costs will generally increase by about 10% with GST, therefore it is proposed that reimbursement of vehicle travel costs be increased from \$175 per trip to \$200 per trip. Fuel receipts for the trip should be submitted with claims, which will allow the Synod Treasurer to claim tax credits from the ATO. It is suggested claimants leave home with a full tank of fuel and fill up again on completing the trip to give a proper account of fuel actually used. Without proper GST receipts Synod Treasurer cannot pay claimants or seek tax credits from the ATO.

Other

- Other travel costs, where appropriate can be reimbursed at a pro-rata rate of \$0.25 per kilometre. I have made a nominal allowance for local travel costs.
- I have made no allowance for accommodation costs by delegates because the host church usually offers accommodation to delegates. Should delegates choose to make their own accommodation arrangements, I believe it is appropriate that they make arrangements with their own consistency to cover these costs.

Appendix 17 Synod Treasurer

- Tokens of appreciation have been given to host families in the past. Please give Synod Treasury some direction on this matter. For example, make delegate's Church responsible for payment of any gift given, or Synod Treasury pays for it. If Synod Treasury is going to be made responsible for it, it will have to be added to the draft budget and I would suggest it be capped at \$50.

GST

As advised by email to all the Churches, travel costs after 1 July 2000 will attract GST. This will include all local airfares. Fuel will also have GST charged, even though the total cost of fuel will not change much. I have registered the Synod Treasury with the ATO to be able to claim back GST components on costs incurred by Synod Treasury that have GST included.

We are all on a learning curve, so in the meantime, anyone who is arranging travel or expenditure which will occur after 30 June 2000 is to ensure that the account is a **TAX INVOICE** and in the name of **FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA SYNOD TREASURY or FRCA SYNOD TREASURER**, otherwise Synod Treasury cannot claim back the GST that will be charged. Please send invoices or accounts direct to Synod Treasury, countersigned and authorised by the person(s) incurring the expenditure, for payment by Synod Treasury. It will mean that travellers need to plan and book their trips a bit earlier to ensure payment is made on time. As I understand it, Synod Treasury cannot claim back GST on an invoice/statement that has a private name on it, or that has been paid by a private credit card or cheque. Without proper GST receipts Synod Treasurer cannot pay claimants or seek tax credits from the ATO.

Treasurer's operating funds:

Synod 1998 agreed to reserve \$35,000 as operating funds to cover the cost of the 2000 Synod. As noted in the Treasurer's report to Synod, with the higher receipts and lower expenditure, the Treasury balance is some \$23,000 higher than budgeted, that is, \$58,299.05. This budget now contains those reserves and the demand on the churches over the next two (three) years is subsequently reduced. I have reserved \$25,000 as operating funds in draft budget to cover operating and costs of Synod 2003.

Synod Acts

With due respect to the work done in preparing Synod Acts and maybe because I have a vested interest, I point out that the last two Synod Acts were not clear when printing Synod Treasury material. The 1996 Acts printed the Treasurer's report and "Synod Budget and Cost Sharing from Synod Treasurer" (underlining mine). Synod adjusts and adopts the budget so it should really become the budget adopted by Synod. The 1998 Acts did not publish the Synod Treasurer's report at all and only included the budget and full text of the cover letter in Appendix 15.

Claims for payment and reimbursement:

Unfortunately, some claims for payment are becoming rather informal and often I do not get a clear definition of what the expense is for. Therefore I have attached a pro-forma expense form for delegates to use to make things a bit simpler for everyone. This form can be modified if required.

Notes on the budget (as amended by Synod 2000):

Numbers refer to rows on budget spreadsheet

1. Estimate based on previous synods. An hourly rate between \$10 and \$15 is considered reasonable, depending on experience. Typist is considered a casual contractor so no tax is taken out or paid on typist's behalf.
2. nil
3. Estimate. Tables \$600 and microphones \$500.
4. Estimate. Photocopying \$1000. Costs for special Synod \$156.
5. Estimate. \$1200. Costs for special Synod \$186.
6. Estimate.
7. Estimate.
8. Estimate. Covers things like Synod photographs, venue heating, bus hire and other miscellaneous items.
9. Estimate. Based on information received \$5400. Estimate for Albany, Mt Nasura and Launceston \$5600.
10. Estimate. Airfares 4x\$850. Car travel 8x\$200.
11. Actual costs incurred for classis and special synod meetings since books closed.
12. Estimate. This only allows for Acts that are printed for Synod. The Churches are responsible to pay for Acts that are printed for the Churches. Last Synod treasurer paid all costs and the clerk arranged for the Churches to pay Synod Treasury for all Acts purchased by the Churches for members. This worked well, so I have budgeted for the full estimated cost with \$2500 under refunds. (see Draft Income and Cost sharing)
13. Estimated cost of printing reports.
19. Allow \$100 per annum.
20. Allow 2 trips per year. ie 6 x \$200 plus \$175 expenditure to date.
- 21-23 Allow \$2200 per person per trip to Indonesia.
25. Allow \$2000 per person per trip to NZ
26. Allow \$1600 per person per trip to eastern states.
27. Allow \$3,000 per person per trip to the Netherlands.
28. Allow \$2,000 per person per trip to the Philippines.
29. Relates to April 2000 trip.

Appendix 17 Synod Treasurer

- 30 Allow 10 days \$1400
- 31. Estimate based on previous synod period. \$200pa.
- 32 Estimate based on previous synod period. \$300pa
- 36. Allow \$50 per annum.
- 41. Rev Veldman trip – installation – Dr Zuiddam
- 45. Allow \$50 per annum.
- 47. Allow \$50 per annum plus \$2900 for new cabinet.
- 49,50. Start-up costs for Classes.
- 52. Total estimated budget.
- 54. 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.
- 56. Total Budget.

NOTE: Considerable savings can be achieved with airfares if they are booked and paid for in advance.

Notes on the income (as amended by Synod 2000):

Numbers refer to rows on income spreadsheet

- 3 –12 Income to be invoiced against the Churches over a three year period. Actual amounts will vary with actual membership numbers being applied to 2001 and 2002.
- 14. For general information only.
- 17. Estimate \$2500 from Acts sales.
- 18. Estimate.
- 19. Balance of Treasury funds when books were closed 28 February 2000.
- 21. Funds available from other than that invoiced to Churches.
- 23. Total funds required (to match budget)

I will be away during Synod from 1 to 12 July 2000, so if you need any assistance you can leave a message at my home (Tel 9399 3305) with a number and contact time, and my wife will pass the message on to me. I will try to ring you back.

I have emailed this report to John Plug in Word 95 and 2000 and Excel 95 and 2000. The two Budget sheets are in one workbook and are linked so if the budget is changed, the cost sharing is also changed automatically.

May God bless your work of Synod.

With Christian greetings.

A. Hordyk
Synod Treasurer
26 June 2000

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
 SYNOD TREASURY
 COST SHARING FOR 2000/2003**

CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FROM THE CHURCHES						
Item		COMMUN'T	%	2000	2001	2002
		MBRS 2000		SHARE	SHARE	SHARE
3	FRC ALBANY	235	13.86	\$2,361.36	\$2,361.36	\$2,361.36
4	FRC ARMADALE	277	16.33	\$2,783.39	\$2,783.39	\$2,783.39
5	FRC BYFORD	200	11.79	\$2,009.67	\$2,009.67	\$2,009.67
6	FRC KELMSCOTT	170	10.02	\$1,708.22	\$1,708.22	\$1,708.22
7	FRC LAUNCESTON	99	5.84	\$994.79	\$994.79	\$994.79
8	FRC LEGANA	75	4.42	\$753.63	\$753.63	\$753.63
9	FRC MT NASURA	181	10.67	\$1,818.75	\$1,818.75	\$1,818.75
10	FRC ROCKINGHAM	141	8.31	\$1,416.82	\$1,416.82	\$1,416.82
11	FRC WEST ALBANY	147	8.67	\$1,477.11	\$1,477.11	\$1,477.11
12	FRC WEST KELMSCOTT	171	10.08	\$1,718.27	\$1,718.27	\$1,718.27
13	TOTALS	1696	100	\$17,041.98	\$17,041.98	\$17,041.98
14	Cost per confessing member per annum			\$10.05	\$10.05	\$10.05
15						
16	OTHER INCOME					
17	REFUNDS			\$2,500.00		
18	INTEREST			\$1,000.00		
19	TREASURY BALANCE AT 28 February 2000			\$58,299.05		
20						
21	SUB-TOTAL OTHER INCOME			\$61,799.05		\$61,799.05
22						

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
 SYNOD TREASURY
 BUDGET FOR 2000/2003**

ITEM	EXPENDITURE	ACTUAL 1998/2000		BUDGET 2000/2003	
	SYNOD COSTS				
1	TYPIST	\$1,034.00		\$1,200.00	
2	PHOTOCOPIER HIRE	\$238.87		\$0.00	
3	FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT HIRE	\$230.70		\$1,100.00	
4	STATIONERY AND CONSUMABLES	\$265.50		\$1,200.00	
5	CATERING	\$2,027.25		\$1,400.00	
6	POSTAGE AND TELEPHONE	\$225.25		\$500.00	
7	PRESENTATIONS	\$712.80		\$250.00	
8	MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE	\$743.72		\$800.00	
9	LOSS OF INCOME DELEGATES SYNOD 2000	\$11,018.68		\$11,000.00	
10	TRAVEL COSTS TO SYNOD 2000	\$22,139.00		\$5,000.00	
11	TRAVEL COSTS (REIMBURSEMENT - Classis Fund)			\$5,000.00	
12	PRINTING ACTS OF SYNOD 2000	\$3,114.30		\$4,000.00	
13	PRINTING REPORTS TO SYNOD 2000	\$1,234.20		\$1,000.00	
14			\$42,984.27		\$32,450.00
15					
16	DEPUTIES BOOK OF PRAISE RESEARCH			\$200.00	\$200.00
17					
18	DEPUTIES CONTACT OTHER CHURCHES				
19	BOOKS ETC	\$0.00		\$300.00	
20	TRAVEL COSTS PERTH / ALBANY	\$115.00		\$1,400.00	
21	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2001	\$2,925.00		\$4,400.00	
22	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2002			\$2,200.00	
23	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2003			\$2,200.00	
24	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS (CANADA MAY 1998)	\$2,871.20			

25	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS NZ 2001	\$2,374.60		\$4,000.00	
26	TRAVEL COSTS PCEA	\$2,816.80		\$3,200.00	
27	REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS			\$6,000.00	
28	TRAVEL COSTS (PHILLIPINES)	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	
29	TRAVEL COSTS (SOUTH AFRICA)			\$1,766.00	
30	LOSS OF INCOME - DEPUTIES OVERSEAS	\$0.00		\$1,400.00	
31	UNA SANCTA SUBSCRIPTIONS	\$350.00		\$600.00	
32	INCIDENTALS (postage, telephone, typing, printing etc)	\$520.91		\$900.00	
33			\$13,973.51		\$30,366.00
34					
35	DEPUTIES TRAINING MINISTRY				
36	INCIDENTALS	\$13.35		\$150.00	
37	Prof Dr Van Dam visit	\$4,164.58			
38	Research future College			\$400.00	
39			\$4,177.93		\$550.00
40	CHURCH VISITS & PULPIT EXCHANGE				
41	TASMANIA	\$8,533.80		\$1,259.00	
42	ALBANY/METRO 2 visits pa	\$406.00			
43			\$8,939.80		\$1,259.00
44	TREASURY ADMINISTRATION COSTS				
45		\$47.25	\$47.25	\$150.00	\$150.00
46	SYNOD ARCHIVES				
47	INCIDENTALS (New Cabinet)	\$143.50	\$143.50	\$2,950.00	\$2,950.00
48					
49	Classis Costs - North			\$15,000.00	
50	Classis Costs - South			\$5,000.00	\$20,000.00
51					
52	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$70,266.26		\$87,925.00
53					
54	TREASURY OPERATING FUNDS				
55	(Includes funds required for 2003 Synod)		\$58,299.05		\$25,000.00
56	TOTAL BUDGET		\$128,565.31		\$112,925.00

**Acts of the Extraordinary Synod
of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
held March 1 and 2, 2000 at Albany, West Australia**

**Article 1
OPENING**

On behalf of the convening Church of West Albany, Reverend J Poppe opens this Synod at 7.30 pm in the Albany church building. He asks the brothers to sing Psalm 147:4 and 6, reads from Scripture 2 Peter 1, and leads in prayer. He then welcomes all present. In mentioning that this Synod is to conduct the peremptory examination of candidate Dr BA Zuiddam who was called by the Church of Launceston, he extends a special welcome to the brother, wishing him the necessary strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

**Article 2
EXAMINATION OF CREDENTIALS**

The delegates from the churches sign the attendance register.
The delegates from the Church of Albany examine the credentials and report to have found them in good order.

The churches have sent the following delegates:

Albany	Reverend A Veldman	Elder A A 'tHart
Armadale	Reverend W Huizinga	Elder W Geurts
Byford	Reverend W Vander Jagt	Elder J De Vos
Kelmscott	Reverend C Bouwman	Elder A Kleyn
Launceston	Elder H Heys	Elder F Postmus
Legana	Reverend J Kroeze	
Mount Nasura	Reverend PKA De Boer	Elder J Eikelboom
Rockingham	Reverend A Van Delden	Elder J Plug
West Albany	Reverend J Poppe	Elder A Mulder
West Kelmscott	Elder H Hordyk	Elder D Pot

**Article 3
ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The following officers are elected:

Chairman:	Reverend A Veldman
Vice-chairman:	Reverend J Poppe
First Clerk:	Reverend A Van Delden
Second Clerk:	Elder J Eikelboom

Article 4

CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD

The chairman declares Synod duly constituted.

He asks the delegates and brother Zuiddam to rise in order to show their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All rise.

Article 5

AGENDA

The agenda is adopted as presented.

1. Opening by the Convening church
2. Signing of attendance register and examination of credentials
3. Election of Officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of Agenda
7. Peremptory examination of Candidate BA Zuiddam
8. Incoming Correspondence
9. The Church of Kelmscott regarding the situation of church members at Exmouth
10. The Church of Legana regarding needy churches
11. The Church of Armadale regarding an appeal
12. Questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order
13. Personal Questions
14. Adoption of Acts
15. Adoption of Press Release
16. Censure according to Article 47 of the Church Order
17. Closing

Article 6

PEREMPTORY EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATE B A ZUIDDAM

As first part of this examination, candidate Zuiddam delivers his sermon proposal on Exodus 17:8-16. Synod evaluates the sermon proposal in closed session, and decides that it is not sufficient to allow the brother to be ordained as minister of the Word. On practical considerations Synod is prepared to continue with the remainder of the examination if our brother can handle it.

Article 7

ADJOURNMENT

After announcing the results of Synod's evaluation of the sermon proposal, the chairman asks Synod to sing Hymn 48:1, 3 and 4. He then leads in thanksgiving prayer, and adjourns Synod to 9am on Thursday 2 March.

Article 8

PEREMPTORY EXAMINATION – PART 2

Upon re-opening of Synod, the examination of candidate BA Zuiddam is continued, as follows:

1. Exegesis Old Testament on Isaiah 2 and Malachi 4 - examiner: Reverend PKA De Boer – 20 minutes + 5 minutes for delegates' questions;
2. Exegesis New Testament on Luke 1 and 22 - examiner: Reverend W Huizinga - 20 + 5 minutes;
3. Knowledge of Scripture - examiner: Reverend J Poppe - 15 + 5 minutes;
4. Doctrine and Creeds - examiner: Reverend W Vander Jagt - 30 + 10 minutes;
5. Church History - examiner: Reverend A Veldman - 15 +5 minutes;
6. Church Polity - examiner: Reverend C Bouwman - 15 +5 minutes;
7. Diaconology - examiner: Reverend A Veldman - 15 + 5 minutes;
8. Ethics - examiner: Reverend A van Delden - 15 +5 minutes.

Article 9

EVALUATION OF PART 2 OF THE EXAMINATION

In closed session Synod decides that the results of this part of the examination are satisfactory.

Article 10

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLETION OF THE EXAMINATION

Synod rules out the possibility of candidate Zuiddam immediately presenting a second sermon proposal for evaluation. Instead he will be given the opportunity to do so at the July 2000 Synod.

Synod extends by a period of six months candidate Zuiddam's permission to speak an edifying word (originally granted to him by the sister churches in The Netherlands). This permission is subject to the conditions set out in Article 27 of the 1996 *Acts of Synod*.

Article 11

APPEAL SUBMISSION BY THE CHURCH OF ARMADALE.

In mid-January 2000, the Church of Armadale received an appeal in its capacity as Second Appeal Church. Because the Second Appeal Church does not function when an appeal is made within two months prior to a Synod (Article 31 of the Church Order), the Church of Armadale found that it could not deal with the matter.

Although the item is therefore admissible, practical considerations prevent this Synod from dealing with it. Not only was this extraordinary Synod convened for 280

Appendix 18 Acts of Extraordinary Synod

the specific purpose of examining candidate Zuiddam, the appeal was received just prior to Synod's opening so that the delegates had no opportunity to prepare for it, and neither had the delegates made allowance for extending the duration of this extraordinary Synod.

Article 12

NEEDY CHURCHES

The Church of Legana requests Synod to appoint deputies to deal with needy churches. Synod decides to appoint Legana's Classis church to function as deputies for needy churches, with the following mandate:

1. to assess the churches for the funds required by Legana, if such request is received;
2. to give account to next Synod;
3. to provide next Synod with a set of guidelines for future deputies.

Article 13

MINISTERS' VISITS TO TASMANIA

The Church of Legana requests Synod to provide for at least two or three visits to the Tasmanian churches by ministers from West Australia rather than the original one visit.

Synod grants this request.

Article 14

EXAMINATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL DOCUMENTS

The following documents relating to the call of candidate BA Zuiddam are tabled, and found in good order:

1. The letter of call.
2. The letter of acceptance of the call.
3. A Certificate from Classis Harderwijk, confirming that brother BA Zuiddam passed his preparatory examination and is eligible for call in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.
4. An attestation from the Church of Ermelo, confirming that brother BA Zuiddam is sound in doctrine and in life.
5. A Certificate from the Church of Launceston, confirming that the required announcements were made to the congregation.

Article 15

QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 41 OF THE CHURCH ORDER

The chairman asks each Church in turn whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are

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being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of Synod for the proper government of their church.

All the churches respond to the first two questions in the affirmative.

All the churches, with the exception of the Church of Kelmscott, respond to the third question in the negative. In a letter to Synod, the Church of Kelmscott request a discussion concerning some members of their congregation living in Exmouth. Having heard the discussion, Synod encourages the Church of Kelmscott to work with the remarks made.

Article 16

ADOPTION OF ACTS AND APPROVAL OF PRESS RELEASE

Synod decides to leave the approval of the *Acts* and Press Release to the officers of Synod. The *Acts* will be distributed to the churches as soon as feasible, and will also be incorporated into the printing of the *Acts* of the Synod scheduled for July of this year.

Article 17

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

There are no personal questions.

Article 18

CENSURE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 47 OF THE CHURCH ORDER AND CLOSING

The chairman observes that brotherly censure is not needed.

He requests Synod to sing Hymn 46:2. The vice-chairman leads in thanksgiving prayer.

The chairman then closes Synod.