

DEPUTIES REPORTS

(as mandated by Synod Bunbury 2018)

to the

2021 Synod

of the

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

to be held at

Albany, Western Australia

June 2021

Contents

General Secretary's Report.....	2
Deputies FRCA Website	3
Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations - outside Australia.....	13
The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated).....	25
The DGK and GKN	28
Free Reformed Churches of South Africa	32
Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea.....	36
First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)	41
Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).....	47
United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)	59
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	69
Reformed Churches of New Zealand	92
Report of deputies for the Indonesian Churches	101
I. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI).....	101
II. The Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC)	110
III. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)	114
IV. GGRI – Theological Training	116
Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise	121
Deputies – Training for the Ministry	127
Committee for Contact with the EPC and SPC.....	186
Deputies Art. 48 C.O.	220
Deputies for Church Order Article 66: Days of Prayer	222
Indexing Synod Decisions – Deputies' Report to FRCA Synod 2021	223
Deputies – Synod Archives – Reports to Synod Albany 2021	224
Report on Archives and Library of Synod.....	225
Nominating Authorities - <i>Marriage Act 1961</i>	236
Synod Financial Audit	238
Inspection of Synod Archives	239

General Secretary's Report

Activities

5 A number of correspondence items were received and forwarded on to the churches for their attention. Once again email has been the exclusive means for receiving any correspondence.

10 The Deputies Reports were nearly all received on time for this Synod. Sr K. van Duyn has once again been found willing to typeset the reports. After discussion with several brothers, it was decided to produce the reports in A4 size. This makes typesetting and binding easier (last Synod the reports were printed in two volumes) and will hopefully improve readability and hence usefulness. Several copies of the bound volume of the reports will be made available to the Free Reformed book shops. An electronic copy in PDF format will also be made available on the website.

Recommendations

15 Synod Albany discharges the current deputy and reappoints a new deputy with a renewed mandate:

- a. to distribute any pertinent mail to the deputies, and acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary, pass it on to the churches
 - b. to collate all Deputies reports (apart from that of the Treasurer) and have them printed in an appropriate format. Deputies reports are to be submitted, six months prior to the next synod, so that they can be printed and distributed to the churches as per the Rules of Synod.
- 20

J den Boer

Deputies FRCA Website

Thomas Brown
Bronya Mulder
Len Vermeulen
5 Gerrit van Burgel

10 December 2020

Report to General Synod Albany
C/- Free Reformed Church of Albany
PO Box 825
10 ALBANY WA 6331
bryantdv@aapt.net.au

CC: General Secretary Deputies jack.denboer@frsa.asn.au

Dear Brothers,

15 Synod Bunbury in Article 35, mandated *Deputies – Website Committee* (WebCom) with the following mandate:

1. Maintain the existing content on the FRCA website and the associated technical functions.
2. Update the look and functionality of the FRCA website, and to make it mobile friendly.
3. Invite the churches to send news items and press releases to the website committee for
20 inclusion on the FRCA website.
4. Allocate a \$2,000 interim budget.
5. Serve Synod 2021 with a report of their activities, a financial statement, a proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding additional content or functionality.

25 WebCom have met a number of times, kept in contact via email and also interacted via Microsoft Teams. Before our first meeting we received the resignation of br. Martin Pot and thankfully the alternate, br. Thomas Brown, was found willing to take his place as convenor. Br Pot indicated he was willing to maintain the existing technical functions and at the first WebCom meeting it was approved he continue in that role.

30 WebCom's primary task was updating the look and functionality of the current FRCA website. It was decided to setup a staging site (<https://frcastaging.frca.org.au/>) which would be hosted alongside the current site. This way the current website could be maintained while the new look and functionality could be piloted. After investigation of alternative designs, including discussions with a brother involved in the Canadian website redesign (<https://canrc.org>), and due to our budget limitations, it was decided we would not pursue a custom application but
35 instead we would use a free open-source Content Management System (CMS). We chose WordPress as the CMS due to its widespread use and ability to be customised for general website use. It was also a platform that our chief website designer, sr. Bronya Mulder, is familiar with.

Once the basic structure of the new website was decided (see Appendix A), the look and feel agreed upon (see Appendix B), the new site created (see Appendix C) and the majority of the content moved from the existing site, we invited the churches to give feedback. The questions that were sent to the secretaries of the consistories of each church in the federation were as follows:

5

1. Are your church details correct?
2. Are your ministers details correct?
3. Do you think it is appropriate to put your minister's history of service?
4. Are you happy with your church picture on the website? If not, please reply to this email and attach a picture which is suitable (this can be done at a later stage)
5. Does this website look good on your mobile phone?
6. Are you happy with the content? is there anything missing? Is there anything that you could not find? (Please note that is a draft website and we are still in the process of putting on all the historical acts and synod act indexing)

10

15 The feedback WebCom received was mostly positive. It was collated, discussed and will be incorporated into the website where applicable and/or feasible.

Financials

The financial statement showing costs since the last synod is below:

Website hosting for frca.org.au	\$600
Domain name registration for frca.org.au	\$64
WordPress themes and plugins updates	\$106
	\$770

The proposed budget for 2021-2024 is:

Website hosting for frca.org.au	\$600
Domain name registration for frca.org.au	\$100
WordPress themes and plugins updates	\$500
	\$1200

Recommendations

WebCom respectfully recommend the following:

1. That the budget of \$1200 be approved for the period 2021-2024.
- 5 2. Because a significant part of our mandate involves the regular maintenance of the website and associated technical functions, WebCom recommend a specific website administrator (who also forms a part of the committee) be appointed for a three-year term to manage the technical aspects of the running of the FRCA site, including WordPress and theme updates. WebCom recommend br. Winston 't Hart for this role.
- 10 3. The content of the FRCA site should also be revised and updated as necessary, including posting news items from the churches (calls, worship service changes, special events etc), documents, reports and announcements, or when out-of-date information is noticed and upon the request of churches or individuals. Therefore, WebCom recommend a specific press user (who also forms a part of the committee) be appointed for a three-year term to regularly update the news feed and other information as required. At this stage WebCom have nobody specific to recommend for this role.
- 15 4. WebCom recommend setting up an email address specifically for news and content updates which can then be included in the church year book.
- 20 5. WebCom recommend that Synod accept and approve the staging site (<https://frcastaging.frca.org.au/>) and approve that it replace and relocate to the current site (<https://www.frca.org.au/>)
- 25 6. WebCom recommend that the new mandate includes an investigation into Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) for the new site in order to increase visibility on search engine pages. SEO is important to search engine rankings and will serve to promote the churches in the local and wider community.
7. WebCom recommend that the new mandate includes an investigation into the options around improvements to email hosting.
8. WebCom recommend that the new mandate includes scope for an investigation into possible social media integration.

Therefore, WebCom recommends that Synod give the committee the following mandate:

- 30 1. Maintain the existing content on the FRCA website and the associated technical functions.
2. Invite the churches to send news items and press releases to the website committee for inclusion on the FRCA website.
3. Investigate and implement improved Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- 35 4. Investigate options around improvements to email hosting
5. Investigate the possibility of Social Media Integration
6. Allocate a \$1200 interim budget.

7. Serve Synod 2024 with a report of their activities, a financial statement, a proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding additional content or functionality.

Wishing you wisdom in your preparations for the coming synod.

With brotherly greetings

5



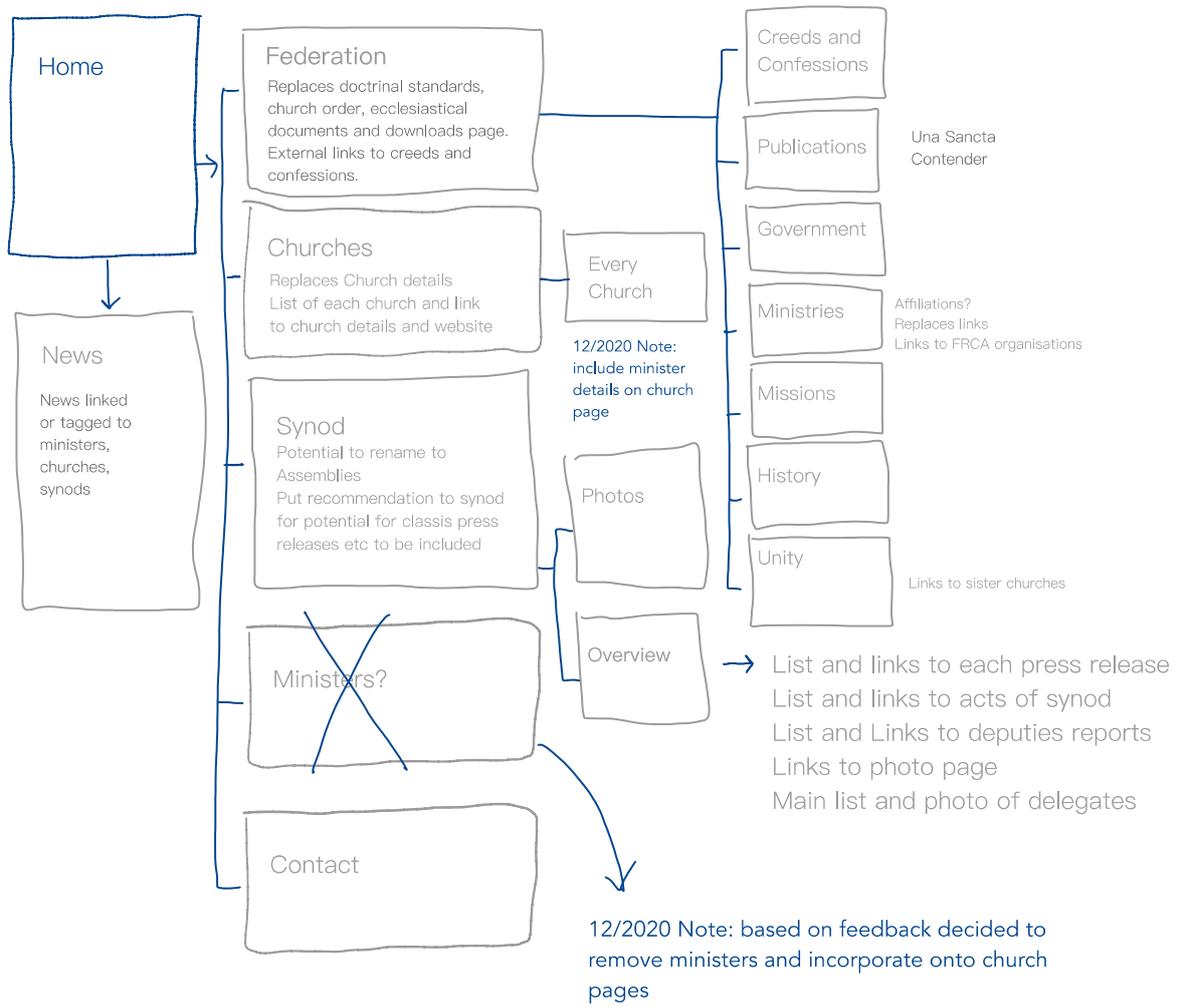
Thomas Brown
Convenor

10



Gerrit van Burgel
Secretary

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B



Primary Logo



Graphics



Fonts

Free Reformed Churches
of Australia

Aaux Next - Medium

Website Info

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia are a federation of 17 congregations located predominantly in Western Australia, with two in Tasmania and a home congregation in Cairns.

Quicksand

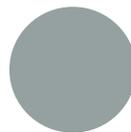
Colours



#31345B
R49 G52 B91



#5C9AAD
R92 G154 B173



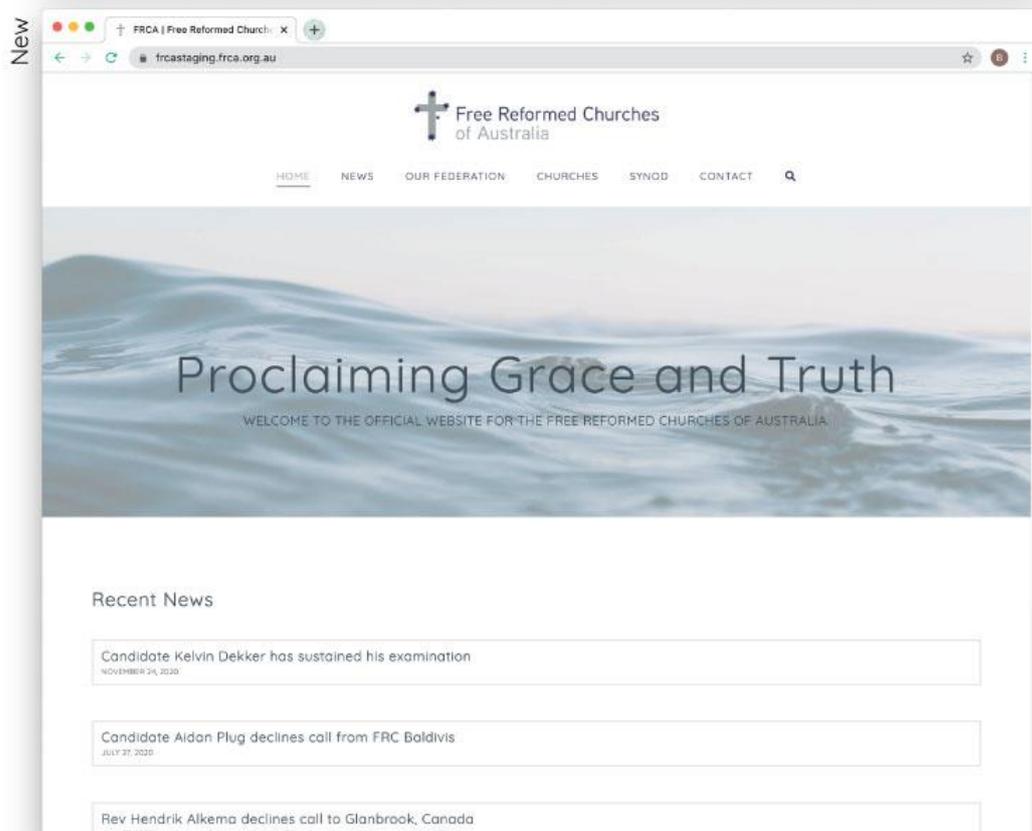
#9AA4A5
R154 G164 B165



#CCCCCC
R204 G204 B204

APPENDIX C

SCREENSHOTS



SCREENSHOTS

Old

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Church Details

The table below contains a list of all the churches in the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, including the location of their worship services, times of the worship services, and the minister.

Refer to the websites of the individual churches (links included below) for more details.

Church Name	Services Location	Institution Date	Website	Service Times	Minister	Live Stream
Albany	cnr North Road & Seafort Road Yakemie, Albany, WA	14 Dec 1952	link	9:30am 4:00pm	Rev H Aikema	youtube channel
Armadale	88 Fifth Road Armadale, WA	24 Jun 1951	link	9:30am 4:00pm	vacant	youtube channel
Baldvis	cnr Durridge Road & Mandurah Road Baldvis, WA	1 Jul 2007	link	9:30am 3:30pm	vacant	youtube livestream youtube channel
Bunbury	16-18 Lower Street Carey Park, WA	25 Nov 2001	link	10:00am 4:00pm	Rev R Pot	
Busselton	Seventh Day Adventist Hall Pettit Close, Busselton, WA	27 Mar 2011	link	9:30am 2:30pm	Rev A Hagg	youtube channel
Byford	cnr Poad Street & Soldiers Road Byford, WA	27 Jan 1985	link	9:30am 3:30pm	Rev R Eitelboom	youtube channel
Calans (home congregation)	Marin Coast Centre 2 Reed Road Smythfield, Cairns, Queensland	n/a	link	10:00am 1:00pm	Rev JGR Krseze	youtube livestream youtube channel
Darling Downs	cnr Rowley Road & Masters Road Darling Downs, WA	6 Jul 2003	link	9:30am 3:30pm	Rev C Varmoulen	youtube livestream youtube channel
Kelmscott	318 Lake Road Champion Lakes, WA	1 Jan 1981	link	9:30am 3:30pm	Rev A Souman	youtube channel
Launceston	53 Howick Street Launceston, Tasmania	15 Feb 1953	link	9:30am 3:30pm	Rev W Brodenhof	youtube channel
Legana	Outbreak Drive Legana, Tasmania	4 Dec 1988	link	9:30am 3:30pm	vacant	
Melville	Mt Pleasant Bowling Club 40 Bedford Road, Ardress	2 Feb 2014	link	9:30am 3:00pm	Rev S 't Hart	youtube channel
Mount Neasons	14-16 Parker Avenue Mount Neasons, WA	1 Dec 1987	link	9:30am 4:00pm	Rev R Brodenhof	youtube channel
Mundijong	191 Wright Rd	6 Dec 2009	link	9:30am	Rev A Pot	youtube channel

New

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

HOME NEWS OUR FEDERATION **CHURCHES** SYNOD CONTACT

Churches

Classis North



KELMSCOTT



LAUNCESTON



LEGANA



KELMSCOTT



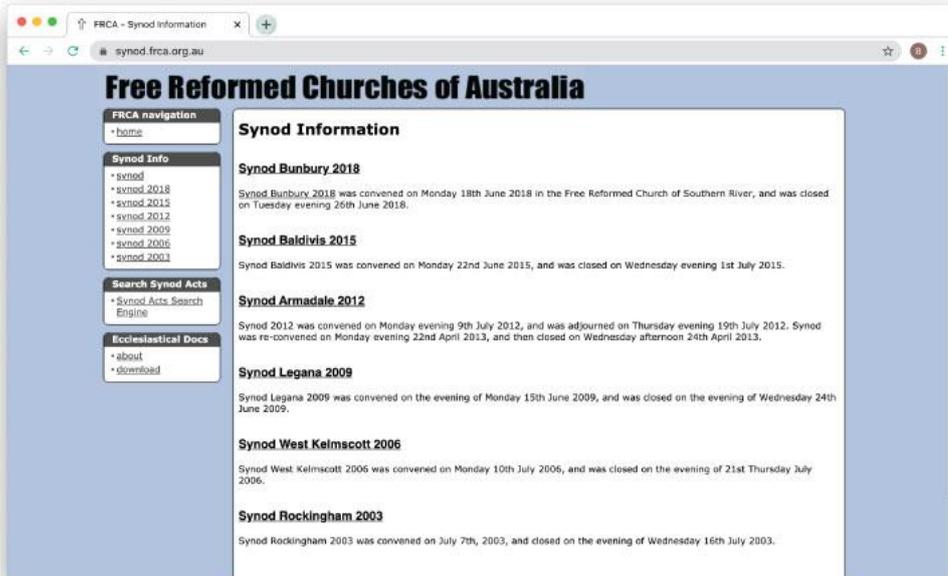
LAUNCESTON



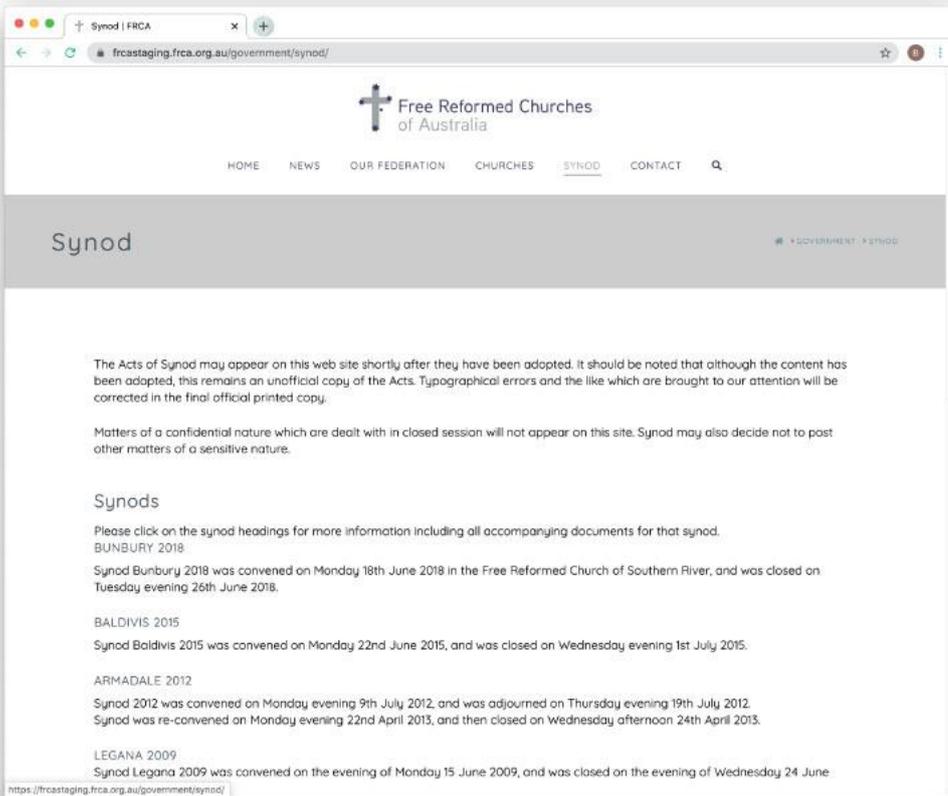
LEGANA

SCREENSHOTS

Old



New

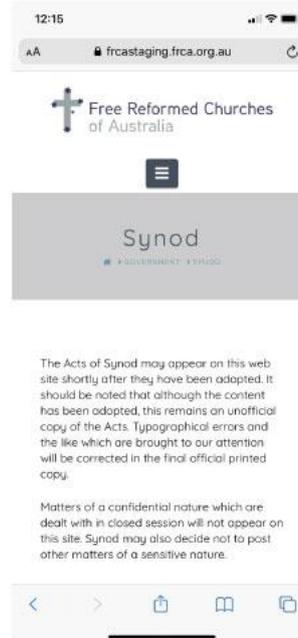


MOBILE FRIENDLY

Old



New



Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations - outside Australia

Introduction

5 With thankfulness to the Lord the deputies appointed by Synod Bunbury for Interchurch Relations outside Australia were able to engage with the mandates given in a spirit of good cooperation and harmony and under the blessing the Lord. Of the deputies appointed by Synod, br. G. Brouwer requested to be relieved of his task in February 2019, and he was replaced with the first alternate, br. H. Terpstra.

Synod Bunbury Decision - overall mandate

10 Synod Bunbury 2018 adopted the following decision regarding the overall mandate of the deputies for Interchurch Relations outside Australia in article 111.

Decision

1. To appoint one deputyship for interchurch relations outside Australia.
- 15 2. This deputyship can organise itself, if it sees fit to do so, in separate sections (e.g. one section per region), under the conditions:
 - a. that the entire deputyship remains ultimately responsible for the functioning of the sections;
 - b. every section regularly submits a written report of its activities (at least once a year) to the entire deputyship; and
 - 20 c. the entire deputyship meets at least once a year, to exchange information between the sections and supervise the work of each section.

Grounds

- 25 1. In a larger deputyship, the various deputies can learn from one another and can give advice regarding questions that come up with respect to a specific sister church or contact church.
2. One deputyship is practical in maintaining contacts with other churches. Deputies visiting assemblies of sister churches normally meet delegates from other churches at these assemblies. It is helpful if they are aware of what is going on and is being discussed with these other churches.
- 30 3. The decision to keep the Indonesian churches as a separate deputyship has been a long-standing practice. However, this does not mean that it should continue. The relations and contact with the Indonesian churches may also benefit from more interaction between the different deputies for relations with sister churches or for contact with other churches. It will also create possibilities for better supervision of their work.
- 35 4. It may be practical to divide the work and the deputies in sections (for instance according to regional areas), while at the same time it is important for deputies to remain informed about each other's work.

5. If the entire deputyship functions as a supervisor over the sections, the deputies can be held to account regarding the fulfilment of their mandate.

Execution of overall mandate

The deputyship was divided in the following way:

- 5 1. Section 1
- a. Netherlands, South Africa, Korea, Singapore (R.D Anderson, H. Terpstra, S 't Hart, B. Veenendaal)
 - b. North America (H. Alkema, R. Pot, P. Witten)
 - c. New Zealand (C. Mulder, with support from Section 1)
- 10 2. Section 2
- a. Indonesia (B. Bosveld, E. de Haan, A Hagg, E. Heerema, A. Souman)

Each section and sub-section met on their own as often as necessary to work through the mandates given. All correspondence, reports and minutes were available to all deputies via a shared online "Dropbox". Relevant material was then shared and discussed at meetings of the entire deputyship (plenary sessions), which were held on five occasions during the inter-synodical period. The appointed convenor was assigned responsibilities in section 1a but also attended all meetings of section 2.

In dividing the work, attempts were made to factor in the various gifts and interests of each deputy as well as the location in which they lived. With the resignation of br. G Brouwer, the only deputy from Tasmania was br. C. Mulder. Although br. Mulder was able to serve very well as deputy and was ably assisted by the other deputies, he was quite isolated and the decision was made to have him attend one plenary session in person each year, combined with a meeting of Section 1 of the deputies. This was done in December 2019 and reimbursement for his flight came from the overall budget of deputies, in line with art. 40 of Acts Synod Baldivis 2015.

Benefits of the new deputyship arrangement included

- an increase in interaction between deputies assigned to the various churches and the possibility to provide mutual assistance as required;
- Opportunities to discuss an increased level of consistency in how we maintain our various sister-church relationships;
- Greater consistency in report writing;
- An increase in mutual accountability;
- The opportunity for feedback from a wider pool of deputies.

Challenges to this new arrangement included

- An equitable division of tasks between the various sections;

- The geographical distance between deputies;
- The danger of leaving certain tasks and relationships to just one or two deputies.
- The need for all deputies to be acquainted with and immersed in a wider spectrum of churches.

5 Thankfully the deputies feel they were able to negotiate the various challenges and, by and large, benefited from the new arrangement.

Synod Report template.

10 In an effort to make our reports as clear and succinct as possible as well as to provide greater consistency, the deputies adopted a common template for Synod reports. Appendices have been limited as much as possible and, where appropriate, references are made to other published works should more information be required. At the same time we have endeavoured to faithfully report on how we have executed our mandates and the results of our findings. We are eager to receive feedback from the churches as to the usefulness of the approach we've taken.

15 Multiple sister churches in the same region?

20 In carrying out their mandate, the *Deputies for Interchurch Relations - Outside Australia* use the relevant acts of previous synods, as well as the relevant articles of the Church Order. However, even though we recognise that successive synods may alter direction over time, the acts may sometimes be ambiguous or even contradictory, which is not conducive to carrying out the mandate well. One question the deputies have been struggling with is: How do we deal with multiple church relationships where these churches are located in relatively close geographic proximity (e.g. in the same country or region)?

Considerations:¹

- 25 1. With regards to geographically distant churches that have a relationship with one or more of our sister churches, Synod Armadale 1990 (Art 58) decided that we should leave the ecumenical relations to our sister churches and be informed via them. This is to avoid duplication of effort where our sister churches already maintain intensive contact, to limit the manpower resources needed to maintain church relations, to reduce the time needed for travel and to recognise that we can be informed through our sister church's efforts. This reasoning was used by Synod Rockingham 2003 which decided to suspend contacts with the FCS, EPCI and RPCI and leave it to the Dutch sister churches to "allow them to exercise relations with these churches in a meaningful way" (Synod Rockingham 2003 Art 84 Grounds IV 2). This has been further reinforced by Synod Baldivis 2015 in its decisions regarding North America (URCNA, OPC, RCUS and ERQ) (Art 96) and Reformed Churches in Brazil (Art 129).
35

¹ Please refer to appendix 1 for the relevant FRCA synod decisions, as referenced in this report.

2. Point 1 above was a change of direction, where the FRCA had previously instructed the deputies, in accordance with Article 46 of the Church Order², to be diligent in seeking contact with those churches which are faithful to the Scriptures and to see if the FRCA can enter into correspondence with them (Armadale 1972, Article 53). Then, another change of direction was taken by Synod Bunbury 2018: Article 83 indicates that despite the 1990 decision, it finds “*compelling reasons to pursue this relationship*”. (These reasons are: the *OPC’s desire to establish contact with the FRCA, being a confessionally-Reformed federation and enjoys long standing sister church relations with several of our sister churches.*) Note that there is no interaction with the Synod 1990 decision and grounds. As a result, it seems as if decisions in the past have not always been consistent.
3. Despite what has sometimes been assumed as the official position of the FRCA (i.e. not to enter into sister relationships with two churches in one country), this has never been a decision of the FRCA. A decision which comes closest to this can be found in Article 53 of Synod Kelmscott 1996, where reference is made in Decision 5.b to paragraph 5.3 of the deputies’ report. However, in this report the deputies come with a general statement (“*The FRCA believes it is contrary to the confessions regarding the church to recognise two churches in one country, when those two churches are unable or unwilling to work towards unity*”), in which the position is qualified: only in situations where these churches are unwilling or unable to work to unity. Moreover, this statement has never been officially adopted by a synod as the position of the FRCA.
4. In contacts with the GGRC in Indonesia, throughout the years the possibility of a sister church relationship with the GGRC has not been explicitly excluded, but the FRCA focused mainly on encouraging the GGRI and the GGRC to become one and in that way the FRCA could have a sister church relationship with the churches in the GGRC as well. See the following synod decisions:
- a. Rockingham 2003, art. 73 decision: “*encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise*” (Decision 3e) and “*The Lord calls His churches to be joined together. Such unity in Indonesia of the GGRI and the GGRC would also grant the FRCA the blessing of being fully united with all the churches that now meet in in two different bonds*” (Ground 3e);
- b. West Kelmscott 2006 art. 58: “*Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise*”;
- c. Armadale 2012, art. 87 II 3: “*To encourage the GGRC to strongly work towards federal unity with the GGRI and thus a sister-church relationship with the FRC Australia*”.
5. The FRCA has the practice not to enter into a sister church relationship with churches which are in close proximity of existing sister churches if they do not express unity with each other (see the decisions about the GGRC mentioned in 4, as well the decisions regarding the DGK by West Kelmscott 2006 (Art. 92 III 3) and Legana 2009 (Art. 75 V 1)).

² Church Order art. 46: "The relationship with other churches shall be regulated by synod. With churches of Reformed confession sister relations shall be maintained as much as possible. On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected."

- 5 6. A distinction is being made by synods between recognising a church as a true and faithful church and having a sister church relationship with this church. Synod Launceston 1985, in article 67, expressed that the recognition of another church as being true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ means that a sister church relationship can be established, but that it does not always happen right away because of historical stumbling blocks which may still be lying on the road to a practical realization of unity. In the meantime, the fact that such a church is recognised as a true and faithful church also means that our church members 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.
- 10
7. In summary, the FRCA churches, through their synods and deputies, have used the following approach to the establishment of sister church relationships:
- 15 a. Acknowledge the calling to maintain sister church relations with churches of Reformed confession (Church Order Art 46).
- 20 b. Since 1985, recognise only one form of permanent ecclesiastical relationship, namely a sister church relationship (Synod Launceston 1985, Art 74 Sub II). Note that “temporary ecclesiastical contact” was discontinued in 1992 (Synod Bedfordale 1992, Art 95). Acknowledging a church as true and faithful is part of the process of coming to that relationship of sister church (Synod Launceston 1985 Art 67).
- 25 c. A realisation that in taking mutual responsibility, there must be a realistic expectation that we are able to fulfil our obligations/promises in maintaining a sister church relationship. We are a small federation with limited resources (Synod Armadale 1990 Art 58).
- 30 d. To concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to us and for whom we have a greater responsibility (Synod Armadale 1990 Art 58).
- 35 e. In order to avoid duplication of effort, where a church has a sister church relation with one of our sister churches in close geographic proximity, to leave the sister church relationship to our sister church in order to avoid duplication of effort (Synod Armadale 1990 Art 58).
8. Obviously, not all possible situations and circumstances have been addressed by synods and some decisions are ambiguous or even contradictory. For the sake of clarity, it is desirable if a synod adopts clear guidelines, which are in the spirit of Article 46 of the Church Order, to address with whom, how and when to establish sister church relationships.

Based on the above considerations, deputies have the following recommendation:

40 To mandate deputies to develop and propose to the next synod guidelines which are in line with Article 46 of the Church Order, taking into consideration previous synod decisions and guiding principles, and addressing the question with whom, how and when to establish sister church relationships. This will require input from the churches.

COVID implications

The sudden onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 and the subsequent travel and other restrictions had a substantial impact on the execution of our mandate. Various synods and other major events were cancelled or postponed, and your deputies have been unable to travel and meet with these churches as per our mandate from Synod. At the same time, however, the universal effects of this virus and the mutual encouragement we could give one another in these times has deepened our feelings and love for the catholicity of Christ's Church.

Service Terms

Since it is the norm for deputies to serve no more than three terms of three years in any one deputyship, we wish to bring to the attention of Synod that the following delegates have completed three or more terms of service: Rev. R. D Anderson, Rev. R. Pot (NZ deputyship prior to 2018), Rev. S. 't Hart, br. B. Bosveld (Indonesia), Br. E. Heerema (Indonesia).

Your deputies are of the opinion that the current number of deputies (thirteen) is sufficient for the work that is being assigned.

Recommendations:

1. To maintain the current arrangement of having one deputyship for interchurch relations outside of Australia as per art. 111 of Synod Bunbury 2018.
2. To mandate deputies to develop and propose to the next synod guidelines which are in line with Article 46 of the Church Order, taking into consideration previous synod decisions and guiding principles, and addressing the questions of with whom, how, and when to establish sister church relationships. This will require input from the churches.

Grounds:

1. The arrangements in place for deputies for interchurch relations have proven to be useful.
2. Clarity is needed to ensure principled and consistent decisions are made with respect to the question of with whom, how and when to establish sister church relationships. This is of particular relevance when the churches with which contact is made are in close proximity to one another.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. S. 't Hart (deputy since 2012)

Rev. H. Alkema (2015)

Rev. R.D. Anderson (2012)

Rev. A. Hagg (2015)

Rev. R. Pot (2012)

Rev. A. Souman (2018)

Br. B. Bosveld (2003)

Br. E. de Haan (2015)

Br. E. Heerema (2009)

Br. C. Mulder (2018)
 Br. H. Terpstra (2019)
 Br. P. Witten (2015)
 Br. B. Veenendaal (2018)

5

Church Acronyms	
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CRCA	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Churches of North America
DGK	De Gereformeerde Kerken (formerly RCN _r)
DRCSL	Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka
EPCA	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia
EPCI	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
ERCS	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Singapore
ERQ	Reformed Church of Quebec
FCS	Free Church of Scotland
FCS(C)	Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
FERC	First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FRCP	Free reformed Churches of the Philippines
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
GGMM	Gereja Gereja Mahesi Musyafir (Reformed Churches of Timor, Savu)
GGRC	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis
GGRI	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia
GGRI-KalBar	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Kalimantan Barat
GGRI-NTT	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - NTT

GGRI-Papua	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Papua
GGRI-T	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
GKN(Syn)	De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (synodaal) - now part of the PKN (Protestantse Kerk in Nederland)
GMMT	Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor
HRC	Heritage Reformed Congregations
IPB	Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil
KPCK	Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
NGK	Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCK	Presbyterian Church in Korea
PCU	Presbyterian Church in Uganda
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church in the United States
PRCA	Presbyterian Reformed Churches of Australia
PRCNA	Protestant Reformed Church in North America
RCA	Reformed Churches of Australia
RCI	Reformed Churches of Japan
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCSTS	Reformed Churches of Sumba-Timor-Savu
RCUS	Reformed Church in the United States
RCZ	Reformed Churches of Zaire

RPCI	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
RPCT	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
URCC	United Reformed Churches of Congo
URCNA	United Reformed Churches of North America

Ecclesiastical Abbreviations	
Art.	Article
BC	Belgic Confession of Faith
CCU-C	Coordinator for the Committee of Church Unity
CCCNA	(Canadian Reformed)Committee for Contact with Churches in North America
CECCA	Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)
CEIR	Committee for Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC
CERCU	Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA
CO	Church Order
CRTS	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
DE	Dynamic Equivalent
Dp BBK	Deputies for correspondance with foreign churches appointed by sister churches (GKN)
EF	Ecclesiastical Fellowship
FSNS	Fund for support of needy students
GA	General Assembly
GS	General Synod
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
KJV	King James Version
MARS	Mid-America Reformed Seminary
NAPARC	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
NIV	New International Version

NKJV	New King James Version
PJCO	Proposed Joint Church Order
RCNZ- IRC	Reformed Churches of New Zealand Interchurch Relations Committee
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council
RES	Reformed Ecumenical Synod
RSE	Regional Synod East
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTC	Reformed Theological College
TEC	Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact
TPH	Trinity Psalter Hymnal
USA	Unites States of America
WCC	World Council of Churches

Appendix 1

Previous FRCA Synod decisions relevant to the question of multiple sister churches in the same region

=====

5 Acts of Synod Launceston 1985, Article 67

Synod declares:

that our recognition of another church as being "true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ"

- 10
1. means that both our churches and that recognized church stand on the foundations as expressed in Article 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;
 2. has 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 in the road to a practical realization of unity;
 - 15 3. and that our church members join that church, and vice versa, in the case that such church is their nearest church, in accordance with Article 28 of the Belgic Confession.

GROUNDS

- 20
1. This Synod, in representing the Churches, and in the present situation of developing contacts with many other Churches both in Australia and abroad, must clearly define in accordance with Scripture and Confession, what is meant by the formal recognition of such Churches as being "true and faithful Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ."
 2. This clear definition will be helpful in the process of coming to full sister-Church relationship in a scriptural way.

=====

Acts of Synod Armadale 1990, Art.58

25 Considerations

1. ...
2. Being a smaller Bond of Churches, the resources and manpower are limited, though we are thankful for the increase in (ministerial) manpower through the increase in the number of churches.
- 30 3. There are increasing demands placed on office bearers within the local church, though the trend toward more (smaller) churches is healthy.
4. Distance contacts require much time in terms of travelling, when Synods give deputies mandates to make such trips.

5. Deputies from our sister churches and those churches whom we have recognised as true and faithful maintain intensive contact with many churches located relatively near to them. Their reports about these contacts or relations are readily available to us.
- 5 6. INTENSIVE relations and contacts on our part with some of these churches who are closer to our sister-churches or those whom we have recognised are needless duplication of effort.
- 10 7. It much be appreciated that the reports of deputies do show that steps in this direction are already underway. Synod 1987 phased out contacts with the Dutch Reformed Churches in Sri Lanka. Also, more attention is now paid to churches nearby, eg. PCEA, Sumba-Savu, Singapore and RCNZ (think also of RCPNG).

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;
- 15 b) To limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad and with churches which we have recognised as true and faithful to the minimum level necessary for us to remain acquainted with their situation and to fulfil our obligations made to them;
- c) To concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically closer to use and for whom we have a greater responsibility;
- 20 d) To phase out contact with Churches with whom we appear to be making no progress.

Acts of Synod Armadale 1990, Art.59 Past decisions concerning other churches

Observations

- 25 1. The submission draws attention to inconsistencies and ambiguities of previous Synodical decisions regarding contact with foreign and/or non-sister churches.
2. ...

Recommendations

1. To acknowledge with past Synods that there have been inconsistencies and ambiguities in past decisions which have led to disquiet and division in the churches.
- 30 2. To express that future Synods should give mandates which are consistent with one another
3. ...

=====

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

1. Introduction

In 2015 Synod Baldivis decided to suspend our relationship with the RCN and this suspension was commuted into termination in 2018 by Synod Bunbury as follows:

5 Article 45 - Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

I. Material

Item 13(h) – Report of Deputies for Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

10 Item 9(c)(i) – Letter from General Synod Meppel 2017, advising of their decision to urge the FRCA not to prematurely break off the bond with the RCN, to declare that from their side they see no cause to review the sister church relationship, and to send a delegation to the FRCA to facilitate a face-to-face explanation of their decision

Item 9(f)(vii) – Letter from FRC of Launceston, supporting deputies' recommendation to terminate the sister church relationship

15 Item 9(h)(iii) – Letter from FRC of Darling Downs, supporting deputies' recommendation to terminate the sister church relationship

Item 9(i)(ii) – Letter from FRC of Byford, proposing to continue monitoring developments in the Netherlands

II. Decision

With sadness to terminate the sister relationship with the RCN.

20 Grounds

1. The relationship with the RCN has become untenable due to their use of the 'New Hermeneutics' – principles allowing the current cultural context to play a determining role in explaining scripture. This has allowed the RCN to turn away from the clear instruction in God's Word and to show unfaithfulness by lack of submission to that Word.
- 25 2. The evidence of ground 1 above is given particular expression in the recent decision of the RCN (Synod Meppel 2017) to allow women to the office of deacon, elder and minister.
3. There has been no adequate response, let alone repentance, to earlier admonitions:
 - 30 i. Letter of admonition from Synod Armadale 2012 to RCN Synod Ede dated 22 April 2013 (Acts of Synod 2012, Appendix 5);
 - ii. Letter from Synod Baldivis 2015 to RCN Synod Meppel 2017 (Acts of Synod 2015, Appendix 2).

Further to this decision Synod Bunbury also decided the following:

Article 107 - Communication of RCN decision (refer Art 45)

I. Decision

1. To send a letter to Synod 2020 of the RCN containing Synod's decision.
- 5 2. To send a letter to our sister churches in Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada via deputies, informing them of our decision.
3. To send two deputies to Synod 2020 to relay our decision.
4. To send to the convening church of Synod 2020 of the RCN, for inclusion on their agenda, the letter sent to the BBK on 7 March 2016 in response to the request
10 from Synod Ede.

Grounds

1. Sending both a letter containing Synod's decision and a delegation underlines the seriousness of the step we have taken.
- 15 2. The letter from the BBK dated 16 June 2017 shares with us that Synod Meppel did not receive from us a response to the letter sent to us by Synod Ede. Deputies sent a letter to the BBK on 7 March 2016, indicating that this was our response, but it appears that this was not passed on to Synod Meppel.

2. Execution of Mandate

20 A letter was duly sent to Synod 2020 of the RCN by the clerk of Synod Bunbury 2018, informing them of our decision. In addition, a copy of our letter sent to the BBK on 7 March 2016 in response to the request from Synod Ede was sent to the convening church for this synod. Deputies had correspondence with our sister churches in Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada informing them of the decision of Synod Bunbury 2018.

25 Two delegates were sent to the Foreign Delegates Week of the RCN Synod 2020 in the persons of Rev. R. D. Anderson and br. G. B. Veenendaal. This was held from Tuesday 7th January to Saturday 11th January. During this week there was ample time for informal contact with the RCN delegates as well as various meetings between RCN delegates and/or BBK together with other concerned (former) sister churches.

30 We were pleased to see that we were able to present a united front together with the delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the GKSA (Doppers) of South Africa. Some time after the Foreign Delegates Week, the RCN synod received a letter from our sister churches in Indonesia informing them that they had terminated their sister church
35 relationship with the RCN.

The make-up of RCN Synod 2020 was distinctly different to that of their previous synod. At the previous synod there had been several delegates, who were clearly most upset at the decision to open all ecclesiastical offices to women. At this synod there was a clear unanimous chorus desiring to maintain this decision. It should be noted that two
40 women elders were also seated as delegates.

5 The foreign delegates were initially informed that there would be no opportunity to actually address the synod and we were requested to present written addresses which would be copied and sent to all the RCN delegates as reading material. We therefore presented a short written address in English outlining the decision of Synod Bunbury 2018, noting at the same time both the *pain* that their spiritual adultery has caused and our *love* expressed to them in attending their synod personally to call them back from the path they have set for themselves.

10 During Foreign Delegates Week, however, we were informed that we were also to be given 10 minutes to address the synod in person. Rev. Anderson presented this address in Dutch (given that this was the clear preference of the RCN delegates) attempting to outline how their sanctioning of the new hermeneutics had foundational implications for our relationship, given that the basis for understanding Scripture had been undermined. If the foundation is no longer the same, the many agreements in doctrine, that we may still have at this point in time, are no longer secure.

15 Upon our return an article concerning our visit to the Dutch synod was published in *Una Sancta* vol. 67 no 5 4 April 2020.

20 It may be noted that after Foreign Delegates Week the Dutch synod also met together with the synod of the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) and sealed a pact to reunite the two church federations, which had parted ways in 1967. The NGK already has women in all church offices and is tolerant of practicing homosexual relationships even among office bearers. It was most sad to see that our former sister churches are not only continuing the path of unfaithfulness upon which they find themselves, but even speeding up the process of becoming a mainstream liberal church-body.

3. Recommended decision

25 I. Decision

That synod with thanks discharges deputies with respect to their mandate concerning the RCN.

Ground

30 Delegates have faithfully discharged their mandate respecting termination of the sister church relationship with the RCN.

The DGK and GKN

1. Names

“The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands” are abbreviated DGK after their Dutch name “De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)”.

5 “Reformed Churches Netherlands” are abbreviated as GKN after their Dutch name “Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland”.

2. Introduction

10 Both these federations of churches have their origin in secessions from our former sister churches (RCN), however, since that time both have become small federations of churches in their own right. Our monitoring of these churches has its genesis in our former relationship to the RCN.

3. Brief Description

DGK

Location	<i>Netherlands</i>
Origin(s)	<i>seceded from the RCN in 2003-2004</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>9 instituted churches and 1 preaching post</i>
Membership numbers	<i>unknown</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>no current students</i>
Website	<i>https://gereformeerde-kerken-hersteld.nl/</i>

GKN

Location	<i>Netherlands</i>
Origin(s)	<i>seceded from the RCN in 2009</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>10 instituted churches and 6 preaching posts</i>
Membership numbers	<i>ca. 1600 members</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>4 students under the care of 2 ministers set aside for 40% each.</i>
Website	<i>www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/</i>

15 The DGK currently have 4 active ministers, 5 retired ministers and 1 ministerial

candidate. There are currently no students of theology.

The GKN currently have 5 active ministers, 4 retired ministers, 1 ministerial candidate and 4 further students of theology.

4. History of the Relationship

5 The DGK seceded from the RCN in 2003-2004 and insisted on being viewed as the legitimate continuation of the RCN. Synod West Kelmscott 2006 (art. 92) mandated deputies to investigate whether this secession was lawful. Synod 2009 Legana (art. 72) decided against acknowledging the DGK as the lawful continuation of the RCN given that we still had a relationship with the RCN at that time.

10 The GKN first came onto the radar of FRCA synods in 2015. Its origin was likewise a secession from the RCN. Initially it began in a longstanding division in the church of Kampen Noord resulting from a RCN classis having sacked the entire consistory of this large church. Later other ministers and churches joined them. Since 2015 the FRCA has been monitoring the developments in both churches and encouraging their union.

15 Both federations are involved in intensive negotiations for union with each other.

5. Decision and Mandate

In 2018 Synod Bunbury made the following decision respecting the GKN and DGK.

Article 75 - De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

20 **Decision**

1. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK (De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) and GKN (Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland);
 - 25 b. to encourage the DGK and GKN to work towards unity with each other;
 - c. to maintain contact; and
 - d. to report back to the next Synod.
2. To await recommendations from the churches on how to proceed with these relations.
- 30 3. Monitor the relationship that exists between the DGK and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford, working in close contact with the CanRC deputies regarding these developments.

Grounds

- 35 1. Both churches profess to be faithful churches in every aspect of the Reformed doctrine.
2. Their historical backgrounds are similar to ours.

3. The DGK is also working via Rev Gunnink among our Indonesian sister churches.
4. Both the DGK and the GKN have recently sent letters to the deputies for distribution to the local churches requesting a sister church relationship.
5. Although their sister relation with Abbotsford LRC is a potential obstacle in our contact with the DGK (see Synod 2012, article 99), the recent DGK synod did decide to have a closer look at the situation in Abbotsford.

6. Execution of mandate

Two delegates were sent to the Foreign Delegates Week of the RCN Synod 2020 in the persons of Rev. R. D. Anderson and br. B. Veenendaal. This was held from Tuesday 7th January to Saturday 11th January. During this week delegates met separately with the DGK and the GKN deputies, together with the delegates from South Africa and Canada. These meetings were very positive. Particularly that with the DGK showed that this federation was productively pursuing discussions with the GKN and at the same time were also pursuing critical discussions with the LRCA (Abbotsford).

In October 2020 Rev. Anderson and br. Veenendaal engaged in Zoom meetings separately with the DGK and the GKN. During these meetings it became clear that both the DGK and the GKN are very serious and engaged with each other in discussions that are to lead to the union of the two church federations. At their last synods in 2019 they have both acknowledged each other as true churches and stated that there are no principled differences between their respective federations. A number of issues in various local congregations do still need to be discussed before union can occur. The deputies of both federations are liaising with these local congregations so that these issues can be addressed or resolved. The deputies recognise that not all issues need to be completely settled for union to take place, but wisdom dictates that some discussion is warranted. The more serious issues concern localities where members of one federation have left through either excommunication or withdrawal for the other after serious disagreement.

With respect to the LRCA, the DGK has issued a public statement wherein it distances itself from their position on the Westminster standards as non-Reformed. It also questions their stance on the catholicity of the church and their justification for leaving the CanRC. The LRCA are currently in a position of defending themselves against what they see as unfounded accusations by the DGK. The discussions between the two are at this point still ongoing.

Deputies see their given mandate as having been brought to a close given that Synod Bunbury 2018 decided to give the churches the opportunity to bring forward proposals with respect to how to proceed with this relationship.

Deputies note that should a church bring forward a proposal for continuing contact with a view to developing a sister church relationship, this can be viewed positively. Although these Dutch federations are not geographically close, we note that the DGK continues to use Rev. Gunnink among our Indonesian sister churches and the GKN has indicated that they would treasure the assistance of the FRCA in the future with respect to their theological training of future ministers of the Gospel.

7. Recommended decision

Decision

1. To discharge deputies and thank them for their work.
- 5 2. To express thankfulness to God for the positive developments towards unity of the DGK and GKN and to encourage them to continuing working towards a united federation.

Grounds

- 10 1. Both churches profess to be faithful churches in every aspect of the Reformed doctrine and both have recognised each other as true churches and working towards unification.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

1. Introduction

The relationship between the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRSA) and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) goes back to the early start of the churches in Australia in the late 1950's.

2. Brief description

Location	<i>South Africa</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 1950 by Dutch immigrants to South Africa</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>7 churches and 6 mission church plants with a new one recently opened in Fizantekraal in the Cape</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>Approximately 1900 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Classis</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Annually</i>
	<i>Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Every 3 years</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>See Section 3 below</i>		
Website	<i>https://www.frc.org.za/</i>		

3. History and context to the relationship

The FRSA originated with three congregations in in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. This later expanded through the institution of a second church in Pretoria, namely Pretoria-Maranata. In the 2000's a further expansion occurred when three churches were instituted as a result of mission work conducted in Mamelodi and Soshanguve-North in Gauteng and Belhar near Cape Town.

The church at Pretoria-Maranata is sending church for mission work in the Pretoria region. Currently there are church planting projects in Soshanguve-F4, Soshanguve Block UU/WW, Soshanguve Block XX and Nellmapius. The church at Capetown is busy with church plants in Wesbank and Leiden and have recently opened up a new on in Fizantekraal.

For theological training, the FRSA make use of the following theological seminaries: Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaMhlanga (Mpumalanga); George Whitefield College in Muizenberg (Western Cape) and Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton (Canada). They have curators appointed by synod and a coordinator to organise and coach theological students.

4. Decision and mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 made the following decision regarding the FRSA and the mandate to deputies:

Article 81 - Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

5 II. Decision

1. To continue sister relations with the FRCSA according to the established rules.
2. To appoint the Deputies Auditor for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided and report to the next Synod.
- 10 3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. send two delegates to the next FRCSA synod in 2021;
 - 15 c. coordinate responses to any requests for support from Deputies within the FRCSA (including either Needy Churches or Theological Training) and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate; and
 - 20 d. keep the members of the FRCA informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via Una Sancta.

Grounds

1. The FRCSA give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- 25 2. Our visits to South Africa and their visits to us have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
- 30 3. Our South African churches request ongoing financial support as they continue on a road to self-sustainability. Whereas in the past this support was required for needy churches, due to the increase in vacancies the need for support has shifted to include theological training. Such support should be coordinated and the churches kept informed and financial accountability of the support provided is important.

5. Execution of Mandate

5a. Activities and actions undertaken

35 An invitation was received to the FRCSA synod to be held in Belhar in September 2020 (note: 2021 in the decision of Synod Bunbury was incorrect). However, this synod is postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and has now been rescheduled for 12-16 April 2021 D.V.

The deputies coordinated the financial support received from the Australian churches for the training of theology students in South Africa. The *Deputies Curators of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa* have requested support of approximately \$68.5k AUD which is the annual target. We have advised the churches of an indicative contribution of \$21 per confessing member assuming all churches contribute. However, this is voluntary for churches and since not all churches do contribute this amount, we are thankful for those that contribute more. Some funds were not sent in 2018 and we were short approximately AUD 10k for 2019. Thankfully, it appears that we will meet the target for 2020.

Given that we, functioning only as coordinators of this financial support, are dependent on the voluntary contributions from our churches, we cannot guarantee that the target amount will be met. The South African deputies are aware of this and thankful for the support they do get. They have expressed their thankfulness a number of times through emails.

We were able to meet with two ministers from the FRCSA who travelled on personal visits to Perth, namely Rev P Boon and Rev H Breytenbach. Incidentally, Rev Breytenbach did preach in our church at Melville. Rev Anderson visited South Africa in November 2019 and taught Mosaic law to two black theology students.

The financial summary is as follows:

Balance 1 January 2019	\$24,493.73	
Contributions received from churches 2019	\$35,080.70	
Term deposit from 2018 contributions	\$17,776.42	
Fees 2019	-\$53.54	
Interest 2019	\$41.94	
Sent to South Africa 2019	\$59,000.00	
Balance 1 January 2020	\$18,339.25	
Contributions received from churches 2020	\$48,539.80	Note: To 10/12/20
Fees 2020	-\$30.00	
Interest 2020	\$0.00	
Sent to South Africa 2020	\$66,700.00	
Balance 1 January 2021	\$149.05	

5b. Discussion and concluding remarks

Because of the pandemic, we were unable to visit and meet with our South African sister churches and obtain an update. However, through the *Deputies Curators of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa* we were able to have regular contact and support their work of theological training. On several occasions they have expressed their thankfulness for the support we are able to provide.

6. Publications and other documents

Some information regarding the support for theology students in South Africa was published in the *From the Churches in the Una Sancta* in June 2020. Two students are planning to study in Hamilton at the *Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary* in 2020 and a further 6 students are busy with language and preparatory studies.

Two letters were sent to FRCA consistories updating them on the financial targets, funds collected and other related details of support. These were sent on 1st March 2019 and 5th May 2020.

7. Recommendation

1. To continue sister relations with the FRCSA according to the established rules.
2. To appoint the Deputies Auditor for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided and report to the next Synod.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a) maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b) send two delegates to the next FRCSA synod when it is convened;
 - c) coordinate responses to any requests for support *from Deputies Curators of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa* and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate; and
 - d) keep the members of the FRCA informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via *Una Sancta*.

Grounds

1. The FRCSA give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Visits to South Africa have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
3. Our South African churches, in addition to their own contributions, request ongoing financial support for theological training. Such support should be coordinated, the churches kept informed and financial accountability maintained.

Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

1. Introduction

5 The Free Reformed Churches of Australia entered into a sister church relation with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) by a decision of Synod Albany 1975 (Article 82).

2. Brief description

Location	<i>South Korea</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 1952, separating from the Presbyterian Church of Korea</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>Approximately 2500</i>
Membership numbers	<i>Approximately 500,000 members</i>
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions Unknown Unknown</i> <i>Presbyteries 53 Unknown</i> <i>General Assembly 1 Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Kosin Theological Seminary, Cheonan</i>
Website	<i>http://www.kosin.org/</i>

3. History and context to the relationship

10 At the 6th synod of the FRCA, namely Synod Armadale 1966, there was a proposal from the church at Armadale to enter into correspondence with the KPCK. After a period of 9 years of correspondence and getting to know each other, the FRCA offered the KPCK a sister church relationship. Rev SG Hur of the KPCK and also a professor at their theological seminary, served as Minister of the Word in Armadale from 1978-1980 and in Kelmscott from 1981 to 1987. He then returned to Korea and became President of the seminary for 10 years before being declared emeritus-professor.

15 The KPCK has spawned three separate daughter church federations in other countries, namely: North America, Europe and Oceania. These three federations form the first group with whom they have church relations. The Korean Presbyterian Churches Oceania have churches in Australia including 3 churches in Perth with similar numbers in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.

20 The second group of church relations are other bonds of churches with whom they have theological unity and relatively close contact. These include: The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, The Canadian and American Reformed Churches, The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, The Presbyterian Church in America and The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands - Liberated (RCN).
25 The third group of church relations are those not as close but they may cooperate in mission.

These include: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, The Reformed Church in Japan, The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, Korean American Presbyterian Church, Union Nationale des Eglises Protestantes Reformees Evangeliques de France, The Korean Church in Japan, The Reformed Presbyterian Church - North East India, Japan Alliance, Taiwan Reformation Presbyterian Association and Chinese Philadelphia Church.

The *Korea Theological Seminary* (KTS) in Cheonan, South Korea, is the seminary of the Kosin churches established in 1946. This is where Rev SG Hur taught as a professor and strongly influenced its commitment to the Reformed faith. This influence and desire to remain and grow in reformed Scriptural directions is still evident, also among many of its graduates and ministers within the bond. The KTS is run by a Board which also oversees the Kosin Global University (<https://center.kosin.ac.kr/english/>), although both institutions are managed separately.

The Kosin churches have a very strong focus on evangelisation and mission. Many of the ministers have been involved in a church plant and establishing a new church in a particular suburb or locality in Korea. Many have grown to over 50 or 100 members in 10 years' time and are reasonably well established in the local communities.

The Kosin churches support the Korea Presbyterian Mission (KPM) located in Daejeon, South Korea. The KPM was established in 1955 to organise and train missionaries; currently there are over 500 missionaries active in over 50 countries internationally, primarily in Asia but also in the Middle East and Africa. Within Australia there is currently one mission church in Perth and one in Brisbane.

4. Decision and mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 made the following decision regarding the KPCK and the mandate to deputies:

Article 49 - Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

II. Decision

1. To continue sister-church relations with the KPCK according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. send two delegates, including (if possible) one Korean speaking delegate, to the KPCK General Assembly in 2019; and
 - c. further investigate the members of our sister churches living in the Perth metro area, with a view to improving contact and cooperation with them.

Grounds

1. The Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions.
2. The inclusion of a Korean speaking delegate has proved beneficial.

5. Execution of Mandate

5a. Activities and actions undertaken

Upon receiving an invite, two delegates brothers H Terpstra and B Veenendaal attended the KPCK General Assembly 2019 held on 17-19 September 2019. (Note: We couldn't find a Korean-speaking person who could go as a delegate.) There were 517 Korean delegates in addition to visitors that assembled in the auditorium of the Kosin Theological Seminary in Cheonan. Our two delegates, who are unfamiliar with the Korean language, were able to download an app that uses the phone camera to translate Korean to English. This was particularly helpful in following the material presented to the GA.

Although much of the GA agenda was spent on administrative matters, they did deal with relations with churches including the current process of unification with the Soonjang Presbyterian Church of Korea. They continued church relations with the FRCA in the second group (see Section 3 for explanation of church relation groups) for which we are thankful. Although they are concerned with the directions of the RCN, the GA had a proposal, without any reasons or grounds, to move them from group 2 to group 3 churches. We had an influence in an amendment which called for more interaction with the RCN and create more awareness among the KPCK before making a final decision in 2 years' time. This was agreed to by the GA.

The most controversial issue was concerning whether or not the church can make political proclamations. The decision was to make a once-off proclamation concerning homosexuality and freedom for schools since many families of the church are confronted with and affected by this secular agenda.

Among the mission work of the KPCK is a mission church in Perth, led by Rev Hun C. Chung. Contact with this mission church has been maintained by Rev 't Hart, who has also been asked to preach there on a few occasions. Most of the people in this small congregation are Korean and it is anticipated that, under the blessing of the Lord, they will become a part of the Korean Presbyterian Church in Oceania, a sister bond of churches of the KPCK. Although our mandate from Synod Bunbury was to " further investigate the members of our sister churches living in the Perth metro area, with a view to improving contact and cooperation with them" we did not go beyond the KPCK mission church in our contacts, since the *Korean Presbyterian Church in Oceania* is not our sister church but rather a daughter/sister church federation of the KPCK.

We did, however, meet representatives from the Oceania federation (from Sydney) through whom we could get some perspective into Korean Presbyterian (Kosin) Churches that exist in our own country. Apparently, there are 3 Korean Presbyterian

Churches in the Perth region and similar numbers in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.

5b. Discussion and concluding remarks

5 The KPCK is a very large bond of churches with a strong history through several reformation. There are many challenges that they face, both in standing united with many churches in faithfulness to our Heavenly Father, and also, in standing united to face the secular culture of this world.

Aspects for us to consider in the relationship include:

- 10 a) The KPCK is a very diverse bond of many churches, but there is a strong group of professors and ministers who want to maintain and promote a strong commitment to the Reformed faith.
- b) From the Korean side, they would like to maintain fellowship with us as a faithful reformed bond of churches who can support them in their commitment to the Reformed faith.
- 15 c) There are many struggles as church living within a secular and worldly environment that we face in common, for example, the homosexual and transgender push in schools, communities and families.
- d) There is a mission church in Perth and others in Australia. Hence, we have our sister churches working in our vicinity. Although the mission church uses Korean as its primary language, there are increasing pressures to utilise English as they become more established. There could be a role for us here in future.
- 20 e) Through our relationship with the KPCK, we have become more aware of Korean presbyterian churches in our own country including 3 churches in Perth that belong to the Presbyterian Church of Korea in Oceania. If our churches through our next synod so desire, the mandate of deputies could be extended to glean further information about these churches on our doorstep.
- 25

6. Publications and other documents

30 A report of deputies' visit to the September 2019 GA was published in the *Una Sancta* for the benefit of FRCA members. Further information on the history of the Korean churches can be found in Hur (2006).

Hur, S.G. 2006. *The Church Preserved Through Fires: A history of the Presbyterian Church in Korea*. Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada.

Veenendaal, B. and H. Terpstra. 2020. A Snapshot of Korean Life. Part 1: *Una Sancta* 67:2 22 February 2020, Part2: *Una Sancta* 67:3 7 March 2020.

35 7. Recommendation

1. To continue sister-church relations with the KPCK according to the established rules.

2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. send two delegates to the KPCK General Assembly in 2022; and
 - 5 c. continue contact with the KPCK mission undertaken locally in Australia, offering support where feasible and appropriate.

Grounds

1. The Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions.
- 10 2. Contact with mission work of the KPCK in our locality is a meaningful way to mutually assist and encourage one another in keeping with the *Rules for Exercising Sister Church Relations*.

First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)

1. Introduction

5 The Free Reformed Churches of Australia extended an offer of a sister church relationship with the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore by a decision of Synod Baldivis 2015 (Article 58). This offer was accepted by the FERC in correspondence dated 19 October 2015.

2. Brief Description

Location	<i>Singapore</i>
Origin(s)	<i>Started as a youth group in 1962 as a small group of students looking to the Christian faith. Instituted in January 1982.</i>
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>1</i>
Membership numbers	<i>358 members (as at 31 May 2019)</i>
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory 1 monthly</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>No affiliation with any Theological Seminaries. One of their members is studying at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.</i>
Website	<i>https://ferc.org.sg/</i>

3. History and context of the relationship

10 The FERC had its beginnings in the 1960s as a small group of high school students looking to the Christian faith instead of the pagan faiths of their Chinese parents. Many divergent views brought them through a Baptist, Arminian, and a liberal Presbyterian phase and finally to the Reformed faith of salvation by grace alone. In their formative years as a Reformed church they were greatly assisted by the Protestant Reformed Church of North America (PRCNA).

15 The FERC has for many years worked tirelessly to nurture a good understanding of the blessings of the Gospel of grace as confessed and embraced in the great reformation and as defined in the Three Forms of Unity. The sister church relationship with the PRNCA ended in June 2007 in the midst of a controversy concerning the biblical teaching of divorce and remarriage.

20 The FERC of Singapore is not part of a church federation, and although small, does continue to support their small sister church in Penang, a church that is the fruit of the FERC's mission work.

2012 Synod Armadale accepted a proposal from the FRC Busselton to appoint deputies to take up contact with the FERCS (as it was known then) on behalf

of FRCA, explore the feasibility of a sister church relationship and present a report to Synod 2015. (Article 22)

2015 Extended an offer of a sister church relationship, with that relationship to take effect from the date of written acceptance by FERC. (Article 58)

5 2015 Letter of acceptance received by deputies 19 October 2015.

4. Decision and mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 (article 106) decided the following with respect to the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC).

Decision:

- 10 1. To continue sister church relations with the FERC of Singapore according to the established rules.
2. To note their new relationship with the Covenant Grace Church of Penang, a small instituted church that is the result of years of their mission work.
- 15 3. To accept the agreement made between our respective deputies which addresses the unique way that a sister church relationship with a single church can function:
 - a. It is not always feasible, nor is it always necessary to attend each other's regular meetings;
 - 20 b. When the FERC is deliberating important matters such as (1) external relationships with other churches, (2) doctrinal and (3) liturgical issues, the FERC will inform FRCA;
 - c. The FERC will send a copy of its annual reports;
 - d. The FERC will update FRCA on any important issues every 6 months if needed; and
 - 25 e. The FERC will invite delegates when there is a special event in the Church.
4. To discharge the deputies, thank them for their work and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Visit the FERC of Singapore two times in the next three years in order to continue to learn more about them and strengthen our relationship;
 - 30 b. Give timely reports concerning the FERC of Singapore to members of the FRCA;
 - c. Promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the FRCA and the FERC by way of exchange of speakers where the opportunity arises, and good communication concerning events that might be of interest for one another's members to attend and participate in;
 - 35 d. Offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible;
 - e. Invite delegates of the FERC of Singapore to our next Synod; and

- f. Liaise with their respective counterparts in the Canadian Reformed Churches concerning the mutual benefits of a sister church relationship with the FERC.

Grounds:

- 5 1. The FERC of Singapore gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God.
2. The existing rules for exercising sister relations do not prohibit a sister church relationship with a single church, but there are elements in the exercise of this relationship that need to reflect its unique aspects.
- 10 3. The FERC of Singapore is a single congregation, has an official bond with only one other church (which also relies on their support), and they can benefit from continued assistance from time to time, and from the resources the Lord has given us.
- 15 4. Visits to Singapore and their visits to us have proven beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

5. Summary Execution of Mandate

While visiting the FERC of Singapore in July/August 2019, opportunity existed for many discussions that centered around the topics that formed a part of the speaking / lecture tour by Dr Joel Beeke.

20 In general, we appreciated the messages given and the discussions we could have on topics such as godliness among church leaders, preaching, marriage, Christian family life, family worship and the centrality of the message of the gospel. Through all this it can be seen that the FERC of Singapore is certainly striving to be and to remain a Reformed Church of our Lord Jesus Christ in Singapore.

25 Delegates were able to meet with brothers from the FERC to discuss our sister church relationship and church life within the FERC. Here we were able to discuss:

1. The uniqueness of our relationship;
2. What the leadership looks like within the FERC: Comprising of 1 pastor, 5 elders and 7 deacons. The leadership is very busy in preaching and especially in teaching. Further the FERC is sponsoring a theological student who was pursuing his degree with the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.
- 30 3. Worship services are conducted twice each Sunday, as well as covenant instruction for the entire congregation.
- 35 4. The FERC has a very active church life, both in giving teaching to the members as well as reaching out to others in the community. This has been blessed with numerical and spiritual growth.
5. In addition to the regular English services, there is also an ongoing Chinese ministry, and each Lord's Day, the gospel is preached in Mandarin.
- 40 6. The FERC has been busy in Mission, and considers the call to mission to be integral to their identity as a church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The FERC is eager

to explore ways to partner with the FRCA in the area of mission in South East Asia.

This meeting was conducted in an atmosphere of brotherly love and support.

6. Execution of Mandate

- 5 a. ***Visit the FERC of Singapore two times in the next three years in order to continue to learn more about them and strengthen our relationship.***

10 A visit was made to Singapore from July 31 - August 3, 2019. It was decided to make the visit at this time since it coincided with a major event hosted, in part by the FERC, a series of lectures by Dr. Joel Beeke of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Visiting Singapore at this time gave us better insight into how, and with whom, the FERC interacts with other churches of a Reformed persuasion in Singapore and other parts of Asia. A meeting was also held with the FERC brethren to discuss our sister-church relationship.

15 A second visit was planned for June 2020. This was to coincide with the FERC annual church camp. Due to the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, however, this annual church camp had to be cancelled, as was the deputies' visit that had been planned.

- 20 b. ***Give timely reports concerning the FERC of Singapore to members of the FRCA.***

20 Although a limited amount of reporting was made through (eg) church bulletins, your deputies' inability to complete their mandate in the manner planned also meant that we were unable to report as extensively as we had hoped.

- 25 c. ***Promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the FRCA and the FERC by way of exchange of speakers where the opportunity arises, and good communication concerning events that might be of interest for one another's members to attend and participate in.***

30 i. The FERC invited members of the FRCA to the various conferences and church camps they hosted; the deputies passed these invitations on, chiefly by way of local church bulletins.

30 ii. The deputies gave occasional reminders to organisers of events in Australia and some invitations were extended to members of FERC for various events. One of those events was the FRCA ministers & wives conference; Rev. Nam Tuck Chong did attend this conference, and also preached in one of our churches.

- 35 d. ***Offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible.***

 The FERC requested some assistance with pulpit supply and a number of ministers of the FRCA were found willing and able to preach there. Plans were also in place for Rev. 't Hart to speak at the 2020 Church Camp as well as preach and possibly visit their sister church in Penang, but this had to be cancelled.

40 In addition to this, the FERC requested assistance with conducting a *Colloquium Doctum* for Pastor Mark Chen with a view to calling him as their second minister. At that time Rev. Chen was pastoring the Covenant Bible Presbyterian Church in

Attadale, Western Australia. Dr. W. Bredenhof of Launceston was able to provide this assistance and the Colloquium was held in February 2020. Dr Bredenhof reported to us that the Colloquium was thorough, lasting over four hours, and included questions of both a theological and practical/pastoral nature. Potential points of difference were discussed and answered appropriately. Subsequent to this Colloquium, Rev. Chen was called and he and his family moved to Singapore in September 2020.

Meanwhile the church of which Rev. Chen had been a pastor experienced difficulties, which led to a substantial number of members, including office bearers, withdrawing from them. This Covenant Bible Presbyterian Church has no formal relationship with other churches and so they reached out to the FERC for help, who in turn encouraged them to seek help from the FRCA. The FRC Consistory of the neighbouring congregation in Melville agreed to investigate and make contact with this church. They subsequently agreed to coordinate and oversee any support given and since then some ministers of the FRCA have assisted with proclaiming God's Word to the members of this church community. Although this development is outside the mandate and jurisdiction of the deputies, we bring it to your attention since it is a practical result stemming from our sister relationship with the FERC.

e. *Invite delegates of the FERC of Singapore to our next Synod.*

An invitation to attend Synod 2021 will indeed be extended in due time. Due to current and expected travel restrictions, this invitation will include a request to address Synod via electronic recorded electronic means if travel is not possible.

f. *Liase with their respective counterparts in the Canadian Reformed Churches concerning the mutual benefits of a sister church relationship with the FERC.*

There has been no request to assist the FERC with respect to developing closer ties with the CanRC, and we have not heard of formal talks being underway. This has not been further discussed with the brothers of the FERC.

7. Concluding remarks:

While much was accomplished, the work of deputies stalled in 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It was envisaged that, with more time and a greater sense of familiarity between us, we would have more substantial discussions when meeting with them in mid 2020. This, of course, was not possible, and so we were not able to be as thorough in fulfilling our mandate as expected. Nevertheless good contact continued between the deputies and FERC over the past three years and our relationship could deepen.

Deputies conclude that The FERC of Singapore is faithful to the Lord of the Church, submits to His Word as the rule for all of life, and is zealous to carry out the church's calling to bring the gospel to a fallen world. Our sister relationship is both cherished and meaningful, and has experienced the blessing of the Lord.

8. Recommendation:

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the FERC of Singapore according to the established rules;

2. Continue to accept the agreement made which addresses the unique way that a sister church relationship with a single church can function:
 - a. It is not always feasible, nor is it always necessary to attend each other's meetings;
 - 5 b. When the FERC is deliberating important matters such as (1) external relationships with other churches, (2) doctrinal and (3) liturgical issues, the FERC will inform the FRCA;
 - c. The FERC will send a copy of its annual reports;
 - 10 d. The FERC will update the FRCA on any important issues every 6 months if needed; and
 - e. The FERC will invite delegates when there is a special event in the Church.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - 15 a. Visit the FERC of Singapore two times in the next three years to continue to strengthen our relationship;
 - b. Give timely reports concerning the FERC of Singapore to members of the FRCA;
 - 20 c. Promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the FRCA and the FERC by way of exchange speakers where the opportunity arises, and good communication concerning events that might be of interest for one another's members to attend and participate in;
 - d. Offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible;
 - e. Invite delegates of the FERC of Singapore to our next Synod.

Grounds:

- 25 1. The FERC of Singapore gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God.
2. The existing rules for exercising sister relations do not prohibit a sister church relationship with a single church, but there are elements in the exercise of this relationship that need to reflect its unique aspects.
- 30 3. The FERC of Singapore is a single congregation, has an official bond with only one other church, and may be able to benefit from assistance from time to time, and from the resources the Lord has given us.
4. Visits to Singapore and their visits to us have proven beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

1. Introduction

5 Synod Bunbury 2018 made a number of changes to the mandate received by deputies at the previous Synod. These included removing a separate, specific mandate to stay informed of the CanRC's sister church developments in North America (URCNA, OPC, RCUS, and ERQ), as well as removing the mandate to liaise with CanRC deputies in connection with developments concerning the RCN. A new clause was adopted in which questions expressed in the deputies report concerning the Blessings Christian Church were deemed of sufficient concern to be monitored in the inter-synodical period.

2. Brief Description of Church Details

Location	<i>Mostly in Canada, four churches in the U.S.</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Mostly RCN immigrants after World War II</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>62 churches & 4 formal church plants</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>19319 members of whom 11,473 are communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
	<i>Regional Synod</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Annually</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary</i>		
Website	www.canrc.org		

3. History of the Relationship

15 Correspondence with the Canadian Reformed Churches was officially initiated at Synod Armadale 1954, while a sister church relationship with the CanRC was established at Synod Albany 1959.

20 Given the decision taken at Synod Bunbury 2018 to terminate our sister relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), our relationship with the CanRC is now the oldest sister church relationship held by the FRCA. Our bond with the CanRC has historically been very close, involving significant interaction between our churches both in an official capacity as well as informally between our members. The FRCA has long used the Canadian *Book of Praise* for worship services over the years, also having been given an opportunity to contribute input to the *Standing Committee for the Book of Praise*. With the institution of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) in 1969, FRCA involvement has included both

contributing financially as well as sending students to study in Hamilton. Both churches have been active in calling each other's ministers, while travel between members of the two federations has been extensive. Members of the FRCA have also benefited over time from the printed resources produced in the CanRC, as well as the services of retired ministers. While the continued coordination and cooperation between our respective federations has been mutually beneficial, it can be stated unequivocally that especially for the FRCA our relationship with the Canadian sister churches has been and continues to be a great blessing.

4. Decision and Mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art.47) decided the following with respect to the CanRC:

Decision

1. To continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
 - b. monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to the Blessings Christian Church in line with the questions expressed in the deputies report;
 - c. stay informed on the developments concerning discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA; and
 - d. send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled in Edmonton-Immanuel during May 2019.

Grounds

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. We need to foster mutual understanding and support regarding matters that our respective federations face, including their sister church relations in North America.
3. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the personal contact at the synodical level, which reinforces our contact with them.

5. Execution of Mandate

Mandate (d): Send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled in Edmonton-Immanuel during May 2019.

Rev.Pot and Rev.Alkema were able to attend Synod Edmonton (14-23 May, 2019). As deputies from a sister-church we were given the opportunity to sit in on various advisory committee meetings, to deliver an official address to Synod, and had the privilege of the floor. As deputies we also set aside time to organise an informal

meeting with Rev. Leo de Vos of the RCNZ, addressing a number of issues relating to the functioning of that sister church relationship.

i. Decisions on interchurch relations

5 A number of decisions were made by Synod concerning relationships with churches in North America and abroad. In the North American context, existing sister church relationships with the URCNA, RCUS (Reformed Church in the United States), OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church) and ERQ (Reformed Church of Quebec) were continued. Invitations extended by the FRCNA (Free Reformed Churches of North America) and the HRC (Heritage Reformed Congregations) to enter into Level One correspondence with the CanRC were adopted.

15 A significant development at Synod Edmonton with respect to inter-church relations abroad was the decision to discontinue the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship (EF) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN), since these churches approve of developments contrary to the Lord's instruction in His Word. A letter was drafted and adopted by Synod to be presented at the next RCN Synod. The decision was also made to send this letter to all churches in the RCN. With respect to the DGK and GKN in the Netherlands, Synod Edmonton decided to continue to maintain contact with these small federations. Synod
20 Edmonton made a number of decisions with respect to Reformed church federations in Indonesia, entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) not only with the GGRI-Papua and GGRI-Kalimantan Barat (cf. the FRCA decision of Synod Armadale 2012, Art. 86), but also with the Reformed Calvinist Churches in Indonesia (GGRC).

25 **ii. Other decisions**

Several further decisions taken by Synod are worth noting. First of all, with respect to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), Synod approved the retirement of Dr. G. H. Visscher, expressing gratitude for his fruitful years of service as professor of New Testament. Dr. William (Jr) den Hollander, minister in the CanRC Langley was appointed the new professor of New
30 Testament at the CRTS.

Secondly, Synod Edmonton made a number of recommendations concerning the *Book of Praise*. In connection with the Psalms, Synod decided to seek input from the churches as to which non-Genevan renditions could be added to enhance
35 the Psalm section, and to compile a list of additional Psalm renditions for possible inclusion. With respect to the Hymns, Synod decided to seek input from the churches concerning additional and replacement hymns. This request came with an understanding that General Synod Chatham (2004) made the decision to set a limit for the number of hymns included in the *Book of Praise*, and that this
40 should not exceed 100. Synod's decisions with respect to the Psalms and Hymns also requested that the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* submit an explanatory report 18 months before the next General Synod so that prospective Psalms and Hymns could be tested in the churches with the aim of giving informed feedback to the next general synod. These decisions specify that
45 the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* (the book of worship recently and jointly produced by the URCNA and OPC) would be used as a primary source. The Standing Committee was also mandated to explore an online version and a 4 part harmony version of the Book of Praise.

5 Other items of note included a decision to revise the Lord's Supper form "by replacing gender specific pronouns intended to include both genders with pronouns that overtly include both genders where it is appropriate", and a change so that seminary students may now speak an edifying word in the churches following their second year (previously: third year) of training at the seminary. Several personal appeals were dealt with, which demonstrated both that Art 31 CO is functioning in the CanRC, and also that the consistories of the CanRC are busy with the faithful exercise of church discipline.

10 **Mandate (a): Monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed**

15 A number of significant discussions are taking place within the CanRC and are reflective of the fact that some members and churches within the CanRC feel certain current practices can (or should) be re-examined and re-evaluated. Deputies note that these discussions have arisen in part as a result of the CanRC seeking to reach out effectively to their communities with the gospel message and to have an impact on their surroundings. Also, with the increase in church plants within the CanRC in recent years has come the desire for flexibility in worship practices.

A number of areas of discussion have surfaced:

20 **i) *Whether the Book of Praise is to be the only approved book of worship for the CanRC.***

25 Among some of the churches in Canada a level of unhappiness with the *Book of Praise* exists. This sentiment has been expressed in a number of letters from various churches supporting the use of the Psalms and Hymns of the *Trinity Psalter-Hymnal* for use in public worship (in addition to the adopted *Book of Praise*). In the West, overtures along these lines were passed on to Synod Edmonton via Regional Synod West 2018. In the East, similar letters and overtures were dealt with but denied by Regional Synod East 2018, which led a number of churches to appeal that decision to Synod Edmonton.

30 Hamilton-Blessings appealed to Synod Edmonton the decision of RSE Nov.2018 to deny the overture to amend article 55 of the Church Order to read: *The 150 psalms shall have the principal place in public worship. The metrical psalms and hymns adopted by General Synod, as well as songs approved by consistory that faithfully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, shall be sung in public worship.*" Hamilton-Blessing's appeal mentioned an apparent lack of hymns commemorating Christ's birth and death, and outlined the practice in some churches of Classis Central Ontario of convening Christmas and Good Friday programs instead of worship services in order to be able to avoid the church order's requirement that only psalms and hymns from the Book of Praise are to be used in worship.

40 Although Synod Edmonton denied the appeal of Hamilton-Blessings, Consideration 4.9 of the synod decision is worth quoting:

45 "The addition of only 19 new hymns between 2001 and 2013 as indicated by Hamilton Blessings is indeed a pace that is not satisfactory for various churches in our federation. However, this does not by definition suggest a need to change the Church Order. Rather, thought could be given to creative ways to address the needs expressed by the churches within the

parameters of Article 55, which until now has proven to work well for the churches.” (Acts of Synod Edmonton, p.124.)

5 More recently, in response to an overture from Classis Central Ontario, Regional Synod East (RSE) adopted the following as part of its overture to the next General Synod: “that General Synod 2022 (Guelph) remove the limit of 100 hymns for inclusion in the Book of Praise as set in place by General Synod 2004 (Chatham).” (Press Release: Regional Synod East, November 11th, 2020)

ii) Other areas of discussion

10 In addition to the above matter, the following topics have also been the subject of discussion: the question of confessional membership, guests at the Lord’s Supper, and whether or not only ministers of sister churches may be permitted to preach on CanRC pulpits or whether it is possible for allowances to be made in certain instances for others. Some of these discussions are reported further in the next section of this report (c.f. mandate b).

15 **Mandate (b): Monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to the Blessings Christian Church in line with the questions expressed in the deputies report**

The Deputies Report to Synod Bunbury 2018 noted the following with respect to the Blessings Christian church:

20 “In regards to the Blessings Christian Church, the deputies understand from classical documents, that Blessings recently removed themselves from one classis without mutual consent and joined a neighbouring classis (cf. Classis Ontario West, September 2017). Further, we note that Blessings Christian Church has no defined church boundary or catchment area, and additionally
25 specifies its members to give evidence of commitment to mission/outreach. Deputies question how such developments function within the CanRC and whether they are consistent with the plain reading of the agreed Church Order.” (Deputies’ Report, Part A, p.31).

30 This report touched on the nature of concerns with respect to the Blessings Christian Church and also highlighted the preferred method employed in identifying concerns, namely by examining official documents. Deputies consider such a methodology to be preferable to anecdotal information, which is subject to misunderstanding and/or inaccuracies. For that reason we have sought to fulfill the mandate to “monitor
35 developments within the CanRC in relation to the Blessings Christian Church in line with the questions expressed in the deputies report” by limiting ourselves to official discussions (e.g. in CanRC magazines) and in official CanRC decisions. Detailed references to specific articles and decisions taken at major assemblies since Synod Bunbury 2018 relating to the Blessings Christian Church can be found in Appendix A.

40 Deputies also note that ministers within the CanRC have made an effort to constructively share and evaluate differing views on some of the matters identified as concerns in the deputies report. A ‘Missional Ecclesiology Forum’ for ministers was organised for January 14th-15th, 2020 in an effort to provide ministers an opportunity to hear from one another in a brotherly manner, with the stated purpose of the forum being “to build understanding and trust”. A number of topics were discussed, among
45 them the ‘evolution of Canadian Reformed Church Ecclesiology’ (cf. the published speech by Dr.J.Visscher found in *Diakonia*, Vol.33, No.4, March 2020, pp.77-80), CanRC polity, what constitutes a missional church, receiving and integrating

newcomers, missional and covenantal preaching, as well as fencing the Lord's table. Deputies see these efforts to openly discuss and debate together questions within the federation as very appropriate.

Mandate (c): Stay informed on the developments concerning discussion between the CanRC and the URCNA

A sister church relationship between the CanRC and URCNA has existed since Synod Neerlandia 2001. The early years of this relationship were characterised by concerted efforts by both federations to work towards federative unity, with both the CanRC and URCNA appointing committees to work through a number of joint issues (songbook, liturgical forms and confessions, church order, and theological education). Despite the initial enthusiasm, efforts at working towards federative unity on the part of the URCNA eased significantly, with hesitation concerning federative unity coming primarily from the American churches within the federation whose knowledge of and familiarity with the CanRC was minimal.

Synod Dunnville 2016 mandated the CCU-C (Coordinators for the Committee of Church Unity) of the CanRC:

- a) "To seek ways to facilitate the work of building unity on the local levels, as well as visiting churches and classes of the URCNA, particularly in the United States;
- b) To discuss with CERCU [Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA] how to make progress towards federative unity should Synod Wyoming [2016] mandate CERCU to pursue this." (Acts of Synod Edmonton, p.128, 2. Observations 2.1, 4.4).

In a number of ways progress was made in the inter-synodical period: a variety of meetings were held in an effort to promote unity, concurrent classes meetings were organised in different parts of the country, and cooperation between churches continued at a local level. Yet in their report to Synod Edmonton, the CCU-C noted the following:

"Since Synod London 2010, every successive URCNA Synod has taken steam out of merger efforts: all committees were gradually dismissed, it was decided to work with the OPC on a common songbook rather than the CanRC, a decision was made to 'table indefinitely' any encouragement for CERCU to move toward proposing to enter Phase 3A, and it was decided to have a breather of at least six years before CERCU makes a Phase 3A recommendation. It further notes: it is hard not to be discouraged by all these developments. And yet the coordinators are thankful that the less formal aspects of the unity pursuit continued to take steps forward" (Acts of Synod Edmonton, p.129, 2.4).

It appears that from the point of view of the URCNA, federative unity can only take place when the churches within their federation are enthusiastic about moving forward, with a recommendation coming from the churches themselves. In all likelihood, this suggests that the process of moving towards church unity will require much patience. Synod Edmonton therefore decided to consider the mandate of the CCU-C to have been completed and to not re-appoint the coordinators, the sub-committees and related committees. Responsibility for contact with the URCNA was moved to the broader committee of the CCCNA (Committee for Contact with Churches in North America). The present situation from the point of view of the CanRC is best expressed in Consideration 3.3 of the Acts of Synod Edmonton: "Synod wishes to express that

the CanRC remain committed to the pursuit of unity with the United Reformed Churches and are looking forward to reengaging in this discussion when the URCNA is ready” (Acts of Synod Edmonton, p.132).

6. Concluding Remarks

5 In monitoring the concerns raised with respect to the Blessings Christian Church, it became apparent to deputies that these developments are part of a larger dynamic within the CanRC in which various matters of church polity and liturgy are being robustly debated, and therefore a reference to a specific single church within the CanRC is neither necessary nor appropriate in a new mandate.

10 It is encouraging to see that within our Canadian Reformed sister churches there is a desire to address the matters under discussion in an appropriate and church-orderly manner. While some of these matters are still being discussed and dealt with internally by minor assemblies within the CanRC, deputies consider that from the perspective of the FRCA this process should be respected. Yet as our existing rules governing sister church relationships include the stipulation that “The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy” (Rule 2), deputies consider that a more general mandate is merited to ensure that the FRCA is kept well informed of any changes within the CanRC to the existing practices relating to church polity and liturgy.

20 The Canadian Reformed Churches continue to demonstrate great faithfulness to Scripture and a desire to serve the Lord in a manner that is pleasing to Him. The relationship we have with this federation is a rich blessing to the FRCA in a multitude of ways, and we may be thankful for the effective functioning of this sister church relationship.

25 7. Recommendation

Recommendation

1. To continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
 - b. monitor and report to synod on developments within the CanRC in relation to areas of discussion about church polity and liturgy as mentioned in the deputies’ report;
 - c. stay informed on the developments concerning the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA; and
 - d. send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled for May 2022 in Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC (Ontario).

Grounds

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- 5 2. Deputies have identified areas of ongoing discussion within the CanRC that relate to church polity and liturgy, and rule #2 for sister church relations requires mutual care for each other in these areas.
3. We need to foster mutual understanding and support regarding matters that our respective federations face, including their sister church relations in North America.
- 10 4. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the personal contact at the synodical level, which reinforces our contact with them.

Appendix A

i) *Discussions in periodicals*

5 We note the extensive discussion which has taken place in the inter-synodical period in the pages of *Clarion*, where members within the CanRC have in a brotherly fashion debated the matters of concern mentioned in the deputies' report. Examples include the following:

September 21st, 2018:

B.DeJong: *The Challenges of Being Reformed and Missional*

10 In this article, Dr.B.DeJong outlined the emphasis at Blessing Christian church of being focused on reaching out to the lost in the local community: of being *missional* in a manner that affects the practical workings of the church. He addressed the importance of the Church Order, and defended the invitation extended to a Baptist pastor to preach in a worship service in special and unique circumstances. He further discussed the decision "of the Blessings leaders not to read the liturgical forms verbatim but to
15 contextualize, crystalize, and sometimes abbreviate their content" (p.512).

September 21st, 2018

J.Visscher: *Interacting with Blessings*

20 In this article, Dr.J.Visscher responded with comments concerning the character of the church order, and described the nature of missional work in different cultural contexts. He outlined the wisdom of individual churches not moving forward on their own, but working cooperatively within the federation: "shunning both the ways of rigid conformity and maverick independence" (p.515).

25 November 2nd, 2018

In this edition of *Clarion*, Dr.J.VanVliet submitted a letter to the editor interacting with the previous articles written by Dr.B.DeJong and Dr.J.Visscher concerning the Blessings Christian Church. In this letter Dr.VanVliet took issue with two matters:
30 admission of a minister from a non-sister church to a CanRC pulpit as well as the paraphrasing of forms from the *Book of Praise*. Dr.B.DeJong's response to Dr.VanVliet defending these practices is also included in this edition of *Clarion*.

January 11th, 2019

35 S.vanLeeuwen: *To Turn or Return: A Response to the Challenge of Being Reformed and Missional*

Rev.VanLeeuwen interacted with practices in the Blessings Church, expressing reservations about a 'missional turn' and suggesting that "what we really need is an ecumenical return to the confessions that we love and cherish" (*Clarion*, Volume 68, No.1, p.14). This edition of the *Clarion* also included two letters to the editor

(Rev.P.K.A.DeBoer and Br.Richard Buist). These items were all addressed in a response from Dr.B.DeJong of the Blessings Christian Church in the same edition of *Clarion*.

5 February 22nd, 2019

J.VanVliet: *Promoting Holiness and Hospitality: The Pulpit*

10 Dr.VanVliet in this article expanded on the discussion in the November 2nd, 2018 issue of *Clarion* in which the matter of opening up the pulpit to a Baptist minister at the Blessings Christian Church was addressed. His article was responded to by Dr.B.DeJong in the same issue.

March 8th, 2019

15 In this edition of *Clarion*, both Dr.VanVliet (*Promoting Holiness and Hospitality: the Lord's Supper*) and Dr.B.DeJong (*The Invitation to the Table*) contributed articles concerning admissibility to the Lord's Supper with each submitting a response to the other's article.

March 22nd, 2019

20 Two brothers in the CanRC submitted letters to the editor. One brother argued for the correct balance between the autonomy of the local church and cooperation between churches, while the other brother wrote in defence of practices followed in the Blessings Christian Church.

August 23rd, 2019

25 *Blessings Worship Music Conference* – Besides reporting on the conference itself this edition of *Clarion* in a number of articles addressed the singability of the psalms, objections to psalm singing in the worship services, and the blessing of the psalms for worship.

ii) Decisions of assemblies

30 Decisions of the CanRC major assemblies held since Synod Bunbury 2018 include the following items relating to Blessings Christian Church:

a) *Proposal to change the questions at baptism/profession (revision of Synod 1983 Art 145)*

35 At Synod Edmonton 2019, Hamilton-Blessings requested revision of the Synod Cloverdale 1983 decision, where the Form for Baptism and Profession of Faith were changed to make vows about "confessions" rather than "creeds", and requested a return to the original wording. It was decided by Synod Edmonton not to accede to the request of Hamilton Blessings, stressing that this matter

concerning the churches in general needs to travel the ecclesiastical route through the minor assemblies (Acts of Synod Edmonton, Article 64, pp.53-55).

This decision prompted the following responses from Hamilton-Blessings:

5 “8.1.3.Blessings Christian Church is overturing Synod 2022, given the response of Synod 2019 (see General Synod Acts, Article 64) to its request for revision, to return to the original formulation in the questions for baptism and profession of faith services, re: ‘articles of the Christian faith’ and is appealing the decisions of Regional Synod East 2019 regarding guest ministers from non-sister churches (Acts, Article 11) and commemorative services (Acts, Article 10).” (Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, March 13, 2020)

10 “Next Blessings submitted an overture to amend the questions in the liturgical forms for Baptism and Profession of Faith to restore the language to reference the Apostles’ Creed. The overture was unanimously adopted after discussion.” (Press Release of Classis Central Ontario, June 5,2020)

15 The overture adopted by Classis Central Ontario was not adopted at the subsequent Regional Synod East held on November 11th, 2020:

20 “An overture from Classis Central Ontario “to overture the 2022 General Synod to amend the questions in the liturgical Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults as well as the Form for the Public Profession of Faith by replacing the term “confessions” with “Apostles’ Creed”” was not taken over by RSE.”

b) *Proposal to give local churches the liberty to decide which songs to sing in worship services*

25 The Press Release of Regional Synod East (November 14,2018) recorded a decision about “an overture from Classis Central Ontario Sept 6–7, 2018 regarding changing Article 55 of the Church Order. The change would allow local consistories to independently decide what songs to sing in the worship services. The overture was not adopted.”

Hamilton-Blessings appealed this decision of RSE to General Synod Edmonton, but General Synod denied this appeal.

30 c) *Admission of ministers from non-sister churches to the pulpit*

The Press Releases of Classis Central Ontario (September 13, 2019 and October 10, 2019) reference the judgment of Classis with respect to the admission of ministers from non-sister churches to preach on the pulpit at Hamilton-Blessings:

35 “A proposal from Burlington-Rehoboth requesting Classis to make a judgement against a practice at Hamilton-Blessings and Ottawa-Jubilee to allow ministers from non-sister churches to preach on their pulpit is discussed. After a few rounds of discussion, a committee was appointed to report back to Classis when it reconvenes on October 10. A letter from the Canadian Reformed Church at Orangeville regarding certain practices at Blessings Christian Church and the position of Classis Central Ontario regarding these practices. A draft response was discussed and will be further discussed when Classis is reconvened on October 10.” (September 13, 2019)

5 “The committee dealing with the Burlington-Rehoboth request presented its advisory report. After a number of rounds of discussion, the advisory committee met to revise its report and then presented its revised report which was adopted. Classis decided not to make a judgement against the practice of Hamilton-Blessings and Ottawa-Jubilee to allow ministers from nonsister churches to preach on their pulpit. The draft reply to the church at Orangeville was discussed. The adopted letter will be sent.” (October 10, 2019)

10 Regional Synod East of November 13, 2019 subsequently sustained an appeal from Burlington-Rehoboth in relation to “the developing practice in Hamilton-Blessings and Ottawa-Jubilee to allow ministers from non-sister churches to preach on their pulpit”. The press release of Classis Central Ontario of March 13, 2020 records that “Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church is appealing to General Synod 2022 the decision of Regional Synod East 2019 regarding guest ministers from non-sister churches (RSE 2019 Acts, Article 11).”

15 d) *Interaction from the church of Orangeville about Blessings*

20 The Press Releases of Classis Central Ontario (September 13, 2019 and October 10, 2019) mention receipt of a letter from the Canadian Reformed Church at Orangeville “regarding certain practices at Blessings Christian Church and the position of Classis Central Ontario regarding these practices.” This led to a submission from Orangeville to Regional Synod East of November 13, 2109: “In this letter Orangeville expressed some concerns it had regarding various practices in that classis that it considered as contrary to the adopted Church Order. Regional Synod judged the matter as not completed in the minor assemblies (Art. 30 CO).”

25 The decision of Classis Central Ontario of September 18, 2020 to declare a subsequent appeal from Orangeville inadmissible, was then successfully appealed by Orangeville at Regional Synod East of November 11, 2020. This means that this interaction is as not yet completed in the minor assemblies. The practices of concern are not specified in any of the press releases.

30

United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

1. Introduction

5 In a letter dated, the 31st of January 2014, the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the United Reformed Churches in North America, expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of entering into a relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). The letter went on to explain that the URCNA has two types of ecumenical relations: one, *ecclesiastical contact* and, two, *ecclesiastical fellowship*. The former is meant to lead to the latter. Further, the letter sought to receive information about the FRCA, listing a number of topics to consider; 10 e.g. the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

2. Brief description

Location	<i>Mostly (2/3) in United States of America, 1/3 in Canada</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Formed in 1996, mostly former members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America – including many Dutch immigrants after World War II</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>125 churches & 20 church plants</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>24,000 members of whom 16,000 communicant</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>Various Seminaries; e.g. MARS & WTS</i>		
Website	https://www.urchna.org		

3. History of the Relationship

15 On March 3rd 2014, the Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches (FRCA) informed the CECCA that their request would be forwarded to, and considered by, the local FRCA churches.

During the Baldivis Synod 2015, the decision was taken to proceed with contacting the URCNA. The deputies were requested to exchange information and recommend on how to proceed with this situation.

20 In 2016, Br. P Witten attended the URCNA Synod Wyoming as a non-delegated synod observer. He met with the CECCA and church details were exchanged.

Synod Bunbury 2018 was requested to renew the mandate for deputies and issued the following mandate;

4. Decision and mandate

- 5 1. To continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship.
2. To acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work.
3. To discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - 10 a. stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;
 - b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;
 - c. if invited send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport Ontario in 2020; and
 - 15 d. submit a report of work completed, six months prior to the next synod.

Grounds

1. Synod Baldivis 2015, Article 39 gave grounds for establishing contact with the URCNA.
2. This mandate is yet to be completed.
- 20 3. Personal contact at a synodical level will enable the deputies to better fulfill their mandate and help the URCNA be better informed about the FRCA.

5. Execution of Mandate

Report of Actions Undertaken

25 In gathering the information for this report (see Appendix 1), the work of Rev. W. Den Hollander and Rev. J. Bouwers is acknowledged. For the past twenty plus years, these two brothers have been working hard towards the goal of greater unity between the URCNA and the CanRC. Through their work, we have gained a clearer perspective of those details which impact this report.

30 Further, via regularly reading three magazines (Clarion, Christian Renewal and The Outlook) we have been able to obtain an insight into the URCNA, and also its relationship with the CanRC.

Finally, the information available via the URCNA church website has been most helpful. <https://www.urchna.org>

Mandate & Answers

1. ***To continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship.***

Deputies have had very limited contact with the URCNA and have prepared a recommendation; (see Recommendation)

3. ***To discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:***

- a. ***stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;***

These discussions have been delayed due to a six year moratorium, adopted by Synod Wyoming 2016.

- b. ***continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;***

Aside from a letter of introduction, sent by Relations for Sister Churches to the CECCA in 2015, an unofficial visit to Synod Wyoming in 2016 and the visit by Br. G. Swets to Synod Bunbury 2018, no further discussions have occurred with CECCA.

- c. ***send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport Ontario in 2020;***

Due to the coronavirus, Synod Wellandport (Synod Redeemer) has been postponed until 2021, DV.

6. Recommendation:

To update and renew the mandate regarding contact by the FRCA and URCNA as follows;

1. To continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2024 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship.
2. To acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work.
3. To discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;
 - b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;
 - c. send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport (Redeemer) Ontario in 2021; and the Acts of Synod Albany 2021, subject to finances;
 - d. submit a report of work completed, six months prior to the next FRCA Synod in 2024;

- e. extend an invitation to the URCNA to send an observer to the next FRCA Synod in 2024.

Grounds

- 5 1. Due to circumstances beyond the control of deputies, the mandate issued by Synod Bunbury was not able to be completed.
- 2. Discussion between the CanRC and URCNA will resume in 2022, following a six-year moratorium issued by Synod Wyoming 2016.
- 3. Deputies were unable to attend the URCNA Synod Wellandport (Redeemer) 2020.
- 10 4. The grounds issued by Synod Bunbury (Acts 63 Grounds 1,2,3) remain unchanged.

Appendix 1

URCNA Report 2019

Prepared for Deputies for Inter-church Relations Outside Australia

Introduction:

5 Synod Bunbury 2018 mandated deputies with the following five requests:

- i) *to continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to Synod 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship,*
- ii) *stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;*
- 10 iii) *to continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;*
- iv) *send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport in 2020; and*
- v) *submit a report of work completed, six months prior to the next synod.*

15 In working to complete this mandate, and especially in view of presenting a future recommendation concerning a possible sister church relationship between the URCNA and the FRCA, this report begins with a brief description of the URCNA.

20 The information for this report was primarily gained through the work of Rev. W. Den Hollander and Rev. J. Bouwers. For the past twenty plus years, these two brothers have been working hard towards the goal of greater unity between the URCNA and the CanRC. Through their work, we have gained a clearer perspective of those details which impact this report.

25 A quick index search of the magazines read in those churches (URCNA – e.g. “Christian Renewal” and CanRC.- e.g. “Clarion”) will reveal that ‘federative unity’ has been a much discussed topic. Many have expressed their thoughts regarding federative unity. The synod Acts of the respective church federations clearly testify of a sincere desire to fulfil the Lord’s prayerful desire voiced in the words of John 17: 11 “...that they may all be one,”.

Nine Topics

The following is a brief description of nine topics concerning the URCNA. They are presented in no particular order and will not address every aspect of each topic.

Topic One: Theological Training of URCNA Ministers

30 Ministerial training is largely done at two seminaries, the Mid America Reformed Seminary and the Westminster Theological Seminary in California. However, because the URCNA has no ‘affiliated’ seminary, as for example we find in the CanRC’s CRTS in Hamilton, prospective candidates receive their training at a number of different seminaries; e.g. Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville South Carolina, Puritan
35 Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids and also the CRTS.

Perhaps, because the URCNA does not have an ‘affiliated’ seminary, i.e. a seminary ‘controlled’ by the churches, their prospective candidates must receive an approval from their local church to initiate their theological study, have that study monitored by the local

church, and in the end, it is the local church that will declare them eligible for call, after the candidate has been examined by their classis.

5 The URCNA Church Order has a number of appendixes which deal with this matter; e.g. Appendix 1 - Guidelines for a Thoroughly Reformed Theological Education. This CO does not recognise the candidacy of/via 'Exceptional Gifts' (see FRCA's Church Order Art 8). However, the newly Proposed Joint Church Order, which has not yet been approved by the URCNA, does recognise 'Exceptional Circumstances' (PJCO Art. 4 d).

Topic Two: Church Government

10 The URCNA has a Reformed church government, which is presbyterial, as the church is governed by elders, not by broader assemblies. The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order. Their church order finds its origins in the Synod of Dordrecht 1618-1619. The federation gathers for a synodical conference (General Synod) at least every three years, but recently have met every two years. Each congregation sends two delegates to the General Synod.
15 Each delegate is assigned a subcommittee, which makes the recommendations to be actioned by the General Synod.

A joint committee of the URCNA and CanRC has proposed a revised CO, known as the Proposed Joint Church Order. Although the PJCO has been approved by the CanRC (2013), the URCNA are yet to do so.

20 Topic Three: Relationship URCNA & CanRC

The URCNA and CanRC church relationship is known as an Ecclesiastical Fellowship, wherein pulpit exchanges are relatively common and member attestations are recognised. One of the dynamics of the relationship between the CanRC and the URCNA is that it is largely limited to the churches that are in Canada, for obvious geographical reasons.

25 Joint work has been done recently in Queretero Mexico where the URCNA's federational mission coordinator has been involved in preliminary evaluation and engagement on the field, where the CanRC have sent a missionary. Further a recent church plant south of Winnipeg has called a URC man who studied at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and became a candidate in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Another recent
30 seminary grad (from Korea, a Canadian Reformed candidate) has taken a call to a United Reformed congregation in Ontario.

More cooperation is being experienced in field of Christian education, especially in areas where new schools are being started or where older schools are struggling somewhat. Likewise, there is good cooperation among the youth at youth retreats, study weekends,
35 Roots conferences, etc. In Ontario there is very good cooperation at youth camps, e.g. the CanRC initiated Campfire, the URCNA Tamarack Camp.

Pastors with their wives from both federations have been enjoying good fellowship at Western and Eastern Ministerial Conferences in Canada. And, in some areas there has been helpful interaction at joint consistory meetings. However, at a recent meeting (May 9th
40 2019) featuring Rev. Den Hollander and Rev Bouwers, some 'partisan' frustration was evident at the churches inability to become one. (Christian Renewal, 7th June 2019)

Currently, the official status of merger talks between the URCNA and CanRC have been placed on hold until 2022. This was a decision of the URCNA, and not a mutual agreement of the two federations. Exactly how these merger talks will resume is uncertain. Further, a
45 decision by Synod Wyoming 2016 to also delay discussions on several URCNA Classis

Pacific overtures to change the Proposed Joint Church Order, adds to the uncertainty of this future federative unity.

In view of this, we also note Synod Edmonton's decision to not reappoint the Committee for Church Unity. (Taken from Acts of GS Edmonton 2019)

5 4. *Recommendations (Acts, pg 127)*

4.4 *To not reappoint the Committee for Church Unity (CCU – including the coordinators, the sub-committees, and related committees (Church Order, Theological Education, Common Songbook, and Creeds and Forms).*

Topic Four: Worship and Liturgy

10 The URCNA worship services may be described as traditional Reformed, seeking to be faithful to the regulative principle, as we understand it from Lord's Day 35 of the Heidelberg Catechism. A new 'song book', known as the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, was recently adopted for use in worship. The TPH was the result of a joint twenty-year project of the URCNA and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It has been well received and was also proposed, but
15 not adopted, for use within CanRC worship. (see GS Edmonton 2019)

Although special emphasis of priority for the Psalms is present within their worship services, local consistories may select songs for worship, which are not in the TPH. The Three Forms of Unity are integrated within worship, as afternoon catechism preaching is also normative.

Topic Five: Mission

20 Mission is a top priority within the URCNA's ecclesiastical pursuits. Currently, there are mission projects happening in Italy, Romania, India, Honduras, Mexico, Philippines and Costa Rica. There are 29 ministers specifically called to mission work. A fulltime special Mission Coordinator, Rev. Richard Bout, oversees all mission projects. They also have a special Handbook for Church Planting and are very active in starting new congregations in
25 many places, especially in the United States.

Topic Six: Ecumenical Relations

The CECCA (Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad) is responsible for the URCNA relationships internationally, or abroad. It's their mandate to initiate, respond to and cultivate ecumenical relations with other denominations and federations. Currently, the
30 CECCA has official contact with five churches internationally; Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ), the United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC), Reformed Churches of South Africa (South Africa), Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC-NTT), and Free Church of Scotland the continuing church (FCC).

Their first official phase in church relationships is known as Ecumenical Contact. Their
35 second phase in a relationship is called an Ecumenical Fellowship or Sister Churches. Here the two denominations share a "oneness" despite their differing geographical boundaries. According to the guidelines of CECCA, ecumenical fellowship comes to expression in several ways: occasional pulpit fellowship, intercommunion, exercise of mutual concerns and admonition, agreement to respect each federation's discipline, joint action in areas of
40 common responsibility and an agreement to inform each other of changes in polity, doctrine or practice.

The URCNA have an active involvement in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, as well as in the International Council of Reformed Churches.

The following Articles are taken from the URCNA CO:

Article 34 – Ecumenical Relations on a Church Level

Churches are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with Reformed congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and demonstrate faithful allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church is to give an account of its ecumenical activities to classis. Fraternal activities between congregations which need not be reported to classis may include occasional pulpit exchanges, table fellowship, as well as other means of manifesting unity.

Article 35 – Ecumenical Relations on a Classis Level

The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery. The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honouring our federative bond.

Article 36 – Ecumenical Relations on a Federation Level

The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision with respect to ecclesiastical fellowship shall require ratification by a majority of the synodically approved Consistories in the federation. Such a decision with respect to church union shall require a two thirds vote of a synod and shall require ratification by two-thirds of the synodically-approved Consistories in the federation.

(Taken from Acts Synod Wheaton 2018 See... CECCA Report pg.223)

The following terminology document serves as the mandate of our committee:

The first step, **Ecumenical Contact (phase 1)**, will follow a period of initial exploration. Ecumenical Contact will focus on studying matters of general concern between the URCNA and the “foreign” federation. This step will be implemented, where possible and desirable, by:

1. Exchange of official observers at major assemblies such that one visit be made to one assembly/church per year to churches with whom we have ecumenical relations.
2. Consultation on issues of joint concern, including:
 - a. authority and sufficiency of Scripture;
 - b. creeds and confessions;
 - c. formula of subscription to the confessions;
 - d. significant factors in the two federations’ history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues;
 - e. church order and polity;
 - f. liturgy and liturgical forms;
 - g. preaching, sacraments and discipline;
 - h. theological education for ministers;
 - i. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the broadest assemblies;
 - j. Exchange of denominational Church Directories (Yearbooks);
 - k. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
 - l. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order;

- m. *Exchange of the most recently denominationally published editions of Psalters/Hymnals;*
- n. *Exchange of information regarding current ecumenical relations.*

5 The second step, **Ecumenical Fellowship (phase 2)**, will focus on the oneness of the URCNA with the “foreign” federation, even though we are separated by geographical boundaries. This step will be implemented according to church order article 36, (in addition to the points listed under step one above) by:

1. *Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option);*
2. *Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other’s members at the Lord’s Supper– but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership as regulated by each consistory (session);*
3. *The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity;*
4. *Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another;*
5. *Joint action in areas of common responsibility;*
6. *Agreement that, as changes in polity, doctrine or practice are instituted, the churches will inform each other – understanding that the adoption of substantial changes may jeopardize the established ecumenical relationship.*

20 **Topic Seven: Church Life**

Church life is very much like that of churches in Australia. There is much Bible Study, local outreach, and many congregational activities in the community. They participate in education in many CanRC schools (Smithers, Langley, Neerlandia, Coaldale, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Jordan, London, Chatham, Brampton, Fergus). A quick web search of a local congregation reveals a vibrant church life. (e.g. see www.bethanyurc.net)

Similar to the CanRC, many URChurches in Canada have post war immigration roots. In America the churches in Michigan and the Midwest trace their heritage to the ‘Afscheiding’ in the Netherlands – the immigration in 1847 and the formation of the CRC in MI in 1857.

30 Since the formation of the URCNA in 1996 a number of newer churches have been planted, where there are a number of people who have come to a commitment of the Reformed faith. These people do not have the same historical heritage, but express a strong commitment to a confessional heritage. In a number of these churches the practice of weekly communion would be quite common.

Topic Eight: Recent Synod decisions

35 The main recent decision taken by the URCNA was the adoption of a new song book, “Trinity Psalter Hymnal”. Formed in cooperation with the OPC, this song book includes the 150 psalms and many additional hymns. The TPH includes the Three Forms of Unity, plus the Westminster Standards.

40 The URCNA have discontinued contact with Liberated churches in Holland. URCNA Synods also make decisions regarding doctrinal statements. For example, Synod 2001 Days of Creation; Synod 2012 Federal Vision; Synod 2018 Marriage Affirmations. As synod declarations, these statements serve to unify the URCNA during times of doctrinal debate. Further, they provide a public expression of belief for all others.

Topic Nine: Federations details

5 The URCNA do not have a Regional Synod, and would object to its inclusion as a major assembly. They delegate to GS from each church two office bearers. Any overtures to GS must first be considered by Classis. Their GS usually last a week. They have a 'Stated Clerk' for the federation. Similarly, each Classis also has a Stated Clerk, who serves each GS with a report. (see Synod Wheaton 2018, Acts, pg. 16)

The URCNA has 125 churches, a total of 24000 members; (16,000,381 in USA; 8000,236 in Canada). (Taken from 2018 Directory – URCNA, pg. 11)

10 The URCNA is comprised of 8 classes, of which five are in America and three in Canada. Five in the US and three in Canada.

In Canada:	In the US
Classis Ontario-East	Classis Central US
Classis Southwestern Ontario	Classis Eastern US
Classis Western Canada	Classis Michigan
	Classis Southwest US
	Classis Pacific Northwest

Conclusion

20 This report has provided a brief description of 'nine topics' regarding the URCNA. It highlights just some of the key aspects of a church federation. We acknowledge that more information will be needed and forthcoming.

Ground 3 of the mandate given to deputies states the following:

“Personal contact at a synodical level will enable the deputies to better fulfil their mandate and help the URCNA be better informed about the FRCA”.

25 Due to the postponement of Redeemer Synod 2020, the deputies were not able to fully complete their mandate.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

1. Introduction

5 Synod Bunbury 2018 accepted the proposal of Classis North of 9 February 2018 to investigate the possibility of entering into fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Deputies were mandated to report with more information, and make a recommendation about the feasibility of further ecumenical contact.

2. Brief description

Location	<i>United States and Canada</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Established in 1936, after separation from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Westminster Standards (Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism, and Shorter Catechism)</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>281 churches & 46 church plants</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>31,472 members (23,175 communicant)</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>	<i>--</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>2-4 times/year</i>
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Annually</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>No denominational seminary; approved list of seminaries, and a denominational training institute (Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC)</i>		
Website	<i>http://www.opc.org</i>		

NB: *Membership/church figures as of December 31, 2019.*

3. History of the relationship

- 10 a. **Visit to FRCA by CEIR members.** In 2011 Rev Jack Sawyer and Mr Mark Bube visited the FRCA as members of the OPC's Committee for Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR). They made a presentation to the FRC of Southern River on Home Missions, and met with Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad. Rev Sawyer had previously attended the FRCA's Synod Armadale 1990, in the capacity of a fraternal delegate of the RCNZ, where he was serving as a minister at that time.
- 15
- b. **79th OPC General Assembly (2012).** Upon a positive recommendation from the CEIR following this visit, the 79th General Assembly of the OPC (2012) authorized the invitation of an FRCA observer to a future General Assembly. This decision was communicated by a letter from the CEIR dated 21 September 2012, and included the following grounds:
- 20

1. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia were charter members of the ICRC, though they have since withdrawn.
 2. The FRCA are in Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN). They have been negotiating Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand since 1990.
 3. The FRCA subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity, and maintain a Reformed polity through the Church Order of Dort. They use the Canadian Reformed Anglo-Genevan book of praise, and a Genevan order of worship.
 4. They support mission work in Papua New Guinea, together with the RCNZ, and the CanRC.
 5. Their ministers are trained at the Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton, Ontario and there is a significant calling of ministers back and forth between Australian and Canada.
 6. In September 2011 CEIR members Mark T. Bube, and Jack W. Sawyer met with the FRCA deputies for contact with churches abroad in Western Australia, and a very good initial colloquium was held which indicated a common commitment to the Reformed Faith. The trip included a number of contacts with brethren with ties to the RCNZ, OPC, CanRC, and Westminster Theological Seminary, and an opportunity for Mr. Sawyer to lecture on OPC Home Missions and present the CHMCHE 75th Commemorative DVD to a large, appreciative audience.
- c. ***Overture from FRC Southern River.*** FRC of Southern River subsequently overtured Classis North of 9th February 2018 to mandate deputies “to explore in greater detail whether there is sufficient unity and shared Scriptural confession, belief and practice between the OPC and the FRCA to establish Ecclesiastical Contact.”
 - d. ***Classis North of 9 February 2018.*** Classis adopted the proposal from the FRC Southern River “to investigate the possibility of entering fellowship with the OPC.”
 - e. ***Synod Bunbury 2018.*** A letter from the FRC Launceston expressed full support for the proposal to establish Ecclesiastical contact, making mention in particular of the OPC’s vocal stance on the matter of women in office against the CRCNA at NAPARC and against the RCN at the ICRC, and the OPC’s long history of standing valiantly for the inerrant truth of God’s Word. Rev. Jack Sawyer was delegated by the CEIR to attend Synod Bunbury 2018, and was present as a fraternal delegate.

4. Decision and mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art. 83) decided the following with respect to the OPC:

Decision

1. To accede to the proposal of Classis North.

2. To mandate deputies for relations with churches abroad to:
 - a. establish contact with the OPC via its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR);
 - b. investigate the OPC and report to the next Synod with information about these churches and a recommendation as to the feasibility of further ecumenical contact; and
 - c. send one delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC during the next 3 years.

Grounds

1. The 79th General Assembly of the OPC (2012) authorized its CEIR to invite the FRCA to send a fraternal observer to a future General Assembly. The presence and address of Rev J Sawyer at Synod Bunbury 2018 has confirmed the OPC's desire to establish contact with the FRCA.
2. The OPC is an English-speaking confessionally-Reformed federation which presents itself as having a commitment to the reformed faith. It has a history of standing valiantly for the inerrant truth of God's Word, as evidenced by its stance with respect to the RCN.
3. The OPC enjoy long standing sister-church relations with several of our sister-churches, including the CanRC, the RCNZ and the KPCK.
4. Whilst Synod 1990 Art 58 decided to concentrate on relations and contact with churches that are geographically closer to us, the above grounds are compelling reasons to pursue this relationship.
5. Australian students at CRTS benefit from OPC internships and in addition the OPC has been active in Asia missions.

5. Execution of Mandate

The following actions were undertaken in order to complete the mandate:

a. *Establish contact with the OPC* (c.f. mandate 2a)

Email contact was made with several members of the OPC's CEIR, including Rev Jack Sawyer. Although plans were made to meet with Rev. Sawyer at the Canadian Reformed Synod of May 2019, he was unable to attend this Synod due to illness. Sadly, Rev. Sawyer subsequently went home to be with the Lord in August 2019. Planned discussions at the OPC General Assembly in 2020 also did not eventuate as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and contact has only been possible by correspondence.

b. *Send a delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC* (c.f. mandate 2c)

Plans were made for one deputy to attend the 87th (2020) General Assembly of the OPC, scheduled to be held in Pennsylvania, in June 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the convening of the 87th General Assembly was postponed until June 2021. Given the timing of Synod Albany 2021, there were

no plans to attend this General Assembly, and instead to await the decision of synod regarding a future mandate in this regard.

c. Investigate the OPC and report with information about these churches (c.f. mandate 2b)

5 In the absence of personal meetings or a visit to the OPC General Assembly, deputies had to rely on written information about the OPC, much of which is readily available online, as well as published resources about the OPC (c.f. the select bibliography at the end of the Appendix).

10 One of our deputies had previously attended several meetings of the OPC General Assembly, as well as various OPC Presbytery meetings while serving as fraternal delegate of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We were therefore able to draw on these experiences, including a review of all the reports to and decisions of the Canadian Reformed Synods regarding the OPC, and the decisions of the OPC regarding the Canadian Reformed Churches, dating back
15 to the establishment of contact in the 1960s.

The mandate to report with information about the OPC has been provided as an appendix to this report. It is deliberately quite extensive, since this is the first time that a detailed overview of the OPC has been provided to our churches. In the estimation of deputies, it is important that our churches have the information
20 they need to make a well-informed and responsible decision, and the goal of this extensive report is to provide the churches with the necessary information to do that. The Appendix thus needs to be carefully read and considered before weighing the considerations and recommendations that follow immediately below.

25 **6. Concluding remarks**

There is no question that the OPC has a different history from our own, and also has its own unique distinctives. Yet this cannot be the single factor that determines whether to pursue an ecclesiastical relationship. Instead, making a judgment on this needs to take into consideration factors such as:

30 1. There is great value and benefit in having contacts and relationships with churches elsewhere in the world that share our commitment to the Reformed faith, and that have a proven track record in maintaining theological orthodoxy, as the OPC's history clearly makes evident. We are called to recognize and honour Christ's church gathering work, and to responsibly care for each other
35 where feasible.

2. The ideal goal of such ecclesiastical relations is to pursue a sister relationship, according to C.O. Art 46 "*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.*"

40 3. Despite some differences in emphasis between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, there is a fundamental unity in confession of the Reformed faith that enables relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship to be established on that basis. The FRCA has long recognised this, as evidenced by the fact that our relationship with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
45 (KPCCK), which holds to the Westminster Standards, stems back to 1976. The RCNZ uses the Westminster Standards alongside the Three Forms of Unity. The

fact that the OPC has Presbyterian aspects in its church polity and confessions, therefore, is not in itself a reason for not pursuing an ecclesiastical relationship.

4. In addition to the positive conclusions found in the Appendix of this report, our sister churches the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) serve as two witnesses that both testify that the OPC is a faithful Reformed church.
5. Differences of practice between the OPC and the CanRC have been well documented and worked through over many years. For a relationship between the OPC and the FRCA to be fruitful, it would be appropriate to recognise the work that has been done by others. Rather than embark on a relationship that revolves around discussion of differences, a potential relationship would be better served by helping one another in positive ways to defend and maintain the Reformed faith.
6. It is important that we remain even-handed where possible in our ecumenical relations. A case for pursuing ecclesiastical contact with the OPC could be made in light of our existing sister church relationship with the KPCK, which has similar confessional standards and church polity to the OPC, and yet where there are very real language and cultural barriers that would not be present in our contact with the OPC. At the same time, a case could equally be made to pursue ecclesiastical contact with other sister churches of the Canadian Reformed Churches that are in North America, such as the United Reformed Churches (URCNA), and the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), particularly since these are churches are even closer to our own heritage than the OPC, and also use the Three Forms of Unity.
7. Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art 83) already took into consideration the decision of Synod Armadale 1990 (Art 58) to concentrate on relations and contact with churches that are geographically closer to us, on the grounds that there were compelling reasons to pursue a relationship with the OPC despite this. Moreover, the global ecclesiastical landscape of today is not the same as it was when Synod 1990 made its decision to focus on geographical proximity. While our human resources remain limited, we now do have access to means of communication and contact that were unthinkable at that time. There are also opportunities to connect in person at events where fraternal delegates from both churches are present, such as broader assemblies of mutual sister churches, e.g CanRC, RCNZ, KPCK.
8. At the same time a sister relationship is not always feasible or realistic, sometimes for pragmatic reasons (c.f. the considerations of Synod Armadale 1990, Art. 58). Our present rules for sister church relations assume that considerable effort needs to be invested to remain acquainted with the situation of sister churches and to fulfil our obligations towards them. Synod Armadale 1990 decided to limit mandates for deputies for interchurch relations to a manageable level, and to limit contacts and relations with churches geographically closer to our sister churches to a minimum level, drawing attention to (a) the fact that we are a smaller federation with limited resources and manpower; (b) the workload of office-bearers in our local churches; and (c) the duplication of effort where sister churches in other parts of the world already have intensive contact with Reformed churches in their region. We have to be prudent with our use of time, energy, and financial resources, and a sister church relationship has to be meaningful.

- 5 9. Factors like these played a role in Synod Baldivis 2015 deciding not to pursue a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches of Brazil (Art. 129), without in any way calling into question their theological orthodoxy. The different histories and theological emphases of the OPC do create practical differences and challenges which we might not experience in a close ecclesiastical relationship with a church that shares our own theological heritage more closely, such as with churches from the continental Reformed tradition.
- 10 10. Distance is also a factor, because there are less opportunities to meet in person, and because overseas trips involve considerable time and expense. Our geographic location prevents us from enjoying the same level of interaction with the OPC similar to the level of interaction that our sister churches the Canadian Reformed Churches can have with the OPC. They have opportunity to readily visit one another's classes and presbytery meetings, cross paths at conferences and events, and arrange meetings at assemblies of sister churches in North America where they both have fraternal delegates present. As a result they have real and regular opportunities for contact, dialogue, and meaningful interaction, which we cannot expect to have. Our absence from the International Conference of Reformed Churches is a related consideration, since this is the venue that the OPC normally uses to arrange meetings with fraternal delegates of churches with which it has ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 15 20 11. While it is not realistic and responsible to have a sister church relationship with every faithful Reformed church, the question can be asked whether there are instead options for more realistic levels of contact that still enable us to honour our calling to maintain the unity of Christ's church, and to engage with faithful churches in a way that has mutual benefit, all the while exercising fraternal relations responsibly and meaningfully. Given that previous synods have decided to maintain only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship with other churches, namely a sister-church relationship (Synod Armadale 1985, Art. 74 sub II), and to discontinue the idea of "temporary ecclesiastical contact" (Synod Bedfordale 1992, Art. 95), any proposals for ecclesiastical contact outside of the context of a sister church relationship, whether in relation to the OPC or in relation to other churches, would have to come from the churches.
- 25 30 12. Via the proposal of Classis North of January 2018 and the decision of Synod Bunbury 2018, the churches have given a strong indication of the desirability of pursuing contact with the OPC. In a world of increasing secularization, there is benefit to have contacts with a church that shares our commitment to the authority of Scripture and to being confessionally Reformed. The OPC has also been active in Asia missions, and has significant expertise and experience in areas such as missions and church planting that can benefit us. In addition, Australian students at CRTS benefit from OPC internships.
- 35 40 Attendance at each other's broader assemblies comes with the additional advantage that it can also be used for dialogue with representatives from other sister churches like the CanRC and RCNZ, and so can assist in fulfilling the mandates concerning these churches.
- 45 50 13. While our geographic distance from faithful Reformed churches in other parts of the world can become a reason for a lower level of engagement in ecumenical relations, it should equally make us cautious not to retreat into isolationism. Our geographic isolation makes it all the more important to find global partners that share our commitment to the Reformed faith, so that we can experience the benefits and responsibilities of ecumenical ties that honour Christ's work, and

help strengthen our mutual resolve to preach the gospel and defend against error in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy.

7. Recommendation

Deputies come with the following recommendation:

5 **Recommendation**

1. To express thanks to God for the Reformed witness evident in the OPC throughout its history, its constant repudiation of theological liberalism, its commitment to being confessionally Reformed, and its commitment to the authority and truth of the holy Scriptures.
- 10 2. Not to pursue a sister church relationship with the OPC at this time.
3. To await recommendations from the churches about the merits of pursuing ecclesiastical contacts with the OPC outside the context of a sister church relationship:
 - 15 a. that enable mutual assistance, encouragement, and exhortation to live as churches of God in this world;
 - b. that promote the Reformed faith, and assist each other in deviating from it in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy.
 - 20 c. that take into consideration the geographic distance and limited opportunities for meeting in person, different emphases in church polity, and responsible use of time and resources.
4. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work, and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to maintain contact with the OPC via its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR);
 - 25 b. to send one delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC during the next 3 years.
 - c. to invite the OPC to send a fraternal delegate to our next Synod in 2024 DV.

Grounds

- 30 1. The OPC is a confessionally Reformed federation that lives up to its commitment to the Reformed faith, and has a history of standing valiantly for the inerrant truth of God's Word.
- 35 2. Despite the decision of Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art. 83), the intent of Synod Armadale 1990, Art.58 continues to have some relevance. While there are substantial reasons to pursue a relationship with the OPC, geographic distance, limited opportunities for meetings in person, different emphases in church polity, and responsible use of time and resources, make pursuing a sister church relationship not feasible at this time.

3. Although there are clear benefits in maintaining a certain level of contact with the OPC, previous FRCA synods have decided to maintain only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship with other churches, namely a sister-church relationship (Synod Armadale 1985, Art. 74 sub II; Synod Bedfordale 1992, Art. 95). Hence a recommendation to pursue any other type of relationship in our interchurch contacts (i.e. outside the context of a sister church relationship) can only be considered if a proposal comes from the churches.
5
4. The OPC's invitation for the FRCA to send a fraternal observer to a future General Assembly is still outstanding. The previous mandate to attend a General Assembly of the OPC in the past 3 years could not be completed due to unforeseen restrictions as a result of a global pandemic. There is still value in sending a delegate, in order to become better acquainted with the OPC, and to have opportunity to personally introduce them to the FRCA.
10
5. The OPC has already shown evidence of a desire to establish contact with the FRCA by authorizing the invitation of an FRCA observer to a future General Assembly, and by the attendance of a member of the CEIR at Synod Bunbury 2018. Inviting an observer to our next Synod confirms our desire for contact, and gives the OPC opportunity to become better acquainted with us.
15

APPENDIX: Information about the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

1. History

a. *Formation*

5 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has its roots in the English Reformation of the sixteenth century. The confessional standards adopted by the Westminster Assembly (1643-49) were taken to the United States by Scottish, Irish, and English immigrants, leading to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUSA).

10 The PCUSA maintained a steadfast and faithful confession of the Reformed faith throughout the 19th century, but succumbed to the attacks of modernism in the early 1900s.

15 Following the spiritual demise of Princeton Seminary, the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia was established in 1929 under the leadership of Dr. J. Gresham Machen. Machen continued to be an outspoken critic of the modernist agenda in the PCUSA and in 1934 he was brought to trial by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in 1934, and along with others was removed from office, these decisions being upheld by the General Assembly of 1936.

20 On 11 June 1936, 34 ministers, 17 ruling elders, and 79 members signed a statement, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was formed. The name was chosen to highlight the orthodoxy of the church in following Scripture as the rule for doctrine and life, as well as reflecting the Presbyterian emphasis in theology and church government.

b. *Development*

25 The OPC suffered various challenges in its earlier years, including the sudden death of Machen in 1937, and the lack of church buildings and other facilities. An additional challenge that the OPC faced in its infancy was a new conflict between two schools of thought that had until now been united in their anti-modernist endeavour. Some argued that the church should also defend premillennial dispensationalism and complete abstinence from alcoholic beverages, which came to a head at the General Assembly in 1937. The church affirmed that dispensationalism fractures the covenant of grace and is not in accordance with Scripture, and that what Scripture forbids is drunkenness rather than moderate use of alcohol. Subsequently a group of dissenters ended up leaving the OPC to form the Bible Presbyterian Church, effectively strengthening the Reformed character and confessional commitment of the OPC.

40 The OPC in this time also benefited strongly from the conservative leadership of the Westminster faculty, as well as faithful ministerial leaders that blended Dutch Reformed backgrounds (Cornelius Van Til, R.B. Kuiper, Ned B. Stonehouse, J.J. DeWaard), with Scottish and Irish Presbyterian backgrounds (John Murray, Alexander Davison) in its ranks, alongside representatives of American Old School Presbyterianism (Robert Marsden, Everett DeVelde, Paul Woolley, Edward J. Young).

45 Throughout the years there have been times where the church had to deal with controversies in its midst. In many instances, such as with Dr. Gordon H. Clark in 1940s, this led to the exodus of those who promoted a broader evangelical

perspective. A similar outcome resulted from numerous failed attempts in the 1980s to unite the OPC with the more broad Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Through these trials, however, the Lord brought about a renewed Reformed and confessional consciousness within the OPC.

5 2. Current overview

The statistician reported to the General Assembly that, at the end of 2019, membership in the OPC consisted of 31,472 members, of which 23,175 were communicant members, and 7,729 non-communicant members. There were 568 ministers, labouring in 281 congregations, and in 46 mission works. The churches are divided into 16 regional churches (presbyteries) throughout the USA and Canada.

3. Doctrine

- 15 a. **Constitution.** The constitution of the OPC consists of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory for the Public Worship of God.
- b. **Scripture.** The constitution is not the final authority in the OPC, but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the primary standard, to which all human documents are subordinate. The OPC confesses the Holy Scriptures to be the infallible Word of God, and the only rule for faith and life.
- 20 c. **Confessions.** The OPC is a confessional Reformed church. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* was adopted at the inception of the OPC, and along with the *Larger Catechism* and *Shorter Catechism*, is received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. The Confession is the 1788 edition adopted by American Presbyterianism, which incorporates some
25 modifications from the one prepared by the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s, chiefly statements that separate the state's involvement with the church.
- d. **Book of Church Order.** The *Book of Church Order* consists of three elements: the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory for the Public
30 Worship of God. These are considered by the OPC to be consistent with God's Word, and regulate the government, discipline, and worship of the OPC respectively.
- e. **Office-bearers.** The doctrinal standards are binding upon office-bearers only. All ministers, ruling elders, and deacons are required to accept them as
35 containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. They are also required to approve of the OPC's standards for government, discipline, and worship, by accepting the Book of Church Order. (An interesting anomaly is that one of the vows required of parents when presenting their children for baptism reads: "Do you promise to teach diligently to [name of child] the principles of our
40 holy Christian faith, revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and summarized in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church?")

4. Church Government

- 45 a. **Presbyterianism.** The OPC traces its heritage to the Westminster Assembly, which consciously rejected an Episcopalian system of church government (where the church is ruled by a hierarchy of bishops) and a Congregational system of church government (where the church is ruled independently by

members), and instead defended a Presbyterian system of church government (where the church is ruled by a body of elders or *presbyters*, including the minister). Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church, and His Word is the final authority in all matters of faith and life. One significant difference in church-culture is that like many other Presbyterian churches, the OPC views themselves as one church, and not a federation of churches.

5

b. *Session.* The Session is the equivalent of our consistory, and consists of one or more ministers plus at least two ruling elders, who are chosen by the congregation through lawful election. It oversees public worship and has the responsibility to ensure the faithful preaching of God’s Word, the administration of the sacraments, and exercises Christian discipline. Session members also engage in pastoral visitation for spiritual encouragement and oversight. While some congregations practice term eldership, most ruling elders are installed for life.

10

c. *Presbytery.* The congregations of the OPC are organized into a regional churches, each of which has a Presbytery as its governing body. This is made up of the ministers and ruling elders commissioned to represent their local churches. Amongst other things it meets in order to promote the combined resources of the churches in spreading the gospel (e.g. evangelism, church planting, establishing new churches), to resolve questions concerning doctrine or discipline, and to supervise and examine candidates for the ministry. It governs the spiritual welfare of local churches, but must also respect their liberty.

15

20

d. *General Assembly.* The General Assembly ordinarily meets annually, and consists of ministers and ruling elders delegated by their respective presbyteries. It is the final court of appeal for judgments on doctrine or discipline that couldn’t be resolved by sessions and presbyteries. It also deals with other matters concerning the worship, witness, and welfare of the entire church, as well as promotes the unity of the church through ecumenical relations, the work of both foreign and home mission, and providing training and educational materials.

25

e. *Office-bearers.* Only men can be ordained to the special offices of ministers, elders, and deacons, on the grounds that this is the clear teaching of Scripture. Deacons oversee ministries of mercy and love, but don’t exercise spiritual oversight with ministers and elders on the session. Members can serve on committees that assist with aspects of church life, which happens under the oversight of the session.

30

35

f. *Membership.* To be received as a member, a credible profession of faith in the triune God is required, an acknowledgment of repentance and trust in Jesus Christ, and a confession that the Bible is the Word of God and contains the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation. There must also be a commitment to accept instruction in doctrine and life, and to participate as a living member of the church and submit to its government and discipline. Communicant members are admitted to the Lord’s Supper and have voting rights. Their children are baptised and considered to be non-communicant members.

40

g. *Discipline.* For church discipline, the original jurisdiction over most members lies with the local session (elders and ministers). Since the church membership (and credentials) of ministers are in the presbytery, original jurisdiction for their discipline lies in the presbytery.

45

5. Theological Training

- 5 **a. *Seminary.*** The OPC does not have a federational seminary, or require attendance at a particular seminary, and this is closely linked to its history. The onset of liberalism at Princeton Seminary led several men who would later be leading figures in the early years of the OPC to set up Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929. This seminary had an almost exclusive bond with OPC until the mid-1960s, at which time a broadening of interests led to an increasingly greater representation of non-OPC members in the faculty and the Board.
- 10 **b. *Committee on Christian Education.*** Also relevant here is the work of The Committee on Christian Education (see below under “Other Ministries”). As part of its role it coordinates ministerial internships, and maintains contact with several seminaries with the goal of strengthening ministerial training of OPC men. This is one way that the church seeks to play an active role in the development of its theological students. Some of the seminaries where ministers have been trained include Mid-America Reformed Seminary (Dyer, Indiana), Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), Westminster Theological Seminary (Escondido, California), Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Greenville, South Carolina), Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), and Reformed Theological Seminary (Orlando, Florida).
- 15 **c. *Ministerial Training Institute.*** Particular mention also should be made of The Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC (MTIOPC), which was established in 1998. It is an in-house OPC training institute that provides supplementary education for men working towards the ministry, for ministers, and (as appropriate) for ruling elders. Its goal is to supplement the training that OPC candidates for the ministry receive at seminaries. While it does not offer a full seminary curriculum, it provides instruction in five key areas: 1. The Reformed confessions; 2. Church polity; 3. History, character, and defining characteristics of the OPC; 4. Practical theology; 5. Presuppositional apologetics. Courses are taught by experienced OPC ministers and elders, and are targeted particularly towards men who are preparing for or in ministry, to help equip them for informed and effective ministry that conforms to Scripture. The Ministerial Training Institute is not a parachurch organization, but serves the church, is answerable to the church, and its Board of Directors are appointed by the church.
- 20 **d. *Presbytery.*** The role of Presbytery is a key component in overseeing prospective ministers. It not only admits men to the gospel ministry, but takes prospective candidates under their care, examines them, and supervises them. Ministers are considered members of a presbytery - which holds their credentials, ordains, and installs them - and not of a local congregation. A presbytery may, with the concurrence of a minister, request a local session to exercise pastoral care over a minister in its behalf, but final jurisdiction with respect to him remains with the presbytery.
- 25 **e. *Timothy Conference.*** The Timothy Conference has been held annually since 2008, and is geared to encourage young men (especially in the ages 16-21) to consider serving in the gospel ministry within the OPC, and also to help the OPC identify young men with potential gifts for the ministry.
- 30
- 35
- 40
- 45

6. Worship and Church Life

- 5
- a. **Public worship.** Public worship is a central activity of congregations of the OPC, and is considered to be a meeting of the triune God with His covenant people. The reverent and joyful assembly of the Lord's people on the Lord's Day is a God-produced and God-centred activity. Central to this is the reading and preaching of God's Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the singing of psalms and hymns. Most OPC churches have a morning and an evening worship service. Many OPC churches also have a scheduled prayer meeting each week, which is held during the week.
- 10
- b. **Songbook.** While the OPC does not have prescribed book for singing in worship, most of its congregations use one of the editions of the (older) *Trinity Hymnal* (1961 or 1990) or the (new) *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, which includes all 150 psalms, and a selection of hymns arranged topically. It reflects a commitment to sing the Biblical Psalms, and at least one rendition of each is included. The last part of the new hymnal includes the Creeds, the Westminster Standards, and also the Three Forms of Unity. It was published jointly in 2018 by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and The Psalter Hymnal Committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). For more information, see:
- 15
- 20 www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org
- c. **Bible study.** Regular Bible study happens during the week, and is typically led by the minister, ruling elders, or members approved by the session. There are also other organized activities for men's fellowship and women's fellowship, and the nature of this can vary. Conferences are organized to commemorate significant events like the Reformation, or to provide teaching on topics relating to the Bible and theology.
- 25
- d. **Instruction of youth.** For the instruction of the children and youth, Sunday school classes are held, as well as catechism classes. In working towards profession of faith and communicant membership, they attend a class taught by a minister or elder. Some presbyteries organize youth camps or rallies, and provide short-term mission opportunities.
- 30

7. Mission and Evangelism

- a. **Importance.** Since its inception, the OPC has emphasized the importance of the church's task in preaching the gospel, both at home and abroad, carrying the whole truth of Scripture to the ends of the earth. Steady growth has resulted from significant church planting efforts.
- 35
- b. **Foreign mission.** Various committees are responsible to the General Assembly, and the Committee on Foreign Missions is active in mission fields in China, Ethiopia, Haiti, Japan, Quebec, Uganda, Ukraine, and Uruguay. The goal is to help establish indigenous national churches that are committed to the Reformed faith, and are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, and with whom the OPC can have fraternal relations. Much of their activity in these countries involves assisting indigenous congregations with church planting, evangelism, and theological training. Members are also given opportunity to support this work practically by means of short-term mission trips. As part of its Mobile Theological Mentoring Corps, the Committee also regularly sends non-residential theological instructors/mentors one or more times a year to
- 40
- 45

encourage developing Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Austria/Switzerland, Colombia, Hungary, India, and Peru.

- c. **Home mission.** The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension works with presbyteries and congregations to assist in establishing new churches throughout North America. This includes providing financial help, regional home missionaries (church planters), and leadership training.
- d. **Outreach.** Local congregations seek to reach out to their communities in various ways. This happens on an individual level, but also in an organized way.

8. Other Ministries

- a. **Education and training.** To assist in discipling its members in the teachings of Scripture, The Committee on Christian Education is an arm of the OPC that provides various resources. This includes magazines such as *New Horizons* (a monthly magazine about the Reformed faith and the OPC), and *Ordained Servant* (a journal for equipping office-bearers), as well as books and pamphlets relating to the OPC and the Reformed faith. It also works with the PCA in the joint Great Commissions Publications (GCP), which produces materials for Sunday schools, instruction, and worship.
- b. **Diaconal.** The Committee on Diaconal Ministries focuses on the needs of the covenant community, and has the goal of tapping into the resources of all the churches in situations where the diaconal need is too great for the local church alone. As such it has the role of supporting local congregations and presbyteries in their task. Teams have also been sent to give emergency relief in disaster situations in the US or abroad.

9. Ecumenicity

Much can be learned about a federation from who it chooses as its allies and friends, and how it exercises its ecumenical relations, and that is very much the case with the OPC.

- a. **A non-sectarian approach.** It has been said that the OPC has “endeavored to walk the fine line between indiscriminate ecumenism and indiscriminate sectarianism.” (*Fighting The Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, p142). A 1945 report entitled “Scriptural Principles of Cooperation with Other Churches” stressed the duty of the church to seek organic union with other faithful churches, and while complete unanimity on every detail of doctrine and practice was not a prerequisite for union, cooperating with other churches must not compromise its distinctiveness as a Reformed church.
- b. **A principled approach.** The Scriptural groundwork in their adopted paper “*Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church*” (<https://opc.org/relations/unity.html>) is very much operative in how the OPC approaches ecumenicity. This was submitted to the ICRC in 1997, and states important Biblical principles regarding ecumenicity, including that it is both a given reality and a requirement. It also reaffirms the Scriptural requirements for such unity, and that this unity must be expressed in a visible manner, ultimately by seeking to unite into one organization, with mutual agreement on both doctrine and practice.

5 c. **A Reformed focus.** In 1941 a recommendation to study cooperation with the broad base evangelical churches was defeated, and instead it was decided to work towards a federation of Presbyterian and Reformed churches, concentrating on the Reformed faith. A report received and endorsed by the 10th General Assembly of 1943 stated:

10 “We favor the formation of a federation of Presbyterian and Reformed denominations professing and adhering to the Calvinistic system of doctrine as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism, and other recognized Reformed confessions for the promotion of such ecclesiastical projects as:

- 15
1. the fostering of Christian fellowship among the churches constituting this federation,
 2. the united propagation of the Reformed faith, e.g. by radio preaching, and
 3. the deepening and strengthening of a Reformed consciousness in Christians in the churches of this federation as well as other denominations by preaching.”

20 The focus on churches with a Reformed character is evident from the mandate given to the CEIR in 1967, “to cultivate the fellowship of and give assistance to the people of Reformed convictions in denominations with which we do not have formal relationship...”

25 d. **Types of relationships.** The OPC currently has three categories of ecclesiastical relationships. These different levels of ecclesiastical relationship are the result of an effort to ensure that fraternal relationships remain meaningful (c.f. *Rules for Ecclesiastical Relationships of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, adopted by the 45th GA (1978), latest revision by the 84th GA (2017). <https://www.opc.org/relations/rules.pdf>). For churches with which it has ecclesiastical fellowship, CEIR has the goal of meeting annually with its counterparts from churches in North America, and meeting at the ICRC with its counterparts from churches that are members of this conference. Good stewardship of time and resources is required, and the OPC wants to focus on those relationships that involve close geographical proximity, or are in areas where it is working. This approach does not reflect a failure to see the need for unity, but is a humble recognition that we need to be responsible with our time and financial resources, and the need to acknowledge that organic unity also has an eschatological dimension, and will be realized in fullness in glory.

40 e. **Current relationships.** At present the OPC is in “Ecclesiastical Fellowship” (the highest level of fellowship) with twenty churches, in a “Corresponding Relationship” with twelve churches, and in “Ecumenical Contact” (the lowest level) with several other churches. The OPC entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches in 2001. It also has a long-standing and close relationship with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and several OPC ministers have served in the RCNZ. The OPC’s relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) has been particularly warm over the last decade. The Trinity Psalter Hymnal (2018) was produced as a joint project of both churches. In 2018, the OPC General Assembly and the URCNA General Synod met concurrently on the

45

campus of Wheaton College, Illinois, which included the sharing of some meals, devotions, and presentations. A complete list of current ecumenical relations can be found on the OPC website: <https://opc.org/relations/links.html>

- 5
- f. **North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council.** The OPC was a charter member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), which was formed in 1976. This organisation includes members such as the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the United Reformed Churches of North America.
- 10
- g. **International Conference of Reformed Churches.** The OPC has been involved as an active member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) since it was admitted in 1993. The OPC uses its participation in NAPARC and the ICRC as an important way of exercising its fraternal relations, and the CEIR typically arranges meetings with delegates from churches that it has ecclesiastical ties with at meetings of NAPARC and the
- 15
- ICRC.
- h. **Fraternal admonition.** While committed to promoting unity, the OPC's actions also demonstrate that this cannot come at the cost of truth. The desire to pursue ecumenicity on the basis of the Reformed confessions, while being intolerant of doctrinal liberalism and new hermeneutics, is particularly evident in the OPC's participation in ecumenical organizations. It was the OPC that initiated the proposal to suspend the CRCNA from NAPARC, and the RCN from the ICRC, in both cases on account of their views on Scripture, which were being manifested in a shifting position with respect to the issue of women in office. They have also gone to great lengths to admonish churches they had ecclesiastical ties with, when these churches began deviating from Scripture in doctrine and practice, culminating in the termination of contact.
- 20
- 25
- i. **Case example: Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Synodical.** The OPC had a sister relation with the GKN(syn) = Synodical churches in The Netherlands (i.e. De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, which the Liberated churches broke away from in 1944) since 1954, but it was a relationship that soon required the OPC to act with disapproval. The OPC admonished the GKN(syn) for becoming a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), opening ecclesiastical offices to women, accepting homosexuality, and showing increasing signs of doctrinal deviation, including a critical view of Scripture. Contact was officially terminated in 1973, on the grounds of the toleration of serious doctrinal deviation within the GKN(syn).
- 30
- 35
- j. **Case example: Reformed Ecumenical Synod.** The Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) was established by the Christian Reformed Churches of North America (CRCNA) in 1946 as an ecumenical organization for Reformed churches, and the OPC was admitted as a member in 1949. In the 1970s the OPC began raising concerns about theological liberalism in the GKN(syn), which was a member church of the RES. After their request in 1984 that the RES terminate the membership of the GKN(syn) was denied, in 1988 the OPC withdrew from the RES, citing their inability to remain in an organization which harboured a church like the GKN(syn). They terminated contacts with the RES with a clear Scriptural witness against the error in the GKN(syn), and brotherly admonition.
- 40
- 45
- k. **Case example: Christian Reformed Churches of North America.** A similar trajectory to the GKN(syn) would unfold in the OPC's ecumenical relations with

the Christian Reformed Churches of North America (CRCNA). In the 1950s and 1960s there were serious discussions about organic union, but in the late 1960s concerns began to surface about theological trends in the CRCNA, particularly with respect to the infallibility of the Scriptures, the particular atonement, the special creation of man, and their involvement with the World Council of Churches. The relationship with the CRCNA was under critical review for an extended time, since the OPC wanted to fully carry out its responsibilities as a sister church before terminating its formal ecclesiastical relationship. This finally happened in 1997, and the CRCNA's decision to open the special offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to women, contrary to the Biblical requirements for these offices, was cited as the main ground.

- I. **Case example: Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated).** The OPC has also been in corresponding relations with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, Liberated (RCN). This relationship deteriorated increasingly after the OPC expressed concerns about the hermeneutics used in the RCN's reports on ethical matters such as on divorce and remarriage, and more recently admonished them for their decision to open the special offices to women.

10. Relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches

The OPC's relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, one of our sister churches with a heritage and character very similar to our own, is worthy of examination, as a microcosm of what might be expected in a similar relationship between the FRCA and the OPC.

- a. **First contacts.** General Synod Edmonton 1965 decided to establish contact with the OPC. Positively, three considerations were observed, namely that as a Presbyterian Church the OPC was a fruit of the Calvinist Reformation; its confessions and church government are Calvinist in character; and in the twentieth century the OPC chose orthodoxy as opposed to modernism. Negatively, it was observed that there were differences in confession and church government.
- b. **Differences in doctrine and church polity.** By 1966 it could be reported that as a result of discussions, there was agreement in many basic areas of Reformed doctrine and doctrinal issues facing the churches today; these discussions also cleared up some misunderstandings caused by differences in language and terminology. At the same time there were some differences that received attention in discussions, including topics such as the doctrine of the covenant, visible and invisible church, the assurance of faith, Sabbath observance and explanation of the law, and differences in church polity and government.
- c. **Recognition as a true church.** Deputies were mandated to examine and evaluate divergencies in confession and church polity, and future synods received positive reports about this. In addition Synod Coaldale 1977 received a letter from the CEIR which presented a convincing case that many of the apparent doctrinal and church political divergencies could be reconciled without difficulty. Synod Coaldale decided "*with thankfulness to recognize the OPC as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as confessed in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.*" This led to the establishment of a new relationship called "ecclesiastical contact", which was seen as being temporary in nature, and had the long term goal of developing into a sister church relationship.

- 5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
- d. ***Closer examination of differences.*** After this decision became the subject of appeals within the Canadian Reformed Churches, the respective deputyships of both church federations continued to meet and discuss differences in confession and church polity, and deputies were mandated to publish a detailed evaluation of them, demonstrating that they didn't form an impediment to recognizing the OPC as a true church. This evaluation was submitted to Synod Burlington 1986, and later synods (e.g. 1992) stated that the divergencies evaluated previously (Synod New Westminster 1971, Appendix, pp 64 – 71; Synod Burlington 1986, pp 142-151) had been sufficiently discussed to confirm that they were not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC, but could be discussed within the context of such a relationship. (c.f. the topical synopsis of all discussions provided to Synod Smithers 2007, Report pp. 144-153).
- e. ***Three outstanding matters.*** Meanwhile a new issue had arisen, after an OPC minister seceded from the OPC over the matter of whether Scripture required administering the Lord's Supper in a closed communion. This drew attention to the matter of fencing the Lord's Supper, given the OPC's practice of restricted communion using a verbal warning, rather than the Canadian Reformed practice of attestations. Synod Lincoln 1992 identified this as one of three outstanding matters before a sister church relationship could be established, the others being confessional membership, and the OPC's relationship with the CRCNA. The OPC saw the action of the same synod in establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) and the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) as operating by a double standard, pointing out that these churches have essentially the same position as the OPC on the two matters in question.
- f. ***Agreement on supervision of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership.*** The OPC terminated its relationship with the CRCNA in 1997. To resolve the two outstanding matters, Canadian Reformed deputies drew up a proposed agreement on the two outstanding points, which was accepted by the General Assembly of the OPC in 1997, and by Synod Neerlandia 2001, thus enabling ecclesiastical fellowship to be established:
- 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 guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.
- Concerning Confessional Membership:* 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. The patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' 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.
- g. ***Establishment of ecclesiastical fellowship.*** In making its historic decision, Synod Neerlandia 2001 stated that both the Canadian Reformed Churches and

the OPC reject the legitimacy of the pluriformity of the church. It also considered that acknowledging each other as true churches implies unity of faith (cf Lord's Day 7, Q&A 21 & 22), but does not necessarily imply complete agreement on every point of doctrine or practice, although existing differences do warrant continued discussion to grow in the unity of faith (Eph. 4:3-6, 13).

- 5
- 10
- 15
- 20
- 25
- h. **Further discussion.** Over the last 20 years, within the context of ecclesiastical fellowship there have been regular meetings between Canadian Reformed deputies and their OPC counterparts of the CEIR, and attendance at each other's broader assemblies. Discussions have included reviewing decisions of each other's major assemblies; sharing and evaluating proposed changes to liturgical forms or books of worship; consulting about establishing new relationships; assisting each other with existing relationships with churches like the URCNA, RCN, IPB, and KPCK; and other matters of mutual concern (e.g. the benefits of NAPARC, church planting). In late 2019, one of the Canadian Reformed Churches entered into a formal Cooperative Ministry Agreement with the OPC's Committee on Foreign Missions regarding a missionary evangelist they were sending to Uganda to work with the OPC mission there.
 - i. **Attestation of the Canadian Reformed Churches.** Decisions of recent Canadian Reformed synods (2013, 2016) have noted with thankfulness "the way in which the OPC actively promotes a faithful Reformed witness to the gospel". Reports also indicate that there is "much evidence that the OPC takes the holiness of the congregation and the importance of vows made by members and office-bearers very seriously in dealing with ministers and members who deviate in doctrine or life." (2016)

11. Important Decisions

Since its inception, the OPC has been faced with many questions relating to doctrine and life. The decisions reached on these matters give a reliable indication as to how the church has understood the Scriptures and applied them to its time. It is one thing to have Reformed confessions, but the decisions of the major assemblies will give an indication about whether a church lives up to its confessions. Some of these decisions are listed below:

- 30
- 35
- 40
- 45
- a. **Liberty of conscience.** A call to insist on complete abstention from alcohol was rejected, and instead the 1936 General Assembly (GA) maintained Christian liberty on the grounds that Scripture doesn't prohibit the moderate use of alcohol, while also insisting that drunkenness is condemned as sin.
 - b. **Eschatology.** The 1936 GA declined to declare that premillennialism was compatible with the standards of the church. Room is given within the OPC for different approaches to eschatology (e.g. amillennialism, post-millennialism), but dispensationalist premillennialism is considered to be contrary to Scripture.
 - c. **Exclusive psalmody.** The exclusive singing of psalms in worship was not adopted by the 1947 GA, and a hymnal containing psalms and hymns was authorized by the 1949 GA, which was eventually published in 1961 as the *Trinity Hymnal*.
 - d. **Guidance from the Spirit.** The 1961 GA concluded that teaching a leading of the Holy Spirit beyond the Scriptures was a deviation from the doctrines of Scripture and the confessions. The 1971 GA also upheld discipline in a case of a minister who practiced the private exercise of "speaking in tongues".

- e. **Sabbath.** The 1973 GA declared that, according to the Scriptures, God had appointed the first day of the week to be the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day, and the 1977 GA upheld the discipline of a minister who had participated in an organized sport on the Lord's Day.
- 5 f. **Women in office.** The OPC insists that God's Word limits ordained office in the church to qualified men. In numerous instances they have warned other churches about this, and ended fellowship with churches that opened the special offices to women.
- 10 g. **Sexuality and marriage.** General Assemblies have typically refrained from making sociological and political pronouncements, but the 1993 GA did petition the President of the United States to stand against the sin of homosexuality and specifically not to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military. In 2015 a "Special Committee on Marriage and Sexuality" was established by the Committee on Christian Education to identify resources and help the church uphold the Biblical teaching on marriage, sexuality, and related issues (e.g. transgenderism), in view of society's increasing antagonism and deviation from God's norms.
- 15 h. **Admission to Lord's Supper.** In response to advocates for paedocommunion, it has been maintained that baptized children are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, and a credible profession of faith is required. Local sessions have discretion in admitting visitors, while maintaining this principle.
- 20 i. **Justification.** In response to contemporary debates in North America relating to justifying faith, the 2004 GA adopted a Declaration on Justification, reaffirming that faith, which is a gift of God, is the sole instrument of justification. A study committee was appointed to critique the teachings of the New Perspective on Paul, Federal Vision, and other like teachings concerning the doctrine of justification and other related doctrines, and presented an extensive report on this to the 2006 GA.
- 25 j. **Creation and human origins.** The view that Adam's body probably had animal ancestors was rejected by the 1996 GA as contrary to Scripture and the OPC's confessional standards. A substantial report received by the 2004 GA that affirmed the historicity of the entire book of Genesis, and explicitly rejected theistic evolution; presbyteries were encouraged to ensure that candidates for the ministry be sound in their doctrine of Scripture, creation, and providence.
- 30 k. **Discipline.** Matters relating to church discipline have been featured on the docket of General Assembly many times. It is clear that unlike many churches today where the exercise of church discipline has been replaced with a toleration of sin, the OPC is not afraid to use this God-given means of grace in instances of unrepentant sin. There is real evidence that the OPC takes church discipline very seriously, and seeks to exercise this key of the kingdom according to Scripture.
- 35

40 12. Characteristics

From the above overview, we would suggest that the following characteristics of the OPC are evident from its history, doctrine, and practice:

- 45 a. **Biblical grounding.** The OPC is serious about its commitment to the infallible rule of Holy Scripture, as the only rule for faith and life. Doctrinal purity is emphasized, and when necessary there is a careful study of the Scriptures to

determine God's will. At the same time there is care to preserve liberty in matters where God's Word allows it, and not go beyond Scripture.

- 5
- 10
- 15
- 20
- 25
- 30
- 35
- 40
- 45
- b. **Theological orthodoxy.** The OPC has consistently taken a strong stand against theological liberalism and modernism, often at critical and decisive junctures that had a big impact on its future. Throughout its history it has been unafraid to study the Scriptures and apply them to the issues of the day, and refused to accommodate the teachings of the Bible to changing influences and trends. It has especially been outspoken about women in office. While it doesn't have a denominational seminary, the OPC has a number of measures in place to ensure the confessional commitment of those admitted to the ministry, and to ensure that their theological training happens with close and active supervision of the churches.
 - c. **Careful scholarship.** The OPC has a fine tradition of producing Reformed scholars who take the Scriptures seriously, and are dedicated to searching the Scriptures. The reports to their General Assemblies, especially on special topics that require study and evaluation, show theological acumen and depth of insight. They have made insightful and astute critiques of the hermeneutics used in the RCN, even prior to the RCN's decision to open the special offices to women. It has rightly been said that on account of their solid scholarship they have an influence far beyond their numbers.
 - d. **Reformed emphasis.** The OPC is confessionally Reformed, and this is evident all aspects of its work, including mission and evangelism. There is a real desire to bring the whole truth of Scripture to the ends of the earth, and to zealously promote the Reformed faith.
 - e. **Theocentric worship.** Reformed Biblical thinking inevitably produces worship that is God-centred and Scripture based. The OPC's worship reflects the regulative principle for worship, in that God is to be worshipped only as commanded by His Word. Gathering for worship is seen primarily as an activity in which God is in the center, not man.
 - f. **Presbyterian polity.** The OPC has its roots in American Presbyterianism but they were also influenced by Dutch Reformed theologians in the early years of their development. They also have a number of vibrant relations of ecclesiastical fellowship with churches in North America that are from the continental Reformed tradition and hold to the Three Forms of Unity. Reports presented to Canadian Reformed synods have stated that the OPC does not promote the pluriformity of the church, and is also careful to avoid a hierarchical system of church government that undermines the autonomy of the local session. At the same the Presbyterian character does result in practices different from our own.
 - g. **Active mission.** The OPC takes the church's task to preach the gospel to all nations very seriously. It has much experience in areas such as mission and church planting, and puts a significant amount of resources and personnel towards this. This aspect of its work has a Reformed character and emphasis, and their experience in this area can be of real benefit.
 - h. **Intentional ecumenicity.** The OPC is keen to have ecclesiastical relations with churches that share its commitment to the Reformed faith, and partner with their work in bringing the gospel to the world. They endeavour to engage in their ecumenical contacts in a responsible way, and have seriously and repeatedly admonished sister churches for unfaithfulness to the truth of Scripture before

terminating relations with them. They exercise some of their relationships via organizations like the International Conference of Reformed Churches, realizing that it is not realistic to have the same level of relationship with every church. Their approach to ecumenicity has been carefully considered from Scripture, and has been refined over the years, particularly in an era where global connections have increased and communication has become easier.

- i. **Unity in Diversity.** Within the bounds of the confessions, there is some diversity within the OPC. For example, while a General Assembly did make a judgment rejecting the animal ancestry of Adam, no decision has been made on the length of the days of creation; some OPC ministers and elders hold to a view of a literal 24-hour day, while others to the day-age theory or the framework hypothesis. And while dispensationalism is considered to be a serious error, there is freedom to hold to different views on eschatology such as post-millennialism or amillennialism. As a confessional church, the Westminster Standards are the standard by which orthodoxy is measured, and within this fundamental unity of faith there is room given for some diversity of opinion on areas not explicitly addressed by the confessional standards.

13. Select Bibliography

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Official website:* www.opc.org

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Rules for Ecclesiastical Relationships of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Adopted by the 45th GA (1978), latest revision by the 84th GA (2017). <https://www.opc.org/relations/rules.pdf>

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church.* <https://opc.org/relations/unity.html>

Dennison, Charles G. (ed). *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church 1936-1986.* Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1986.

Dennison, Charles G. & Gamble, Richard C. *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Philadelphia: The Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1986.

Duff, Donald J. "The Orthodox Presbyterian Church 1936-1986" in *Clarion*. Vol 35, No 22-24.

Hart, D. G. & Muether, John. *Fighting The Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Philadelphia: The Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1995.

Muether, John R. & Olinger, Danny E. *Confident of Better Things: Essays Commemorating Seventy-Five Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Willow Grove, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 2011.

Olinger, Danny E. *Welcome to the OPC: A Primer on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Willow Grove: The Committee on Christian Education of the OPC, Revised 2014.

Rian, Edwin H. *The Presbyterian Conflict.* Horsham: The Committee for the Historian of the OPC, 1992.

The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *What is the OPC? Basic Information to Acquaint You with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* Willow Grove: The Committee on Christian Education of the OPC, Revised 2013.

Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Introduction

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia entered into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches in New Zealand by a decision of Synod Baldivis 2015 (Article 38)

5 Brief Description of the RCNZ

1. Brief description

Location	<i>North & South islands of New Zealand</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>New Zealanders and Post World War 2 European immigrants from various Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian federations.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity Westminster Confession</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>21 churches</i>		
Membership numbers	<i>3,354 members</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Sessions</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>monthly</i>
(Dort polity with some Westminster terminology)	<i>Presbyteries</i>	<i>3</i>	
	<i>General Assembly</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of Theological Students	<i>The RCNZ presently makes use of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Melbourne Australia, and Mid America Reformed Theological Seminary, and Greenville Theological Seminary.</i>		
Website	<i>www.rcnz.org.nz</i>		

2. History of the relationship

10	1985	Synod Launceston initiated correspondence with the RCNZ.
10	1996	It was reported to Synod Kelmscott that the RCNZ had acknowledged the FRCA as true churches.
15	2000	Synod West Albany agreed in principle to recognise the RCNZ as true and faithful churches, however the RCNZ sister relationship with CRCA remained an issue.
15	2011	RCNZ Synod Bucklands Beach discontinued sister church relations with the CRCA and entered a new relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship.
	2015	Synod Baldivis decided to offer sister church relationship to the RCNZ.
	2017	RCNZ Synod Palmerstone-North confirmed this new sister church relationship.

3. Decision and mandate.

Synod Bunbury 2018 (article 79) decided the following with respect to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Decision:

- 5 1. Continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ, under the established rules;
- 10 2. Make the churches in our bond aware of the practical obstacles that have been identified in relation to the support of retired ministers, which in some cases makes calling each other's ministers difficult, and encourage the churches to engage with the Emeritus Fund to consult with the RCNZ counterpart, in an effort to find a mutually satisfactory solution that would remove these obstacles, so that this aspect of the sister church relationship can function in a meaningful way.
- 15 3. Discharge deputies and thank them for their work, and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - 20 a. monitor developments within the RCNZ for mutual benefit according to the established "Rules for Sister Church Relations", and maintain the contact necessary in exercising the relationship according to these rules;
 - b. promote continued familiarisation of the memberships of the RCNZ and FRCA;
 - 25 c. if necessary consult with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee and our respective emeritus committees to seek a mutually satisfactory way whereby ministers who serve in each other's churches are able to do so without significant detrimental effect to their retirement entitlements;
 - d. meet with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee during the inter-synodical period, subject to finances;
 - 30 e. send two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, subject to invitation and finances;
 - f. invite up to two delegates from the RCNZ to attend our next Synod;
 - g. continue to monitor the RCNZ's relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship with the CRCA, encourage them to continue their warnings, and to be consequential in this relationship in light of the concerns expressed in the report to Synod Baldivis 2015;
 - h. continue to encourage the RCNZ to be vigilant in its approach to theological education; and
 - i. report to next Synod along with recommendations

35 Grounds:

1. From the decisions of its most recent synod, and the ongoing contacts observed and reported by deputies, the RCNZ gives evidence of a love for the gospel, ongoing faithfulness to God's Word, and commitment to the Reformed faith; no evidence has been presented of any deviation or unfaithfulness in this respect.

2. For a sister relationship to function in a meaningful way, it is important for the membership to become acquainted, and given that the relationship is still in its infancy, continued growth is needed to strengthen these bonds in practical ways.
- 5 3. Part of a sister church relationship includes the privilege of calling one another's ministers, and if there are practical difficulties that prohibit this due to different models being used for the support of retired ministers, real efforts should be made to remove these obstacles in the proper way.
- 10 4. Although there is no evidence that the RCNZ is being unfaithful in its relationship with the CRCA, the ongoing contacts that the RCNZ has with the CRCA via its relationship of ecumenical fellowship and via the RTC means that continued vigilance is needed to guard against any potentially unhealthy influences from the CRCA.
- 15 5. Although there is no evidence that the RCNZ is being unfaithful in the matter of theological education, and the RTC is not a denominational seminary of the CRCA, theological students who attend the RTC will have greater contact with CRCA churches and are more open to potentially unhealthy influences from the CRCA.
- 20 6. Although the rules of the relationship of "Ecumenical Fellowship" have safeguards in place to maintain the purity of the preaching and the sanctity of the Lord's table, this is still a relatively new relationship for the RCNZ, and we need to observe how it will be implemented over time.

4. Execution of Mandate

- a. ***monitor developments within the RCNZ for mutual benefit according to the established "Rules for Sister Church Relations", and maintain the contact necessary in exercising the relationship according to these rules;***

25 In accordance with the rules the RCNZ churches have invited delegates from the FRCA to attend the next RCNZ Synod to be held in Hukanui in September 2021. Copies of the minutes of the RCNZ Synod 2017 and the Acts of the FRCA Synod 2018 were forwarded to the respective Church federations.

30 Deputies were also able to meet with the RCNZ Interchurch Relations Committee in Melbourne 2019.(further detail of this meeting is reported under mandate section d.)

- b. ***promote continued familiarisation of the memberships of the RCNZ and FRCA;***

35 Some practical measures served to fulfil this part of the mandate. An article was published in the Una Sancta encouraging FRCA members to subscribe to the RCNZ church magazine "Faith in Focus", to access their online resources on the RCNZ website and to join with our New Zealand brothers and sisters in worship when visiting New Zealand.

40 Rev Bredenhof from the FRC Launceston and Rev Waldron from the RCNZ church of Christchurch conducted a pulpit exchange in October 2018. Both churches held congregational meetings to share what was happening in both church federations. A report of this exchange was published in the Una Sancta (20/4/2019).

- c. ***if necessary consult with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee and our respective emeritus committees to seek a mutually satisfactory way whereby ministers who serve in each other's churches are able to do so without significant detrimental effect to their retirement entitlements;***

5 This section of the mandate is also addressed by (decision no.2 of article 79 Acts of Synod Bunbury 2018) ***Make the churches in our bond aware of the practical obstacles that have been identified in relation to the support of retired ministers, which in some cases makes calling each other's ministers difficult, and encourage the churches to engage with the Emeritus Fund to consult with the RCNZ counterpart, in an effort to find a mutually satisfactory solution that would remove these obstacles, so that this aspect of the sister church relationship can function in a meaningful way.***

10
15 In February 2019 a letter went out to all the FRCA churches outlining a practical challenge in our relationship with the RCNZ, namely the discrepancies between the emeriti funds of the two church federations. In response the churches have communicated these concerns to the Emeritus Fund of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

20 The Emeritus fund board have acknowledged that this matter is something which they are addressing and have taken up contact with their New Zealand counterparts. The board has summarised the current position as follows:

1. The RCNZ churches are structured so that each individual minister now has their retirement benefits held within a super fund. If they should move to Australia, they simply keep their balance or take it with them over here. So there is no issue with an NZ minister transferring to Australia.
- 25 2. Our structure is entirely different, in that our ministers don't have any "entitlement" to a fixed portion of the Emeritus Fund. Our EF has always been structured as a pooled saving scheme for the benefit of the churches, not of individuals who come and go.
- 30 3. Having said that, our ministers do receive the employee SGC and so are building up some personal super balance that they may take with them. This would, at present, be insufficient to provide for their retirement.

35 The Emeritus fund board is currently in discussions with the FRCA churches to determine the future direction of the fund. One of the considerations in those discussions is the suggestion to present to the churches a range of options that could be considered by the churches that would satisfactorily address the discrepancy as articulated by Synod Bunbury 2018.

40 At the FRCA deputies /RCNZ – IRC Melbourne meeting the FRCA deputies highlighted the process that has taken place so far in the FRCA. The IRC brothers stressed the urgency of solving this issue in the *short term*, given that an RCNZ Synod is scheduled for 2020 and that a proposed solution must be available prior to that Synod. If that deadline is missed, this barrier could be in place until 2023.

- d. ***meet with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee during the inter-synodical period, subject to finances;***

45 On the 27th September 2019 the deputies met with RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee (RCNZ-IRC). The location for the meeting was in

Melbourne, Victoria, chosen for its convenience due to a conference some of the RCNZ brothers were attending. Present were the following: RCNZ: Rev. Paul Archbald, Br. Pieter VanderWel, Rev. Daniel Wilson, Rev. David Waldron (apologies from Rev. Andrew DeVries and Rev. Leo de Vos);FRCA: Br. Colin Mulder, Rev. Hendrik Alkema.

The FRCA delegates highlighted the major decisions of Synod Bunbury 2018.

The RCNZ- IRC reported on some of their church relations

1. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN): Synod Palmerston North 2017 made the decision that unless the RCN repents of its unfaithfulness in doctrine and practice, the sister church relationship with the RCN will be terminated at the next RCNZ Synod in 2020.
2. Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA): A sister church relationship the PRCA was established at Synod Palmerston North 2017. Since that time, there has been a considerable amount of contact between the two churches. Br.Pieter Vanderwel of the RCNZ has been busy in Vanuatu, where three PRCA congregations exist. Br.Vanderwel attended a Presbytery of the PRCA and spoke about the RCNZ, as well as recommending contact for the PRCA in the ICRC, given the isolationist past of the PRCA. The PRCA are now also pursuing a relationship with the OPC. In the PRCA the style of worship is quite simple, but there is a variety of differing worship practices in their churches. The RCNZ has raised the issue of a second service with them and this has been received positively, some churches have either re-introduced a second service or initiated a Bible study in the afternoon.

FRCA delegates reported on the decision of Synod Bunbury 2018 regarding the feasibility of establishing a FRCA Theological Seminary. The FRCA deputies asked the IRC members whether they thought any appetite might exist within the RCNZ for any possible cooperation in working towards the establishment of an FRCA (or joint) seminary. The IRC deputies responded that in the past the possibility of establishing a federational seminary was looked into, but the decision was made not to go down that route. Currently students have a number of options where to study and if a FRCA Seminary was established in the future, it could be considered as one of the available options.

- e. send two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, subject to invitation and finances;**

Deputies were scheduled to visit the RCNZ Synod in Hukanui in September 2020. This Synod was postponed and is now scheduled for September 2021, consequently no visit has been made.

- f. invite up to two delegates from the RCNZ to attend our next Synod;**

An invitation to attend Synod 2021 will indeed be extended in due time. Due to current and expected travel restrictions, this invitation will include a request to address Synod via electronic recorded electronic means if travel is not possible.

- g. continue to monitor the RCNZ's relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship with the CRCA, encourage them to continue their warnings, and to be**

consequential in this relationship in light of the concerns expressed in the report to Synod Baldivis 2015;

5 The mandate makes reference to concerns raised in a report presented to Synod Baldivis 2015. These concerns were noted in the report as points of contention that existed between the RCNZ and the CRCA. It is important to note that these concerns had already been raised and discussed by the RCNZ themselves prior to their change in relationship and precipitated their Synod decision in 2011 to change their relationship status. This demonstrated the attentiveness of the RCNZ to address concerns when and where required and therefore be consequential in their relationship with the CRCA.

10 The CRCA is no longer a sister church of the RCNZ, they are now churches in Ecumenical Fellowship and as such the discussions between the RCNZ and the CRCA no longer take place in the context of a sister church relationship. Despite the change in relationship there is still an interaction between the two church federations, giving the RCNZ the opportunity to raise concerns with the CRCA.

15 The RCNZ are a mature reformed church federation and as such have made their own decisions including a set of rules (*Rules for Ecumenical Fellowship, RCNZ Acts of Synod 2014, Art 84 – 1,2*) that govern its relationship with the CRCA. These rules provide the necessary safeguards to prevent any potential adverse influences that might result as a consequence of this relationship.

20 The RCNZ have demonstrated that they have addressed concerns in the past and will address them in the future within the context of their downgraded relationship. At the FRCA deputies / RCNZ –IRC meeting in Melbourne in 2019 a brief discussion was held concerning the CRCA. The IRC deputies informed the FRCA deputies that the CRCA are having another look at the possibility of allowing children to attend the Lord's Supper. The IRC deputies intend to take this matter up with the CRCA when they meet with them in the inter synodical period. There are further concerns in the RCNZ with respect to the diversity of worship practice in the CRCA, particularly in new church plants. No ministers from the CRCA have come to the RCNZ, with the exception of one who had previously served as a minister in the RCNZ. As per the RCNZ rules governing the ecumenical relationship a "colloquium doctum" was held.

25 The ground that is given for this mandate states that although there is no evidence of unfaithfulness, a continued vigilance is needed to guard against potentially unhealthy influences from the CRCA. This same ground was given in the previous mandate to deputies. Once again it can be reported that there is no evidence of unfaithfulness and that the RCNZ have been vigilant. The RCNZ has had a downgraded relationship with the CRCA for the past nine years and there has not been any evidence to suggest that this relationship has had a negative impact on the RCNZ. Our New Zealand sister continues to show the marks of a true and faithful church and we can be thankful for this. The RCNZ have demonstrated that that the need to continue to exhort them to be vigilant in guarding themselves against potential unhealthy CRCA influences is no longer required.

30 The current FRCA rules for sister churches include the following:

35
40
45 *Sister relations shall be used to mutually assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine,*

church polity, discipline and liturgy and the churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.

5 These rules are designed to govern the relationship we have with our New Zealand sister and her relationships with other church federations. There is room within these rules to exhort one another and to encourage one another to remain faithful as churches.

The following points are brought to the Synod's attention to be considered when a new mandate is drafted :

- 10 • the RCNZ have demonstrated evidence of faithfulness over the past nine years (The time of the Ecumenical Fellowship RCNZ/CRCA).
- the RCNZ have a set of specific rules governing their Ecumenical Fellowship with the CRCA .
- the FRCA also has a set of Rules that govern the sister church relationship with the RCNZ.

15 We are now at a point in our relationship with the RCNZ where we can look forward to a future together as churches building each other up and supporting each other as stipulated in the rules for sister church relations. To continue to exhort the RCNZ in the light of concerns expressed in a report to Synod 2015 and to warn them of potential unhealthy influences from the CRCA would communicate to the RCNZ that the FRCA find it difficult to trust the RCNZ to follow their own rules governing their own relationships despite evidence to the contrary.

h. continue to encourage the RCNZ to be vigilant in its approach to theological education

25 Since the FRCA Synod Bunbury 2018 the RCNZ Churches have not held a Synod and therefore have not had a report from their deputies regarding the theological education of their ministers. It was envisaged that encouragement as mandated would have been addressed in an address to their Synod.

30 Due to the absence of a report from the RCNZ deputies in the inter synodical period, reference is made to the report prepared by FRCA deputies for Synod Bunbury 2018. This report concluded *"we were greatly encouraged by the thoroughness in which the members of synod questioned the deputies for training for the ministry, the nature of the discussion about theological education, and the various safeguards the RCNZ has in place on the road to the ministry. This demonstrated how seriously the RCNZ takes theological education and the need to stick to Biblical principles."*

35 At the FRCA deputies/ IRC- Melbourne meeting a discussion was held concerning the RTC (Reformed Theological College). The IRC deputies noted the following:

- 40 1. *Memorandum of Understanding and Involvement of the RCNZ:* The MOU was recently revised in a restructuring which has resulted in less formal influence for the RCNZ and has made the RTC somewhat more independent. Having said that, the RCNZ still meets with the faculty of the RTC once a year and is able to raise any concerns they may have.

2. *Faculty:* Overall, the RCNZ brothers remain positive about the doctrinal faithfulness of the faculty of the RTC. There have been some pressures on the faculty in terms of health, and as a result Dr.Murray Capill has had to step down as principal; that role is now being filled by Dr.Phillip Scheepers.

5 **5. Concluding remarks:**

To adequately address the mandate given by Synod Bunbury it was envisaged that face to face discussions and attendance at the RCNZ Synod in 2020 would provide significant background material to complete a detailed report.

10 A careful reading of the deputies' report submitted to Synod Bunbury 2018 shows that a substantial portion of the report was based on the visit made to the RCNZ Synod – Palmerston North 2017, reinforcing the view of current deputies that a visit to the RCNZ Synod would have been very worthwhile.

15 A consequence of the RCNZ Synod 2020 postponement is that the reports and overtures that would have been presented to their Synod have also been postponed. Deputies believe that the material contained in these reports and overtures will be needed to complete the current mandate.

20 The deputies therefore recommend that the new mandate for this deputyship remains largely unchanged from the existing mandate (but taking into account the remarks under point **g**), giving deputies the opportunity to attend the RCNZ Synod in person and report accordingly.

25 Deputies were however able to be kept informed via other means including the Faith in Focus Magazine and also the meeting with some of the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee in Melbourne in 2019. There is no evidence that deputies cannot reiterate the conclusion that was reported to Synod Bunbury 2018, namely: "It remains apparent that the RCNZ is faithful to the Lord of the Church, submits to His Word as the rule for all of life, and is zealous to carry out the church's calling to bring the gospel to a fallen world."

6. Recommendations:

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ, under the established rules;
- 30 2. Thank deputies and reappoint them to continue and complete their work with the following mandate:
 - a. monitor developments within the RCNZ for mutual benefit according to the established "Rules for Sister Church Relations", and maintain the contact necessary in exercising the relationship according to these rules;
 - 35 b. promote continued familiarisation of the memberships of the RCNZ and FRCA;
 - c. continue to monitor and report on the progress being undertaken to resolve the practical obstacles that have been identified in relation to support of retired ministers.
 - 40 d. meet with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee during the inter-synodical period, subject to finances;

- e. send two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, subject to invitation and finances;
- f. invite up to two delegates from the RCNZ to attend our next Synod;
- 5 g. continue to encourage the RCNZ to be vigilant in its approach to theological education; and
- h. report to next Synod along with recommendations.

Grounds:

- 10 1. As the RCNZ were unable to hold their planned Synod in 2020 due to the Covid 19 virus, there was no visit by deputies for the same reason. Deputies were however able to have some contact via other means and can conclude that the RCNZ gives evidence of a love for the gospel, ongoing faithfulness to God's Word, and commitment to the Reformed faith; no evidence has been presented of any deviation or unfaithfulness in this respect.
- 15 2. For a sister relationship to function in a meaningful way, it is important for the membership to become acquainted, and given that the relationship is still in its infancy, continued growth is needed to strengthen these bonds in practical ways.
- 20 3. Part of a sister church relationship includes the privilege of calling one another's ministers, and if there are practical difficulties that prohibit this due to different models being used for the support of retired ministers, real efforts should be made to remove these obstacles in the proper way.
- 4. Supervision of the theological education in the training for the ministry is recognised as an important aspect which has consequences for the long term spiritual direction of a church federation.

Report of deputies for the Indonesian Churches

Introduction

In accordance with the mandate of Synod Bunbury 2018, the deputies maintained the sister church relationship with the GGRI, but also maintained contact with two other federations in Indonesia, the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor. This report first deals with the sister relations with the GGRI, which is followed by the recommendations to the synod in Albany 2021. Thereafter two reports will follow about the contacts with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor.

There is a separate report about the support of the Theological Training in the GGRI.

I. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI)

10 1. **Name of Church** – Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI)

2. **Introduction**

15 GGRI is a Sister Federation, which was formed in 2012 out of three provincial federations: GGRI-Papua, GGRI-Kalimantan Barat, and GGRI-NTT. The FRCA have had an established relationship with the GGRI-NTT since the 1970s. In 2012 synod Armadale decided to extend this relationship to the entire federation of which the GGRI-NTT had become part.

3. **Brief description of Church**

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>Spread over three provinces: Papua, Kalimantan Barat and NTT (on the islands Sumba, Timor, Sabu).</i>		
Origin(s)	<i>Dutch mission work in Indonesia resulted in the establishment of churches in all three provinces, the first ones in the fifties.</i>		
Confessional Documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds</i>		
	<i>Three Forms of Unity</i>		
Number of churches & church plants	<i>TOTAL: 47 churches and 119 mission posts</i>		
	<i>Papua: 12 churches and 47 mission posts</i>		
	<i>Kalimantan Barat: 17 churches and 16 mission posts</i>		
	<i>NTT: 18 churches, approx. 56 Mission posts</i>		
Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
	<i>Classis</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>6 Monthly</i>
			<i>/Annually</i>

<i>Regional Synod</i>	3	<i>Triennially</i>
<i>General Synod</i>	1	<i>Quaddriennially</i>

Training of Theological Students *Theological college Waingapu Sumba.*

Reformed Theological College in Sentagi, KalBar

4. History of the relationship

a. Relationships were first established with the GGRI-NTT in 1970s. In 2001 contact was broadened when FRC Rockingham received requests to financially assist the GGRI-NTT churches in providing mission support for their evangelists & mission workers in Sumba. Since FRC Mundijong took over work of Litindo, they have also been busy working in Sumba and other districts including West Papua and Kalimantan.

Since 2012, when the three provincial federations merged into the national federation (GGRI), the FRCA have contact with all the churches in the three provincial parts of the federation.

b. No significant changes have been noted within the GGRI-NTT churches since the last synod.

c. The relationship between the GGRI and FRCA is significant in that the Indonesian churches are our closest sister church geographically. This closeness, especially of the GGRI-NTT, has in the past benefitted the churches greatly in the ease of travel and limited cost involved in meeting regularly, particularly for their ecclesiastical assemblies. Geographically it is also the main area of focus for mission work, for a number of Perth Metro churches.

The GGRI in Papua is harder to reach, due to the geographical circumstances. It is not only more remote, but also has a much less developed infrastructure, which makes traveling to the churches much more cumbersome and expensive. Nevertheless, also for these churches the FRCA are the closest sister church.

5. Decision and Mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 (art. 105) decided the following with respect to the GGRI.

Article 105 - Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI)

Decision 1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.

Decision 2: To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

- maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
- send delegates to visit the national and regional synods of the GGRI subject to available finance;

- c. support the GGRI with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches;
- d. in consultation with the deputies of the GGRI, to monitor, evaluate and offer advice about troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI;
- e. encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (also with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Smithville Mission Board);
- f. continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their Synods subject to available finance, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;
- g. continue contact with the GGRI-Timor;
- h. as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI Papua and the GGRI Kalimantan Barat that have united and formed one federation with the GGRI NTT in February 2012, confirming their Reformed character and the implications of this union.

Grounds

1. The GGRI shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confessions.
2. Our rules for sister church relations indicate that the churches need to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. The deputies express confidence about the Reformed faithfulness of the federation. At the same time, they do indicate that there are concerns, and it is important that we monitor these things.
3. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI and GGRC and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with these two other church groups in Indonesia.
4. Not enough has been reported about the Reformed character of these federations, although this had been mandated by Synod 2012.

6. Execution of mandate

a) Official correspondence:

- a. 6th May 2019: from GRI Tana Hamu: Letter of invitation to attend regional synod of the GGRI-NTT.
A response was sent on 13 June 2019, accepting the invitation.
- b. A letter has been received from the Reformed Church of Groningen in the Netherlands (part of the DGK) informing us that they had decided to support the seminary of the churches in Kalimantan Barat.

Execution of the mandate

a) **Maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules.**

and

b) **Send delegates to visit the national and regional synods of the GGRI subject to available finance.**

An invitation was received to attend the national synod, which was scheduled for September 2020, but due to travel restriction as a result of the COVID19, this synod was postponed until further notice.

An invitation was received to attend the regional synod in Tana Hamu, Sumba, NTT in August 2019. Two delegates attended. The synod was held in a good brotherly atmosphere and due diligence was given to the important items on the agenda. The visit and timing of regional synod was very beneficial in that it coincided with a seminar tour of the churches in Sumba by Rev A VanDelden in building up the reformed character of the churches there. One deputy was able to attend some of the seminars whilst in Sumba prior to synod. Delegates were able to encourage the churches in the important matters of 2nd worship service & catechism preaching which were also the topics of the lectures for church leaders. Significant attention was given to the situation in the RCN, and the current status with the FRCA and the response given from synod 2018.

An invitation to two visiting ministers/evangelists for the purpose of familiarising themselves with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, and to improve their English language was extended and accepted. Due to Covid-19 restrictions these invitations are still outstanding and deputies have committed to honouring this invitation once the restrictions will be lifted.

The churches in Kalimantan Barat could not be visited as a result of the restrictions due to COVID 19.

One deputy accompanied Rev. VanDelden during a seminar tour for the churches in Papua in 2019.

c) **Support the GGRI with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches.**

and

d) **In consultation with the deputies of the GGRI, to monitor, evaluate and offer advice about troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI.**

Deputies have utilised the services of Rev VanDelden to hold teaching seminars for the church leaders in all three provinces. These seminars are being organised in consultation and cooperation with the deputies of the GGRI and are financially supported by the FRC of Rockingham.

Two seminar tours were held in Papua, one in Kalimantan Barat and one in NTT. The tour in NTT was held both in Sumba and in West Timor. These

5 seminars specifically dealt with issues of concern regarding the lack of Catechism Preaching, lack of 2nd worship service, and teaching the church leaders how to preach from texts using the Heidelberg Catechism as reference. In addition, Rev. VanDelden addressed these matters directly when teaching the theological students.

Rev Van Delden also provided focused teaching of Koine Greek to students in the theological seminary in Sumba for a three-week block of teaching each academic year.

10 The deputies attending the regional synod in NTT were able to encourage, exhort and provide sound scriptural arguments regarding various issues being dealt with at synod.

e) Encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (also with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Smithville Mission Board).

15 Discussions have been held with church leaders and this matter was discussed at the regional synod in NTT where delegates encouraged ongoing, meaningful contact between these federations. Written encouragement entailing how this might be done, e.g. by means of pulpit exchange within their regional localities, has been forwarded to the GGRI church leaders. Delegates were encouraged by the willingness of the GGRI to move forward, albeit with care and at a pace which is agreeable to both federations. There has been contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches and in particular the Smithville Mission Board. However, the GGRI-Timor are now an independent federation and the Smithville Mission Board has an advisory function towards this federation. Deputies therefore focus on contact directly with the deputies of this federation.

f) Continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their Synods subject to available finance, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches.

30 **and**

g) Continue contact with the GGRI-Timor.

For a report on this part of our mandate, see our separate reports about the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor.

h) As yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI Papua and the GGRI Kalimantan Barat ... confirming their reformed character and the implications of this union.

Kalimantan Barat:

40 Deputies were planning to visit the GGRI in Kalimantan Barat but that has not happened as result of the government restrictions because of the spread of the COVID-19. Information received from Rev. VanDelden after his seminar tour is in line with the concerns expressed at synod Bunbury about these churches. However, deputies are not comfortable coming with a final report about these churches based on the limited contact they have had with these churches.

Papua:

One deputy traveled with Rev. Van Delden to Papua for the first seminar tour. This was the first visit to the GGRI-P and resulted in a better understanding of the challenging dynamics of these churches.

5 *Origin:* In 1956 the most extensive mission project from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands started with the sending of Rev MK Drost to Papua. In the decades to follow several missionaries served in different locations, supporting churches to expand and eventually form a federation called GGRI-P with its own theological training in Boma. Through the
10 Mission support organisation, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are still quite involved in Papua, employing three full-time staff on several projects.

15 *Current circumstances:* GGRI-P have about 8,000 members, 17 organised congregations, 21 church plants in the process of becoming official full status congregations and 3 classes. They have about 15 pastors, 8 candidate pastors and 30 evangelists. Most congregations are located in the isolated interior part of Papua Province.

20 Increasing urbanisation is taking place, resulting in many congregation members moving to cities such as Tanah Merah and Merauke. The GGRI-P is currently facing a significant shortage of ministers. However, a considerable number of young people are following theological training, thanks to the SMTK, a secondary school founded by the GGRI Papua.

25 The geographical circumstances significantly shape the functioning of the churches. Most of the congregations are in the interior of the province, which is covered with hundreds of kilometres of rivers, lowland rainforests, extensive wetlands, savanna grasslands and expanses of mangrove forest.

30 *Education:* There are elementary schools in each village, but only a few have teachers teaching on a daily basis. About 10–30% of children continue in middle school. Very few go to high school, resulting in most of the church members being illiterate. Three congregations are in the large coastal cities that house Indonesian bureaucratic and commercial apparatus. The level of education in these congregations is higher than in the inland, even though it is still not comparable to the situation in
35 Australia.

40 *Infrastructure:* Some churches can be accessed by vehicle on the road from Merauke, but the majority by motorised canoe up the different main rivers. Only a few congregations are close to an airstrip. Only one float plane is currently available from Merauke through MAF. Some villages have a clinic, but most people still use traditional medicines.

45 While some church members living on the north and south plains and coastal cities have access to reasonable infrastructure, the majority in the interior are limited in this regard. Public telephones or toilets are non-existent in the interior. Most church families must collect drinking water from the different rivers, wells or rain for their daily needs. Most of the GGRI-P members in the interior live primarily off hunting, fishing, and

gardening short- and long-term crops in the lowlands. Each village has a general grocery store.

Communication: Mobile networks are growing, and the wealthier members in the cities can afford a mobile phone running on a basic 3G network. At night local generators provide electricity for a couple of hours. There are single side-band radios (SSBs) in a handful of villages, mainly used by the police and military force.

According to the 2010 census, 83.15% of the Papuans identified themselves as Christian with 65.48% being Protestant and 17.67% being Roman Catholic. 15.88% of the population is Muslim and less than 1% are Buddhist or Hindu. There is also substantial practice of animism, the traditional religion for many Papuans, with many blending animistic beliefs with other religions such as Christianity.

These churches share the same reformed doctrine with the FRCA and are of reformed character. As in other churches of the GGRI, also in Papua there are concerns about troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy. During the first visit to Papua, the FRCA deputies met with the Board of Synodical Work (BSW) in the GGRI-P. Contact with sister churches is part of the BSW's mandate. They shared our concerns about troubling aspects of church polity and liturgy in the GGRI-P. They indicated that they sometimes experience difficulties amongst church leaders to address the issues due to their non-confrontational church culture. Furthermore, there is a lack of funding to arrange regular classes meetings where these issues could be addressed.

For this reason, during the first seminar attention was mainly given to the need to restore catechism preaching. During the second seminar tour issues like the hallowing of the Sabbath Day, the principles of reformed worship, the giving of the first fruits as an act of faith and worship, and the ministry of the gospel: a fulltime calling, have been addressed. Although the responses from the GGRI attendees to the seminars were quite promising, it is difficult for the FRCA deputies to evaluate the long-term effects of the seminars. This implies that the concerns about troubling aspects of church polity and liturgy in the GGRI-P could not completely be taken away.

There is some contact between the churches in Papua and in the other provinces, and some ministers and theological students travel between these provinces. But overall, regular contact as we are used to in the FRCA, is limited due to the geographical distances and limited funding. In the past the Dutch churches sponsored most of the major ecclesiastical assemblies in the GGRI-P, resulting in more regular oversight taking place. This has been lacking in the past three years.

Some GGRI-P congregations still have contact and receive support from the Dutch churches. This creates challenges, both with regards to what is being taught as well as expectations regarding the financial arrangements around the seminars.

7. Final remarks

Deputies are encouraged by the desire within the GGRI churches to continue to reform, and to return to the reformed principles of worship formerly adhered to, which was expressed by attendees during the seminar tours in all three provinces. This is also evidenced by the decisions of the regional synod 2019 in Sumba, NTT, to:

- I. Reinstatement of the 2nd worship service in established churches, subject to availability of minister.
- II. Reinstatement of catechism preaching in the churches on a weekly basis where 2 worship services are possible, and on alternate Sundays where only one worship service is possible.
- III. Bring concerns regarding the RCN churches to the national synod with a proposal to terminate sister church relationships if no repentance is forthcoming, regarding the issues already raised by the FRCA & Canadian sister churches.
- IV. Formally endorse a request for assistance from the churches, for Rev VanDelden to provide lectures and seminars for the purpose of building up the Reformed character of the GGRI churches.
- V. Continue to improve the oversight of the theological college by appointing Rev VanDelden to a position as an external advisor working closely with the board of governors.

8. Recommendations

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. Send two delegates to the next GGRI Regional & National synods subject to available finance;
 - c. Continue to offer assistance in improving the Reformed character of the GGRI Churches and addressing existing concerns by the current means of theological training support and seminars, subject to available resources;
 - d. Encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor;
 - e. Continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their Synods subject to available finance, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;
 - f. Continue contact with the GGRI-Timor;
 - g. as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI

Kalimantan Barat, confirming their Reformed character.

Grounds:

1. The GGRI churches give evidence of continual striving for faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- 5 2. Our rules for sister church relations indicate that the churches need to mutually care for each other so that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. Troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI have been identified and discussed with the leaders in the GGRI. The deputies indicate that there is a desire to address these concerns and it is important that we continue to encourage them in these matters and offer them help wherever possible.
- 10 3. The seminars as organised over the past few years in cooperation with the deputies of the GGRI have been well received and are a valuable means which deputies can offer to assist the GGRI in improving the reformed character of these churches.
- 15 4. Our visits to Indonesia and their visits to us have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
- 20 5. The Indonesian churches request ongoing financial support for their theological college as they continue on a road to self-sustainability. Until such time that this support is no longer required, such support should be coordinated, the churches kept informed, and financial accountability maintained.
- 25 6. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI and GGRC and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with these two other church groups in Indonesia.
7. Some information has been received about the GGRI-KalBar but this is not sufficient to come with a good report and create a clearer picture.

II. The Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC)

1. Name of Church

Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC).

2. Introduction

5 The GGRC were established in the fifties when they left the GMIT churches. Their name was first GGM (Pilgrim Churches) and later the word 'reformed' was added and the name became GGRM. In 2003 the name was changed to GGRC (Calvinist Reformed Churches).

10 They are sister churches of the GGRI and have repeatedly offered the FRCA a sister church relationship. In response the FRCA has always encouraged them to become one with the GGRI and in that way become sisters of the FRCA.

The Synod Edmonton 2019 of the Canadian Reformed Churches accepted the GGRC as sister churches.

3. Brief description of Church

Location (description of political & geographical context)	<i>All churches are in the province NTT and are divided over three islands: West Timor (Kupang) - 5 churches. Rote - 7 churches +2 mission posts). Sabu - 2 churches and a mission post They also have a mission post located in Malang, Java.</i>
History	<i>Initially the now-known-as GGRC left the GMIT churches and to become the GGM and later the GGRM. One of the leaders, Rev. Fangidae, had contact with the GGRI through Dutch mission workers in Indonesia. GGRM students together with GGRI students were taught by Dutch missionaries in Sumba in the 1990's. Disagreements led to a split from the GGRM and formation of the GGRC. The GGRC has a sister relationship with the RCN, GGRI, CanRC and URCNA</i>
Confessional documents	<i>Three Ecumenical Creeds Three Forms of Unity</i>
Number of churches & church plants	<i>14 established churches and 4 mission posts</i>
	<i>Consistory/ Council 14 Weekly</i>

Assemblies, number, frequency	<i>Classis</i>	2	<i>Biannual</i>
	<i>General Synod</i>	1	<i>Triennially</i>
Training of theological students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>At present, churches are served by 9 ministers.</i> ▪ <i>5 ministers studied at STT Sumba and one of them continued at the CRTS in Hamilton.</i> ▪ <i>1 minister studied at STAKRI Timor.</i> ▪ <i>1 minister studied at the John Calvin College in Bali, Indonesia.</i> ▪ <i>2 ministers studied in Malang.</i> ▪ <i>Now students mainly study in Malang.</i> 		

4. History of the Relationship

- 5 a. While in Indonesia in the late 1980's, FRCA Deputies met with members of the GGMM. One of the leaders of the GGMM, Rev. Fangidae, attended the FRCA Synod of 1990. This Synod mandated deputies to seek contact with the GMM in Timor, to determine whether they could be recognised as true and faithful churches in accordance with our confessions.

10 The GGMM requested an ecclesiastical relationship with the FRCA, to which the FRCA responded by encouraging them to become one with the GGRI. Due to schism and splits within the GGMM, the churches are now known as the GGRC.

The FRCA supported Yonson Dethan to study at the Canadian Reformed Seminary. He graduated in 1997.

15 In 2003, the FRCA noted that these churches have demonstrated faithfulness to God's Word and encouraged the GGRC to seek unity with the GGRI.

20 Deputies have regularly attended GGRC synods and in the past Australian ministers have twice helped the GGRC with seminars on topics like the church order. The GGRC have sent delegates to FRCA synods since 2012.

5. Decision and Mandate

Article 105 - Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI)

Decision

- 25 1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

...

- e. encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (also with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Smithville Mission Board);
- 5 f. continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their Synods subject to available finance, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;

6. Execution of Mandate Article

- a. Official correspondence received:
 - 10 1. Invitation to attend Synod at Korlok on Rote Island in August 2019 and a request for financial aid for Synod costs.

Deputies responded to this in a letter, accepting the invitation and offering limited funding to cover Synod costs.

- b. Visits made:
 - 15 1. In accordance with the mandate from Synod Bunbury 2018, two deputies attended the GGRC Synod held on Rote island in August 2019.

Some of the items dealt with at Synod:

- 20 i. Discussions regarding the sister church relationship of the GGRC with the RCN. As they had not discussed their concerns with the RCN yet, it was decided that before GGRC could sever relations with the RCN, they were duty bound to write a letter urging the RCN to turn back from their decisions.
- 25 ii. Church Literature.
- iii. Construction of church buildings
- iv. Raising the human resources and the economy of the congregations.
- v. Rotation of deputies.
- 30 vi. Provision of care for ministers, retired ministers and the families of ministers who have passed away.
- vii. Funding for mission posts.
- viii. The official address for the federation.
- ix. The relationship between the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor.

7. Execution of specific points in the mandate with regards to the GGRC

1. To support the GGRC with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches.

5 As part of the seminar tour which was organised by Rev. VanDelden together with deputies of the GGRI in NTT, a series of lectures was held in Kupang as well. The GGRC were invited to attend. Four leaders from the GGRC could attend and spoke positively about the lectures.

2. Encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (also with the Canadian Reformed Churches and Smithville Mission Board).

10 Discussions have been held with church leaders at personal levels while at Synod Korlok. Delegates encouraged ongoing and meaningful contact between these federations and encouraged members of the GGRC to seek unity with the GGRI and the GGRI-T.

15 Deputies were able to meet with Canadian deputies Rev. A Pol and Br. O Bouwman to share information on our work in Indonesia.

8. Recommendation

20 As part of the recommendation to synod regarding the GGRI (see the report about the GGRI), the deputies recommend to include in the mandate of the deputies:

- e. Continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their Synods subject to available finance, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;

Ground:

25 6. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI and GGRC and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with these two other church groups in Indonesia.

III. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)

1. Name of Church

Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia - Timor (GGRI-T).

2. Introduction

5 The GGRI-Timor are the result of the mission work of the Canadian Reformed Church in Smithville, with Rev. Edwer Dethan as missionary. These churches have established a Theological School for the training of teachers and ministers of the Word, which has the name STAKRI.

3. Brief description of Church

Location *All churches are in West Timor in the province NTT. A few are close to Kupang, others are more inland.*
(description of political & geographical context)

History *The Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville started mission work in West Timor and sent Rev. Edwer Dethan in 2003. The first church was established in 2005. A theological training center was established in 2006, which developed into a seminary, combined with a school for teachers, which is officially registered under the name STAKRI.*

Confessional documents *Three Ecumenical Creeds
Three Forms of Unity*

Number of churches & church plants *9 established churches and 4 mission posts*

Assemblies, number, frequency

<i>Consistory/ Council</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>Weekly</i>
<i>Classis</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Biannually</i>
<i>General Synod</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Triennially</i>

Training of theological students

- *These churches have six ministers who are all trained at STAKRI.*

10 4. History of the Relationship

Since 2007, the FRCA deputies have had contact with these churches, through the church of Smithville. After these mission churches formed a federation, they sent two delegates from Timor to the synod of the FRCA in 2018.

5. Decision and Mandate

15 **Article 105** - Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI)

Decision

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.

5 2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

...

e. encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (also with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Smithville Mission Board);

10 ...

g. continue contact with the GGRI-Timor;

6. Execution of Mandate

When the deputies traveled to Rote to attend the synod of the GGRC, they also stayed in Kupang and had a meeting with deputies of the GGRI-Timor.

15 The GGRI-T have formed a federation in November 2016, which is supposed to be temporary. Their intention is to seek contact with the GGRI and possibly over time join this federation. They have considered joining the GGRC and some of their churches had sent a delegation to a classis meeting in 2015 but have decided to focus on the GGRI.

20 The GGRI-T experience some persecution from the large protestant church (GMIT).

25 The GGRI-T expressed their appreciation for being invited to attend the synod in Australia in 2018 and asked how to go about requesting a sister church relationship with the FRCA. The deputies responded that they could write a letter to the next synod, but also encouraged them strongly to seek unity with the GGRI.

7. Recommendation

30 As part of the recommendation to synod regarding the GGRI (see the report about the GGRI), the deputies recommend to include in the mandate of the deputies:

e. Continue contact with the GGRI-Timor;

Ground:

35 6. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI and GGRC and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with these two other church groups in Indonesia.

IV. GGRI – Theological Training

1. Decision and mandate:

Synod Bunbury 2018 decided (article 96):

- 5 1. To mandate deputies to continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, to submit a budget, proposed assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2021.
- 10 2. Not to provide funds for the building of a new campus for the STT-GGRI at this time but to mandate deputies to consider the best way to responsibly provide financial support for theological training for the GGRI.
3. To mandate deputies to find a local church to assume responsibility for the financial support of theological training for the GGRI following Synod 2021 and to ensure a smooth transition to this new arrangement.
- 15 4. To encourage the Board of Governors at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev A VanDelden.
5. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA for three months, subject to available funding from our churches.

20 Grounds

- 25 1. The churches of Baldivis and Kelmscott have made a compelling case that our support for theological education in Indonesia ought to become the responsibility of a local church rather than Deputies for Sister Church Relations. However, out of concern for our Indonesian brethren, this transition ought to be made carefully.
2. The financial support for this theological training ought to be managed with more detailed attention to reporting and accountability, as well as due consideration for best practices related to avoiding long-term dependency.
- 30 3. Deputies have expressed concern about the functioning of the Board of Governors at STT-GGRI (Sumba).
4. Recent history has proven the benefit of having FRCA ministers providing assistance in theological training, as well as having GGRI students and ministers come to Australia.

2. Execution of Mandate Art. 96

35 A. Correspondence:

1. There was regular correspondence with the deputies for theological training of the GGRI regarding the needs of the college and the financial support.

2. A letter was sent to the churches in the FRCA with the request to consider taking over the responsibility for the support of the seminary. None of the churches responded that they were able and willing to do so.

5

B. Visits made

Two deputies visited the theological college (STT-GGRI) at least once a year. An official visit was made in August 2019. This visit coincided with a lecture tour by Rev VanDelden which included seminars at the college. Opportunity was also taken to hold discussions with teachers at the college who were also delegated to regional synod. The two Australian deputies also visited Sumba on behalf of the church of Rockingham. During those visits they took time to meet with the deputies, teachers, students and others at the college as well.

10

C. Execution of specific points in mandate

15

- I. Deputies to continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, to submit a budget, proposed assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2021.**

20

Deputies have been diligent in carrying out their mandate. Churches have been approached and financial assistance has been forthcoming which has allowed the college to function effectively. Budgets have been approved and sent and the college has been constrained to work within the budget amounts agreed upon. Every year in the first half of the year, financial reports and auditor's reports were provided for the local churches in Australia as mandated by Synod.

25

30

- II. Not to provide funds for the building of a new campus for the STT-GGRI at this time but to mandate deputies to consider the best way to responsibly provide financial support for theological training for the GGRI.**

35

Funds for the further building of the theological college at the proposed location of Praellu were withheld as the site did not meet the requirements specified for continuing support. Instead, Synod Tana Hamu 2019 decided to relocate the college in the 2020 Academic year to Waimarang (Melolo), where it had been previously situated, until such time that a new college in Waingapu is completed and fit for purpose. The deputies had collected funds in the past for the building of a new campus. Now that a new campus is not going to be built in the foreseeable future, deputies recommend to synod that part of these funds can be used for renovation of the buildings in Waimarang. Remaining funds which were collected for the new campus can now also be used for the running costs of the college, so that the contribution requested from the churches can be decreased.

40

45

- III. To mandate deputies to find a local church to assume responsibility for the financial support of theological training for**

the GGRI following Synod 2021 and to ensure a smooth transition to this new arrangement.

5 Deputies have strived to comply with the provisions of this mandate. An information pack was completed and sent to all FRC churches in Australia for their consideration. To date no positive reply has been received. It appears that the churches see this task as being too much for a local church to handle. There is also some confusion whether this can be considered mission work or not. Deputies do not see this as mission work but as support from one church federation to another, in the same way as the FRCA support the churches in South Africa for their theological education. Deputies request synod to reconsider this part of the mandate.

10
15 **IV. To encourage the Board of Governors at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev A VanDelden.**

The FRCA delegates to the regional synod GGRI-NTT 2019 encouraged synod to appoint deputies in place of the non-functioning YASTRI. This was agreed to and the following appointments were made:

20 The chairman: Rev Martinus Manek Nikan (M.Th)

Secretary: Rev Hina Hinggirandja Kurung.

Treasurer: Kornelius Paratu (ST).

Rev Van Delden was also appointed as an external advisor.

25 **V. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA for three months, subject to available funding from our churches**

Invitations were sent to two brothers, one from Kalimantan and one from Sabu.

30 Rev Marianus Tuaty Waang from STTR in Sentagi, Kalimantan Barat & Rev Windi Kurung from GGRI in Sabu were selected. These brothers received approval from their respective consistories for a period of leave from their respective offices, however due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions, it has not been possible to proceed with their visits. Deputies made the commitment to welcome these brothers once the travel restrictions will be lifted and it is possible for them to visit Western Australia.

35
40 Over time, the usefulness of these visits has decreased. As a result of the development of technology, there are other ways for them to learn English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA and this money can be spent in better ways.

Deputies recommend that, after these brothers have visited, no others will be invited.

D. Concluding remarks

- 5
- a. This mandate continues to be a challenging one for the deputies. Should a local church not be found willing to take over the responsibility for the support of the theological college, as seems to be the case, deputies will not be able to fulfill this mandate in its current form.
- 10
- b. Deputies are thankful for the positive direction taken by Regional Synod NTT in 2019 in appointing a new board of governors, and also in appointing Rev VanDelden as an external advisor.
- c. Deputies are also thankful that the decision not to proceed with the building at Praellu, but to focus on moving the college back to Waimarang where there are existing facilities which can be utilised at a minimal cost.
- 15
- d. Synod 2019 in Sumba expressed appreciation for Rev VanDelden's continued support in teaching at the college, for his seminar tours for church leaders, and for his willingness to work with the board of governors of the theological college.

3. Recommendation:

1. To mandate deputies:
- 20
- a. to continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, to submit a budget, proposed assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2024.
- 25
- b. To provide funds for the renovation of the buildings in Waimarang as needed and redirect the remainder of the funds collected for a new campus to the running of the seminary.
- 30
- c. To mandate deputies to find capable members and appoint them in a committee which functions under the responsibility of the deputies, to manage the support for the seminary of the GGRI in Waimarang.
- d. To encourage the deputies for the training for the ministry at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to continue to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev A VanDelden.
- 35
- e. To financially support the ministers already invited to come to Australia to study English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA for three months, and thereafter no longer to invite brothers to come to Australia for this purpose.

Grounds

- 40
1. The financial support for this theological training ought to be managed with detailed attention to reporting and accountability, as well as due consideration for best practices related to avoiding long-term dependency.

2. Since the regional synod in NTT decided to move the seminary back to the existing buildings in Waimarang, there is no longer a need to keep the funds collected for a new campus and these funds can be redirected to the renovation of the existing buildings in Waimarang, and what is left, can be used to decrease the financial support requested from the churches.
5
3. No churches have indicated that they are able to take over the responsibility for the support of the seminary. Mandating deputies to appoint a special committee for this task allows them to find qualified members for this committee and to exercise proper oversight, while deputies can focus on their main task to maintain the sister church relationships.
10
4. The usefulness of inviting students or ministers to come to Australia is limited. Commitments made should be kept, but thereafter there is no clear need to continue to invite others.
5. The GGRI churches have appointed Rev. Van Delden as an external advisor and can be encouraged to make good use of him. This has also proven to be beneficial for the deputies to maintain good contact with the seminary in Sumba.
15

Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise

Report to Synod to be convened, God willing, in Albany on 14 June 2021

Introduction

5 The *Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise* hereby submit our report on the mandate given by Synod Bunbury, 2018. This Synod decided to adopt and produce an Australian version of the Book of Praise which included the Psalms and Hymns of the 2014 Canadian *Book of Praise: Anglo Genevan Psalter*, its creeds, confessions and liturgical forms (including changes made by the FRCA) as well as the Australian Church Order (Synod 2018 Acts, Article 60). Based on this decision, the Standing Committee was
10 mandated to:

- a) act as the legal entity within the FRCA to deal with copyright matters, as required;
- b) produce in a timely manner a version of the *Australian Book of Praise*, as described in Article 60 of Synod 2018 Acts and make such a version also available in a digital format suitable for use on mobile devices;
- 15 c) request Premier Printing to act as the publisher for the *Australian Book of Praise* and request Pro Ecclesia to become the Australian distributors;
- d) maintain good contact with the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
- e) receive, scrutinise and evaluate correspondence from the churches, provide advice
20 where required, and make recommendations to the next synod as to the validity of any suggestions made;
- f) report to the next synod in accordance with Rules for Synods regarding Deputies. (Synod 2018 Acts, Article 88)

25 The Deputies are pleased to report that under God's blessing they were able to fulfill their task. The *Australian Book of Praise: Anglo Genevan Psalter* is in the last stages of production; the Lord willing, by the time Synod 2021 is convened it will be available for distribution in the churches. We pray that the *Australian Book of Praise* will be used with joy, for the edification of the church and to the glory of God's name.

Humbly submitted by the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise

30 Rev C Vermeulen (convenor)
Rev R Eikelboom
R(ober) Eikelboom
G Plug

The activities of the Standing Committee are outlined under the various elements of their mandate.

1.0 Act as the legal entity within the FRCA to deal with Copyright matters

5 Since the Canadian SCBP has copyright to the entire *Book of Praise* and various individuals have copyright to the psalms and hymns, there was little to do regarding copyright other than pay fees, and consequently there was no need to create a legal entity.

2.0 Produce in a timely manner a version of the *Australian Book of Praise*, as described in Article 60 of Synod 2018 Acts and make such a version also available in a digital format suitable for use on mobile devices

2.1 Feedback from the Churches:

15 In March 2019 the Standing Committee published an article in the *Una Sancta* reporting on the progress towards the publication of the *Australian Book of Praise* and asking for feedback about the use of Australian spelling and preferences for hard and/or soft covers. We also solicited submissions for an Australian cover design. The feedback received indicated an overwhelming conviction that Australian/British spelling should be used. A small number requested that pronouns for God be capitalised. There seemed to be some desire for soft-cover versions of the Book of Praise to be made available.

2.2 Cover design:

20 The Committee gratefully received a small number of high-quality designs for an Australian themed cover. After due consideration, the Committee selected the design submitted by Br Edwin Visser. In his words, it is a design which blends Australian themes suggestive of the environment in which we live with the idea of
25 praise directed on high toward God.

2.3 Changes made in the non-musical section of the Book of Praise:

30 The *Australian Book of Praise* has incorporated the changes in the non-musical section of the Book of Praise decided on in previous Synods (identified in *Report to Synod 2018 by the Deputies for Australian Version of the Canadian Book of Praise* 1.2.4 – 1.2.6):

- i. Changes to the Apostles Creed
- ii. Changes in the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons
- iii. Inclusion of the text of the Forms of Subscription used by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- 35 iv. Replacement of the Canadian Church Order with the latest Australian Church Order

2.4 Changes to the Preface:

40 In considering the changes required to the Preface, the Committee noted that much of the original preface has great relevance to the *Australian Book of Praise*. On the other hand, it felt that a preface reflecting the particular context of

the *Australian Book of Praise* was also desirable. The decision was made to retain much of the original preface in an adapted version which also included the Australian context. Permission was sought and obtained from the Canadian SCBP to include this adapted version.

5 2.5 *Copyright matters:*

Contact was made with various copyright holders of the Psalms and Hymns:

- 10 i. SCBP: We acknowledge with gratitude that the SCBP has not charged royalties for the individual songs to which it holds copyright.
- 10 ii. W Helder: The Committee requested and was granted permission to use the 44 Psalms and 15 Hymns to which he holds copyright (as identified in the previous *Report to Synod 2018*, 5. 1). This required the payment of a fee of US\$120 per psalm or hymn to the publisher of the New Genevan Psalter, amounting to US\$7080.
- 15 iii. G. van Popta: The Committee requested and received permission to use Hymn 63 upon the payment of a fee of US\$120 to the publisher of the New Genevan Psalter. Rev. van Popta also granted permission to use Australian spelling.
- 20 iv. United Reformed Church: The URC was contacted for permission to use the tune of Hymn 79. Permission was readily granted, and the Committee notes with gratitude that no royalties were charged.
- 25 v. Hope Publishers: Contact was made with Hope Publishing regarding royalties for four of the Hymns for which they hold copyright (as identified in *Deputies Report to Synod 2018*, 5.3). Royalties remain minimal, at less than \$100 AUD for every 1000 copies of the *Book of Praise*.
- 25 vi. Use of ESV texts in the Book of Praise. No special permission was required since there are only 306 texts quoted, below the threshold of 500 after which special permission is required.

2.6 *Printing:*

30 The Committee considered a number of local and overseas options for printing the *Australian Book of Praise*, including extensive consultation with Br William Gortemaker, CEO of Premier Printing in Winnipeg, Canada, who produce the Canadian *Book of Praise*. We decided to ask Premier Printing to produce the books for us on the basis of: (i) they have an intimate understanding of what is required to produce these books, and (ii) the costs of production would mean the books would be able to be sold at approximately the same price as they are now.

35 Furthermore, we would be dependent on them to make the changes to the text, and also to produce the electronic version. We would like to thank Br Gortemaker for the help and advice that he has provided.

40 The Committee considered various factors in coming to a decision on numbers to be initially printed. Firstly, many members will already have a relatively new version of the Canadian *Book of Praise (2014)* which will still be suitable for use in the Australian Churches, therefore reducing the immediate take-up of the *Australian Book of Praise*. However, the Free Reformed Churches of Launceston and Legana are still using an older version and eagerly waiting for the *Australian*

Book of Praise. While it would be more economical to have an initial print run of 5000 books, it was envisaged that it would take many years to sell and recoup the cost of producing them. In coming to its decision, the Committee communicated with the various schools and the churches for estimates on how many would be needed in the relative short term. Based on this, it was decided to have a first print run of 2000 in hard cover (or standard version) and 1000 in soft cover (or deluxe version), as well as make an electronic version available as soon as possible.

2.7 *Financing:*

The 2018 Synod allocated \$15,000 towards the production of the *Australian Book of Praise*. As the estimated cost of the project was expected to be over \$70,000, and we wanted to pursue the mandate of having the *Australian Book of Praise* produced before the next Synod, the Committee wrote to the churches, asking for a financial contribution to the cost of production. A number of churches responded, offering various amounts as pre-payment for books, or for loans to be repaid as soon as practical after the next Synod. We are grateful that the funds offered are sufficient to cover the anticipated costs.

Funds will be channelled through the Synod Treasurer, who will be asked to pay royalties and production costs.

The committee has proposed to use the \$15,000 allocation for the cost of royalties, changes to the text by Premier Printing, and the cost of producing the electronic version. The cost of printing the books should be covered by the sales of the books.

2.8 *Entity responsible for distribution*

As the Committee has no legal standing (i.e. no bank account) nor the resources to act as a distributor (i.e. physically hold the stock, sell to the churches or bookshops as required), we propose the following model for the distribution of the *Book of Praise*:

- i. The Synod Treasurer, as the only financial legal entity in our Bond of Churches, be the legal entity that manages the holding and distribution of the physical books. As the task is beyond the normal role of the Treasurer, the Synod could appoint a deputy to the Treasurer for this specific task. Thought should also be given to the secure storage of the physical stock. Furthermore, the Treasurer should work with resellers such that they sell the books with only a small margin.
- ii. The electronic version has to be sold at the same price as the Canadian version. As the Synod has no facility to sell and distribute these on the FRCA website, the Committee has approached Pro Ecclesia Bookshop to sell the electronic version via their website. They have been asked, and are willing, to invest in setting up the facility on their website, cover the cost of sales, and report annually the number of sales to the Committee. In light of this investment, and also that they will be managing many of the one-off sales of the physical books at a low margin, they will not be asked to pass on any of the proceeds of the sales of the electronic versions. It should be noted that the demand for the electronic version is unknown, but likely to be low. This arrangement should be reviewed by the Committee for inclusion in their report to the next Synod.

3.0 Request Premier Printing to act as publisher for the *Australian Book of Praise*

5 Early contact was made with Premier Printing outlining a proposal for Premier to take on the printing of the *Australian Book of Praise*, in both physical and electronic versions. This included working with the Committee to make the type-setting changes required and facilitating the inclusion of an Australian cover design.

We acknowledge with gratitude the helpful cooperation and advice of Br William Gortemaker of Premier Printing, including the willingness to assist in creating and delivering an electronic version.

10 Premier Printing were happy to allow the Standing Committee to research cheaper options for the printing of the *Book of Praise* and, if necessary, facilitate printing by another company, asking only that the Committee share information on alternative pricing with them. After quotes were received from a number of local and overseas companies, the Committee was convinced that, in terms of price and quality, Premier Printing remained the best option, also in light of their expertise in producing the
15 Canadian version over many years.

4.0 Maintain good contact with the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches*

20 With gratitude we acknowledge the brotherly spirit of cooperation which characterised all our interactions with the Canadian SCBP. We particularly note their stated well-wishes and prayers for God's blessing over our work; their approval of the name *Australian Book of Praise: Anglo Genevan Psalter*; their willingness to approve our adaptation of the preface to the *Book of Praise*; and their decision not to charge royalties on the use of any of the Psalms and Hymns for which they hold copyright.

5.0 Receive, scrutinise and evaluate correspondence from the churches

25 W Helder suggested a change to Hymn 2: 3, from '*And I believe a catholic Church, one holy Christian congregation*, to: '*in the holy catholic church, one universal congregation*'. The Committee decided not to take on the suggestion on the grounds that:

- 30 a. to change the text at this time, for publication in the *Australian Book of Praise*, without the approval of Synod, would be going beyond its mandate.
- b. any proposal to the Synod to change the text would delay the printing of the *Australian Book of Praise* till the second half of 2021.

35 As committee we did consider proposals to modify Psalms 2, 8, 130 and 150 which had arrived at Synod Bunbury 2018 via the ecclesiastical route and subsequently (albeit implicitly: see Article 89) forwarded to us as committee. Our preliminary recommendation is that there are no compelling reasons to change any of these psalms. While we intend to provide a supplementary report to synod regarding these
40 four psalms, it ought to be noted that we have not yet established 'ground-rules' regarding copyright with the Canadian SCBP: are we even permitted to change the text of the psalms and/or hymns?

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Repayment of loans:

5 That Synod arranges for the repayment of loans made by the Free Reformed Churches of Darling Downs and Rockingham – and any others that might wish to be reimbursed – by assessing the churches.

6.2 Appoint or reappoint members to the Standing Committee of the Australian Book of Praise:

10 We remind Synod that Rev C Vermeulen has now completed his third term on this committee and its predecessors; the other current members are available to be reappointed.

6.3 Mandate:

Provide the Standing Committee with the following mandate:

- 15 a. receive feedback from the churches regarding the contents and appearance of the *Australian Book of Praise*;
- b. record corrections and possible improvements for reprints and revisions
- c. maintain good contact with the *Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise* of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
- d. express the gratitude of the FRCA to the brothers Helder, van Popta and Gortemaker for their contribution to the *Australian Book of Praise*;
- 20 e. clarify with the copyright-holders under what conditions we might be allowed to make modifications to the *Australian Book of Praise*;
- f. monitor quantities available for distribution and authorise new print runs when necessary;
- 25 g. maintain contact with Pro Ecclesia Bookshop regarding the distribution and sales of the electronic versions;
- h. prompt Synod to arrange financing for future print runs at the appropriate time.

Deputies – Training for the Ministry

Report to Synod Albany 2021 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

1. Introduction

Synod Bunbury 2018 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia appointed as
5 Deputies – Training for the Ministry:

Rev Reuben Bredenhof
Rev Wes Bredenhof
Br Bruce Huizinga
Rev Dirk Poppe
10 Br Alwyn Terpstra

As alternate, Br Willem Van Der Ven was appointed.

The brothers who were appointed each accepted their appointment and were able to
function as deputies for the duration of the term.

The deputies met regularly to report, discuss and work through the different aspects of
15 the mandate extended by Synod 2018.

What follows is the report of deputies outlining activity undertaken in relation to the
various elements of the mandate, considerations around the matter as well as
recommendations for consideration by Synod Albany 2021.

2. Mandate:

20 Deputies were guided in their activity by the mandate derived from Synod Bunbury
2018 Acts, Articles 80 and 90, as outlined below.

2.1 To mandate the deputies to:

- a. develop and submit to the next synod a strategic long-term plan for a future
Australian theological seminary that will:
 - 25 i. be an accredited seminary to train our men for serving as ministers
and missionaries
 - ii. have the potential to serve our sister churches and other churches in
the wider Reformed community in the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. the
Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa); and
 - 30 iii. have the potential to serve the needs of the broader FRCA
community including office bearer training, teacher training and
enrichment courses for the members
- b. solicit the churches' input regarding an Australian theological seminary that
could serve the wider Reformed community
- 35 c. continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by the churches
as reasons for not establishing our own theological seminary at this time,
as outlined in (Article 80) Ground 1

- d. make use of the expertise of CRTS as necessary
- e. consult with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRC's have contact, regarding the potential benefits of an Australian theological seminary as described above;
- 5
- f. consult with the CRTS for opportunities to co-operate in an Australian theological seminary; and
- g. provide a recommendation regarding the execution of this strategic plan, and an associated implementation timeline. This should include the consideration of utilising existing infrastructure.
- 10
- 2.2 To mandate deputies:
- 2.2.1 To express appreciation for Dr J Smith's visit to the Australian churches.
- 2.2.2 To send a deputy as delegate to attend one convocation and Board of Governors meeting during the next three year term.
- 15
- 2.2.3 To accept the explanation of CRTS regarding distance education for the FRCSA, and to express thankfulness for their current consideration of this possibility in relation to our churches.
- 2.2.4 To suggest to the churches that Canadian candidates called to serve among churches in Australia should undergo a peremptory examination before applying for immigration.
- 20
- 2.2.5 To ... appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
- a. continue to collect funds for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and forward them to the seminary;
- 25
- b. request the churches to contribute \$90 per communicant member per annum for the support of CRTS, and to report on the amount of contribution paid by the Canadian churches and propose a matching level of contribution;
- c. notify all our sister-church deputies and governors for theological training of new deputies in order to maintain contact and exchange information;
- 30
- d. continue to correspond with CRTS;
- e. continue to collect funds for the support of theological students;
- f. review the current system of funding for students with respect to its effectiveness in supporting and encouraging students;
- 35
- g. consider and implement new ways to promote the study for the ministry among young men, such as through the local John Calvin schools, local churches and the involvement of local pastors;
- h. to meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to have good oversight over their education;

- i. investigate and report on the applicability of a ministry internship model, taking into consideration models for theological training used by our sister churches (e.g., RCNZ);
- 5 j. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required, in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of the Acts of Synod 1992 (as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994);
- k. continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from CRTS once every three years;
- 10 l. continue to be as closely involved, as practically as possible, in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS;
- m. thank CRTS for providing faithful, godly theological education for our young men;
- 15 n. monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program;
- 20 o. collect and disburse funds for the PTP in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the PTP; and reimburse students taking the PTP in Australia, at an increased level to match Canadian churches' level of support;
- p. continue to oversee the Library and Library Fund; and
- q. accept the invitation from CRTS and participate in the work of the ad hoc committee that is investigating the possibility of pursuing distance education with CRTS.

25 3. Report and Recommendations

3.1 Strategic Plan for an Australian Seminary (Article 80, 2a – g)

Deputies were mandated by Synod 2018 to develop a strategic plan for a seminary. As we embarked on this work, we discovered quickly that there are some significant obstacles to creating a feasible plan. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that there is an option available which might realistically allow us to achieve our goal of Reformed seminary education in Australia in the long term.

We considered three possibilities for an accredited seminary.

3.1.1 Option 1: Independently Accredited Seminary

This possibility would envision an institution to which the Australian government grants the right to issue degrees. This would involve making an application to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and meeting all their requirements. We sought the advice of Dr. D.J. Swarts, an expert in this area from our church community. He advised that the establishment of a small seminary registered as a Higher Education Provider regulated by TEQSA would be extremely difficult and

practically impossible as a first step. Therefore, we do not regard this as a viable option.

3.1.2 Option 2: A Seminary Affiliated with the Australian College of Theology

Introduction to the Australian College of Theology

5 An alternative way of establishing a seminary able to grant accredited degrees is to operate under the auspices of the Australian College of Theology (ACT), based in Sydney, NSW. The ACT is historically and constitutionally an Anglican foundation, and describes its operation as “an ecumenical consortium.” The ACT is fully accredited through TEQSA, and it has several affiliate schools throughout Australia, including e.g., Trinity Theological College in Perth and the Reformed Theological College in Melbourne.

10 In TEQSA’s view, the ACT is considered “the education provider,” while its affiliated colleges are “third party” providers contracted out to provide education for ACT’s students—indeed, all affiliated college students are technically ACT students. As such, the ACT remains involved in the ongoing governance of its schools. For instance, affiliated colleges are open to regular inspection and review by the ACT, and all affiliated colleges are directly accountable to the ACT on an ongoing basis. Affiliated colleges must adhere to the policies and procedures of the ACT; e.g., there must be a consistent marking rubric across all the colleges.

The Functions of Affiliation

25 The ACT has its own set of extensive requirements for affiliation (see below). A critical requirement for affiliation is that all teachers must meet the N+1 qualification. That is to say, a M.Div. program must be taught by individuals who hold Ph.D. degrees (or their equivalent: D.Min., etc.).

30 The overall structure of the various colleges’ programs and degrees (e.g., M.Div.) is set by ACT. The general course structures and learning outcomes are expected to be followed by the affiliated colleges. The particular way in which the actual content is delivered varies according to college, but courses must be approved by the ACT committee.

35 While the ACT does not have any personnel sitting on the various college boards, staff members from all of the affiliated colleges are expected to sit on the various ACT governance committees (e.g., professional development, course content).

School Size and Distance Education

40 In our conversations with the dean of the ACT, we asked about school size, as our prospective school would likely be small, serving a few small Reformed denominations in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. His response was that school size is not critical, though most ACT colleges find that to be viable they must have between **50-100** full-time equivalent students. Regardless of the student body size, the college’s business plan must be sustainable and demonstrate that there will be sufficient funds for continued operation (i.e., maintaining a facility, library, and staff).

45 Furthermore, small student numbers are not ideal because with minimal

classroom sizes, student interaction is decreased, and students do not get the full “higher education experience.”

5 The ACT dean noted that being part of the ACT can be a significant drain on the human resources of a small college, as there are regular reporting and governance obligations with regard to ACT as well as TEQSA. He suggested that smaller theological colleges have to consider carefully whether partnering with ACT is something they can afford to spend their time and energy on; he shared that some of the smaller ACT colleges are definitely stretched by the time required to work within ACT and TEQSA standards.

10 We asked the dean if it is possible to offer some of an M.Div. program via distance education through a Canadian seminary (i.e., CRTS). The response is that in order to properly maintain quality control (and its TEQSA accreditation), the ACT must keep meaningful supervision over all of its affiliated colleges and their staff. From the ACT’s perspective, having Australian-based students being taught by Canadian-based teachers at another institution stretches the lines of accountability too long.

Application Process

20 For a school (new or existing) to affiliate with the ACT, there is a process of application.

- 1) *Informal Enquiry* – Initial conversations are held between representatives of the prospective college and the dean of the ACT.
- 2) *Notice of Intent* – The chairman of the college’s governing body informs the dean of the ACT about the intent to apply for affiliation. Such a notice should include information regarding the background of the institution, its strategic purpose, and the suggested timeline for organization. The ACT board will evaluate this initial proposal in order to see whether a full application is warranted.
- 25 3) *Full Application* – Once the Notice of Intent has been assessed, a full application (see below) is invited by the ACT board. A panel from the ACT will assess the application and visit the prospective college, and then prepare a report for the board of the ACT. It is the ACT board’s decision to grant permission to affiliate.
- 30 4) *Approval* – If approval is granted, an affiliation agreement is signed between the college and the ACT. Following affiliation, each college is expected to complete a self-review process every five years.
- 35

ACT Requirements

40 As mentioned, the ACT has a detailed set of requirements for its colleges in order to maintain high educational and governance standards satisfying TEQSA regulations. In general, the ACT is concerned with a college’s governance and organisational structure, ongoing student support, pastoral care for students, stability of academic staff, student numbers, and professional development of academic staff.

As mentioned, colleges offering an ACT three-year degree (such as an M.Div.) are required to have at least four full-time teachers, or their equivalent, in an appropriate range of disciplines. As already mentioned, staff must meet the N + 1 qualification.

5 Before approving affiliation, ACT requires the development of various institutional policies regarding such areas as:

- recruitment of staff
- induction of staff
- staff mentoring
- 10 • staff performance evaluation
- staff termination
- response to critical incidents
- disaster recovery plan
- management and regular oversight of risk
- 15 • security of student records
- annual professional development program

ACT also stipulates that provisions must be made for student support in relation to:

- student orientation
- 20 • assistance with learning
- student financial services
- student health services
- vocational support
- personal counselling
- 25 • student legal services
- accommodation services
- student mentoring
- campus safety

30 To grant affiliation, ACT requires colleges to make adequate provisions for a library, including details surrounding:

- location and access to library
- quality and size of collection
- scope of collection
- library information and resource systems
- 35 • library staff
- policies for acquisition, review and operations

[Note: the library can be the college's own asset, or it can be shared with a second provider by written agreement.]

40 The ACT seeks to ensure that all of its affiliated colleges are financially stable and viable. Thus, as part of the application process with ACT, a comprehensive business plan must be developed which addresses the following aspects:

- objectives of institution
- services provided

- modes of educational delivery
- premises security
- leadership profiles
- academic and general staff
- 5 • student profiles
- three years of audited annual statements
- current budget
- sources of income
- library budget
- 10 • anticipated financial situation (4 years)
- capital needs
- market size
- marketing program
- promotion strategy
- 15 • risk (to revenue, reputation, etc.) analysis

Advantages / Opportunities

Synod mandated us to work on a strategic plan for an *accredited* institution. Affiliating with the ACT would allow us to become accredited, provided we can meet their stringent and extensive requirements.

20 If we affiliated with the ACT, it would help ensure that we pursue professionalism throughout our operations. It would help us develop and maintain good practices conforming to the accepted standards of higher education. In this sense, we expect that affiliating with ACT would not be unlike how CRTS has benefited immensely from its relationship with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Associating with ATS has elevated the professionalism and practices of many aspects of CRTS, which in turn has improved the quality of theological education at Hamilton. Such a pursuit of institutional excellence would likewise be fitting for an Australian seminary.

30 Disadvantages / Obstacles

The ACT application requirements demonstrate that it would be a long and complex process to prepare for an application to affiliate with ACT. Immense time and resources will be needed in order to develop the wide range of policies prior to application. We consider that such an undertaking is far beyond the ability of a voluntary committee (the Deputies for Training for the Ministry) to do. An individual would have to be recruited to begin working on these policies.

40 Furthermore, if affiliation with ACT were achieved, continuing to meet ACT requirements would necessitate further work. This would be onerous for a small school. The reality is that tertiary education in Australia is highly regulated. TEQSA has its own expectations and priorities, for the government sees TEQSA as a key way to address cultural and societal issues; e.g., sexual violence and harassment. TEQSA priorities become priorities for ACT and its colleges, in the sense that policies and procedures must be developed by the ACT/colleges in order to maintain accreditation. Keeping pace with such priorities would require ongoing attention.

As mentioned, the ACT is historically an Anglican school, and the ACT network comprises a broad spectrum of Christian colleges and seminaries. It is possible that the ecclesiastical background of the ACT and the diverse make-up of its network may prove a hindrance in getting broad support from the churches for a seminary operating under the ACT's auspices.

Additionally, we noted above that going this route would require us to forego the use of any help from CRTS via distance-learning. Because of the ACT's requirements, all our teaching would have to be resourced from within our own seminary, or perhaps from other ACT-affiliated seminaries.

Finally, we note the requirement that a seminary affiliated with the ACT have at least four full-time faculty at the doctorate level. It is our view that, under the current circumstances in our churches and sister-churches, this is unrealistic. We simply do not have enough ministers with doctorates and that is unlikely to change in the future.

All things considered, the deputies regard affiliation with the ACT as presently unfeasible.

3.1.3 Option 3: CRTS Australian Affiliate

On June 13-14, 2019, we met face-to-face with Dr. Jason VanVliet (as principal of CRTS) and Rev. Richard Aasman (as then-chairman of the CRTS Board of Governors). This "roundtable" discussion was agreed upon and supported by the CRTS Senate and Board. During this discussion, a third possibility emerged, namely an Australian affiliate of CRTS. We might then have seminary training provided under the auspices of CRTS and its accreditation with ATS.

On September 21, 2019, we sent a letter to the churches with an Executive Summary of the meeting with Dr. VanVliet and Rev. Aasman. This excerpt is worth noting:

The CRTS would be significantly impacted by the establishment of an ARTS [Australian Reformed Theological Seminary] in the short to medium term. Currently student numbers are close to optimal for the arrangements that are in place. Australian students add considerably to the depth and diversity of the student body. Australia currently also contributes significantly to the running costs of the CRTS.

The obstacles that stand in the way of having an ARTS and a CRTS functioning together are around the availability of ministers with advanced degrees to call on as professors, the potential reduction in size and diversity of the student body at CRTS, and the cost associated with maintaining two seminaries.

Longer term, two confessional reformed seminaries, one in the northern hemisphere and one in the southern hemisphere, drawing on each other and supporting each other, serving the two federations and being of service to reformed churches in neighbouring countries is regarded as a very positive vision. The two seminaries would do well to have agreement between them to ensure that they continue to work in co-operation and avoid competition.

Establishing an ARTS might be best considered at such time as student numbers in the CRTS are such that the current arrangements (first year students make up one class, second to fourth year students combined) can be sustained even with the loss of Australian students. This would avoid the CRTS having to adjust, based on increased numbers and would still maintain a positive student experience, especially in the first year.

The above discussion was especially in regard to establishing an independent Australian seminary and the bearing it would have on CRTS. However, it does also have some relevance for the establishment of a CRTS Australian affiliate, particularly with regard to student numbers.

This model, if pursued, might see an Australian brick-and-mortar campus with a number of full-time professors on site. These professors could offer a substantial amount of the curriculum in person. The remainder might be resourced through a combination of distance-learning from the CRTS campus in Hamilton and modular courses offered in-person from Canadian CRTS professors (e.g. during the Canadian summer months).

Advantages

With this model, we could offer accredited Reformed seminary education in Australia, but at the same time continue to capitalize on our long-standing relationship with CRTS. We could take optimal advantage of CRTS's experience and expertise. This arrangement could be mutually beneficial, since CRTS student numbers continue to rise and this will eventually begin to stretch the capacity of current facilities at CRTS. Moreover, CRTS would gain some professors on staff, adding to the breadth of expertise in the seminary as a whole. This could also prove to be mutually beneficial, since Australia-based professors could also provide teaching to Hamilton-based students either in modular courses offered in-person or through distance learning. Finally, FRCA seminary students will be more likely to remain in Australia to serve within the FRCA.

Challenges

This option emerged late in our discussions. Consequently, we have not yet had the opportunity to discuss this model in any detail with the full CRTS Board of Governors. It was briefly raised at the September 11, 2020 Board of Governors meeting in the context of their discussion of a significant report received from their internal committee studying the matter of distance education. While there were no objections raised as such at that meeting, it was noted that there are significant questions that will need to be explored in the future if this track is followed. We will outline some of those issues.

First, with regard to the timing, it appears CRTS would not be willing to venture down this path unless warranted by student numbers. As noted earlier, student numbers do currently continue to grow at CRTS, but this is not a given. Nor is it a given that CRTS would see an Australian affiliate as the answer to crowded facilities in Hamilton.

Governance is another potentially challenging issue. Would we want a governance model which allows for some measure of Australian

autonomy? Would there be an Australian Board of Governors under or beside the CRTS Board of Governors?

5 When it comes to faculty, Australia-based full-time professors would technically be CRTS professors. Yet they would also presumably be FRCA ministers and somehow under the supervision of an Australian Board of Governors. How would this all work? How might it fit with current CRTS policies and regulations? If it does not fit, how difficult would it be to change those?

10 This model features distance education as an integral component. Due to the pandemic, CRTS has begun using distance education for several students overseas. However, CRTS reports that there is still much to learn about how well this works and how it can work well. One of the significant challenges with us is the time difference between Australia and Canada. We would need to carefully consider how distance education with a time difference of 12-13 hours works out in reality.

15 Is this a viable option within the ATS-accreditation framework that CRTS works under? We do not yet have a definitive answer to that. However, if it is (depending on a number of factors discussed further below), we could then be subject to all ATS requirements, including having adequate facilities. We would need to make a substantial investment in brick-and-mortar infrastructure, as well as library resources.

20 Besides those initial significant costs to get established, there is also the challenge of sharing the cost of ongoing operations. Would the affiliate have a separate budget from the main campus in Canada? If so, to what degree would the FRCA continue to support the education offered at the main campus? Some kind of arrangement would have to be negotiated.

25 In addition to questions needing to be explored with the CRTS Board of Governors, there are also outstanding questions relating to the Australian tertiary education regulatory environment. Here again we sought out the advice of Dr. Swarts. He advised that the establishment of an Australian campus of CRTS, while a complex endeavour, should be possible. TEQSA has regulations relating to TransNational Education that would have to be taken into account. According to Dr. Swarts, there are two possibilities to explore.

30 The first option would see CRTS directly establishing a campus in Australia. CRTS would have to apply to both ATS and TEQSA to do this. Professors, staff, and students would all be under the CRTS organization. Students graduating in Australia would receive a CRTS qualification recognized by both ATS and TEQSA. At a future date, it would likely be possible to legally separate the Australian affiliate. It would then be an independent entity with regulation from TEQSA, but not ATS. It is currently unclear if the ATS framework allows for this option. That remains to be researched.

35 The second option would see CRTS establishing an Australian subsidiary that would be accredited and regulated by TEQSA. For convenience, we will refer to it as the Australian Reformed Theological Seminary (ARTS). CRTS would contract with ARTS to deliver one or more qualifications on its behalf. ARTS would deliver CRTS qualifications under license from CRTS

– these would be recognized by TEQSA, but not ATS. ARTS would have to comply with CRTS academic regulations. ARTS would be regulated only by TEQSA, while CRTS would be regulated only by ATS. Australian professors, staff, and students would all be under the ARTS organization. With this option too, it would likely be possible to legally separate the Australian subsidiary in the future to result in a stand-alone ARTS. Again, whether or how this fits with the ATS framework remains to be investigated.

Of these two options, the first is likely to be less complex within our Australian regulatory environment. The second option provides more Australian autonomy, but higher barriers to successful registration with TEQSA because we would have less leverage off the existing expertise and history of CRTS.

In sum, there are many challenges and outstanding questions; however, from what we know at the moment, the option of CRTS establishing an Australian subsidiary appears to be doable.

Proceeding in this direction would see Deputies taking a two-pronged approach.

First, more investigation needs to be done regarding how best to establish a CRTS Australian affiliate within the regulatory frameworks of both TEQSA and ATS. With regard to TEQSA, we would need to engage the expertise of Dr. Swarts. With further investigation, he could advise us more concretely as to which option is best for us. With regard to ATS, they have a “global engagement” department which CRTS and/or we can contact for further advice.

Second, assuming no insurmountable regulatory obstacles on the Australian side, Deputies would need to engage the CRTS Board of Governors to discuss the feasibility of an Australian CRTS affiliate. If there is a positive outcome, discussions would continue to establish a mutually-satisfactory plan. This plan would include agreements regarding a tentative timeline, governance, financing, faculty, and meeting the requirements of ATS. We would also have to then consider more closely the feasibility/desirability of offering a large segment of seminary training via distance education.

If Synod’s decision is to head in this direction, it would be wise to begin accumulating funds for infrastructure, and more funds for a theological library. To that end, we suggest a modest additional levy to the regular assessments for Deputies for Training for the Ministry over the next three years. This levy would scale up each year: \$3.00 pcm for 2022, \$6.00 pcm for 2023, \$9.00 pcm for 2024. This would gradually introduce the costs of having a CRTS affiliate to our churches. Should a CRTS Australian affiliate prove to be impossible, these funds could be donated to CRTS for their infrastructure needs.

Finally, we want to emphasize strongly the tentative nature of what we are recommending. A draft of this plan was sent to the Executive of the CRTS Board of Governors and Dr. Jason VanVliet (principal of CRTS) for their comment. The Executive remarked that, while an Australian CRTS affiliate is an exciting prospect, there is much that remains to be explored and

discussed. We concur with that sentiment. While this direction holds promise, 2020 has reminded us how all our plans should be appended with “God willing.”

Recommendations

5 Synod decide to mandate new deputies:

To continue discussions with CRTS to explore the feasibility of a CRTS Australian affiliate and, assuming a positive outcome, develop a plan and report to the next synod with recommendations towards implementation. Discussions will need to include (but are not limited to) working towards agreements regarding:

- 10
- A tentative timeline
 - Governance
 - Financing
 - Faculty
 - ATS Accreditation requirements

15 To engage Dr. D.J. Swarts as a consultant to advise further on the feasibility of a CRTS Australian affiliate within the TEQSA regulatory framework.

To introduce an additional levy to the regular assessments in view of the possibility of establishing a CRTS Australian affiliate in the coming years.

- \$3.00 pcm for 2022, \$6.00 pcm for 2023, \$9.00 pcm for 2024
- 20
- With 75% of the funds from the additional levy, to establish a Seminary Infrastructure Fund. This would be with a view to possibly building a brick-and-mortar campus in the long term.
 - With 25% of the funds from the additional levy, to re-establish contributions to the Library Fund.

25 **Grounds:**

- A CRTS Australian affiliate appears to be the only viable option for us to offer accredited Reformed seminary training in Australia. For now it appears feasible, but much further discussion with the CRTS Board of Governors is required, as well as further investigation into the TEQSA regulatory framework.
- 30
- If we are committed to offering Reformed seminary training in the coming years, we need to begin accumulating funds to build the necessary infrastructure and library resources to meet accreditation standards. This will also gradually introduce the churches to the weighty financial reality of our own seminary training in Australia.

3.2 Dr J Smith's visit (Article 90, 2.1)

Deputies report that in a letter dated 5th October 2018 to the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, appreciation for the visit of Dr J Smith was expressed.

5 3.3 Deputies attendance at Convocation and Board of Governor's meeting (Article 90, 2.2)

10 In January 2019, Rev. W. Bredenhof and Rev. D. Poppe were able to visit the CRTS and attend the Board of Governor's meeting. The brothers were warmly welcomed at the meeting and able to participate in all of the discussions. It was heart-warming to see the dedication of the Board of Governors to deliver Reformed teaching to the young men in a context of academic excellence.

In September 2019 Br B Huizinga was able to travel to Hamilton to attend the 50th Anniversary & 45th Convocation of the CRTS. From the 5 – 7 September, Br B Huizinga was able to attend several meetings and events.

15 The Board of Governor's (BOG) Meeting and the Board of Governor's Induction meeting were a wonderful opportunity to interact with the CRTS. As deputy, Br Huizinga was able to attend and participate on the September BOG meeting and get a very real sense of the scope of operations as well as the high level of accountability and transparency within their operations; there is a lot of work
20 being done both in support but also in delivery of theological training. At the same time, God has blessed this work and the brotherly manner, and the love shown for the work is evidence of this.

25 The Convocation ceremony held at Redeemer College was also a wonderful opportunity to see God's gifts in allowing theological education over the past 50 years in Canada. The address of br. B Huizinga to 50th Anniversary of the 45th Convocation of CRTS Sep 2019 can be found in Appendix 1.

The CRTS Open Day, on the next day, was extremely well attended and a beautiful time to catch up with Australian students as well as speak to the professors and many of the people in attendance.

30 For more information regarding this visit see the Report on visit to CRTS Sep 2019, Appendix 2.

Recommendation

35 Synod decide to mandate new deputies to, as a minimum, send a deputy as delegate to attend one convocation and Board of Governors meeting during the next three year term.

3.4 Distance Education explanation (Article 90, 2.3)

40 Rev Dirk Poppe and Br A Terpstra served on the CRTS Distance Education Committee. This is reported on in Section 3.17 of this report. In their interaction with the CRTS, they communicated the thankfulness of the Australian churches for the CRTS's willingness to develop their distance education possibilities.

3.5 Suggestion to churches re peremptory examination (Article 90, 2.4)

At the time of writing this report, deputies have not written to the churches; it was simply overlooked. It will be attended to prior to Synod Albany 2021.

3.6 Support for CRTS (Article 90, 2.7a, b)

5 3.6.1 Summary of the Hamilton Theological Fund (CRTS) activity

The deputies managed the financial support for CRTS via the Hamilton Theological Fund. For detailed financial information about this fund see the treasurer's report (Appendix 3).

10 Deputies have collected \$90 per communicant member per year, for the years 2018 through 2020. A total of \$777,056 was collected from the churches while AUD \$769,701 was transferred to the CRTS over this period. The monies transferred to the CRTS were received with much gratitude.

15 At the time of the writing of this report, \$26,920 was still owing from the churches for the 2020 assessments whilst \$29,830 still needed to be transferred to CRTS for 2020 (awaiting income).

20 The significant increase in the amount assessed from churches (26.8% increase) over the last two synodical periods (2015-2017: \$609,351 to 2018-2020: \$772,858) is due to the increased levy per communicant member coupled with the increase in communicant members within our federation.

The levy per communicant member increased from \$65 during 2012-2014 to \$82 during 2015-2017 to \$90 during 2018-2020. The number of communicant members increased from 2,588 in 2014 to 3,016 in 2020.

25 Deputies can also report that, as per the recent 2020 CRTS letter to councils re 2021 budget (Appendix 4), the CRTS has set their 2021 levy at CAD \$90 per communicant member. It is noteworthy that this is a decrease of CAD \$3 from CAD \$93 in 2020 (the increase was due to anticipated costs in the hiring and transition of a New Testament Professor). For this reason, we recommend maintaining the assessed levy at a rate of \$90 per communicant member.

30 There was a special donation of \$1,153 made in 2020 to the CRTS from FRC Bunbury on the special occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the CRTS.

3.6.2 Guest Lecturer from CRTS

35 During 2019, Dr J Van Vliet travelled to Australia and toured the FRCA. As per synod decision, the cost of this was borne by deputies and refunded from synod treasury (\$5,398, Appendix 5).

3.6.3 Deputy visit to CRTS

40 The travel cost incurred by Br B Huizinga to attend the CRTS Convocation in 2019 as reported in Section 3.3 above, (\$1830) was refunded from synod treasury (Appendix 5).

As part of this visit Br B Huizinga incurred a loss of income for 5 days. This claim, however, was deemed to be outside the budget approved by Synod 2018 for that period. After some correspondence with the synod treasurer (see Appendix 5) it was agreed that the synod treasury would only pay the cost of the flight to the CRTS, but that the deputies would have to fund the loss of income themselves and would then be refunded by next synod. This is what occurred and therefore, deputies request that synod treasury refund this loss of income (5 days @ \$236 per day = \$1,180) to the deputies during the next synod term.

This misunderstanding seems to be due to an oversight of Synod 2018 in not budgeting for this expense as well as an oversight on deputies' part to specify this as an expected expense. Instead of receiving the normal budgeted amount of \$7,500 for arranging a guest lecturer from CRTS and \$4,000 for arranging a deputy to attend CRTS, only \$7,500 seems to have been allocated. Additionally, deputies were also tasked with finding new ways to promote the ministry of the gospel among young men; the Timothy Conference arranged in 2019 cost \$1,743 and was refunded from synod treasury (see Appendix 5).

To avoid this in the future, deputies have ensured that the proposed budget of expenses for the next synod period includes specified amounts for the different expenditure, as per the mandate.

3.6.4 Pastoral Training Program (PTP) payments

During the period 2018 - 2021, deputies were requested, as per Synod Bunbury 2018's decision (Art 90, 2.7o), to provide financial support for students participating in the Pastoral Training Program in Australia.

Br Kelvin Dekker was supported in 2019 during his PTP program at FRC Albany (\$10,778 for wages and flights).

Br Tim Van Beek was scheduled to complete his PTP at FRC Mount Nasura in 2020, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the support paid for travel flights (CAD \$1,583 = AUD \$1,869, March 2020) was repaid to the deputies (CAD \$1600 = AUD \$1630, September 2020), incurring a AUD \$239 loss due to differential exchange rates. For more information see the treasurer's report for the Hamilton Theological Fund (Appendix 3).

3.6.5 Timothy Conference 2019

The cost of the Timothy Conference was \$1,743 and was refunded by Synod treasury (Appendix 5), even though this was not a budgeted item for this synodical period. The \$1,743 comprised some interstate and intrastate travel costs for deputies and presenters, printing costs, event costs as well as administrative costs.

3.6.6 FX Online management system

During 2019 and 2020 it became apparent that the transfer of monies to the CRTS via the regular online banking system involved a significantly poorer exchange rate than the regular exchange rate. After some investigation with the bank, ANZ offered to allow us to transfer money via their provider of foreign exchange, FX Online. FX Online is a leading

provider of foreign exchange, interest rate and commodities risk management services.

5 This is an online business platform that allows customers to transfer money globally in virtually any currency. A consequence of this is that the exchange rate is about 1.5% better than via the online banking system. In 2020 alone, this represents a savings of about AUD \$3,854, that would otherwise have been absorbed in the bank's online exchange fee associated with transferring funds overseas.

Recommendations

10 To task new deputies to continue to:

- assess and collect monies from the churches at a rate of \$90 per communicant member
- oversee the Hamilton Theological Fund
- arrange a guest lecturer from CRTS every three years
- 15 • arrange a deputy to attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next three-year term.
- arrange the financial matters associated with hosting a conference every synod period

To approve:

- 20 • the proposed refund regarding loss of income of \$1,180 to the deputies.
- the proposed budget for the 2021-2024 period, namely \$13,000, consisting of:
 - \$7,500 for a guest lecturer from the CRTS
 - \$4,000 for a deputy to represent FRCA and attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next three-year term
 - 25 ▪ \$1,500 for the promotion of the ministry of the gospel amongst young men through means of a conference held during the next synod period

3.7 Contact CRTS (Article 90, 2.7d, m)

The deputies have corresponded with the CRTS as and when needed.

The appreciation of the FRCA (Article 90, 2.7 m) was conveyed.

30 The deputies received and responded to correspondence relating to a sensitive matter, which was passed on to the Consistories of the FRCA, with the request to also deal with this in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Recommendation:

Synod instruct new deputies to:

- Maintain contact with CRTS
- Express appreciation for the work undertaken by CRTS across all fronts.

5 3.8 Contact with sister churches (Article 90, 2.7c)

Deputies established contact with Deputies and Board of Governors of sister churches in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa to advise them of new deputies having been appointed by Synod Bunbury 2018 and to share with them the mandate received.

10 It was not possible to establish connections with sister churches in Indonesia, Singapore and South Korea. Advice received was that there was no equivalent committee operating in these churches.

15 In the period between 2018 and 2021 there was regular contact with the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), largely as part of the work undertaken by deputies under Article 90 7d. There was also significant connection with brothers from our sister churches in South Africa, mainly through the Distance Education Committee as per Article 90 7q. Besides the initial connection and an acknowledgment received, there was no further interaction with RCNZ, besides what was undertaken in relation to Article 90 7i.

20 **Recommendation:**

That Synod instruct new deputies, wherever reasonably possible and meaningful, to establish and maintain contact with sister churches in relation to theological training.

25 3.9 Financial support theological students (Article 90, 2.7 e, f)

3.9.1 Summary of the Needy Student Fund activity

The deputies managed the financial support for theological students via the Needy Student Fund. For detailed information on this fund see the treasurer's report of this fund in Appendix 6.

30 During the period 2018 – 2020 deputies collected funds from the churches at rate of \$8 per communicant member.

35 Churches who were supporting a theological student were exempt from this levy. During this synodical period, there were a number of churches (FRC Armadale 2018, FRC Albany 2018, FRC Byford 2018-2020, FRC Baldivis 2018-2020, FRC Darling Downs 2018-2020 and FRC Rockingham 2018-2020) who were supporting theological students and thus received exemptions from this levy.

During the period 2018 – 2020 deputies collected \$51,841 in assessments from the churches.

During this three-year period two students (br Dathan Pleiter and br Anson van Delden) received financial support from deputies, for a combined total of \$41,124.

5 As mentioned previously, the deputies now use FX Online to transfer money overseas. When this was initially set up, this transfer service was inadvertently connected to the account for the Needy Student Fund and not the Hamilton Theological Fund. As a result, the first planned FX Online transfer of AUD \$50,000 (CAD \$59,908.04) occurred to the CRTS from this fund and had to be refunded from the Hamilton Theological Fund (CRTS).
10 Consequently, the total income and expenses on the financial statement are inflated (see Appendix 6).

The Needy Student Fund continued to grow from an opening balance of \$105,455 in November 2017 to \$117,508 in October 2020.

15 It is anticipated that if no other support is requested, and current levy rates are maintained, the Needy Student Fund will likely reduce to about \$112,000 by end of 2021 and \$107,000 by end of 2022.

Despite this reduction over the next few years, the fund still has a healthy reserve, and deputies anticipate that an increase in this levy will not occur in the next synodical period.

20 3.9.2 Agreement with FRC Rockingham

Midway 2020, FRC Rockingham requested deputies to manage the financial support for Br Jacob Baijal and Br Anson van Delden. An agreement was reached that FRC Rockingham would provide \$50,000 annually for this support with the deputies providing extra support needed
25 and would also manage the payments.

3.9.3 Updated Regulations for Financial Support (proposal)

As part of its mandate to review the current system of funding for theological students, the deputies have reviewed the current regulations governing financial support.

30 Regulations regarding financial support for students were first written and adopted at Synod 1992 (Art. 50) and further adjusted by Synod 1994 (Art. 56) and Synod 2000 (Art. 42). There were a set of rules for the fund as well as a set of guidelines for financial assistance attempting to summarize the regulations. As a result, there have existed multiple documents all relating
35 to the financial aid of theological students. These documents were largely repetitive, sometimes conflicting in detail and quite dated.

Deputies have drafted a proposed new set of regulations consisting of:

- Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students (proposed)
 - Application Form for Financial Assistance (new, proposed)
 - Agreement Form (new, proposed)
- 40

Broadly the regulations remained unchanged in intent, but different in structure. The intent remains to be able to provide financial support for students, according to Article 18 of the Australian Church Order. The proposed documents (specifically the new regulations) aim to:

- 5 • ensure that the guidelines are coherent
- address matters relating specifically to:
 - the situation when a student becomes a minister of a sister church of the CanRC
 - 10 ○ the expectations of the support expected and provided by the family of a student
 - providing assurances to the student that if the student in good faith pursues theological training, he will not be required to repay the loans
 - 15 ○ the process of preparing and applying for financial assistance (application form)

The proposed regulations and related forms can be found in Appendices 7.1 – 7.3. For comparison, we include the previous set of regulations and guidelines and rules, which can be found in Appendices 7.4 (i) – 7.4 (iii).

Recommendations

- 20 To task deputies to continue to oversee the Needy Student Fund for the support of theological students and levy the churches as needed.
- To approve the proposed regulations and forms relating to the financial aid for theological students.

Grounds

- 25 The proposed Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students:
 - are more up to date and in line with current expectations
 - read as a coherent document.
 - provide clarity surrounding students who become a minister in a sister church of the Canadian Reformed Churches
 - 30 • provide clarity for the expectations of families of theological students
 - provide assurances for students that repayments of loans are not required when students, in good faith, pursue theological training
 - provide a transparent process for preparing and applying for financial assistance.

3.10 Promotion of the study for the ministry (Article 90, 2.7g, h,)

As deputies, we were able to promote the ministry of the gospel in several ways.

3.10.1 Information Evenings

5 On 5 June 2018 and 10 September 2020, the Deputies of Training for the Ministry hosted an information evening in Armadale for any young men interested in learning about what is involved in the ministry of the gospel. During these meetings we informed them about how to prepare for the ministry, what life at the seminary is like and what life as a minister is really like. We also used the opportunity to explain how financial support for students works.

10 These evenings were attended by many young men in the Perth metro area who had expressed an interest in the ministry of the gospel. In addition, as deputies we had numerous private meetings with young men who needed information and assistance in pursuing the ministry of the gospel.

3.10.2 Career Expos

15 In the past three years, Rev. D. Poppe participated in the Career Expos at the John Calvin Christian College, informing approximately a dozen young men who expressed some interest in the ministry of the gospel about what is involved in this beautiful task.

3.10.3 Timothy Conference 2019

20 The deputies organised a Timothy conference, held on Friday 7 and Saturday 8 June 2019, to promote the ministry of the gospel among young men. Young men from all congregations were invited (and attended) and their consistories were requested to sponsor their travel in the event this would hold anyone back from attending. The conference was arranged at the time when Dr. J. VanVliet was doing a tour of the churches and invited him to speak on the topic "How to prepare? What to expect?"

25 Alongside of him we also had five other speeches. Rev. A. VanDelden addressed, "How Will I Know I am called?" Two current students from the seminary, brothers Kelvin Dekker and Aidan Plug hosted a student panel explaining what life at the seminary is like for an Aussie. The first day was rounded off with a speech by Dr. W. Bredenhof and Rev. D. Poppe on "What's the ministry really like?" On Saturday morning we listened to a speech by Dr. W. Bredenhof about "Reading books" and by Dr. R. Bredenhof on "The Process of Becoming a Minister."

30 The feedback we got from the approximately 40 participants was that they found the speeches extremely beneficial. They also sincerely appreciated the opportunity to have some conversation with Dr. VanVliet as well as the other ministers to gain a greater understanding of ministry and what life for a minister is really like. As deputies we also found this conference to be a rich and informative way for us to encourage the young men to consider the ministry of the gospel. It would be beneficial to

run such a conference every three years, coinciding with a visit from one of the professors from the CRTS

Recommendation:

5 Synod charge deputies with the task of actively promoting the study for ministry among young men in whatever way possible.

3.11 Ministry Internship or Vicariates (Article 90, 2.7i)

10 As per our mandate we investigated models for ministry internships found among our sister churches. We specifically requested information from the Koshin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). The KPCK does not have a unified model for internships and hence they were not able to offer any assistance in pursuit of our mandate. However, our Kiwi brethren do have a program which they helpfully described to us at length.

3.11.1 The RCNZ Vicariate Model

15 The RCNZ model for seminary students can be summarized as follows:

- Students are granted permission to exhort (our “speaking an edifying word”) after a minimum of one year of theological studies. They must have completed a “principles of preaching” course at seminary. There is no presbytery examination for this step.
- Students studying at Mid-America Reformed Seminary (MARS) will follow two summer internships; students at Reformed Theological College (RTC) will do one or two.
- After seminary studies are fully completed, the student will do a vicariate of one year under the supervision of an experienced pastor and his consistory.
- Following the vicariate, there is a preliminary examination at presbytery. If sustained, the man is declared eligible for call.
- The man receives a call to a church and then undergoes a final examination at presbytery before ordination.

30 This model is required to be followed by all RCNZ seminary students. We are told that this system is effective in providing additional “on-the-ground” training to men before being ordained as pastors. On occasion it has also served to indicate difficulties not previously discerned with a seminary student.

35 The RCNZ also has a funding model to facilitate these vicariates. In summary:

- The RCNZ has a central fund to provide financial support to churches with a vicar. This is supported by a quota levied on each of the churches. Churches can apply to the Vicariate Fund for up to two-thirds of the cost of the vicariate.

- A married vicar must receive not less than two-thirds of the recommended salary of a minister and half for a single vicar. They are also to be provided with free accommodation, vehicle and phone. Sessions are also to provide health care, particularly for those on temporary visas to NZ.

Our Deputies were informed that this funding model works well in the RCNZ context.

3.11.2 Applying the RCNZ Model to the FRCA

In order to apply the RCNZ model, we have to account for some differences between us and them. For example, RCNZ students mostly study in Melbourne at RTC. Bringing students back to NZ is not as financially burdensome as bringing students back from Canada to Australia. There could be substantial costs involved.

Moving our Australian students back for a one-year vicariate could affect the possibility of their receiving a call to a Canadian church. This would be due to the costs associated with moving and immigration. However, if the FRCA desires FRCA students to serve FRCA churches, this might not be considered a negative. In fact, it could facilitate that.

CRTS already has the Pastoral Training Program (PTP). This is not intended to replace that. A robust FRCA vicariate program could supplement the PTP, just as the RCNZ model supplements the internships offered via MARS and RTC.

One of the challenges to adapting the RCNZ model is the more “hands-off” approach that we take with “our” seminary students. Students originating from the FRCA become CanRC local church members while studying at CRTS. As such, along with their “native” CanRC counterparts, they have the opportunity to go straight from CRTS to classis to be declared eligible for call. We do not have any direct say in whether they use that opportunity.

With regarding to the funding model, it certainly appears broadly transferable. While the RCNZ have a central fund for vicariates, we could use the existing account(s) of the Deputies for Training for the Ministry.

3.11.3 A Possible Process

If we go this route, taking into account the above, we would envision an FRCA vicariate model looking somewhat like this:

- FRCA seminary students (= originating from the FRCA) do their theological training at CRTS, including participation in the PTP.
- After their second or third year, students undertake a licensure examination in the CanRC and subsequently complete all the requirements of the PTP.
- Upon completion of the fourth year at CRTS, we suggest that FRCA students be offered a one year vicariate in an FRCA congregation. This would be done under the supervision of an experienced pastor

and arranged by the Deputies for Training for the Ministry. It would not be mandatory. Students would have the freedom to instead present themselves to a classis in Canada to undertake a candidacy examination and, all being well, proceed directly to the ministry.

5

- Upon successful completion of the vicariate, students undertake a candidacy examination at the FRCA classis in whose region they reside.
- If a call is received and accepted within the FRCA, the student undertakes an ordination examination at an FRCA classis.

10

Recommendation

Synod decide to mandate new deputies to develop vicariate guidelines (including financial arrangements) to be presented to Synod 2024 for implementation beginning in 2025.

15

Ground

A vicariate system would be both advantageous and feasible for the FRCA and its seminary students. Advantages would include:

- Giving students further opportunities for training and growth
- Providing the churches further opportunities to test men regarding their suitability for the ministry
- Bringing FRCA seminary graduates back to the FRCA where there is more likelihood they would serve our churches

20

3.12 Support for theological students (Article 90, 2.7j)

In the past three years, the deputies have had frequent opportunities to support our students at CRTS. When Br. B. Huizinga, Rev. W. Bredenhof and Rev. D. Poppe were present at CRTS, they had contact with the Australian students to support them in their education. There were also a number of phone conversations with the students to assist them with various matters. In addition, when the students were visiting in Australia, deputies connected with them to hear about their education, and to encourage and support them.

25

30

Recommendation

Synod decide to mandate new deputies to meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to provide encouragement and support and to have good oversight over their education.

35

3.13 Guest lecturer from CRTS (Article 90, 2.7k)

In June 2019, Dr Jason Van Vliet and his wife, Sr Janet Van Vliet visited Western Australia. The visit included time in Albany and Bunbury, as well as Perth. Dr and Sr Van Vliet did not go to Tasmania, the intent being that Dr T Van Raalte (also a CRTS faculty member) who was visiting Australia in October 2019, would spend time there. In the course of the visit Dr Van Vliet was involved in preaching,

40

speaking and visiting. The objective of the visit was to establish and build connection between the CRTS and the FRCA churches, to meet and discuss with deputies about matters pertaining their mandate, and to provide helpful instruction and insight by addressing specific topics. Dr Van Vliet addressed members of all ages, by visiting the schools and through public meetings which were well attended. At the public meetings he addressed two topics: "The Beauty of Reformed Worship" and "Image of God - a divine antidote in a culture of death." Dr Van Vliet also played a crucial role in the Timothy Conference as reported under 3.10.

Dr Van Vliet's visit was very helpful to deputies and was greatly appreciated across the WA churches.

In October of 2019, Dr Ted Van Raalte visited Australia. The main purpose of Dr Van Raalte's visit was to be a key note speaker at a conference of FRCA ministers, held near Bindoon. In WA, his itinerary also included one speaking engagement on the subject of Christian response to the LGBTQ movement. Dr Van Raalte then headed east and spent some time in Tasmania establishing and building relationships there, presenting at a Reformation conference and holding speaking engagements for the churches in Launceston and Legana. Like Dr Van Vliet's visit, Dr Van Raalte's visit was also highly appreciated.

The arrangements for the guest lecturer were conducted a little differently than before. This was a more satisfactory arrangement for the Van Vliets who didn't want to leave their family behind in Canada for too long and it also worked in well with other events being conducted in Australia. In terms of cost the whole of Dr and Sr Van Vliet's expenses were paid for by deputies and refunded from Synod treasury and the flight of Dr Van Raalte from Perth to Launceston was also refunded directly from Synod treasury.

Recommendation:

Synod mandate new deputies to continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from CRTS, once in three years.

3.14 Involvement with Board of Governors CRTS (Article 90, 2.7I)

Following meetings of the Board of Governors, the Chairman of the Board (Rev Aasman first and Rev J Louwse later) and the CRTS Principal, Dr J Van Vliet arranged a meeting with the deputies nominated to take care of this part of the mandate (Rev D Poppe and Br A Terpstra). Meeting minutes and documentation were made available with a view to the deputy representatives to acquaint themselves with the material. In a Zoom meeting the Chairman and the Principal then outlined the discussions and conclusions of the meeting, at which time there was opportunity for questions and / or input. These discussions were generally reported to the next meeting of deputies and, where there was information of wider interest, this was passed on to the FRCA Consistories.

These meetings were characterised by a genuine thankfulness and appreciation for the FRCA support and involvement for and in CRTS.

The arrangements going forward will be that the Australian deputies will be given access to documentation prior to the meeting with the opportunity to have written input into the meeting which will then be shared at the meeting.

This changed arrangement is in recognition of the very strong FRCA support for the CRTS.

5 The deputies were generally also involved in the annual convocation by way of extending congratulatory messages and words of support and encouragement in writing or in person, and information on the event (and when and how to view it) was made available within the FRCA.

Recommendation:

Synod instruct new deputies to:

- 10
- Continue to be as closely as involved as is practically possible, in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS.
 - Convey congratulatory messages and words of support and encouragement on special occasions such as the annual convocation.

3.15 Pastoral Training Program (Article 90, 2.7n, o)

15 As part of the Pastoral Training Program at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary the Australian churches were privileged to support brother Kelvin Dekker for his final internship which he completed in the FRC Albany. This was done under the guidance of Rev. H. Alkema and conducted for the stipulated ten-week period commencing in June 2018.

20 Further, Br. Dathan Pleiter participated in a two week orientation internship in FRC Southern River under the guidance of Rev. D. Poppe. Br. Pleiter also had a second two week orientation internship in FRC Mt. Nasura under the guidance of Rev. R. Bredenhof. A further internship for br. T. VanBeek had been arranged under the guidance of Rev. R. Bredenhof for June 2020, but was cancelled because of travel restrictions associated with COVID-19.

25 All written evaluations, as required upon completion of the program, were provided and submitted. The young men indicated that they found the internships helpful. The mentors also expressed joy in assisting the young men in their education.

Recommendations

30 To instruct the deputies to:

- monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program
 - collect and disburse funds for the PTP in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the PTP; and reimburse students taking the PTP in Australia, at an increased level to match Canadian churches' level of support.
- 35

3.16 Library and Library Fund (Article 90, 2.7p)

Over the years many books and periodicals have been donated towards a theological library for a possible Australian Reformed Theological Seminary, sometime in the future.

5 Deputies undertook work with this collection with a view to removing that which would not be helpful and maintaining what might be useful and meaningful. The collection has now been cleaned up and the items that may be useful in the future are being kept in storage at the FRC Darling Downs building.

10 The deputies have continued to manage the Australian Theological Library Fund. This is no longer an active fund, in the sense that, following a past Synod decision to discontinue levying the churches for the purpose of establishing a theological library, the only growth is due to interest.

15 Consequently, the fund has increased from \$123,153 at November 2017 to a closing balance of \$130,208 at October 2020. The fund is invested in a term deposit, for which the rate of return has been relatively low during the past three years. Of note is the lower than previous return on this fund; currently 0.75% p.a.

See Appendix 8 for treasurer's report of this fund and Appendix 9 for the audit of this fund.

Recommendation

20 To mandate deputies to continue to oversee the Library and the Library Fund.

Ground

25 A library is an integral component of a theological seminary. Should the churches approve any plans for the establishment of a theological seminary, the current collection and the funds that have been saved would provide a substantial contribution towards the establishment of a library.

3.17 Participation Distance Education Committee (Article 90, 2.7q)

On the CRTS Strategic Plan, Distance Education has been identified as Key Thrust 1 (KT1).

30 To that end the CRTS Board of Governors has appointed members to a Distance Education Committee. The members comprise representatives from Australia, Canada and South Africa. Rev Dirk Poppe and Br Alwyn Terpstra serve as members of this Committee from Australia. The Committee reports its progress to the Board by way of a report to each Board of Governors Meeting.

35 CRTS is an institution that has as main task to train ministers of the Word. As such it is as much an institution that forms men towards undertaking a critical position in the churches, as it is an educational institution that develops the academic understandings of these men. Both functions, that of forming and that of teaching are vitally important and in the functioning of the CRTS they function seamlessly. In view of this, CRTS holds to the position that a face to face mode
40 is the best way to deliver on its most important function. Teaching can be achieved by way of distance education whereas forming the person for an office

is seriously compromised through a training program that relies fully on distance education.

5 At the same time CRTS is mindful of the potential of distance education to provide assistance and support to a face to face program, to facilitate absence due to illness, inability to attend full time due to distance and associated factors and to be used in times of pandemic when schools cannot be open. CRTS is cautiously open to discussions to provide a form of distance education to groups of students elsewhere who are supported by their local churches. In this latter scenario, CRTS provides academic training and the formation of the men following that training is left to a local church support group.

10 Moving from a face to face program to an effective distance education arrangement is quite challenging. It needs to be remembered that face to face education is very different to online education and the pedagogies and practices associated with teaching need to be tackled quite differently for effective learning to take place. Besides this, considerable thought and investment needs to go into acquiring and using the right technology as well as supporting and training staff in its use. One major consideration in this for the CRTS is to be mindful that adding an online component to their current face to face delivery is very demanding on its faculty members. This needs to be managed well.

15 The Distance Education Committee explored ways in which CRTS might move to an online platform, initially to support its current operations and ultimately to be able to provide support across the country and also internationally to students who for all sorts of reasons might not be able to attend or attend full time. Distance education could also provide opportunities for an eventual Theological Seminary in Australia, with certain courses being taken online direct from Canada, whether synchronously or asynchronously.

20 COVID-19 accelerated matters considerably at CRTS. Within the space of one week CRTS moved from face to face to on line delivery of courses, including doing examinations. This was a very stressful time for CRTS; the faculty was really extended in having to pull this off but it was managed and the 2020 year could be fully completed with the adjusted way of functioning. Since then, many aspects of online delivery have been fine-tuned and the CRTS now has an effective Learning Management System in place forming the backbone of the online delivery.

25 Currently CRTS is serving students overseas in different locations (and more importantly, time zones) in the freshman program of the CRTS.

30 The Australian deputies serving on the Distance Education Committee were able to provide support and also advice in relation to these developments. This was achieved especially through engaging with the issues by way of discussion through regular Zoom meetings, involving Australian, Canadian and South African representatives.

35 The Australian representatives contributed substantially to the KT1 report that was sent to the CRTS Board for its September 2020 meeting.

40 Given that the aspect of distance education will continue to feature on the CRTS agenda, that the outcomes of the KT1 have, as yet, not fully been realised, and that Australia has an ongoing interest in this matter in relation to a possible

Australian Reformed Theological Seminary, it is considered prudent to continue our involvement in this Committee.

Recommendation:

5 That deputies be charged to continue participation in the CRTS ad hoc Distance Education Committee.

3.18 Promotion of CRTS within FRCA

10 The mandate of the deputies did not specifically indicate to promote the work of CRTS within the FRCA. Given that it was a necessary element of attending to all the other aspects of the mandate, deputies did it anyway. Where possible and appropriate, information about the functioning of the CRTS was disseminated to FRCA Consistories and members.

CRTS is hugely appreciative of the support received through the FRCA financially, through prayer and also through positive engagement with its functioning.

15 It seemed appropriate that this be given expression through the dissemination of information, requests for general and specific prayer, and support for fundraising.

It seems appropriate that in the future this be continued and Synod might give expression to that in its mandate to future deputies.

Recommendation:

20 Synod mandate new deputies to promote the CRTS within the FRCA.

3.19 Treasurer task:

25 In reviewing the work undertaken by the treasurer of the deputies it was noted that the workload associated with the three different funds (CRTS fund, Needy Student fund and Library fund) was significant and involved the distribution of significant amount of funds. The treasurer did his work faithfully and reported his activity to the deputies at their meetings. However, deputies believe that there is a level of risk associated with this that is best mitigated.

30 To that end the deputies request consideration to add one further member to the deputies who will be able to share the load relating to managing the three different funds and to provide an additional pair of eyes checking for errors.

Recommendation:

Synod appoint one additional deputy to the Deputies Training for the Ministry with a view to assisting and supporting the treasury work associated with their mandate.

35 **4. Recommendations / Grounds:**

What follows is a list of the recommendations and in some cases grounds for the recommendations, as they have been developed in Section 3 of the report, above.

4.1 Re an Australian Reformed Theological Seminary

Synod decide to mandate new deputies:

4.1.1 To continue discussions with CRTS to explore the feasibility of a CRTS Australian affiliate and, assuming a positive outcome, develop a plan and report to the next synod with recommendations towards implementation. Discussions will need to include (but are not limited to) working towards agreements regarding:

- A tentative timeline
- Governance
- Financing
- Faculty
- ATS Accreditation requirements

4.1.2 To engage Dr. D.J. Swarts as a consultant to advise further on the feasibility of a CRTS Australian affiliate within the TEQSA regulatory framework.

4.1.3 To introduce an additional levy to the regular assessments in view of the possibility of establishing a CRTS Australian affiliate in the coming years.

- \$3.00 pcm for 2022, \$6.00 pcm for 2023, \$9.00 pcm for 2024
- With 75% of the funds from the additional levy, to establish a Seminary Infrastructure Fund. This would be with a view to possibly building a brick-and-mortar campus in the long term.
- With 25% of the funds from the additional levy, to re-establish contributions to the Library Fund.

Grounds:

• A CRTS Australian affiliate appears to be the only viable option for us to offer accredited Reformed seminary training in Australia. For now it appears feasible, but much further discussion with the CRTS Board of Governors is required, as well as further investigation into the TEQSA regulatory framework.

• If we are committed to offering Reformed seminary training in the coming years, we need to begin accumulating funds to build the necessary infrastructure and library resources to meet accreditation standards. This will also gradually introduce the churches to the weighty financial reality of our own seminary training in Australia.

4.2 Re attendance at CRTS Board of Governors' Meetings and CRTS Convocation

4.2.1 Synod decide to mandate new deputies to, as a minimum, send a deputy as delegate to attend one convocation and Board of Governors meeting during the next three-year term.

4.3 Re Hamilton Theological Fund

4.3.1 To task new deputies to continue to:

- assess and collect monies from the churches at a rate of \$90 per communicant member
- 5 • oversee the Hamilton Theological Fund
- arrange a guest lecturer from CRTS every three years
- arrange a deputy to attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governors meeting in the next three-year term.
- 10 • arrange the financial matters associated with hosting a conference every synod period

4.3.2 To approve:

- the proposed refund regarding loss of income of \$1,180 to the deputies.
- 15 • the proposed budget for the 2021-2024 period, namely \$13,000, consisting of:
 - \$7,500 for a guest lecturer from the CRTS
 - \$4,000 for a deputy to represent FRCA and attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next three-year term
 - 20 ▪ \$1,500 for the promotion of the ministry of the gospel amongst young men through means of a conference held during the next synod period

4.4 Re contact CRTS

4.4.1 Synod instruct new deputies to:

- 25 • Maintain contact with CRTS
- Express appreciation for the work undertaken by CRTS across all fronts.

4.5 Re contact other church federations:

- 30 4.5.1 That Synod instruct new deputies, wherever reasonably possible and meaningful, to establish and maintain contact with sister churches in relation to theological training.

4.6 Re Needy Student Fund:

- 4.6.1 To task new deputies to continue to levy the churches and oversee the Needy Student Fund for the support of theological students.

4.6.2 To approve the proposed regulations and forms relating to the financial aid for theological students.

Grounds

The proposed Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students:

- 5 • are more up to date and line with current expectations
- read as a coherent document
- provide clarity surrounding students who become a minister in a sister church of the Canadian Reformed Churches
- provide clarity for the expectations of families of theological students
- 10 • provide assurances for students that repayments of loans are not required when students, in good faith, pursue theological training
- provide a transparent process for the preparing and applying for financial assistance.

4.7 Re promoting the study towards becoming minister:

- 15 4.7.1 Synod charge new deputies with the task of promoting the study for ministry among young men in whatever way possible.

4.8 Re an FRCA Vicariate Model

- 20 4.8.1 Synod decide to mandate new deputies to develop vicariate guidelines (including financial arrangements) to be presented to Synod 2024 for implementation beginning in 2025.

Grounds

A vicariate system would be both advantageous and feasible for the FRCA and its seminary students. Advantages would include:

- Giving students further opportunities for training and growth
- 25 • Providing the churches further opportunities to test men regarding their suitability for the ministry
- Bringing FRCA seminary graduates back to the FRCA where there is more likelihood they would serve our churches

4.9 Re maintaining contact with Australian theological students

- 30 4.9.1 Synod decide to mandate new deputies to meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to provide encouragement and support and to have good oversight over their education.

4.10 Re Visit of CRTS faculty member:

4.10.1 Synod mandate new deputies to continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from CRTS, once in three years.

4.11 Re involvement with the CRTS Board of Governors:

5 4.11.1 Synod instruct new deputies to:

- Continue to be as closely as involved as is practically possible, in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS.
- Convey congratulatory messages and words of support and encouragement on special occasions such as the annual convocation.

10

4.12 Re Pastoral Training Program:

4.12.1 To instruct the deputies to:

- monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program
- collect and disburse funds for the PTP in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the PTP; and reimburse students taking the PTP in Australia, at an increased level to match Canadian churches' level of support.

15

20

4.13 Re Library and Library Fund

4.13.1 Synod to mandate new deputies to continue to oversee the Library and the Library Fund.

Ground

A library is an integral component of a theological seminary. Should the churches approve any plans for the establishment of a theological seminary, the current collection and the funds that have been saved would provide a substantial contribution towards the establishment of a library.

25

4.14 Re participation in Distance Education Committee:

4.14.1 That new deputies be charged to continue participation in the CRTS ad hoc Distance Education Committee.

30

4.15 Re promotion of CRTS within FRCA:

4.15.1 Synod mandate new deputies to promote the CRTS within the FRCA.

4.16 Re number of deputies

4.16.1 Synod appoint one additional deputy to the Deputies Training for the Ministry with a view to assisting and supporting the treasury work associated with their mandate.

35

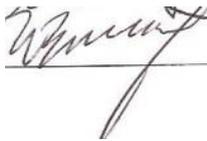
5. Conclusion

5 It has been a joy and privilege to serve the churches as Deputies Training for the
Ministry. The activity undertaken in the area of training for the ministry is a vital activity
for the churches now and into the future. As deputies we could reflect on a strong unity
and a very positive co-operation with the Canadian Reformed Churches by way of the
CRTS Board and Faculty. Working across the globe with the same understanding and
conviction and with strong commitment created a lot of synergy for the work that had to
be done. Our prayer was continually and will remain for God's blessings on our work,
10 for the wellbeing of his church and for the honour of his Name. With these conclusions
and in this spirit, we present this report to Synod Albany 2021 and we hope and pray
too, that the Synod will be well served by our efforts.

Deputies:



15 Dr R Bredenhof



Dr W Bredenhof



20 Br B Huizinga



Rev D Poppe

25



Br A Terpstra

Appendix 1 Address of br B Huizinga to 45th Convocation (50th Anniversary) of CRTS September 2019

Address of br. B Huizinga to the 50th Anniversary Meeting and 45th Convocation of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, 6 September 2019, Redeemer College.

5

Esteemed Board of Governors, Senate, staff, graduands, students, brothers & sisters,

It is an honour and privilege to be at this 45th convocation ceremony and the Golden Jubilee of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary.

10 To you all, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, I extend greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We share tonight the joy of seven students having completed their academic studies and being presented as graduands. We congratulate you all, and brothers, we wish you God's indispensable blessing in the awesome, but joyous task set before you.

15 To all, the work of your seminary remains very close to the hearts and minds of those across the oceans in Australia.

20 We remain immensely thankful that we could in good faith send many prospective students to the seminary over the years. The bonds of mutual trust and respect have certainly strengthened over the last half a century. To paraphrase John Calvin, the Australian churches have sent their jarrah wood and have received back chiselled arrows, some proclaiming the gospel with familiar Aussie inflections and, just as many, with a Canuck twang. We have tasted the fruit of the labours of your seminary in numerous ways and our churches have been tremendously blessed and strengthened by them.

25 As Australian churches we are aware of the unique blessings that the seminary experience provides for foreign students. It's true that the tyranny of distance is very real for those leaving behind family, friends and the familiar, for a cold land half a world away. Not to mention foregoing vegemite, Tim-tams, test cricket and the best beaches and weather in the world! However, offset against these sacrifices, both great and small, I know that the current Australian contingent from the antipodes – Dathan, Aidan, my long-time teaching colleague, Ruurd, Kelvin, Anson, Matthias and Rodney – have often expressed heartfelt appreciation for
30 the opportunities and experiences offered at the seminary.

35 As Australian churches we've been blessed by the wealth of theological expertise provided over the years by regular visits of CRTS professors. Recently, we welcomed Dr. VanVliet to our sandy shores where he spoke on *The Beauty of Reformed Worship* and *The Image of God*. We appreciated his commitment to a busy speaking and visiting schedule. We are thankful for the time that he and Rev Aasman could spend with Australian deputies to discuss and reflect on the scope and possibility of future theological training on our own continent.

40 To give traction to this concept, this past June the Australian churches held our inaugural 'Timothy Conference'. Having the Principal of the CRTS contribute lent authenticity to this undertaking. I know that there remains at grass-roots level in Australia, a strong interest from young men whom the Lord is raising up, and who, with His blessing, might one day venture this way to answer His call.

The Australian churches are presently in the process of developing a strategic plan for establishing a theological seminary, which aims to redress the lack of any truly reformed

English-speaking seminary in the Australasian world. And yet, it may be some time before aspects such as adequate student numbers, available staff and accreditation are worked through in order to allow this vision to become a reality under the Lord's blessing.

5 Before I finish, or get tackled by a timekeeper, may I for a moment meander down Memory Lane: on a personal note, I pass on sincere congratulations to the College from my father, Rev Wietse Huizinga. Now minister-emeritus of the church of Armadale, my father was privileged to be part of the first graduating class of 1971. He remembers with great fondness the fledgling years of the College, citing the special bond that existed amongst staff and students as together, they embarked on the journey of teaching and learning as a new theological seminary. With solemnity, he recalls the difficulties that were placed on the path of the seminary upon its inception – the sudden passing away of Rev. J. van Popta sadly before his appointment as Professor and the passing of Prof. F. Kouwenhoven shortly into the academic year of 1969. He recalls the Lord's grace in providing for the College at this time, allowing other godly men to continue where they left off when called to their eternal home. My father wishes to honour Dr. J Faber in particular, for the enormity of his contribution to the College.

20 While there were some tough years initially, my father remembers the joy and laughter amidst the hard work. How, for example, as seminarians, they boarded at the Queen St. "manor house" under the auspices of the house-keeping inspector-extraordinaire, Mrs. L. Selles; who ensured they properly dusted every corner of every room, testing the quality-control by running her fingers across the tops of the doors. This, and other such fond memories, were indicative of the spirit of harmony that already existed in those early years.

25 His reflections on those humble beginnings in 1969 bring us to a realisation of the service and diligence of so many men it pleased the Lord to use in the College over the five decades it has served as a bastion of reformed theological training.

On behalf of the Australian churches, I once more congratulate you on the seminary's 50th anniversary and may He continue to bless all endeavours in training ministers and missionaries to boldly bring the gospel to all nations.

30 With the prophet Isaiah, we say: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns.""

Thank you.

Appendix 2 Report on Visit to CRTS September 2019

Report of visit to Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

5 – 7 September 2019

5 **Reporting on:**

Board of Governor's Induction
Board of Governor's Meeting
45th Convocation of CRTS
CRTS Open Day

10 **Board of Governor's Induction**
Thursday 5 Sep 2019, CRTS, 10.30am – 12.00am

At the suggestion of Dr Van Vliet, I was permitted to sit in on the meeting of the induction of the new Board of Governors. Led by Rev M. van Luik (outgoing Vice Chairman), the new board of governors were inducted in the operations and responsibilities of the board, by using the handbook. Although very extensive, only a few sections of the handbook were highlighted for the purposes of this induction (it was assumed that the new board of governors had read the manual); namely mandate and responsibilities. It was a useful meeting as it became very clear what the exact responsibilities of the board are and who they report to. This meeting clearly set out the order of those responsibilities: General synod, Board of Governors, Principal, Senate, Faculty, Library and Administration. It was also useful to understand the reporting relationships between the Finance & Property Committee and the Academic Committee.

Board of Governor's Meeting
Thursday 5 Sep 2019, CRTS, 1.00pm – 7.00pm

25 As a deputy representing the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Board of Governor's meeting was quite a lengthy meeting, but was a wonderful experience, a great insight, and a privilege to be a part of. I was able to witness the high level of accountability and transparency that exists in the governing body of the CRTS. Above all I could witness the brotherly manner in which the governors did their work, representing their churches but also showing a love, dedication and thankfulness to their Heavenly Father for the wonderful work they are a part of.

Whilst a Press Release of the meeting is available to Australian churches, I mention some of the more pertinent matters below.

35 Firstly, the meeting dealt with the appointment of new governors to the board, as well as the election of a new chairman; Rev. R. Aasman is retiring and elected was Rev. J. Louwerse.

The meeting dealt with matters relating to the relocation and commencement of duties of Dr. W. den Hollander, appointed to the position of New Testament Professor commencing May 2020.

40 There was a discussion on the Metrics report and the Church Survey report. A brief discussion followed relating to the promotion of both the convocation ceremony as well as promotion of the work of the CRTS for and amongst the churches. Things such as newsletters and Church Social app were discussed.

The meeting dealt with the Key Thrusts: KT1 (Distance Education Update), KT4 (Mission & Church Planting report), KT5 (Proposed letter to URCNA churches). The board accepted these reports (and recommendations for further work) with thankfulness.

5 2020 Budget was reviewed and adopted. Of note was the fund-drive to raise money to upgrade the CRTS building, as parts of the CRTS building are in need of repair.

The meeting had an extensive discussion on the Self-Study 2020 draft document. The list of recommendations for improvement was extensive. The discussion focussed on whether it was necessary for the ATS to hold the CRTS accountable on certain recommendations, or whether they were "in-house" goals?

10 The Alumni survey was discussed. Generally, this report was positive.

The Australian Roundtable Report was discussed. The willingness of the FRCA to work together with the CRTS and the mutual trust that exists between the two bonds was highlighted. The BOG took note of the request from the FRCA for the CRTS to consider whether a satellite campus in Australia is possible and the development of online resources, making use of distance education. More work and research will need to be done in this area.

20 Then there was a presentation and brief discussion on the Annual Reports. Of note was the report, by Dr J van Vliet, of his tour of the Australian churches in 2019. It was reiterated to the meeting that his visit to Australia certainly confirmed the strong bond of mutual trust that exists between the two federations. The roundtable discussion was mentioned in this report, and of special mention was the consensus idea that when the CRTS reaches such a point, in terms of student numbers and professors, it may be feasible to consider collaboratively the establishment of either an accredited campus or a satellite campus in Australia.

Other conference reports and future lecture visit schedules were also tabled at this meeting.

25 **50th Anniversary & 45th Convocation of CRTS**
Friday 6 Sep 2019, Redeemer College, 8.00pm – 10.30pm

30 The convocation was a wonderful celebration of the 50 years of the CRTS. The evening program reflected thankfulness for the blessings that the Lord has given over the years, and for the grace that He has shown also through the difficult times of the seminary. As deputy I was able to pass on official greetings from the FRCA. The evening was a mix of speeches and songs of praise as well as the graduation ceremony for the seven students. There was also a presentation by the Women's Saving Action. The evening was very well attended, given the special occasion.

CRTS Open Day
Saturday 7 Sep 2019, CRTS, 10.00am – 2.00pm

35 The seminary Open Day at the college on W27th Street in Hamilton was very well attended. There were lectures from professors, sermon discussions and tours of the college. There was a presentation of the commemorative book to various alumni and representatives and then the official cutting of the cake by Dr C van Dam to mark the occasion. Tours were made of the seminary (in small groups) and visitors could see the library, offices, lecture rooms, meeting rooms, chapel and other facilities. Visitors could mingle and experience the communion of saints in this way. This was a wonderful event attending by many people from across the Canadian churches.

B Huizinga
22 November 2019

Appendix 3 Treasurer's Report – Hamilton Theological Fund

Treasurer's Report: Deputies for Training for Ministry Hamilton Theological Fund

Statement of Income and Expenditure
28 November 2017 to 29 October 2020

						State #	
Opening Balance						\$12,698.79	
Income	2017	2018	2019	2020	Note	Totals	
Albany		\$ 19,188	\$ 21,690	\$ 22,410		\$ 63,288	106,108,109
Armadale		\$ 19,598	\$ 22,050	\$ 23,670		\$ 65,318	105-107,109
Baldivis		\$ 19,352	\$ 21,510	\$ 21,420		\$ 62,282	105,107,109
Bunbury		\$ 7,462	\$ 8,100	\$ 9,450		\$ 25,012	105,107,109
Busselton		\$ 5,248	\$ 6,480	\$ 6,030		\$ 17,758	105,108,109
Byford	\$ 20,008	\$ 21,730	\$ 23,220	\$ 20,000	%	\$ 84,958	104-106,108,110
Darling Downs		\$ 14,678	\$ 16,470	\$ 16,380		\$ 47,528	105,107,109
Kelmscott		\$ 16,154	\$ 18,270	\$ 17,910		\$ 52,334	105,107,109
Launceston	\$ 10,000	\$ 16,404		\$ 15,570		\$ 57,904	105-106,109, 110
Legana		\$ 6,758	\$ 6,840	\$ 6,840		\$ 20,438	106,107,109
Melville		\$ 5,904	\$ 6,750	\$ 7,290		\$ 19,944	105,107,109
Mt Nasura		\$ 13,284	\$ 13,590	\$ 14,040		\$ 40,914	105,107,109
Mundijong	\$ 4,020	\$ 15,416	\$ 19,530	\$ 15,000	** %	\$ 53,966	104-110
Rockingham		\$ 16,482	\$ 18,270	\$ 18,900		\$ 53,652	105,107,109
Southern River		\$ 20,418	\$ 23,130	\$ 24,930		\$ 68,478	105,107,109
West Albany		\$ 18,532	\$ 20,430	\$ 20,250		\$ 59,212	105,107,109
Synod Treasury (refund)			\$ 9,066.98		#	\$ 9,066.98	108
Special Donations			\$ 1,152.55		@	\$ 1,152.55	108
Refunds				\$ 1,629.63	&	\$ 1,629.63	110
Interest		\$ 107.36	\$ 106.63	\$ 22.96		\$ 236.95	104-110
Total	\$34,028.00	\$236,715.36	\$256,656.16	\$277,672.59		\$805,072.11	

					Total Income	\$805,072.11	
Expenditure	2017	2018	2019	2020		Totals	
Transfers to CRTS	\$ 32,737	\$ 221,550	\$258,054.00	\$275,713.30	** ^^	\$788,054.24	104-110
Transaction Fees	\$ 24.00	\$ -	\$ 21.00	\$ 18.00	**	\$ 63.00	104,107-109
PTP (Albany)			\$ 8,816.00			\$ 8,816.00	107
PTP (Albany) - flights			\$ 1,962.00			\$ 1,962.00	107
PTP (Mt Nasura) - flights				\$ 1,868.96	&	\$ 1,868.96	109
Timothy Conference			\$ 1,743.36		#	\$ 1,743.36	107
B Huizinga to CRTS (flight)			\$ 1,829.85		#	\$ 1,829.85	108
J Van Vliet from CRTS (flights)			\$ 5,377.27		#	\$ 5,377.27	107,108
Meeting with CRTS reps			\$ 95.50		#	\$ 95.50	107
Special Donations to CRTS				\$ 1,152.55	@	\$ 1,152.55	109
Printing (CRTS pamphlets)	\$ 275					\$ 275.00	104
Total	\$33,035.94	\$221,550.00	\$277,898.98	\$278,752.81		\$811,237.73	
					Total Expenditure	\$811,237.73	
						\$6,533.17	110

Closing Balance

Notes	**	Includes transactions in 2017 following financial audit in Nov 2017
	#	See document relating to claimed refunds from Synod Treasury
	@	Special donation to CRTS Library or Special Project from FRC Bunbury
	&	PTP for br. Tim vanBeek (FRC MN) was cancelled due to COVID-19
	%	Total of \$10,990 still outstanding from 2020 FRCA assessments
	^^	Total of \$11,476.70 still owing to CRTS in 2020

Appendix 4 CRTS Letter to Councils re 2021 Budget



CANADIAN REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TEL 905.575.3688 FAX 905.575.0799
110 WEST 27TH STREET, HAMILTON, ONTARIO L9C 5A1

Councils of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches
and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

October 8, 2020

Esteemed brothers,

Please find enclosed the audited financial statement for the year ended December 31, 2019, and the proposed budget for 2021, with comparisons to 2019 and 2020.

A few comments re 2019:

1. The Statement of Fund Operations shows an excess of revenue over expenses of \$18,288.
2. Our Australian Sister Churches continued their strong financial support.
3. In 2019, the seminary celebrated its 50th anniversary. As a result, the seminary budgeted for additional expenses in the area of public relations, building improvements and building maintenance.
4. In 2020, CRTS was scheduled to have a visit from the Association of Theological Seminaries (ATS), our accrediting body. In order to avoid a large increase in the budget in 2020, half of this cost was budgeted for in 2019.
5. Building Improvements shows as being overspent. However, money was reallocated from the Capital Assets-Building line to the Building Improvements line after the year started.
6. Most categories in the Statement are relatively close when comparing Budget to Actual. Overall, the seminary received more than budgeted for in terms of income and spent less than budgeted for in terms of expenses.

For 2021:

1. In line with our policy to have a balanced budget, the assessment per communicant member is proposed at \$90.00. This is a decrease of \$3/CM from the 2020 assessment and brings us back in line with the assessment level of 2019. 2020 saw an increase in the assessment due to the hiring of a new professor in the New Testament department and the transition costs associated with that hiring.
2. Salaries and benefits of local ministers were reviewed, resulting in an increase of 2.1% in the salary of the professors and administrative staff.
3. Total pensions have decreased due to the passing away of Prof. Geertsema in March 2020.
4. Software and Support has increased due to the new Student Information System (SIS) and Learning Management System (LMS) that has been purchased (Populi).
5. Repairs and Maintenance has increased due to the requirement to hire additional cleaning staff due to COVID-19.

www.canadianreformedseminary.ca

6. \$30,000 has been budgeted for Pandemic Preparedness. This will help offset expenditures that arise due to COVID-19, including technological improvements.
7. There is an allocation to Capital Assets for \$65,000 for the Building which is offset by a new income line for a capital fund drive for \$65,000. Therefore, this has no impact on the assessment. \$6,600 has been budgeted for technological improvements.

The Lord has continued to bless the Seminary and the supporting churches, as all were able to remit the assessed amounts in a timely manner, enabling us to meet our obligations when due.

Should you have any questions or comments, you may send a letter to the Seminary, attention the Finance and Property Committee, or email me at chm@walinga.com.

With Christian greetings



C. Medemblik
Treasurer

Appendix 5 Refund Requests from Synod Treasury 2018 – 2021

Requests for Refund from Synod Treasury Deputies Training for Ministry 2018 - 2021

Valid as of: 19/10/2020

Timothy Conference, June 2019

(Relevant decision: Synod 2018, Article 90, Decision 7g,h)

Item	Date	Description	Cost	Receipt No.	Person	Comment
1	23/03/19	Una Sancta Ads for Timothy Conf.	\$ 120.00	00017746	AT	Advertising for Timothy Conference
2	7/05/19	Travel costs (flights) - Rev W Bred.	\$ 655.47	7952155844380	WB	ex. GST
3	30/05/19	Winc. - presentation folders	\$ 72.89	10469338	AT	conference material
4	1/06/19	Officeworks - cords, lanyards...	\$ 148.84	915497	BH	conference material
5	4/06/19	Reject Shop - lollies	\$ 8.85	764759	BH	conference consumables
6	5/06/19	Kmart - notebooks	\$ 35.00	792552	BH	conference material
7	5/06/19	JCCC library - colour copy	\$ 16.80	66	BH	conference material
8	6/06/19	Kmart - notebooks, lollies	\$ 17.00	036112	BH	conference material
9	6/06/19	Officeworks - lanyards, pouches	\$ 41.40	905820	BH	conference material
10	7/06/19	Travel costs (petrol) - Kelvin Dekker	\$ 141.71	7936	KD	KD was a conference presenter; travel from Albany
11	8/06/19	10 Pin Bowling - activity	\$ 382.40	63	BH	Saturday afternoon activity
12	8/06/19	Travel costs (car) - Rev W Bred.	\$ 91.17	101305806169	WB	ex. GST
13	8/06/19	Travel costs (fuel) - Rev W Bred.	\$ 11.83	748045	WB	ex. GST
Total			\$ 1,743.36			

Meeting with CRTS

(Relevant decision: Synod 2018, Article 80, Decision 2a,d,f & Article 90, Decision 7d,l,m,q)

Item	Date	Description	Cost	Receipt No.	Person	Comment
1	14/06/19	Haynes Bar & Grill - lunch	\$ 95.50	512772	AT	13/6, 14/6 meeting: deputies & CRTS reps
Total			\$ 95.50			

Guest Lecturer from CRTS

(Relevant decision: Synod 2018, Article 90, Decision 7k)

Item	Date	Description	Cost	Receipt No.	Person	Comment
1	25/03/19	Flight Costs	\$ 4,958.08	156824	BH	Cost of flights for Dr. & Mrs. Van Vliet return
2	15/07/19	Travel costs (petrol) - Dr Van Vliet	\$ 440.19	Various	JVV	ANZ receipt # 979979
Total			\$ 5,398.27			

FRCA Deputy attending 2019 CRTS Convocation

(Relevant decision: Synod 2018, Article 90, Decision 2)

Item	Date	Description	Cost	Receipt No.	Person	Comment
1	16/07/2019	Flight - B Huizinga to Ontario (CAN)	\$ 1,829.85	14823345	BH	Cost of flight (ANZ transfer/refund receipt #558487)
Total			\$ 1829.85			
Total			\$ 9,066.98			

Appendix 6 Treasurer's Report – Needy Student Fund

Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for the Ministry Needy Students Fund

Statement of Receipts and Payments
November 2017 - October 2020

Statement

	Opening Balance		\$105,454.52		140
INCOME	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Albany			\$ 1,928	\$ 1,992	\$ 3,920 161,167
Armadale			\$ 3,920	\$ 2,104	\$ 6,024 157,165,168
Baldivis					\$ -
Bunbury	\$ 728	\$ 720	\$ 840	\$ 2,288	149,160,173
Busselton	\$ 512	\$ 576	\$ 536	\$ 1,624	148,163,169
Byford	\$1,952			\$ 1,952	142
Darling Downs				\$ -	
Kelmscott	\$ 1,576	\$ 1,624	\$ 1,592	\$ 4,792	148,159,168
Launceston	\$ 1,258	\$ 1,406	\$ 1,009.05	\$ 3,673.05	145,157,165,169
Legana	\$ 672	\$ 608	\$ 608	\$ 1,888	151,160,171
Melville		\$ 1,176	\$ 648	\$ 1,824	157,165,168
Mt Nasura	\$ 1,296	\$ 1,208	\$ 1,248	\$ 3,752	147,157,168
Mundijong	\$ 2,880	\$ 1,736	\$ 1,928	\$ 6,544	148,160,169
Rockingham				\$ -	
Southern River	\$ 1,992	\$ 2,056	\$ 2,216	\$ 6,264	148,155,169
West Albany	\$ 1,808	\$ 3,688	\$ 1,800	\$ 7,296	148,158,165,173
From CRTS acc.			\$ 59,908.94	\$ 59,908.94	169
FRC Byford			\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	174
Interest	\$17.78	\$142.88	\$156.72	\$ 78.10	\$ 395.48 140-175
			Total Income	\$117,145.47	

EXPENSES	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	
Student Support (DP)	\$ 5,382	\$10,842	\$ 7,984	\$ 24,208	149,154,155,158,162, 165,168,171,174	
Student Support (AV)			\$ 15,933.72	\$ 15,933.72	174	
Transfer to CRTS			\$ 59,908.94	\$ 59,908.94	169	
Refund FRC Byford			\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	174	
Bank Fees			\$ 41.20	\$ 41.20	168,169,175	
			Total Expenses	\$105,091.86		
			Closing Balance	\$117,508.13	175	

Appendix 7 Proposed Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students & Forms

Regulations for the Financial Aid of Theological students

BACKGROUND

- 5 The foremost directive for the financial assistance for theological students is given in the Australian Church Order, Article 18, quoted below.

Article 18 – Students of Theology

The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology, extending financial aid where necessary.

- 10 The implications of this directive from the Church Order is that young men are encouraged by the local congregations to seriously consider studying for the ministry and to also ensure that, where there is genuine need amongst these students, they are adequately supported during their periods of study.

- 15 Since 1992 the FRCA have decided to provide this financial support for theological students via the Deputies for Training for the Ministry by levying the churches a small amount per communicant member.

Regulations were first established at Synod 1992 (Article 50) and further amended by subsequent synods, Synod 1994 (Article 56) and Synod 2000 (Article 42).

- 20 The regulations also eventually included a set of *Rules for the Fund for the support of Needy Students*.

Since 2000 the deputies have developed guidelines entitled *Financial Assistance for Theology Students from Deputies*. Although this document is separate from the rules and regulations, its aim was to summarise the main processes and highlight pertinent aspects of the regulations for the students.

- 25 Consequently, there have existed multiple documents relating to the financial aid for theological students, with much duplicity and somewhat conflicting information.

The intent of this updated document is to combine the existing regulations, rules and guidelines into one coherent document, which completely captures all aspects associated with the financial support of theological students.

30

Deputies for Training for Ministry
September 2020

ELIGIBILITY

Article 1 Eligibility

Financial aid will be provided only to students who satisfy all the eligibility criteria as outlined in Article 2 of these regulations.

5 Article 2 Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for financial aid, the student must:

1. originally be a confessing member of one of the churches of FRCA;
2. have the intention of becoming a minister within the FRCA or within a sister federation or within a sister church of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
- 10 3. have made satisfactory progress in their undergraduate courses (usually a Bachelor of Arts degree);
4. be accepted and enrolled in an approved theological college or seminary;
5. be committed to undertake full-time studies at the approved college or seminary;
6. demonstrate a genuine financial need. See Article 5 for further information.

15

FINANCIAL AID

Article 3 Support from Deputies for Training for Ministry

20 Students who apply for financial aid for their theological studies may be supported by the Needy Students Fund (NSF) operated by the deputies for Training for the Ministry, mandated by the FRCA.

Article 4 Typical Expenses

The NSF provides financial aid for (but not limited to) the following typical expenses:

1. tuition fees;
2. study books;
- 25 3. living expenses;
4. clothing;
5. fares;
6. health insurance;
7. incidental expenses;
- 30 8. their on-going expenses.

Article 5 Potential Sources of Funding

In order to assist deputies in determining whether a student has a genuine financial need, it is important that the student explore, in this order, the following potential sources of funding before applying for financial aid from the deputies:

- 5 1. the student themselves (e.g. savings).
 2. the student's family (e.g. parents, in-laws, siblings and others). While the student's family ought not to be placed under undue pressure, they should be given the opportunity and privilege of supporting the student.
 3. the student's church (e.g. an annual contribution).
- 10 The above potential sources of funding should be explored in the order given above; namely student first, student's family second and the students church third.

If any of these three funding sources are enough to meet a student's annual expenses, then the deputies would not be called upon to provide financial aid.

- 15 However, if there is a significant shortfall from these first three funding sources, then financial aid can be sought from the deputies.

Article 6 Seeking Financial Aid

Once the student has decided that financial aid is required from the deputies the student must complete an Application Form for Financial Assistance.

As part of this application, the student must:

- 20 1. procure agreement documents from relevant parties (e.g. family, consistory) indicating the agreed level of financial aid from sources other than deputies;
 2. present to their local consistory for approval, a projected annual expense budget;
 3. request their local consistory to approve, co-sign and forward to deputies the Application Form for Financial Assistance.
- 25 Agreement documents need to clearly state the amount of financial aid committed and should be signed and dated by the relevant parties.

Article 7 Determination of Financial Aid

Once the deputies receive this application (as per Article 6), the deputies will then determine the final amount of financial aid.

- 30 As part of this determination, the deputies should consider the income of financial support from all other sources and may also consult with the approved college or seminary.

The deputies will then enter into an official Agreement with the student. For further details about this Agreement, see Terms of Agreement (Article 11 – 13).

Article 8 Form of Financial Aid

- 35 The financial aid will be provided in the form of interest-free loans for the purpose of meeting the costs associated with studying at the approved college or seminary.

Article 9 Payment of Financial Aid

The deputies will come to an agreement with the student as to the most convenient mode and frequency of payment. The details of the payment schedule will be part of the Agreement.

5 **Article 10 Exemption from NSF Levy**

The deputies, when assessing the churches, must consider the financial commitment which the local churches have assumed with respect to the support of needy students. In such cases, churches that have assumed a financial commitment for a needy student will be exempt from the annual NSF levy.

10

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

Article 11 Commencement of Agreement

Once an Application Form for Financial Aid has been lodged and the Agreement Form has been duly completed, the agreement is in effect.

15 This agreement is made between the Deputies for Training for Ministry and the student requesting financial aid.

Article 12 Cessation of Agreement

If the student in good faith pursues theological training with the intention of entering the ministry of the gospel, he will not be required to repay the loans.³

20 The Agreement ceases and the student will not receive any more funds when any of the following occurs:

1. the student terminates their studies before completion;
2. the student decides not to become a minister;
3. the student does not, within two years of completing his studies, make himself
25 available for call by one of the churches mentioned in Article 1;
4. the student has not received a call after a period of twelve months has lapsed after their preparatory examination;
5. the student does not accept a call extended to him;
6. the student, having accepted a call, withdraws and does not accept another call;
- 30 7. the student ceases to be a member either by their withdrawal or excommunication.

If at any point it becomes evident that the student is not acting in good faith, he may be required to repay any provided loans or any outstanding amount thereof and the Agreement will cease.

³ To act in good faith is honest intent to act without taking an unfair advantage.

Article 13 Terms of the Agreement

The terms of the Agreement are:

1. financial aid will be given only for the duration of the theological course;
2. details of payments and a payment schedule will be included in the Agreement;
- 5 3. the student agrees to adhere to their obligations as outlined in Article 14
4. the deputies agree to adhere to their obligations as outlined in Article 16
5. that upon the request of the student the deputies shall annually assess if an interest free loan can be made available to assist in financing the student;
- 10 6. financial aid will end at the time when the student has completed their studies and ecclesiastical examinations and becomes the responsibility of a church;
7. that financial aid will end if, after twelve months after his preparatory examination, the student has not received a call from a church;
8. the student declares himself to be in dept for the interest free loans provided by the deputies administering the NSF on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia;
- 15 9. the student is bound by the stipulations of Article 12;
10. repayment of the loans provided will be waived, and the Agreement dissolved once the student is ordained as minister of one of the churches mentioned in Article 1, at the rate of two years of financial aid for every year of ministry;
- 20 11. in the case of financial hardship when immediate repayment in full would be too difficult, deputies may consider a request for repayment in instalments.

OBLIGATIONS

Article 14 Obligations of the Student

For the duration of the Agreement, the student is obliged to:

- 25 1. annually submit a budget of expenditure outlining and substantiating the financial aid required for the next year;
2. at any time, inform deputies of any substantial changes in their financial position in either income or assets, as this may affect the amount of financial aid given in subsequent years;
- 30 3. keep the deputies informed about his study progress at the college or seminary;
4. inform the deputies as soon as possible if, for whatever reason, the student desires to end their studies;

Article 15 Obligations of the Supporting Church

Once a supporting church has ascertained that the student wishes to pursue theological studies, the supporting church is obliged to:

- 5 1. help the student in determining an annual projected expense budget, especially in relation to possible sources of funding (see Article 5);
2. approve the annual projected expense budget;
3. aid the student in completing the Application Form for Financial Assistance and forwarding relevant material to the deputies as part of this application;
4. honour any financial commitment under the Agreement, if applicable;
- 10 5. maintain good contact with the student, once studies have commenced.

Article 16 Obligations of Deputies

During the period leading up to the student applying for financial aid as well as for duration of the Agreement, the deputies are obliged to:

- 15 1. ensure that the student is given the *Rules and Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students* including, at the appropriate time, the *Application Form for Financial Assistance* and the *Agreement Form*;
2. ensure that the student understands the contents of these documents;
3. keep good contact with the student during the student's study at the college or seminary;
- 20 4. report to the next synod financial aid being given;

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Article 17 Exceptional and Special Circumstances

During the Agreement there may arise exceptional or special circumstances.

- 25 By their very nature, these circumstances are unpredictable. Thus, while not every circumstance can be covered, some of the known exceptional and/or special circumstances which may occur and the action that applies are as follows:
 1. students who are not eligible for government support for tertiary education may receive financial aid only in exceptional circumstances;
 - 30 2. students who need to complete extra studies, after having obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian university and before being admitted to the college or seminary, may be financially supported by the deputies for that time of study;
 3. If the student fails to make satisfactory progress, and desires to continue with his studies, the student may request a continuation of financial aid, if required. The
 - 35 deputies will consider this request only if the college or seminary senate support the continuation of the student's studies;

4. any request for a continuation of financial aid, following further failures to make satisfactory progress, can only be considered by the deputies if it can be ascertained that the failure was due to exceptional circumstances;
5. in the unusual situation where it is clear that too high a level of financial aid was given in the past, then the total sum of excess money must be repaid in full;
6. the obligation to repay loans may be waived in cases of sickness, death or other exceptional circumstances.

AUTHORITY

10 Article 18 Lack of Provision

In any case where these Regulations do not make provision, deputies have the authority to decide.

Article 19 Disputes

In cases of disputes, the home church's classis shall adjudicate.

15

DEPUTIES FOR TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Appointed by Synod Bunbury 2018 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
c/o The Secretary, 32 Gribble Avenue, Armadale 6112, Western Australia,
Telephone: (08) 9497 3456, Email: alwyn.terpstra@frsa.asn.au

5

APPLICATION FORM FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

WHO SHOULD USE THIS FORM?

10 This form is to be used by students who meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in Article 2 of the *Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students* and who require financial aid from the Deputies for Training for Ministry.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please enter the following personal information:

15 **Name** _____
Church _____

UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS

20 Prior to making application for financial assistance the student should have read and understood their obligations and responsibilities outlined in the Regulations, also pertaining to the preparation of this application.

In order to make this application all following questions should be answered in affirmative.

Please answer the following questions: Yes No

I have read the *Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students*

I understand my obligations and responsibilities as outlined in the Regulations

I meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in Article 2

In consultation with the consistory of my local church I have prepared a projected annual expense budget

I have explored all possible sources of funding as outlined in Article 5

I have prepared/procured all agreement documentation (if applicable) from relevant parties for this application as outlined in Article 6

DETAILS OF REQUESTED FINANCIAL AID

25 As per Article 7 of the Regulations, the deputies need to be provided with accurate information regarding the student's annual source(s) of funding.

Please complete the information below. This information should tally with the budgets and other documents provided. If not applicable enter N/A. If zero enter \$0.

Annual budget (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	\$
Expected annual budget (for subsequent year(s))	AUD / CAD	\$
Financial aid provided by family (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	\$
Financial aid provided by local church (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	\$
Financial aid requested from deputies (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	\$

PAYMENT SCHEDULE & DETAILS

As per Article 13, indicate a payment schedule that is convenient to your circumstances.

Frequency of payment (e.g. monthly, quarterly, etc.) _____

Preferred date of first payment

Name of Bank

Account Name

Account Number

Bank State Branch (BSB)

OTHER INFORMATION

- 5 Please provide other information that you deem relevant to your application.

CERTIFICATION

This application needs to be signed by the applicant and also needs to be co-signed **EITHER** by a representative of the consistory of the supporting church (if the student is receiving financial aid from the sending church) **OR** by another office bearer.

5 As applicant and witness, we hereby declare that the information provided in this application, to the best of my knowledge, is correct and complete.

Student's Name _____

10 **Student's Signature** _____ **Date** _____

As witness, I am a (select):

- Representative of the consistory of the supporting church
- Office bearer

15 **Witness Name** _____

(either supporting church consistory representative or another office bearer)

20 **Witness Signature** _____ **Date** _____

(either supporting church consistory representative or another office bearer)

Please attach the following documents to this application:

- 1. Any Agreement documents, as applicable to this application
- 2. Projected Annual Expense Budget
- 25 3. Any other documentation you deem relevant to this application

DEPUTIES FOR TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Appointed by Synod Bunbury 2018 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
c/o The Secretary, 32 Gribble Avenue, Armadale 6112, Western Australia,
Telephone: (08) 9497 3456, Email: alwyn.terpstra@frsa.asn.au

5

AGREEMENT FORM

This agreement is made between the Deputies for Training for Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the student (named below), whereby both parties agree to the terms as outlined in Article 13 of the *Regulations for the Financial Aid of Theological Students*, and the following payment schedule:

Annual payment

(Choose \$CAD, if applicable) AUD / CAD \$ _____

Payment frequency _____

Preferred date of first payment _____ / _____ / _____

Annual payment (\$AUD)

(Determined by deputies based on exchange rate, if applicable) AUD \$ _____

Payment per period (\$AUD)

(Determined by deputies based on exchange rate, if applicable) AUD \$ _____

Student (name printed in full) _____

Student Signature _____

15 **Date of Agreement** _____ / _____ / _____

Witness (name) _____ (Signature) _____

20 Rev D Poppe
Chairman, Deputies Training for Ministry
(signature)

B Huizinga
Treasurer, Needy Students Fund
(signature)

Date _____ / _____ / _____

Date _____ / _____ / _____

RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS

1. Students who apply for financial aid for their Theological study, on the ground of Article 19 of the Church Order, may be supported by the Fund for the Support of Needy Students (FSNS).

- 5 2. The FSNS provides financial aid for the following purposes:
 - a. Tuition fees
 - b. Study books
 - c. Living expenses
 - d. Clothing
 - 10 e. Pocket money
 - f. Fares
 - g. Health Insurance
 - h. Incidental expenses
 - i. Other expenses as detailed

- 15 3. To become eligible for support from S.S.F. the student must:
 - a. be a confessing member of one of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
 - b. be accepted by one of the recognized theological colleges
 - c. undertake full-time studies
 - d. have made satisfactory progress in the study for an Australian Bachelor of Arts degree and/or in the previous study year of the college

- 20 4. The FSNS distinguishes two classes of students:
 - a. Students who are financially dependent on their parents for their studies at a theological college
 - b. Independent students who have their own income and/or are supported by their wife; and all students who were married prior to the beginning of their theological study

- 25 5. In the case of a 'dependent' student the income of his parents must be assessed annually by way of a 'means' test, before the student can be supported by FSNS.

- 30 6. In the case of an 'independent' student his income and/or that of his wife must be assessed annually by way of a 'means' test, before the student can be supported by FSNS.

7. In applying the 'means' test referred to in articles 5 and 6 the standards of the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme of the Commonwealth Department of Education and Youth Affairs are taken as a general guide. Allowance will be made by deputies for the

difference between study costs at the theological college concerned and those at an equivalent Australian institution.

8. The forms for the 'means' test must be duly completed and signed.
9. An agreement between deputies and the parents and/or the student - as the case may be -, must be completed and signed before financial aid can be given by FSNS

As recorded in Appendix H – sub-appendix 1 of Acts of Synod 1987.

Appendix 8 Treasurer's Report – Library Fund

Treasurer's Report: Deputies Training for Ministry Australian Theological Library Fund

Statement of Receipts and Payments, Funds
November 2017 - October 2020

					Note	
Opening Balance					\$123,152.57	(1)
Receipts					\$0.00	
Term Deposit						
	Lodged	Matured	Frequency	Rate (pa)	Interest	
	14 May 17	14 May 18	1 year	1.90%	\$2,339.89	
	14 May 18	14 Nov 18	6 months	2.05%	\$1,296.87	
	14 Nov 18	14 May 19	6 months	2.05%	\$1,288.90	
	14 May 19	14 Nov 19	6 months	2.05%	\$1,323.60	
	14 Nov 19	14 May 20	6 months	1.25%	\$806.54	
	14 May 20	14 Nov 20	6 months	0.75%		(2)
Expenses					\$0.00	
Closing Balance					\$130,208.37	

Note (1) Term deposit lodgement date is 14 May 2017.
Closing balance of previous statement should be \$123,152.57, not \$123,152.66 (see Periodic Statement 7 July 2017); 9c discrepancy.

Note (2) 6 monthly term deposit maturing 14 Nov 2020

Committee for Contact with the EPC and SPC

Report to Synod 2021

1.0 Introduction

5 Synod 2018 appointed the churches of Launceston and Legana to form a Deputyship for Contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC). Our mandate was to investigate these churches and report back respecting the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. In the grounds, the following was mentioned:

10 For further ecumenical contact to proceed, their doctrine, history, including the reasons for their split and continued separation, and their respective national and international contacts need to be investigated. Deputies should show that the marks of the true church (art. 29 BC) are present. (Acts of Synod 2018, article 37)

15 To execute this mandate, Launceston and Legana consistories appointed Rev. Wes Bredenhof, br. Gerrit Brouwer, and br. John Everts to form a Committee for Contact with the EPC and SPC (CCES). This report has been prepared by the CCES and approved by both Launceston and Legana consistories. It has also been reviewed by our EPC and SPC counterparts for factual accuracy.

2.0 Activities

20 To execute our mandate our committee engaged in the following:

2.1 Meetings

25 We met with a delegation from the EPC on September 23, 2019 and a delegation from the SPC on August 24, 2020. Both meetings were cordial and we were able to discuss all the items we were mandated to explore. The results of these discussions are found elsewhere in our report.

Additionally, a delegation from our committee attended a reconciliation meeting between the EPC and SPC on March 30, 2019 (cf. 3.1.2 and Appendix 2).

2.2 Sermons

30 Committee members listened to at least nine sermons from the EPC, and the same from the SPC. This helped us form an impression of the preaching in these churches.

2.3 Worship Services

35 Committee members attended several worship services of the EPC and SPC. By this means, we could witness their manner of worship, as well as both preaching and the administration of the sacraments.

2.4 EPC Presbytery Meeting

Our committee was invited to attend the EPC Presbytery meeting from February 2 to 7, 2020. Two committee members attended as observers on February 4

and 5. While as observers we were not permitted to bring greetings, we were nonetheless warmly welcomed.

2.5 *Reformation Day Conference*

5 In late October 2019, a joint Reformation Day Conference was held in
Launceston. It was organized by FRC Launceston, but hosted in the EPC
building. Speakers included Rev. Chris Connors (EPC) and Rev. Ian Hall (at that
time SPC). Rev. Wes Bredenhof was supposed to speak, but due to other
commitments Dr. Ted Van Raalte (from CRTS) took his place. This joint
10 conference was attended by members of the EPC, SPC, and FRC. It was
another good opportunity to fellowship together and become better acquainted.

2.6 *FRC Classis North of August 28, 2020*

We extended an invitation to the SPC to send an observer to the classis held on
15 August 28, 2020. Elder Stuart Coles from the Launceston congregation took up
the invitation. Though this classis was held electronically, Elder Coles could
receive a sense of how things operate in our church federation.

3.0 **Observations**

3.1 *Evangelical Presbyterian Church*

3.1.1 Doctrine

20 The EPC adheres to the Westminster Standards. They maintain strict
subscription for office bearers and no exceptions are permitted.
Communicant members of the EPC are required to acknowledge the
Westminster Confession as the confessional basis of the church. Prior to
membership for those coming from outside, there would be a membership
25 class providing instruction in the doctrine of the Westminster Confession.
Those who go through such a class and find themselves in significant
disagreement with the church's confessional standards would be gently
advised to reflect on whether they may not be better suited to a church that
aligns more closely with their views. However, any who make a credible
30 profession of faith with a life that bears testimony to that profession, may
be a member, provided that they understand and respect the confessional
basis of the church; and should they hold different doctrinal views to those
in the confessions, they agree not to agitate or propagate those views and
also be open to instruction in relation to the same. This is a point that
requires further discussion (see 4.1.3).

35 With regard to creation, the EPC holds to an orthodox understanding of
Westminster Confession 4.1:

40 It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the
manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and
goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world,
and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six
days; and all very good.

The EPC preaches and teaches that the six days of that article are literal
days of approximately 24 hours that took place on the order of thousands
of years ago, and not millions or billions.

In our discussion with the EPC brothers, they did raise some points for future discussion. They specifically mentioned the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology.⁴ Given the EPC's relationship to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (see 3.1.3), we were not surprised by this. We agree that this will have to be discussed in the future in order for ecumenical relations to advance. Particularly, we will need to discuss whether and to what degree diversity on these points can be accommodated in a sister-church relationship (see further 4.1.1).

As noted previously (see 2.2), our committee reviewed some nine sermons from EPC pastors. With gratitude, we noted that each sermon was a faithful administration of Scripture. The preaching was consistently textual, applicatory, and Christocentric.

3.1.2 History

Appendix 1 gives the official history of the EPC (from their website). This history was written in 1998 and some of the information is outdated, particularly with regard to churches, preaching stations, and currently serving ministers. However, it does give an accurate overview of the unique historical background of the EPC.

The official history notes the division that occurred in 1986, which led to the establishment of the Southern Presbyterian Church. According to the EPC delegates with whom we met, the division occurred over differences regarding the person of Christ. They were reticent to speak further about it, indicating that it was a sensitive issue from the past and the EPC has no desire to revisit it.

Thankfully, our committee could observe a reconciliation meeting between the EPC and SPC held on March 30, 2019. Appendix 2 includes a Joint Statement from the EPC and SPC that was read at this meeting and approved by all. It was a joyous occasion for everyone present. Informal relations have now resumed between them. The EPC hopes to work towards a more formal relationship in the future, but for the moment there is much good will. According to the EPC delegates at our September 23, 2019 meeting, there is currently very little doctrinal difference between the EPC and SPC.

3.1.3 National and International Contacts

The EPC has two formalized ecumenical relationships.

There is a fraternal relationship with the Pilgrim Covenant Church (PCC) in Singapore. This is their closest ecumenical contact. There is communication and advice shared. They cannot call each other's ministers, but they do exchange guest preaching. The EPC has assisted PCC, at times, with training and examination of their students for the ministry. They cooperate in mission, particularly in training men for the gospel ministry in Malawi. One of the significant differences between the PCC and EPC is that the PCC allows for exceptions in the confessional

⁴ The "well-meant offer of the gospel" is the teaching which states that God desires the salvation of all people, whether elect or not. Conditionality in covenant theology has to do with whether or not there are conditions attached to the covenant of grace and if so, what is the nature and content of those conditions.

subscription of their office bearers. Members transferring from the PCC to the EPC are required to undergo an interview with the local EPC elders.

5 There is a corresponding relationship with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. PRCA ministers can preach on EPC pulpits, but not vice-versa. There are some doctrinal differences, one of the most notable being the EPC's allowance for remarriage after divorce (following Westminster Confession 24.5).

10 The EPC also has informal contacts with the following: the Southern Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Australian Free Church, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland, and the Puritan Evangelical Church in San Diego, CA.

3.1.4 Administration of the Sacraments

15 The EPC strictly adheres to the historic Westminster Directory for Public Worship, as well as Westminster Confession chapters 28 and 29.

20 Consequently, with regard to the Lord's Supper, they have a guarded communion. Guests may be admitted, but only upon an interview with either the full session or a delegation. The EPC therefore follows the practice of some of our existing sister-churches.

25 We have had the opportunity to observe their diligence in guarding the table. A visitor to FRC Launceston presented himself to the consistory with a request to be admitted to the Lord's Supper as a guest. While visiting with him, it came to light that he made a similar request to the EPC in Launceston – a request which they denied because he was not a living member of a faithful church and saw no need to be such. FRC Launceston also denied his request.

30 With regard to baptism, the EPC faithfully follows the teaching of Scripture as summarized in their confessional standards. They practice baptism by sprinkling plain water in the name of the Triune God. They baptize the children of believers, as well as adults who come to faith who have not previously been baptized.

3.1.5 Church Discipline

35 The EPC follows the historic Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government and holds to Westminster Confession chapter 30. Consequently, biblical church discipline (as taught in Matthew 18 and elsewhere) is followed. It was also noted that the EPC practices home visitation by the elders, thereby maintaining close pastoral supervision of the congregation.

40 3.1.6 Conclusion

From these observations we gratefully conclude that the marks of the true church (BC 29) are indeed present with the EPC. However, in 4.1 we will discuss further some potential challenges to working towards a sister-church relationship with the EPC.

3.2 Southern Presbyterian Church

3.2.1 Doctrine

5 The SPC holds to the Westminster Standards. They do not hold to anything beyond these confessions. Apart from being confessionally Presbyterian, we were not informed of any “doctrinal distinctives” within the SPC. They practice strict subscription for office bearers – no exceptions are permitted. While communicant members are not required to fully agree with every detail of the doctrine and practice of the SPC, they are expected to profess faith in Christ, have a knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, and live in obedience to God’s Word. We have not yet discussed further with them the exact parameters of that to which communicant members do commit themselves with regard to the church’s Confession, nor what latitude exists for not fully agreeing with every detail of the church’s doctrine and practice. This is a point that needs further discussion (see 4.2.2).
10
15

When it comes to creation, the SPC holds to an orthodox understanding of Westminster Confession 4.1. In other words, they teach and preach a six-day creation which took place on the order of thousands of years ago.

20 As noted in 2.2, we listened to at least nine sermons from the SPC. With joy we can report that these sermons were faithful proclamations of God’s Word. In each instance, the text was explained and applied in a Christ-centered way.

3.2.2 History

25 Up until 1986, the SPC has a shared history with the EPC. Therefore the official history of the EPC (in Appendix 1) is relevant for the SPC’s history up until 1986.

30 As noted earlier (3.1.2), in 1986 there was a doctrinal dispute in the EPC which resulted in a separation. In our August 24, 2020 meeting the SPC delegates were just as reluctant to discuss the reasons for this as the EPC brethren. However, they were also equally glad that reconciliation had been achieved on March 30, 2019. They want to put the past in the past, especially since all the current leadership in the SPC had no involvement with the events of 1986. We were clearly told, “The SPC has no desire to revisit the divisive issues of the past.”

35 From the SPC perspective, they will continue to remain separate for the foreseeable future because of associations that have been made and a divergence of influences. The EPC is more influenced by the Protestant Reformed Churches of America, while the SPC has been more influenced by the Free Church of Scotland and related churches.

3.2.3 National and International Contacts

40 The SPC’s closest contact is the fraternal relationship with the Heritage Reformed Churches of North America. This is mainly owing to the fact that one of the previous pastors (Rev. Terreth Klaver) of the Launceston congregation hailed from these churches and now serves there again.

They also have informal contact with the following: the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), the Australian Free Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. These relationships are relatively informal. The informality with which these relationships exist can be seen, for example, in the fact that the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) website makes no mention of any contact with the SPC, and neither do recent reports of the FCS (Cont.) Ecumenical Committee.

3.2.4 The Administration of the Sacraments

In the SPC the sacraments are administered purely, as Christ instituted them – in accordance with the summary of Scripture found in the Westminster Confession (chapters 28 and 29). We made a point of specifically asking about the supervision of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is fenced in the SPC. As with the EPC, guests may be admitted to the Lord’s Supper, but only upon an interview with the elders.

3.2.5 Church Discipline

The SPC practices church discipline in accordance with the Scriptures and the summary of Scripture in Westminster Confession chapter 30. Their practice (as detailed in their Constitution) is similar to ours. They follow the biblical teaching of passages such as Matthew 18.

3.2.6 Conclusion

From these observations we conclude that the marks of the true church (BC 29) are indeed present with the SPC. However, in 4.2 we will discuss further some potential challenges to working towards a sister-church relationship with the SPC.

4.0 Potential Challenges

4.1 *Evangelical Presbyterian Church*

4.1.1 Theological Concerns

We have noted above the association that the EPC has with the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. This association is such that several of the EPC pastors have been trained at the PRCA seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There are also family connections between EPC and PRCA members. This is worth noting because of the outspoken antipathy of some PRCA theologians towards the Canadian Reformed Churches/the “Liberated tradition.”

In our discussions with the EPC, it was noted in passing that we would have to discuss such matters as the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology. For the PRCA their views on these matters are non-negotiable. For the PRCA, because of their 1951 Declaration of Principles, there is no tolerance for what has been termed the well-meant offer of the gospel or conditionality in the covenant of grace. It remains to be determined whether that same approach prevails in the EPC. While our EPC brethren have assured us that their covenant

theology does not mirror that of the PRCA, clearly more discussion is still needed.

4.1.2 Categories of Ecumenical Relations

5 Currently, the EPC has two categories for ecumenical relationships: fraternal and corresponding relationships. They do not have an equivalent to our “sister-church relationship.” Should we decide to proceed in due time, we would likely enter into what they call a “fraternal relationship” which would include all the features of what we call a sister-church relationship. We could then become the EPC’s closest ecumenical contact.

4.1.3 Doctrinal Commitment of Communicant Members

15 As noted earlier, the EPC makes allowances for those coming from outside becoming communicant members even if they do not agree with everything in the Westminster Standards. We still need to discuss this with the EPC to gain clarity. Specifically, we need to find out what sorts of disagreements with the Confession would be tolerated. As noted below with the SPC (4.2.2), such a position might have weighty consequences for ecumenical relations.

4.2 *Southern Presbyterian Church*

4.2.1 Categories of Ecumenical Relations

20 As with the EPC, one potential challenge we have identified with the SPC is the lack of an equivalent category of “sister-church relationship.” However, because of their small size, we are confident that, as with the EPC, we could negotiate the establishment of fraternal relations with the SPC with provisions that, from our perspective, would make the relationship functionally equivalent to a sister-church relationship.

4.2.2 Doctrinal Commitment of Communicant Members

30 We noted above that communicant members in the SPC are expected to profess faith in Christ, have a knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, and live in obedience to Scripture. However, they are not required to agree with every detail of the doctrine and practice of the SPC. We still need to discuss what this means. The consequences could be significant. For example, in some Presbyterian churches, credobaptists are permitted to be communicant members.⁵ If that were the case in the SPC, and we had a sister-church relationship with them, we could be receiving members from them who do not hold to a biblical view of who should be baptized. Therefore, this is an important issue that needs to be discussed and clarified.

⁵ Credobaptists are those who believe that only those who have made a credible profession of faith can be baptized.

4.3 Free Reformed Churches of Australia

4.3.1 Synod 1985 Article 67 – Background

5 From our side, there is a notable potential challenge in a decision made by Synod 1985. In the context of discussions about the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Synod 1985 adopted a “Declaration Regarding the Meaning of ‘True and Faithful Church.’” Article 67 reads:

Br. J. Eikelboom tables the following proposal:

Synod declare that our recognition of another Church as being “true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ”

- 10 1. means that both our churches, and that recognized church, stand on the foundations as expressed in articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;
- 15 2. has as 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;
3. and that our church members must join that church, and vice versa, in the case that such church is their nearest church, in accordance with article 28 of the Belgic Confession.

20 GROUNDS

- 25 1. This Synod, in representing the churches, and in the present situation of developing contacts with many other churches both in Australia and abroad, must clearly define in accordance with Scripture and Confession, what is meant by the formal recognition of such churches as being “true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. This clear definition will be helpful in the process of coming to full sister-church relationship in a scriptural way.

30 As indicated above, this Declaration was made in the context of discussions about the PCEA. Article 66 of Synod 1985 is about the PCEA; likewise article 68 contains a decision about the PCEA.

35 FRC Launceston appealed article 67 of Synod 1985 to Synod 1987. This appeal was made mainly on the grounds that the proposal was brought to the floor of Synod, instead of coming from the churches – contrary to Church Order article 30 and the Rules of Synod. Synod 1987 denied Launceston’s appeal, partly on the grounds “it is related to the Synod’s task to come to a decision about possible recognition of the PCEA. Thus it was legitimately proposed by a member of the Synod in the discharge of Synod’s task” (article 41 of Synod 1987).

40 FRC Launceston then appealed article 41 of Synod 1987 to Synod 1990. It did so on four grounds. The first was that the original decision in 1985 “pretends to interpret Scripture and Confession without mentioning the

PCEA specifically, therefore it purports to have universal application.”
Second, it is contrary to Church Order article 30 and the Rules for Synods,
when such an interpretive decision is made by a synod apart from the
churches having had the opportunity to discuss and consider it. Third,
Launceston argued that the contents of Synod 1985 article 67 “lack proof
from Scripture and Confession.” Finally, it was argued that the Declaration
was self-contradictory when it first recognized stumbling blocks to unity, but
then insisted that “our church members must join that church.”

Synod 1990 denied this second appeal as well. In its considerations,
Synod 1990 argued that Launceston had not proven that the original
Declaration was an interpretation of Scripture and Confession. Because
that was not proven, the reference to the Church Order and Rules for
Synod was “out of place.” Further, Synod 1990 maintained that since the
1985 Declaration “gives a practical application of the Confession, it is not
necessary that explicit proof from Scripture be given.” Finally, Synod 1990
asserted that sections 2 and 3 of the Declaration are not incompatible. If a
church is recognized as true and faithful, “God’s people must join that
church in the event that this church is nearest them.” The bond of
churches is also required to pursue a sister-church relationship,
recognizing that practical difficulties may prevent that from happening
immediately. It seems again that all of this was envisioned strictly within
the context of relations with the PCEA – i.e. if an FRCA church member
moved to one of the eastern states where a PCEA congregation would be
their nearest church, they would be expected to join it, even if the FRCA
was still labouring to come to a sister-church relationship with the PCEA.

At Synod 2006, there was a third appeal regarding Synod 1985 article 67,
this time coming from FRC Legana. Legana asked Synod 2006 “to repeal
article 67 of Synod 1985 as counter-productive, confusing and binding
beyond our confessions.” With regard to the last element, we note that
Legana stated, “Point 3 goes beyond our confessions in asserting that one
must join the nearest true church.”

Synod 2006 denied this appeal. The first ground was that Legana had not
shown that the Declaration “has not been helpful in coming to sister
relations.” Next, Synod 2006 argued that if the Declaration is badly
worded, it should be revised, but not repealed. Finally, “This article applies
our confession regarding other true churches, and does not go beyond our
confession” (Synod 2006 article 59).

We note that Synod 2006 seemed to be more ambiguous about whether
the Declaration was only relevant to the discussions with the PCEA.
Nevertheless, the language of application (as opposed to interpretation)
continued to be used. Thus it could be interpreted (!) as meaning that it
was simply a Declaration serving the limited context of discussions about
ecumenical contact with the PCEA.

4.3.2 Our Situation Vis-à-vis the EPC and SPC

In Launceston, the Free Reformed Church, the EPC, and the SPC live
virtually side-by-side. Our buildings are within a 3 km radius of one
another. The members of these three churches live scattered throughout
the Launceston region. From a practical perspective, it would never work
to insist that a sister-church relationship with either the EPC or SPC (or

5 both) would require that members from these churches must join the church nearest them. For example, because our church buildings are so geographically close, there are going to be church members living virtually equidistant from two, if not three, of these churches. Moreover, if this rule is to be applied, is it to be applied in terms of driving distance or a straight-line distance? Finally, why would we be fixated on the location of a church building? The EPC building used to be located in Youngtown – it moved to Newstead a couple of years ago. The FRCA building is currently in South Launceston, but it will likely move in the next few years. Church buildings can and do move – is the **location of the building** what defines the membership of the congregation? This is not found in our Confession, nor is it a practical approach in this context.

10
15 Weightier than the practical problem, however, is the problem of binding consciences. Both the EPC and SPC have a different understanding of the application of the Regulative Principle of Worship to us.⁶ For example, by conviction they only sing psalms and without musical accompaniment. We respectfully disagree with them on this. However, to insist that our EPC and SPC brothers and sisters must take up membership at our church because it is the closest would, for many of them, be a difficult matter for their consciences. It is one thing when you live in a city where there is no choice but to join a Reformed church where they have a different understanding of how the Regulative Principle applies, but it is a completely different thing when you live in a city where you have a choice, and where you have been already been a member of a church which shares your conviction of how to apply the Regulative Principle.

20
25
30 Apart from the situation in Launceston, we would naturally (without any thought to the 1985 Declaration) encourage FRCA members who move to Hobart or Brisbane to join the SPC or EPC respectively. In the case of Hobart, this has already been happening for a number of years. With further acquaintance and development of relations, we hope that EPC or SPC members moving to locales such as the Perth Metro, Albany, or Cairns would likewise see fit to join our FRCA congregations. That would be in the spirit of the 1985 declaration.

4.3.3 A Way Forward

35 After the Union of 1892 in the Netherlands, there were many cities where Secession and Doleantie churches lived virtually side-by-side for years. The existence of these so-called 'A' and 'B' churches reckoned with the reality of true churches having a different history, but unity in the faith. There was no principle compromised with such an arrangement. The pursuit of ecumenicity simply requires us to acknowledge practical and historical realities.

40
45 We believe the way forward past this obstacle is to recognize that Synod 1985's Declaration was made in the limited context of discussions about the PCEA (whose congregations all existed at a lengthy distance from the FRCA). Synod 1987 emphasized that point in its response to

⁶ The Regulative Principle of Worship is expressed in Heidelberg Catechism QA 96: we are not to worship God "in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word." It is also expressed in Westminster Confession 21.1, "But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture."

Launceston's appeal. Synod 1990 further asserted that the Declaration was not an interpretation of Scripture and Confession, but an application of it – presumably to the situation presenting itself with the PCEA. In the FRCA, we do not have extra-confessional binding to synodical doctrinal pronouncements, thus the Declaration **must** only have that limited character. It served Synod 1985 in its discussions about the PCEA, but has no binding force beyond that. Synod 1985 could not have foreseen our situation where three true churches from three different federations exist in close geographical proximity to one another, nor did this Synod intend its Declaration to speak to such a situation. The Declaration therefore has no bearing on the establishment of sister-church relationships with the EPC or SPC.

5.0 Recommendations

We recommend Synod decide:

- 5.1 To acknowledge the report submitted by Launceston and Legana as a Committee for Contact with the EPC and SPC (CCES) and thank them for their work.
- 5.2 To reappoint the churches of Launceston and Legana as a CCES with the mandate to:
 - 5.2.1 Continue discussions with the EPC with a view to establishing a sister-church relationship. Discussions should specifically focus on:
 - a. The doctrinal points of the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology, with a view to determining whether and to what degree diversity on these points can be accommodated in an ecumenical relationship between the FRCA and EPC.
 - b. The doctrinal commitment of communicant members of the EPC.
 - 5.2.2 Continue discussions with the SPC with a view to establishing a sister-church relationship. Discussion should specifically focus on the doctrinal commitment of communicant members of the SPC.
- 5.3 That Synod 1985 article 67 has no bearing on the establishment of sister-church relationships with the EPC or SPC.

Grounds

1. Both the EPC and SPC give evidence of being true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we have an obligation to pursue sister-church relations with them.
2. With respect to the EPC, questions remain on the matter of some doctrinal points and how much allowance would be made for theological diversity between sister-churches. It also remains to be determined what is expected for communicant members in terms of doctrinal commitment.
3. With respect to the SPC, it remains to be determined what is expected for communicant members in terms of doctrinal commitment.

4. The Declaration found in article 67 of Synod 1985 was made strictly within the context of discussions regarding the PCEA and did not consider the possibility of two (or more) geographically proximate true churches from different federations.

5 **Appendix 1 – A History of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia**

The History Committee of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has prepared this history on our Church. Our Presbytery asked the committee to prepare it as an aid in remembering the Lord's grace to us, and of the great issues involved in our coming into being as a denomination.

- 10 It is our prayer that the following history will be an aid in teaching us lessons from our past, and stirring us up to glorify the Lord. May it renew us in our love and service of Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. May it remind us of how the Lord has called His people out of darkness into His marvellous light.

- 15 As we reflect on our past may we pray and labour that His cause in our midst would be maintained. May we look to Him that His grace which has brought us thus far, will continue with us in the generations ahead. May the beauty of the Lord God be upon us and that we will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge and service of the Lord.

T.D., A & A.J. Carins, & C. Coleborn
History Committee of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

20 **The Beginnings**

- 25 The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) was a reformation development out of various main line denominations in Australia, beginning in the early 1950s, and culminating in the institution of the EPC in 1961. It was originally constituted as the Reformed Evangelical Church. The name was changed because it was found that Australian society was not familiar with the term "reformed" in its historical and church connection. Many associated the word with reform or correctional schools for example.

- 30 The EPC began in a remarkable way. Groups of earnest Christian people in the states of Tasmania and Queensland, deeply moved in heart and mind, came together from such Churches as the Baptist, Brethren, Salvation Army, Congregational, Anglican, general Presbyterian and Methodist denominations. What caused them to come together was their grief over the departure from fundamental Christian truths by their respective denominations. There was much spiritual compromise in those denominations. There was a tragic compromise of such truths as the Bible being our only rule of faith and practice; the sinfulness of man; the need of the new birth and faith in Christ, and other essential
- 35 Protestant and historic Christian beliefs. These beliefs of our Christian mothers and fathers were either being ignored or abandoned by many, especially the leaders of those large denominations.

- 40 These groups of sincere believers sought to call their Churches to return to the basic Christian truths. They were frustrated in this though by their different denominations' courts generally not dealing fairly and properly with these pleas. Their cry for spiritual help and reform in their stand against the tide of humanism, modernism, and the liberal theology that was prevailing in the main line denominations at that time was largely ignored.

At a later date, after coming to the Reformed faith, Pastor McNeilly, one of the Church's first pastors, on a radio broadcast programme, "The Word of Truth", gave voice to these peoples'

understanding of how a Church should treat the matter of Biblical and Christian beliefs. He said in part:

5 *1 Tim 3:15. --- We are told that the Church of the Living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. Here we learn that the chief end of the Church is to preserve the truth. The Church exists to make known the truth of God's Word. Any Church that does not*
10 *proclaim the truth is a mere system of man, and is not that divine society instituted by Christ. The Church exists to maintain, support, uphold, proclaim, and to be a citadel to the truth. The greatest curse that can come upon any people is to be given over to error, and for the land to be void of true ministers to cry, "Thus saith the Lord". The true prophet in the Bible was one who brought the Word of God to the people, and the false prophet was one who spake out of his own heart and who did not preach the truth. May God in His mercy give us a revival of truth. Not something that is brought about by humanism, not a revival of shallow evangelism that stirs peoples' emotions and produces great excitement and many decisions, for it has been proved in our day,*
15 *that kind of evangelism is only "heat without light". It glorifies man and does much harm to the cause of Christ. Our need is a revival of truth, not new truth but the old truth as it is found in the inspired Word of God. For it is the truth that glorifies God and humbles the human heart and causes it to hope in God's mercy. May we see in our day a return to the old paths. Jer 6:16."*

20 So it was that men and women from various denominational backgrounds but with a single desire to truly know and serve God, were distressed with the apostasy around them. As they found like-minded believers elsewhere, they enjoyed informal fellowship together. This led them to form first of all evangelical fellowships, and then, when they had come to the Reformed faith, the EPC.

25 **The Establishment of Fellowship Groups**

Some of the men and women, who were sincerely seeking a better understanding of the Bible, the Lord and His ways, were forced out of their denominations. Others eventually withdrew from them. A loose network of fellowship developed between these people as they came in contact with one another. The folk in Tasmania came from Hobart, Launceston,
30 Penguin, St. Marys, Taranna and Winnaleah. Those who enjoyed this fellowship were Arminian inclined, believing in man's ability and free will. They were man centred in their thinking, and viewed life and God from the perspective of self. They believed man was not so bad; he only needed a bit of help from the Lord to find happiness in life, and to get to heaven. They viewed Christ's work as only an incomplete work. It was up to man to finish it.
35 Man could resist God and even change God's will. Whether we were saved or not, ultimately depended upon man. Some found their fellowship in existing para-church organizations such as "Ambassadors for Christ."

Those of the fellowship were also inclined to be Baptist, even those from a non-baptist background. That is, they believed that the community of God's people, the Church, was
40 only made up of truly born again believers, who could be discerned. They did not agree that the Church of God is made up of believers and their children, and that the visible Church and community of God's people always were made up of the wheat and tares. They believed only in the baptism of adults professing repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, and so had no real place for children in the Church. There was no appreciation for God's Covenant
45 relationship with His people.

The fellowship groups also tended to see the Church as simply a local congregation, and that every member had a say in the running of the Church. The rule of the congregation was not by elders as it is in Presbyterian Churches.

Searching for the Truth of God's Word

There were many struggles and discouragements that different ones went through. They were painful and confusing. For example, at one time when those who worked and prayed most earnestly for the extension of Christ's kingdom were at a low ebb spiritually, they
5 invited an American "evangelist" who was a follower of Charles G. Finney, to visit them. They longed for a true revival - a revival of the truth of God's Word that would really help souls. They thought this man was the one to bring revival for them. Yet after a time of stirred up emotions and energy, and after twelve months of his doctrine and practice, it left them bewildered and fatigued and in a sort of hopeless state of legalism and despair. The
10 Arminianism of it all almost led some to atheism; such was the bitter disappointment they found in what was presented as Biblical Christianity.

There was a real and deep hunger among many of these folk to grow in the "meat" of the Word of God, and to more fully love and serve the Lord. This led to a preparedness to honestly examine themselves and their doctrine and practices. For example, they observed
15 that at evangelistic meetings, many could be brought to "make a decision" to become a Christian, but few of them went on to give any evidence of being a true child of God. Few continued in a credible profession of faith and a life that supported that profession. They found that all too often people who were pressured into decisions became even more hardened against the Lord afterwards. This grieved the fellowship people, for they wanted to see souls saved. They discussed and prayed over why this was so. They asked themselves,
20 were they believing and doing something wrong?

The Discovery of the "Doctrines of Grace" or the Reformed Faith

Things began to change in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some of these fellowship believers, in their search to grow more in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus, and to
25 find answers to the questions which their Arminian theology could not give, came across the Westminster Confession of Faith, and various reformed writers and publications. The Banner of Truth Trust was at this time just beginning to publish such material. Sovereign Grace Publications were producing similar material in the U.S.A. Among the literature that greatly helped, were books such as B.B. Warfield's "*The Plan of Salvation*", A. Pink's "*The*
30 *Sovereignty of God*", T. Watson's "*A Body of Divinity*", M. Luther's "*The Bondage of the Will*", Jonathan Edward's "*The Religious Affections*", etc. As the folk came into contact with such material, something wonderfully profound took place in many of their hearts and minds and lives!

As the fellowship people grew in the knowledge and appreciation of the Reformed faith, they
35 found that their hungering souls were satisfied in this newfound appreciation of the wonder and greatness of the Lord. They marvelled in His perfect and finished work in Christ, and of the Scriptures as a rule of faith and life. They also realized something profound! They saw that in the past, they had been ensnared by a faith that had man at the centre, not God. This faith and practice had brought the work of God into disgrace and them into despair.

Those who experienced what followed from the "discovery", describe it as an amazing work
40 of God's grace and a revival of truth that was to grip the soul with a "vision" of the glory and greatness and wonder of the Lord. It caused such a sense of human inability and unworthiness, that the Triune God in Christ became very precious and wonderful. Many felt as if they had never really known the Lord before. It was like a powerful, supernatural
45 conversion, and a revolution took place in their faith and life. Their faith now became not only God centred, but encompassed more and more all of their life. Faith in God and salvation was not just one department of their life, and family, work and social activity all separate departments. Increasingly, Christ was seen as sovereign over all of life.

Most of these believers were persuaded through this Reformed literature of the great truths of the sovereignty of God and the Reformed faith. They believed that they had at last found the true "meat" and light of the Word. They found that they had at last a unified view of life and the world and of God, and the answers to their problems.

5 Many changed from an Arminian man-centred faith, to a Reformed God-centred faith. They felt they had been delivered from the bondage of a "works" syndrome. Previously they were uncertain of their salvation, peace and joy. Now, seeing these things were guaranteed by God in Christ, and dependent upon His works and power and not man's, they knew deep contentment in full assurance. They grew by leaps and bounds, as they studied the Word,
10 and read of the great doctrines of grace as set forth by fathers in the faith of old.

Sharing the Truths of God's Word

This "discovery" of truth, was wonderful to the people involved. They thus desired very much, not only to see lost souls saved, but also to share the knowledge and experience of those newly discovered truths. Truths, they were assured, that gave the Lord His right place.
15 Absolute principles, given from on high in the Bible, that they believed were principles of faith and for our real life. They came to the profound conviction that these things of Divine revelation would bring true stability and happiness to the restless soul of man, and these alone. They thus sought to spread this knowledge to as many people as possible.

One of the ways they sought to give wider knowledge of these great truths, was the
20 publication of theological papers called "Sputniks". The Russians had just put up their first space satellite to circle the earth, so these papers were meant to be launched into society for as wide a distribution as possible.

A Visit of the Rev. E. Lee to Tasmania

About this time, a minister from the PCEA, the Rev. E. Lee visited Tasmania. He spoke at a
25 Convention at Winnaleah on the 14th of April 1960, and then going on to speak at a Convention at Ulverstone. He spoke on a subject increasingly important to the fellowship people, that of "The Church". Approximately 150 people attended the weekend Winnaleah convention.

The Rev. E. Lee wrote of what he saw happening.

30 *"Recent movements in Tasmania toward the Reformed faith have gladdened the hearts of all to whom the faith of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin is precious. The writer is able to give first-hand information on the quality and manifestation of the work. That it is the work of God there is no doubt. There has been a tremendous outburst of intellectual activity in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has stimulated and elevated*
35 *their lives. Christians who have never read a book for years now have moderate-size libraries with which they appear to be very familiar. Young ladies, as well as housewives, are conversant with the Confession of Faith; Berkhof's Systematic Theology, and the works of the British Puritans. This especially amazed the writer. For the interest of ladies is usually centred in the realms of fashion and food, babies and*
40 *household furnishings.*

In addition to this outburst of sacred study, there is a spirit of love, and open mindedness that is rarely met with in Christian fellowship. Although under pressure from former friends and associates - for Calvinism is an offense to many - they exhibit
45 *no bitterness, only the desire to win them and interest them in the way of God more perfectly. Amongst themselves they are tender-hearted and share a concern for the welfare of each other. This latter attitude, so sorely lacking in our Churches today, was*

a characteristic feature of primitive Christianity. Behold how these Christians love one another was the verdict of the wondering pagans.

5 *One is also impressed by the consecrated lives that these dear brethren live. And we out of the older Reformed movements might take a leaf out of their book. They spend their time, energies, and talents in seeking to know the will of God and the truth of the Scriptures. If you join their company, you will find their conversation is on a very high level. The Person of Christ, the sovereignty of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, the doctrines of the Church they discuss with earnestness and relish. Their time and money is not frittered away in frivolous and harmful amusements. They are in earnest.*
10 *The revelation of God's sovereign majesty has come as a glorious light. The Bible is a new book.*

15 *One of the saddest features of the movement has been their disappointment with the worldliness of the brethren of the Reformed churches. They cannot understand how Christians, especially those who profess the truth which God gave to His Church at the Reformation, can waste money on tobacco, on the pursuit of worldly amusements, such as the patronage of the cinema, where a godless way of life is portrayed and encouraged. They wonder why Christians have an appetite for these things. In consequence those who have so much to teach them have repelled them.*

20 *Let me say, in conclusion, that these brethren were a challenge and an inspiration to the writer as he moved among them. They have all the enthusiasm of those who have discovered a wonderful treasure. Their zeal in spreading the truth is a reflection of this. Some have criticized them for being aggressive; and so, no doubt, there has been a lack of wisdom on some occasions. But maturity comes with time and reflection. And there are signs already that their zeal is being tempered with discretion, although it is by no means abating. May God grant to us all such an insight into His holiness and majesty and such an insight into the grace that receiveth sinners that we with awe and devotion shall carry our faith to every creature in this land."*
25

Conference Meetings

30 A conference was held on the 2nd of July 1960, at the home of two believers deeply involved in this work of reformation, Viv and Audrey Connors, at 53 Station Road, St. Leonards, Launceston. The aim of the Conference was the amalgamation into an organized Church of the fellowship groups from Winnaleah, Penguin, Taranna and Hobart, (Taroon, Newtown, and Warrane). It was at first thought that the fellowship groups would establish "The Baptist Reformed Church of Tasmania", and have the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 as its
35 confessional basis. As time went by, and after further prayer, study and discussion, the conference moved to adopt the Westminster Confessional Standards. Those involved became convinced that these Standards and their view of the Church and Baptism etc. most consistently summarized the truth of the Scriptures on these subjects. Again, it was painful for some to honestly test their beliefs by Scripture and to change them.

40 The subject of infant baptism caused much heart searching for some. As we have noted, most of the people had adopted adult only or "believers" baptism. It was decided that there would be a presentation of papers at a conference by several of the brethren. The papers would give the arguments for both sides. Mr. John Driscoll was appointed to present a paper on infant baptism.

45 The day for the gathering was a cold winter's day, and those present were gathered before a large open wood fire. Mr. Driscoll was aware, even before he delivered his paper in defense of infant baptism, that there was much opposition to his position. Some, in their zeal for the baptistic position, were somewhat mocking and saying in a prejudicial manner that

5 paedobaptism simply could not be correct. There was such antipathy to the position, and because it was threatening to cause a real division between those at the conference, Mr. Driscoll was loath to deliver his paper. He stood before the fire and said to the gathered brethren that it would be better if he threw his paper into the fire, than that it be the cause of unspiritual and ungodly division and behaviour. He stated though that he was convinced that the truth of the Word did teach infant baptism, but would yet remain silent on the matter if the others did not feel able to honestly consider the matter. His words and imminent action of burning his paper electrified the gathering. They realized that they must be like the Bereans of Acts 17:10-11 who, when they heard Paul speak of things they had not yet considered, tested them by the Scriptures. They realized that unless they walked humbly in prayer and with a teachable spirit, they could go astray. As they then humbly compared the two views with Scripture, prayed and debated the matter, most saw that there were things in the Bible about infant baptism they had never considered before.

15 The consequences of the above incident led a great majority to abandon their baptistic view of baptism, and to become paedobaptists. They saw that God indeed calls us to baptize our children.

20 Various speakers were used of the Lord to help the fellowship people towards the reformed faith. Mr. Lee was one such man. He spoke at various conferences. He spoke at a "Tasmanian Reformed Conference" in 1960 on the subject of "The Church". On a second visit to Winnaleah in January 1961, he spoke on "The Unity of the Church", and explained Infant Baptism. Allison Carins, who attended this meeting observed, "*It was a real eye-opener to us. I suppose it was hearing of the Covenant - quite new to us. It headed us into a Presbyterian rather than a Baptist direction.*"

25 Mr. Viv Connors, as secretary of the Conference organizers, wrote a report on their behalf. In this report he gave expression of the thinking of the brethren at that time. He wrote:

"Owing to God's leading in bringing about circumstances which forced many of the Reformed conviction out of the dominant Churches, it was deemed necessary and proper that we meet together to worship God according to His Word and the doctrines of the historic Christian faith.

30 *Our first meeting was on the 2nd July 1960, and it has been encouraging to see God at work over these eight months, both in our own midst and throughout the other centres.*

35 *Not being greatly concerned at numbers, we are concerned that every member of His body be thoroughly grounded in the Word of God and that each be ever conforming to the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.*

And so it is with great confidence that we face the New Year, believing that God is at work amongst His people, and that He will bring His Church out of the terrible error and confusion into which she has fallen. God has worked mightily in the past, and being the same God, will work mightily in this generation."

40 The "Conference" Christians, though dissenting from and objecting to the apostasy and liberalism of the mainline churches, and their objection to the leaven of Arminianism in much of the evangelical world, were concerned not to be sectarian in this revival of truth. From the beginning they sought to reach out to other reformed churches, and to have contact with them. This desire is expressed in an open letter of Mr. Morgan, of 19th of July 1960. He wrote:

45

5 *"Those who embrace the Reformed faith soon learn that a door to a vast store of exegetical and expository literature and learning is opened to them. They discover the reality of Romans 11:33, 'O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' and find that it is greatly contrasted with the shallow Arminian, and Semi-Pelagian concept of God and His Word.*

10 *The realization that there are depths unfathomable, both of wisdom and knowledge of God must more and more bring our movement to consider the need of scholarship and learning. All lasting and well-founded Reformations and Revivals have been led by men of learning. It is here that great advantage will accrue to our movement by not turning it into a sectarian movement. The Reformed movement in Tasmania has reached such proportions that it is being closely watched by other Reformed Churches, who are ready to assist in any way possible. We already have the offer of assistance and fellowship of Professor Finlayson of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, during his visit to Australia next year. This we should regard as a privilege, for it has been said that Professor Finlayson is perhaps one of the greatest minds in all of Scotland.*

20 *However, it needs to be understood that the established Reformed Churches are not greatly interested in ministering within a sectarian movement, even though they may be Calvinistic. --- Furthermore we must understand that men within the established Reformed Church who possess a lively faith, and who would be able to greatly assist us, also, as true Calvinists, have a vision of an unrestricted working of the Holy Spirit of God in Reformation and Revival. The formation of a Baptist Reformed Church in Tasmania would place the movement largely on its own, and would lose the advantage of the offer of the scholarship, learning and assistance, which would otherwise be available to it.*

30 *In closing this letter, may I bring to you a verse of Scripture, Daniel 12:3, --- 'they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.' Herein is a gracious promise of an everlasting crown and reward to those who seek to turn the eyes of men to behold the perfect and all sufficient righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May the Lord at this time grant us wisdom in all that we undertake in His name. May the organization ever seek to conform to, and all who compose it labour in, the will of our Lord who prayed, 'Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.'*

35 **Independent Baptists**

40 *Sadly, as time went on, some of the folk, who were sympathetic to the Baptist position, were not persuaded of the Biblical consistency of Covenant Theology and Presbyterian polity, and of a Reformed world and life view. At this time, the Rev. L. Lincolne felt unable to continue with the conference, and established a College (Geneva), and a congregation at Latrobe, Tasmania, based on the Reformed Baptist Confession.*

45 *Mr. Lincolne was previously principal of the World Evangelization Crusade (WEC) College in Launceston. (WEC was a College of a missionary society that had been founded by C.T. Studd). Quite a few students of this College became convinced of the Reformed faith after great battles within their own understanding and consciences. They debated and discussed with those who maintained Arminian type tenets the radical difference between a God-centred belief and a man-centred belief. It was obvious that the two could not be reconciled. This led to the division of the WEC College, and about 30 of the 50 students left because of their sympathy with the doctrines of grace - the Reformed faith. A number of these students eventually became members and office bearers in the EPC.*

Presbyterian Convictions

Those of the Presbyterian persuasion continued the study and examination of the historic beliefs of the reformed faith. As they grew in knowledge they desired to make contact with other reformed denominations. They recognized that they needed to be a part of a visible organized reformed Church. They studied and communicated with various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations in Australia. After considering these Churches' profession, practice and history, they became convinced that basically the original Reformed Church of Scotland was the most consistent Biblically in its doctrines and practices.

Serious consideration was then given to joining a denomination that reflected that original position. One such denomination in Australia was the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, (PCEA), which was popularly known as "The Free Church". One of the officers of this Church, with whom there was discussion on joining, was the Rev. E. Lee.

Of the various Reformed Churches which existed in Australia of a British/Scottish background at this time, only three could be said to reflect in varying degrees the doctrine, practice and worship of the original Reformed Church of Scotland. They were the PCEA, The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (of Ireland). Further information on these Churches was obtained, consideration given about becoming a part of them, and discussion with various office bearers held.

Discussions with Other Reformed Churches of a Continental Background

The fellowship people recognized that God had also worked a great wonder at the time of the Reformation on the Continent of Europe as well as in Britain. They had studied and appreciated their Confessional Standards, and especially appreciated the Canons of Dort. In the Canons they could see the same issues with which they had had to wrestle. They were thankful to God for this Scriptural light on the issues raised in the Arminian/Reformed debate. The will and ability of man and the will and ability of God as spelt out by them was a great help to the people. Because there were churches in Australia that professed the historic reformed faith of the Continent, particularly that of the Netherlands they made contact with such churches. For example, they met with, and had discussions with a representative of the Reformed Churches of Australia. In November 1960 the Rev. D. Heenan, a Home Mission minister of the Reformed Churches, visited the fellowship centres in Tasmania. He was keen on the fellowship/conference people being integrated into an existing denomination. The Free Reformed Churches also offered union with this newly formed body of professing reformed people.

Both the Reformed Churches of Australia and the Free Reformed Churches were basically immigrant Churches from the Netherlands at that time. The denominations were established in Australia only after the Second World War. Union with them was not to be however, though it gave the fellowship folk a knowledge of and in different ways, an appreciation for, these Churches' history and Confessions.

Differences of Conscience with Other Reformed Churches

There were cultural barriers between these Continental Churches and the fellowship people. These included matters such as smoking and the use of alcohol, and other aspects of life-style. Because many had just arrived from the Netherlands as part of the great wave of post war immigrants that came in the 1950s and 1960s from the Continent there was a language barrier too.

There were also doctrinal problems. For example, whilst there was some sympathy for the high view that these Reformed Churches had of their Covenant children, there were real

problems with the commonly held view in the Reformed Churches of Australia of presumptive regeneration. This was Abraham Kuyper's view. It was also felt that these two Continental Reformed denominations had adopted a somewhat "Lutheran" approach to worship. That is, they permitted practices in the worship of the Church on the basis that God's Word did not forbid them. The fellowship people saw this as opposite to the historic Calvinistic and reformed understanding of the Bible, that only that for which we had a Biblical warrant could be brought into the worship of the Church. The Continental Churches for example, considered instrumental music in worship a thing indifferent. The fellowship people now saw it as contrary to Scripture, and the Reformed Confessions, even the Continental Confessions, (E.g. Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 96, and Belgic Confession Articles 7 and 25), and the original historical practice of the Reformed Churches on the Continent.

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

After considerable help and encouragement from various office bearers of the PCEA the matter of joining them was contemplated. After some prayerful consideration and review of that Church's life and attitude to the reforming people, the fellowship's leaders did not feel able to proceed with an actual union with that denomination.

The PCEA on their part did not actively court and invite the fellowship to join them. The reason for this is somewhat difficult to precisely define. We can only try to point in the direction of the reasons. There was a perception on the part of some of the PCEA ministers that those who were to make up the EPC were like "new wine". They feared that this "new wine" would not go so well with the "old wine skins" of their denomination. It was thought an influx of highly motivated and zealous proponents for the Reformed faith could unsettle the PCEA denomination by not appreciating the particular ethos and history of the PCEA. The Rev. R. Ward, writing from a PCEA perspective for example, says:

"Mr. Lee --- was --- cautious (about union with the PCEA), since he saw the zeal and enthusiasm of the (EPC) brethren as likely to be a disturbing factor in the PCEA." (See "Presbyterianism In Tasmania 1821-1977" page 55, and "The Bush Still Burns" page 392).

On the fellowship's part there was an appreciation for various ministers of the PCEA, and its history and witness. They never the less felt that many of the members of that denomination had grown up without any real appreciation of the grand soul-gripping truths of the reformed faith. In fact, they felt that many in the older Reformed denominations simply had a traditional faith. Those in the fellowship felt that, all too often, it seemed that they were speaking a somewhat different language of the faith with folk from these denominations. There was a definite difference of ethos between the fellowship and those denominations.

The Formation of a New Denomination

Though there were these differences, the EPC really appreciated the Standards and history of the PCEA. They were grateful for the help given from various ministers of that denomination. Even in the matter of the formation of the EPC as a denomination, the leaders of the conference group that had come to a consistent Presbyterian and Westminster Confessional position acted upon the advice of PCEA ministers. They advised that the people formally petition the PCEA Presbytery based in Victoria, to ordain ministers and to constitute a separate Presbytery outside of the PCEA denomination.

So it was, that in April 1961, the Conference wrote to the PCEA, and addressed their letter to the "Synod" of that Church, seeking assistance in the formation of a Church of various congregations. It seems that the matter of assistance by the PCEA for the fledgling reformed

movement was kept at a Southern PCEA Presbytery level. Mr. Lee especially was advising the conference brethren. The Revs. I. Graham and J. Harman also were involved.

For the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to be formally organized and constituted as a reformed Church would, among other things, require the ordination of several ministers.

5 Mr. M. Maxwell Bradshaw, Procurator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and a friend to the resurgence of Reformed theology in that denomination and in Australia generally, assisted in the drawing up of a Constitution of the Church. Basically, the Constitution was the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and the Directory of Public Worship, as originally accepted
10 by the Church of Scotland. The Church of Scotland in accepting them continued to maintain its earlier reformed confessions too, so this latter clause opened up an earlier Confessional heritage to the EPC. Further, the Constitution was to be the Constitution and Law of the Church of Scotland in the year 1843 "so far as applicable".

15 In August 1961, the Conference applied to the PCEA - via Mr. Lee, for three of its pastors to be regularly ordained. It was decided that because of the relative harmony of constitutions, several ministers of the PCEA would form themselves into a special Presbytery to ordain the EPC's first three ministers. These ministers could then constitute their own Presbytery and separate denomination. A meeting on the 12th August 1961, finalized arrangements, and also notified other Reformed Churches of their intention in a circularized declaration. From
20 the beginning there was a desire to enjoy a true Biblical and Confessional reformed ecumenical relationship with other reformed churches. The people believed in the "catholicity" of the true church, and that it was not limited to the mere denomination. **The Declaration of Intention** reads as follows:

25 *"On the 29th July 1961, the Pastors and Elders of our Reformed congregations met to finalize arrangements for the constitution of the 'Reformed Evangelical Church', and for the ordination of a Presbytery in Tasmania.*

*The Standards and Formularies of the Church shall be, The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechism, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and the Directory of Public Worship as originally accepted by the Church
30 of Scotland, which includes the original Calvinistic principle of things not commanded in Scripture, (either expressly, or by good and necessary consequence from its statements), being forbidden in worship.*

*As History has ever proved that unity in the Church is best maintained in the Unity of the Spirit and truth, and not necessarily in adopting the name of a visible organization
35 of any older established denomination, - and believing that this unity in our ranks can be best maintained thus, we agreed to proceed to this position, which we believe to be the true scriptural one.*

*We have prayerfully considered, and do deeply appreciate the advice and assistance of mature Reformed brethren in the Faith concerning the principle of the ecumenicity of
40 the Church, and believe that the way we have chosen is not inconsistent with this principle.*

The ordination of our first members of Presbytery will be conducted by a (special) Presbytery from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Free Church).

*It is our earnest desire to co-operate in the promulgation of the Reformed Faith in our
45 land to the fullest possible extent with all who are militant for the Reformed Faith.*

Praying that our generation shall see a Reformation that enthrones God, that establishes righteousness, unmask false religion, and strips sinners of vain confidence."

5 The document was signed by Charles L. Rodman, V. Connors, D.T. Carins, H. McNeilly, D.W. Cooper, A. G. Lefevre, Eric S. Turnbull, M. Logan, Peter Carins, M.R. Hingston, and T. Connors.

10 Various Reformed Churches were invited to send observers to the meeting to ordain ministers, and to constitute the EPC. For example, the Rev. W. R. McEwen, a friend of the Conference believers, and a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Australia, was invited. He was unable to attend, and sent his apology. He also wrote in part:

I have rejoiced at every report which I have received of the movement of God's Spirit in your island state and the way He has led you into the truth of His Holy Word and called you to stand for it. May He continue to lead and empower you in your faithful witness.

15 *I believe that this fresh step will be fraught with momentous issues, and I pray that it may lead into greater blessing and wider service. No doubt it will be met with fresh opposition, and may mean misunderstanding and sacrifice. But you have already faced these before, and I am sure you will prove the Lord's grace sufficient again."*

20 The three fellowships of Launceston, Penguin and Winnaleah, under supervision of acting elders, had drawn up letters or forms of call to Messrs. Charles Rodman, Eric Turnbull and Hugh McNeilly, to be their respective pastors. The three men were the first ministers of the EPC, and the three original congregations of the EPC were Launceston, Penguin and Winnaleah.

The Ordination of the First Ministers of the EPC

25 The historical scene was then set for the actual birth of the EPC. It took place on Thursday evening, the 28th. September, 1961, in "Chalmers Hall", Frederick Street, Launceston. This in many ways was most appropriate, for Chalmers Church was the original Free Church in Launceston. With a revival of the reformed faith, it was fitting that those Confessional Standards that the Free Church originally upheld, were once again, being established and advanced.

30 So it was that on the evening of the 28th. September, a congregation of about 200 met with hushed anticipation. In the climate of reverent and joyful thanks to Almighty God for His goodness, and for the wonder of His grace and the knowledge of His truth, the ordinations of Messrs. Rodman, Turnbull and McNeilly took place. The members of the special Presbytery who ordained these men, were Revs. E. Lee, I. Graham and J. Harman. The Rev. J. Harman's notes of the evening read:

35 *"An ad hoc Presbytery of ministers of the PCEA, the Rev. I. L. Graham, Rev. J. A. Harman, and Rev. E. R.. Lee met in Chalmers Church Hall, Launceston. Mr. Viv Connors was appointed to make the announcement to the congregation gathered that the Presbytery was about to ordain Mr. C. Rodman, Mr. E. Turnbull, Mr. H. McNeilly as ministers, and called for objections against the life and doctrine of these men. No objections were lodged.*

The Rev. E.R. Lee conducted the service and preached from Ephesians 4:11.

The Rev. I. J. Graham presided over and carried out the ordination. First, the statement was read, the questions asked and answered and the Formula signed, and then the three were solemnly set aside to the work of the ministry.

5 *The Rev. J. A. Harman addressed the new ministers from the opening verses of 2 Timothy 4, especially the words: 'make full proof of thy ministry.'*"

The Constitution of the New Church

The following evening, the 29th September 1961, the newly ordained ministers met and constituted themselves a Presbytery, formally adopting the Constitution previously prepared and agreed upon.

10 On the Lord's Day of the 1st of October, 1961, it was with thankfulness and joy in the Launceston, Penguin and Winnaleah congregations that their new ministers were inducted and their recently called elders ordained. The minister at Launceston was the Rev. C.L. Rodman, with elders V. Connors and D. Cooper. The minister at Penguin was the Rev. E. Turnbull, with elders M. Logan, T. Connors and M. Hingston. At Winnaleah, the minister was
15 the Rev. H. McNeilly, with elders D.T. Carins, G. Lefevre and T.D. (Peter) Carins.

Establishment of Other Early Congregations and Preaching Stations

TARANNA - In October 1961, a fellowship group from around the area of Taranna on the Tasman Peninsula, sought membership as a congregation of the Church. In November 1961 they were invited to join the Church after answering various questions. Their pastor, John
20 Lyons, was accepted as a student for the ministry. Mr. Terry Kingston was the elder. The Rev. John Lyons served in this congregation for some years. This congregation continued the EPC witness in this area until it joined the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1986.

HOBART - After some time of discussion and consultation, on the 25th January, 1962, a
25 fellowship based in Hobart formally applied to join the Church. Mr. E. Tomlin and Mr. Athol Liddall were elders. Mr. Raeburn Cameron-Smith applied in February 1962 to be received, and was accepted as a student for the ministry. After licensing by the Presbytery of the EPC, the Hobart congregation called Mr. Cameron-Smith to be their minister. He and this congregation seceded in 1986 to form the Southern Presbyterian Church.

30 ROCKHAMPTON - Contact with a group of believers in Rockhampton, Queensland, began with a visit by Mr. H. McNeilly of Winnaleah in May 1960. He preached several times in a Brethren Assembly on the doctrines of grace. Interested folk from various Baptist and Church of Christ churches attended these meetings. As a result, a number of people,
35 including Thomas and Gladys Jones and their adult children, and Noel and Joan Greatbatch began to come to the knowledge of the Reformed Faith. From October to December 1961, the Presbytery of the new denomination released the Rev. E. Turnbull so he could conduct a three months teaching ministry in Rockhampton.

In November 1961 the Rockhampton families, with some others, expressed their desire to
40 become a congregation of the new denomination. They requested that a student pastor of the Church, Mr. Philip Burley, be released to go and minister among them for a time. Eventually, in May 1962, Mr. and Mrs. Burley travelled to Rockhampton from Winnaleah, where they were living at the time. In February 1963, the fellowship group in Rockhampton was received as a congregation of the Church. Mr. N. Greatbatch was ordained as an elder. The Rev. Charles Rodman visited Queensland for this event and ministered in Brisbane for a
45 time as well. Mr. Burley continued his theological studies, assisting the Rockhampton congregation at the same time.

He completed his studies and was ordained as a minister of the gospel and inducted as the first pastor of the Rockhampton congregation on the 13th June 1967. Pastor Burley served the Rockhampton congregation until the end of 1978, when he accepted a call to become the minister of the Winnaleah congregation.

5 BRISBANE - In August 1962, Mr. G. Lincoln wrote to the Presbytery of the EPC in
Tasmania, notifying them that there was a small group of believers in Brisbane Queensland,
who were worshipping with the Reformed Churches of Australia in the suburb of Toowong.
These believers were of the conviction that they would be more at home spiritually with the
EPC, and would do all they could to establish an EPC congregation in Brisbane. Those in
10 Brisbane who at this date were interested, were Garnet and Mavis Lincoln, Mrs. B. Burley
and Deidre Donald. Soon, several individuals and families from Tasmania and elsewhere
joined those already committed to the EPC in Brisbane. Among others, there were George
and Verna Barton, Malcolm and Ann Walker, Bill and Hazel Hutcheon, and Peter and Denise
Torlach and families.

15 After times of growth and decline and encouragement and discouragement, the fellowship
was constituted a congregation of the EPC in 1972. The elders were Arthur Hurse, Murray
Logan and Peter Torlach together with John West who was a student minister of the church.
The Rev. P Burley was the interim Moderator. Merv Hurse was Deacon. The congregation's
first minister was the Rev. Chris Coleborn who, after serving the congregation as a student
20 pastor for several years, was called by the congregation, and was ordained and inducted on
the 27th May 1978.

He served the congregation until 1995, when he accepted the call to engage in Church
extension work, and the establishment of a new congregation in Cohuna, Victoria.

25 In February 1963, there were three ministers with congregations at Launceston, Penguin
and Winnaleah. There were student ministers at Hobart, Taranna, and Rockhampton, with
St. Marys and Brisbane as preaching stations.

Testing and Trials of the New Church

Since the constitution of the EPC, and its growth out of a remarkable revival of truth, it has
had various griefs and trials.

30 A controversy arose between the EPC and the PCEA. Various ministers, including the PCEA
lecturers at their theological college, promoted a certain view of how we offer or present
Christ and the gospel to unbelievers. The EPC were of a strongly held conviction, that by the
PCEA allowing the doctrine of "the well-meant offer" such as advanced by Murray and
Stonehouse's work, "*The Free Offer of the Gospel*", as well as "common grace," they were
35 liable to modify the distinctives of the Reformed faith. They believed that it would eventually
lead to a turning away from the consistency and strength of the Reformed faith.

40 It was not that the EPC did not believe that the gospel should be preached to all men. It did
believe that, and did do that. The EPC believed in the "free offer of the gospel" to all. It did
not believe, however, that in encouraging men and women to come to faith in Christ that we
should preach and say such things to all men as "God loved and died for them". They did not
believe that we could assure all, head for head, that Christ longed for their salvation as is
taught and practised by those who hold to the "well meant offer" of the gospel. To hold such
things, the EPC believed, was to compromise the distinctives of the reformed faith. It did not
allow for the great truth of God's sovereignty in election and reprobation. It made God
45 changeable, in that He loved all men in this life, yet in eternity withdrew His love and made
them objects of His just hatred in hell. It made God to have unfulfilled desires within Himself
that could never be satisfied. It struck, in EPC eyes, at the very nature and perfection of the

unchangeable and all sufficient God and His perfect and complete work of salvation in Christ Jesus.

5 This controversy led to various on-going difficulties and disruption. In 1964 most of the Penguin congregation left the EPC and was received by the PCEA. At the same time a serious division in the Winnaleah congregation occurred. Later the Burnie congregation of the EPC replaced the Penguin congregation as the EPC's witness and work on the northwest coast of Tasmania.

10 The Winnaleah congregation suffered much spiritual distress and heartache during this time of controversy. A considerable number of members, out of the convictions they held at the time, withdrew from the EPC. A number however, continued to maintain services, catechism classes, Bible studies and local school religious instruction. With only one elder remaining, the Presbytery arranged help by appointing Pastor Rodman and elders from the Launceston congregation to assist that congregation in its functioning. A student minister, Chris Coleborn helped in the care of the congregation, by supplying one-week each month from 1972 until
15 he went to Brisbane in 1975. The congregation consolidated, with additional office-bearers being called, and the payment on the building and land being completed.

It is one of the evidences of God's grace and work in the midst of the EPC they believe, that it pleased the Lord, after fifteen years, to heal the division that took place in 1964. The Rev. P. Burley accepted a call to be the pastor of the congregation, and was inducted as its
20 pastor on the 15th January, 1979. Pastor Burley is now the longest serving and senior minister in the EPC.

Establishment and Consolidation 1964-98

25 Following the disruption and division in 1964, the Church established its position on the Free Offer of the Gospel, and set about consolidating and building up the Church and its witness in the world.

The Rev. C. Rodman, who carried out a prolific correspondence with a great many individuals, Churches and organizations, both in Australia and overseas, achieved much of this. Mrs. Marge House, as secretary in the Launceston congregation, gave invaluable help until 1975. In that year she retired, and went to live on the North West Coast, where she
30 became a member of the Burnie EPC congregation. This faithful servant was called to her Saviour's presence on 2nd April, 1998. Mr. Rodman travelled in several states and overseas making many contacts in the Reformed world.

Submissions

35 As part of the EPC's witness to the State and society around us, it made submissions to various branches of Government on such issues as Sabbath Day Observance, Gambling, Morals in Education and Victimless Crimes. Mr. Rodman also wrote a booklet, "*Why Is Lawlessness Increasing?*" which was widely distributed to hundreds of members of States and Federal Parliaments, Magistrates, School Principals and others in authority all over
40 Australia, and also overseas. In these ways the Church sought to be a witness and salt in society.

Outreach in Australia and Overseas Christian Work

Over the years assistance has been given by the Church to missionary enterprises such as the Chinese Translation Society (formerly The Reformation Translation Fellowship), The Trinitarian Bible Society, The Presbyterian Church of Uganda and children's homes there
45 through Help A Child Foundation, the Middle Eastern Reformed Fellowship and others.

Also over the years, apart from the above, help has been given by our congregations to missionary work in Africa, Irian Jaya, Vanuatu, and Europe. Deacons' Courts of the EPC have, either directly in Christ's name, or through other Christian organizations, given material relief to those suffering as the result of disasters or other special material needs, such as Vietnamese and other refugees in Australia. Donations of Christian literature have been made to various public libraries and overseas Churches and Christian organizations.

The Church has sponsored over the years, visits by our pastors to various cities and towns in Australia as well as in overseas countries, to promote and encourage the spread and promotion of the doctrines of grace. Pastor Rodman visited North America and Britain in 1974. Pastors Burley and Coleborn visited various conservative Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the U.S.A. in 1990, where both spoke at an international conference of Reformed Churches. They visited the U.S.A. again in 1993 for a similar visit.

The EPC over the years has sought and maintained contact with a considerable number of other conservative Reformed and Presbyterian Churches all over the world, as well as in Australia. They believe in the "catholicity" of the true faith of Christ Jesus, and recognize true Churches of Christ throughout Australia and overseas, and seek to foster fellowship with them. For example, the Church maintains correspondence with various reformed churches and works within Australia and overseas. It has also hosted on several occasions a Reformed Conference in Victoria. Ministers and other officebearers and Christians from various professing reformed denominations have attended and spoken at this conference.

There have been at various times, "beach missions" for children, and witnessing by tract distribution in house and hospital visitation. There has been protest and witness against anti-Christian activities, such as when tracts about the true message of Christ were distributed outside of the Theatre where the so-called rock opera, "*Jesus Christ Superstar*" was being staged.

Family and young people's camps and studies have been regularly held, not only to edify our own members, but also to invite and encourage non-believers to come under the sound of the gospel.

Tertiary students of the EPC have been involved in varsity fellowships, and EPC pastors have ministered to such groups.

From 1959 until 1975, the Winnaleah congregation, and supported by the Church from 1961, maintained a radio broadcast on 7SD (Scottsdale, Tasmania). A gospel message was sent out each Lord's Day morning, as a means of witness and outreach over much of northern Tasmania, and even into parts of Victoria. Until 1961 the programme was called "*The Gospel in Message and Song*", and until 1975 it was called "*The Word of Truth*." Increasing costs made it very difficult to continue the programme.

Christian Literature

Rockhampton congregation, with a gift of \$800.00 set up a bookshop (possibly the first Reformed Bookshop in Australia) in the 1960's. This bookshop distributed and sold many thousands of dollars of Reformed literature all over Australia and so helped in the spread of the knowledge of the Reformed faith. It catered for a very extensive clientele, far beyond the boundaries of the EPC denomination. This bookshop also helped establish bookshops in other EPC congregations to assist their outreach.

Church Magazine and Other Publications

5 A Church magazine was published by the denomination on a quarterly basis from 1972 to 1976. After several attempts to begin publication once again, a final effort of a committee of the Presbytery, and the new editor, Rev. Chris Connors, resulted in a magazine, *The Evangelical Presbyterian*, being published twice a year, and having a small but worldwide circulation.

10 The Church has also published various other booklets on a variety of subjects. Some have been reprints of earlier publications, such as G. Whitfield's, "*The Method of Grace*"; some have been theological and/or historical, dealing with our distinctives, such as particular grace and biblically regulated worship.

In 1998 a Website was established in which the EPC seek to witness to the fact that they exist and to promote and encourage the spread of the reformed faith - the faith they believe that is most Biblically consistent.

Precentors and the Singing of the Psalms

15 Precentors of various congregations have met on various occasions to discuss the psalmody of the Church. Such matters as uniformity of the selection of Psalm tunes, how to encourage the learning of the Psalms for singing, and new tunes have been discussed.

20 Members of the various congregations have regularly met to practise the singing of the psalms, both new tunes and part-singing. Often the congregations meet to fellowship in simply singing the psalms as a means of grace together. The Launceston congregation produced a cassette tape of a selection of the Psalms, sung by a number from that congregation. The tape was very successful, being appreciated not only within the denomination, but elsewhere in Australia and overseas. The EPC that came from basically a non-Psalms singing background, has grown greatly in its understanding and ability to
25 appreciate and sing the songs of Zion.

Ordination of New Ministers

30 Six new ministers were ordained and inducted into congregations during the period 1964 to 1997. They were the Rev. R. Cameron-Smith on the 28th November 1964 into the Hobart congregation; the Rev. J. Lyons on the 8th May 1965 into the Taranna congregation; the Rev. P. Burley on the 13th June 1967 in Rockhampton; the Rev. A.I. Morgan on the 2nd of August 1975 to serve the Church as a professor in the theological training of students for the ministry, (Mr. Morgan was living in Launceston); the Rev. C. Coleborn on the 27th May 1978 into the Brisbane congregation and the Rev. R.A. Fisk on the 11th August 1978 into the Burnie congregation.

35 In December 1991 the Rev. Brian Dole and his congregation was received into the EPC.

This congregation was called the Covenant Presbyterian Church and was based in Penrith, (a western Sydney suburb). It had originally been a congregation of the PCEA.

40 In 1995, two new ministers were ordained, after being trained by the Presbytery and, under Presbytery's supervision, at the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the U.S.A. The Rev. Chris Connors was ordained and inducted into the Launceston congregation on the 24th March 1995, and the Rev. David Higgs was ordained and inducted into the Brisbane congregation on the 22nd April 1995.

Further Preaching Stations

During this period four new preaching stations were established. They were at Chinchilla, Cairns and Townsville in Queensland and Burnie in Tasmania. Sadly, the preaching station at St. Marys in Tasmania lapsed.

- 5 CHINCHILLA - In December 1971, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur and Jenelle Hurse withdrew from the Presbyterian Church of Australia over its serious departure from the Reformed faith. They became members of the Brisbane congregation in 1972.

10 Mr. Hurse was called as an elder to assist the work of the Brisbane congregation, even though he lived three hundred and fifty kilometers from Brisbane. He had been an experienced elder in the Presbyterian Church of Australia before he and his family had left that denomination.

15 Their home was established as a preaching station, and for many years they have faithfully served the cause of Christ and the Reformed faith through maintaining a regular preaching station in the Chinchilla district and also a Christian Book Shop in their home. They have distributed much literature in their district. They have further witnessed to the Lord and His sovereign grace by running bookstalls at local agricultural shows for many years.

The Chinchilla preaching station is under the care of the Brisbane Session.

20 TOWNSVILLE - In 1973 a preaching station was established in this northern city when David and Margaret Lowcock and Bevin and Jan Jones and their families separated from the pre-union Presbyterian Church because of its falling away from the historic Reformed faith. Previously, Mr. Lowcock was an elder in this Church. The preaching station was under the care of the Rockhampton Session. The witness of the EPC in Townsville ceased when these two families moved to other congregations of the Church.

25 CAIRNS - In the late 1970's a preaching station was established in the tropical north Queensland city of Cairns. Several families originally made up this congregation. They included Allan and Jessie Carswell and Gavin and Raewyn Roberts and their children. Several other families eventually joined. Though some families moved to other congregations of the EPC, the work continues there. Gavin and Raewyn Roberts continue to maintain Lord's Day services there and thus be a witness to the reformed faith in that
30 northern city.

35 BURNIE - In April 1970 Burnie became a preaching station under the care of the Launceston Session. Student pastor Chris Coleborn assisted this work with a weekly visit once a month from 1972 to 1975. Rita and Rex Ling, John and Jess Driscoll, Nick and Ina Kleyn, Albert and Mary Bosveld and Aadrian and Dorothy Bosveld and their families eventually formed a congregation of the Church with Mr. John Driscoll as an elder. Mr. Tony Fisk was ordained and inducted into the congregation on the 11th August, 1978.

40 The Rev. R.A. Fisk came from South Africa, and having heard of our Church and its witness, visited Australia and our congregations before applying to be a minister of the Church. After ministering in Burnie, he ministered in Taranna and is now pastor of the Rockhampton EPC congregation.

After being without a minister for some years, and being unable to call its own officers, with ill health and members moving away, the congregation was reduced to a Preaching Station of the Church, under the pastoral oversight of the Launceston congregation from January 1st 1996.

PENRITH - Contact was made with the Covenant Presbyterian Church (CPC) of Penrith in Sydney in 1981. The Rev. Brian Dole was invited to address EPC folk at various congregational camps in Rockhampton, Brisbane and Tasmania. Some EPC families and officebearers also worshipped with the CPC in Penrith when travelling through Sydney.

5 Various members of the CPC also visited EPC congregations and worshipped with them. At such times there was unofficial and informal discussion about our denominations and their positions on various matters, as well as edifying fellowship.

10 Commencing in 1987, official discussion was entered into with regard to our relationship as Churches. In 1988 the matter of the union of the two denominations was also officially raised then for the first time. There were further meetings and prayerful discussion and the examination of all issues on which there may have been differences. A remarkable oneness of faith and practice was evident.

15 There was an EPC Presbyterial visitation to the CPC in Penrith to meet with the congregation, and a detailed report on the meetings between the EPC and CPC was sent to all Sessions of the EPC for their information. The Sessions were asked to indicate if they had any serious reservations regarding union with the CPC. Various matters and questions were raised by some Sessions. These were raised with the CPC. The Rev. B. Dole and his Session gave written explanations and answers to the Sessions on these matters to their satisfaction.

20 Finally, with the resolution of all matters of difference to the mutual satisfaction of both Churches, the union of the EPC and the CPC was effected in December 1991.

25 The CPC had been constituted out of a conservative, confessional congregation of the PCEA. Pastor Dole had trained as a student of the PCEA in the Free Church of Scotland's Theological Hall in Edinburgh, Scotland in the 1970's. Upon his return he became the minister of the PCEA congregation in western Sydney. After a time difficulties arose in Pastor Dole's congregation when an elder would not uphold the worship and doctrines of the Presbyterian faith. The majority of the Session, after discussion with the elder, opposed his actions, and he was stood down. When the higher courts of the PCEA would not support the Session's stand Pastor Dole resigned from the ministry of the PCEA and, in sympathy, also many of the congregation. A new congregation, called the Covenant Presbyterian Church, seeking to be faithful to the doctrine, practice and discipline of the historic Scottish Reformed Church, was then formed.

35 COHUNA - The work of the EPC in Cohuna and the state of Victoria commenced with Noel and Christine Taylor, together with their young family, coming to the knowledge of the doctrines of grace. Noel came from a Methodist/Wesleyan Methodist background. Christine (nee Jongsma) came from a Dutch Reformed background. Whilst attending the Church where Christine and her family worshiped, Noel came in contact with the doctrines of grace. He was persuaded of the Biblical consistency of the Reformed faith after Bible study and prayer and the reading of such books as Arthur Pink's *Sovereignty of God*, L. Boettner's *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* and J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

45 Having read of the EPC through the magazine, *The Standard Bearer*, they made contact with the EPC in Brisbane. There was correspondence between them and the pastor of the Brisbane congregation on the reformed faith and membership of a Reformed Church. After several visits by the family to Brisbane, Noel and Christine and their then five young children were welcomed into membership. They received taped sermons from Brisbane, and each Lord's Day conducted two worship services in their home. Officers of the Church made regular pastoral visits to their home, and almost each year they travelled to either Brisbane or another congregation of the EPC for fellowship.

In 1994/5 the EPC, after much prayerful investigation of several centres for Church extension work, decided on Cohuna as such a work. The work was officially launched at the beginning of 1996 when the Rev. Chris Coleborn was commissioned as the home missionary for that work. He had moved to live in the Cohuna district in December 1995. The work would not have proceeded had not another family, John and Marjan De Jong, at considerable cost and effort, willingly made their home in Cohuna for the express purpose of helping to build this congregation. In 1997 Joe and Gail Henderson and family, also sacrificing various material and social benefits, moved to Cohuna to be a part of that Church planting work. Since then several local people and a family have become regular worshippers of this mission congregation.

Collegiate Of Theology

Shortly after the establishment of the EPC, a Theological College called "*The John Knox Theological College*", was set up in association with the PCEA. Three EPC students, Messrs. P. Burley, R. Cameron-Smith, & J. Lyons, were attending for six months in the year. As a result of the theological controversy that arose between the PCEA and the EPC over the matter of particular grace and the manner in which the offer of the gospel is made, the college ceased to exist.

The Presbytery of the EPC established a Collegiate for the training of students for the ministry in 1972. The first student, Mr. Chris Coleborn, having commenced theological studies at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, completed his studies under this body. Some tutors from other Reformed Churches, such as the Rev. W. R. McEwen of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, assisted in this training. Practical work was also set, with students assisting in the work of various congregations. Mr. John West, Mr. Peter Morgan and Mr. John Coles were for a time students also.

Because of short-term difficulties in the EPC fully training its own ministers, it has sought the assistance of the Protestant Reformed Churches in training several of its prospective pastors. Mr. Mark Shand and his family are undergoing theological training over three years in the U.S.A. at present.

Church Property and Buildings

The congregations of the EPC further consolidated by purchasing places of worship. For example, in June, 1962, Hobart congregation appealed for financial assistance in the purchase of a Church property. In August 1962, the Winnaleah congregation was making arrangements to purchase a Church building for removal from Hobart to Winnaleah. Launceston, Taranna, Rockhampton and Burnie also were able to purchase property and places of worship to assist in the work of the ministry. Some of these purchases were possible through interest-free or very low interest loans from members of the different congregations and many hours of voluntary labour.

Further Times of Testing

To the sorrow of the EPC, in 1986 Hobart and Taranna congregations and part of Launceston congregation seceded from the Church, together with some ministers. They were not happy to continue under the Practice of the EPC among other matters. A larger and separate history of this sad schism has been published.

Some families withdrew from the EPC in 1990. They did so over non-founded accusations of doctrinal error made against various officers of the Church by a supplying minister, the Rev G. Bancroft from America.

In spite of the trials the EPC has undergone and in spite of its limitations and shortcomings, God by His sovereign and gracious Spirit has been pleased to use, we believe, the great truths of His Word to raise it up as a denomination of His universal true Church. We further believe that by those truths extolling Him and His grace, as expressed in the Westminster
5 Confessional Standards and the Government of the Church, He will preserve it as an ongoing true Church of Christ in the earth.

Looking to the Future

The EPC continues on with congregations in Burnie, Launceston, and Winnaleah in Tasmania, and in Brisbane and Rockhampton, and with preaching stations in Cairns and
10 Chinchilla in Queensland, Penrith (Sydney) congregation in N.S.W. and the Cohuna Mission Congregation in Victoria. The EPC has a full time student for the ministry who, Lord willing, will be able to serve our Church by the year 2000.

Christian Education and Schools

The EPC is committed to the Christian education of its Covenant youth, and to that end
15 seeks the establishment of Christian schools and schooling.

Launceston

Christian education was, over many years, strongly supported in Launceston, but it was not until 1981, that a small school, Presbyterian Covenant School, was established. The
20 underneath hall of the Launceston Church building was used for its classes. The first teacher was Mrs. Leoni Duff, ably assisted by Mrs. Marg Miller, a former infant teacher. Mrs. Duff was succeeded by Mr. John Steel. Though the school faced difficulties in staffing and finances, it was so important to the congregation, that through these and other difficulties, they faithfully sacrificed and maintained the school for 12 years. The congregation's children generally now attend other local Christian Schools, or are home schooled.

Winnaleah

After several years preparation, including re-building the former Presbyterian Church building at Herrick, (land and building being donated by the late Elder Tom Peters), the
30 Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School was opened in February, 1991. It commenced with 4 students. The teacher Mr. Alex Carins, (also an elder in the congregation) has continued from that time as the teacher.

The Lord has greatly blessed this work for the education of the Covenant children of the Winnaleah congregation. It has given them a view of life from a Christian reformed
35 perspective. Over the years, though there have been hardships at times, the Lord has wonderfully provided for all the needs. Volunteers carry out extra-curricular activities and help in monitoring lessons. As at 1999, there were 18 full-time students, in grades 1-11, with 2 part-time. A further three are expected to start later this year. Recently the school building has been extended with the completion of a new classroom.

The history of the present school building shows in a heart-warming way, the Covenant
40 faithfulness of the Lord over the generations. The original weatherboard section was originally built as a Presbyterian Church's place of worship. It was built at Springfield (near Scottsdale) in 1880. It was used for the worship of God until the 1940's. Remarkably, during these earlier years the pioneering Beattie grandparents and family of Mr. Peter Carins, an elder of the Winnaleah EPC, worshipped in this building. In addition, Mrs. Peter Carins' great-grandfather, the Rev. Thomas Cunningham, who faithfully subscribed to the reformed
45 faith as set out in the Westminster Confessional Standards, was the minister who led the

worship and preached the Word in this little building. (Mr. & Mrs. Peter Carins' son Alex, is the teacher of the school, and their grandchildren attend the school as students).

5 Further, the little township of Herrick, near Winnaleah, where the old Springfield Church building now is, is where another elder of the Winnaleah EPC ancestors worshipped. In the 1930's Mr. Tom Peters and his mother Mrs. Mary Peters and grandmother Mrs. Elizabeth Jones, were faithful members of the Presbyterian Church, and worshipped at services held in a hall in this little town. In 1952 the old Springfield Church building was moved to Herrick to the present site on Tom Peters' land, becoming the Presbyterian Church's place of worship. With the decline of the Presbyterian Church through liberal theology, the Church
10 lost support from the believers in the area, and the Church building fell into disuse.

Mr. Peters eventually purchased it for use as a barn. In 1990 he donated the land and building to be used for a Christian school - the present Christian School of the Winnaleah Congregation. Mr. Tom Peter's son David is an elder in the Winnaleah EPC, and his children also attend the school. David and his brother Andrew also serve on the School Board. So it
15 is that over five and six generations this little building has seen believers and their Covenant children worship the Lord.

Though we acknowledge that there is no virtue in a building, yet in this instance this humble little building, in God's Providence, speaks to those families and that congregation, of a faith of all ages, and an unchangeable Saviour.

20 ***Other Congregations***

Other congregations of the EPC have formed Associations within their membership that are working towards the establishment of Christian Schools and the Christian education of their covenant children. Most families in the Church either send their children to local Christian
25 Schools, or home school their children. It is the prayer of the EPC that some of its members will consider serving the Lord in the Church by training to be teachers. Often the establishment of a school cannot proceed because of lack of a teacher.

Additional Care of the Covenant Children

The Church from its earliest days has strongly promoted and taught the importance of family worship in the home. This is generally a well-established practice in all families of the
30 Church. Usually a psalm is sung, perhaps a catechism learnt or revised, prayer offered and the Scriptures read and where necessary commented upon and applied to the daily lives and needs of the family.

Catechism classes for all ages are held weekly in all the congregations.

35 Most congregations hold youth meetings, under the supervision of the Session, on a regular basis for Bible teaching and fellowship. Congregational and inter-congregational camps for the young people of the denomination, under the supervision of the Presbytery, are held every year or so. Family camps are held in several of the congregations each year as well.

There are special publications for the youth of the Church. After a humble start of a monthly newsletter, the Church now produces ***The Children's Courier*** on a quarterly basis. Another
40 magazine, *The Burning Bush* is also produced quarterly for the older youth.

The Communion of the Saints

With such small beginnings numerically, the EPC members have enjoyed close fellowship with those in other congregations, even though separated by great distances. Whenever

possible individuals and families have visited one another in the congregations. Originally it was only between the congregations in Queensland and Tasmania, but now includes our Penrith congregation in N.S.W. and Cohuna in Victoria.

5 Most of the congregations publish a regular congregational newsletter, and there is a regular exchange of these between all the congregations, in addition to a flow of fellowship maintained by correspondence and telephone calls. In this way the members, even of the smallest and most isolated congregation are able to keep in touch with the rest of this body of Christ, and thus are able to share and care for one another as members of that body.

10 In the wider sphere, the EPC, through its Presbytery Contact Committee, corresponds with various other reformed denominations and individuals, both within Australia and overseas. The Church sends magazines and other Church publications to many people throughout the world. With the advent of the Internet, there is not only an exchange of correspondence by e-mail, but the Church also has a Website.

Second and Third Generations

15 The EPC has been in existence as a denomination for nearly forty years now, and a strongly committed young and new generation is arising, to follow in the footsteps of the original members. It is the prayer of the older members that the succeeding generations by God's grace will not forget their heritage. They pray that the Lord would enable them to truly enter into, and wholeheartedly embrace, the heritage that they had to obtain and learn in such a
20 difficult and hard, but amazing way.

Faithful By God's Grace

The EPC members believe the Lord, in His providence, raised them up, as He does His true Church everywhere. While they are small and struggling in various ways, they rest in the Lord and His grace for the present and future. They are quietly but sincerely seeking to be a
25 ground and pillar of truth and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They seek to lift up the Lord Jesus as God's supreme revelation to us, and as the only hope for mankind. They are aware their distinctives may mean, in the spiritual and social climate of the day, that they remain a small denomination, but are content, if that is the Lord's will, to accept that smallness. Yet they seek to be large on vision and depth, and to be salt and light
30 and leaven to all around them. They seek to encourage and to be encouraged by all who love the Lord in sincerity and truth, particularly those who profess the historic Reformed faith.

Appendix 2 -- A Joint Statement of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia Concerning Confession of Sin, Forgiveness, and Extending of the Right Hand of Fellowship

35 "*This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" Philipians 3:13-14

40 We of the EPCA and SPCA, as we consider our two histories as churches, acknowledge before the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, that while there were honourable principles and legitimate concerns involved, and while there was a desire on both sides for the good of Christ Jesus' cause, there was also sin committed by all those involved in the events which led to a separation and alienation of brethren a generation ago.

Together we acknowledge that those sad events of yesteryear have harmed the name and cause of Christ Jesus and have hurt and caused to stumble various of His children.

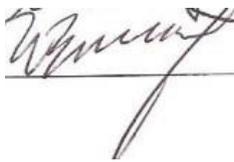
We, the officers and courts of both the EPCA and SPCA confess those wrongs to the Lord and to one another, and in the grace of Christ Jesus, seek the Lord's and one another's forgiveness and healing.

5 We offer with gratitude, thanks to the Lord that, in spite of our human failings, which resulted in separation of brethren, and the attacks of Satan over the intervening years, we are continually thankful that our Lord has shown His forbearance and goodness and has seen fit to bless both our churches in many ways. Truly we are debtors to mercy and grace.

10 We are thankful that with the passing of time and further prayerful reflection, we believe it is now right and proper to not only acknowledge sin and seek together forgiveness of the Lord, but to acknowledge one another as true churches who share a great deal in common in both our histories, our Confession of Faith, church practice and organic life as God's covenant people.

15 We accept that the events and issues involved in our separation have now passed into history, and while it is proper that we prayerfully reflect upon and seek to learn from those lessons the Lord may teach us from those events, we ought not to allow them to prevent a healthy relationship between two true churches. We will therefore, at every occasion that presents, seek by God's grace to support and encourage one another, recognising our respective gifts and graces and, with our eyes upon the Lord, seek to mutually advance the cause of the gospel of Christ Jesus, both at home and abroad.

20 We therefore, in the spirit of Christian and brotherly love, jointly publish this statement, and extend the right hand of fellowship to one another, seeking to offer mutual respect and care, and to work together as able, to honour and uphold Christ in our two churches and our future relationship.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Wes Bredenhof', written over a horizontal line.

25

Submitted by Wes Bredenhof
Convenor of CCES
November 16, 2020

Deputies Art. 48 C.O.

Report to Synod Albany 2021

MANDATE

5 Esteemed brothers,

Synod Bunbury 2018 made the following appointments to serve as Deputies according to Article 48 of the Church Order, i.e. "to assist the classes in all matters provided for in the Church Order":

For Classis South-West: Rev R Pot (alternate: Rev H Alkema)

10 For Classis Central: Rev R.D. Anderson (alternate: Rev R. Eikelboom)

For Classis North: Rev A. Souman (alternate: Rev S. 't Hart)

ASSISTANCE GIVEN

As deputies we were requested to give assistance to the classes in one instance:

1. Examination of Candidate Kelvin Dekker

15 *Classis South West of 30 October 2020*

- a) Rev. R.D. Anderson and Rev. A. Souman were invited to attend the peremptory examination of Candidate Kelvin Dekker, according to Article 6.A.1.b C.O., at Classis South West of 30 October 2020, convened by the FRC Albany.
- 20 b) Due to the complications for traveling resulting from COVID19 restrictions imposed by the governments and to prevent unnecessary delay caused by uncertainty surrounding travel opportunities and quarantine requirements, the convening church had decided, with the agreement of the neighbouring church, to have the examination of br. K. Dekker conducted using ZOOM, with br. Dekker being in Ontario, Canada, and all the delegates together in Albany. The
25 deputies had no objections to this.
- c) The requisite documentation was presented and found to be in order and the examination could proceed.
- d) After due deliberation, Classis, with the cooperation and concurring advice of the
30 Synodical Deputies Art 48, sustained the examination, with the result that the candidate could be admitted to the ministry and be ordained in the Free Reformed Church of West Albany. Soon after the examination br. Dekker and his family were able to travel from Ontario to Albany. We are thankful to God for this outcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS

35 Deputies respectfully recommend that synod:

1. receive this report, and release deputies from their task.

2. appoint new deputies to assist the classes according to Art. 48 C.O., with one deputy and one alternate from each classical region, i.e. according to the manner decided by Synod Armadale 2012, Decision 3 (Art. 110, p.80-81).

With brotherly greetings,

- 5 Deputies Art. 48 C.O.



5

17th November 2020

10 **Deputies for Church Order Article 66: Days of Prayer**

In accordance with Church Order article 66, FRC Launceston was appointed by Synod 2018 to call a Day of Prayer “in times of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches.”

15

We decided to call such a Day of Prayer on March 29, 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. In our letter to the churches, we stated the following:

20

When we consider how the coronavirus (COVID 19) has disrupted the way of life in Australia and throughout the world, the situation meets the prescribed criteria for a day of prayer. As Christians we do not need to panic, but we look to the LORD for help in this crisis and pray collectively as churches that the LORD may give healing to those who are sick, stop the spread of this virus, grant wisdom to our leaders, give calmness to people, bring back normalcy to our way of life, and cause our nation to look to him for help.

25

We received no feedback from the churches regarding this decision. We assume that all FRCA congregations followed suit.

30 Respectfully submitted,

35

Colin Mulder
Secretary

Indexing Synod Decisions – Deputies’ Report to FRCA Synod 2021

Synod 2018, Article 103, records the following decision:

To appoint deputies with the mandate to:

- 5 1. Collate the decisions of Synod Bunbury 2018 as they relate to articles of the Church Order, and:
 - a. publish these decisions on the official web page of the FRCA; and
 - b. place one bound paper copy in the archives after the decisions of Synod Bunbury 2018 have been indexed.
- 10 2. Make all the published Acts of the Synods since the start of the FRCA available on the FRCA website, without password protection, in searchable pdf format.
3. Place an updated copy of the Church Order on the FRCA website and publish it in a format which can be inserted into the Canadian version of the Book of Praise.

Grounds

- 15 1. The churches are well served by the ongoing collation of Synod decisions as they relate to the various articles of the Church Order.
2. The Acts of Synod are of widespread interest both within our churches as well as our sister churches.
3. Making the Acts of Synod online has become common practice amongst our sister churches, and allows for greater access.
- 20 4. All information presented in the published Acts of Synod are generated in open session.

Deputies have carried out their mandate by:

1. Collating the decisions relating to articles of the Church Order.
2. Publishing these on the official web page of the FRCA.
- 25 3. Placing a bound updated paper copy in the archives.
4. Making the published Acts of all FRCA synods available on the FRCA website, without password protection, in searchable pdf format.
5. Placing an updated copy of the Church Order on the FRCA website.
- 30 6. Submitting a request to Pro Ecclesia Printers to publish the Church Order in a format which can be inserted into the Canadian *Book of Praise*. Deputies were informed that Pro Ecclesia Bookshop still has copies of the Church Order available for purchase. The draft Australian *Book of Praise* has the most recent Australian Church Order incorporated into it.

Deputies:

- 35 Jelte Numan and Warnar Spyker
4 December 2020



Free Reformed Church of
MT NASURA

14-16 Parker Ave
Mt Nasura WA 6112

Postal address:
PO BOX 207
Armadale WA 6992

Br Jack den Boer
5 Deputy General Secretary
Synod Albany 2021

BY E-MAIL: jack.denboer@frsa.asn.au

14 December 2020

10

Dear Br den Boer

Deputies – Synod Archives – Reports to Synod Albany 2021

1. We are writing to you in our capacity as Deputies – Synod Archives, appointed by Synod Bunbury 2018.
- 15 2. Please treat this letter and all of its enclosures as our Deputies report.
3. We **enclose** a report dated 4 December 2020 from Br Len Vermeulen, whom we have appointed as Synod Archivist. This is the usual report entitled “Report on Archives and Library of Synod”.
- 20 4. In addition, we also **enclose** a separate report which we have prepared entitled “Synod Archives Review 2020” which contains our recommendations for revisions to some of the relevant rules and (most importantly) recommending that Synod 2021 instructs all past and present deputies to forward all “missing” materials to the Synod Archivist for archiving by no later than 31 December 2021.
- 25 5. The background to that additional separate report is some interaction in 2018 involving Rev Pot (as second clerk of Synod Bunbury 2018) about precisely what material should be provided to us for Synod Archives. As a result, we undertook a review of the Synod rules relating to this in order to identify any opportunities for refinement or improvement.
6. Please let us know if you need anything further.

30 With brotherly greetings

Rev RM Bredenhof
Chairman

Br HC Faas
Corresponding Clerk

4 December 2020

The Consistory,

Free Reformed Church at Mt Nasura.

5

Esteemed brothers,

REPORT ON ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD

10 In accordance with 'Rules for the Archivist', Synod Acts 1998, Appendix 11, point 3. "*The Archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; stating who has received or seen items, and the items involved*", I hereby submit my report as follows:

Contents of Synod Archives

Additions to archives since the December 2017 report.

Synod 2018 material: Items 18.01 - 18.107

15 Additions to library

Deputies Report 2018

Acts of Synod 2018

Index of Synods decisions

Church Order of Dordrecht with standing decisions made by synod.

20 Loans from Archives

Rev W Bredenhof:

98.20 Launceston proposal re women voting

Rev C Vermeulen

96.13 Bedforddale – appeal against art 83, Acts '94

25 96.26 Byford – appeal against re ICRC

Rev S 't Hart

90.35 B'dale - appeal & requests re: decisions contact with foreign and/or Presbyterian churches

30 90.62 Supplementary report Deputies for Relations with churches abroad - minority report

A detailed chronological listing of all documents added to the synod archive since July 2018 is attached.

A detailed chronological listing of all synod archived documents since 1954 is stored in the archive cabinet.

Archive Inspection

The archives will be inspected Thursday the 3rd of December 2020.

5 With Christian greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Len Vermeulen', written in a cursive style.

Len Vermeulen
(Synod Archivist for the Church of Mt Nasura)

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX TO SYNOD ARCHIVES

(Items added after last reported date December 2017)

Synod 2018 - Final Agenda / Credentials

Synod 2018 Agenda

- 5 **Credentials Overseas Delegates and Visitors**
- Credentials Delegates**
- Correspondence Inwards
- Classis Central - Proposal Church Order (FRC of Byford)**
- Classis Central - Proposal Church Order (Classis Central)**
- 10 **Classis Central - Proposal Belgic Confession Art 30**
- Classis Central - Proposal Lords Day 38**
- Classis Central - Proposal Psalm 2**
- Classis Central - Proposal Psalm 8**
- Classis Central - Proposal Psalm 130**
- 15 **Classis Central - Proposal Psalm 150**
- Classis Central - Proposal for Theological College**
- Classis North - Additional Information re EPC and SPC**
- Classis North - Proposal about ecumenical relations with EPC and SPC**
- Classis North - Proposal about the Acts of Synod**
- 20 **Classis North - Proposal about the addition of 19 hymns**
- Classis North - Proposal for relations with OPC**
- General Synod of Gereformeerde Kerken GKV- Letter from Synod Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland**
- General Synod of Gereformeerde Kerken GKN - Letter requesting sister church relations**
- FRC Kelmscott - Letter re Report of Deputies for relations with Sister Churches - Indonesia**
- 25 **FRC of Kelmscott - Letter regarding Deputies Reports**
- FRC of Launceston - Acts of Synod Online**
- FRC of Launceston - Appeal of Jelte Numan**
- FRC of Launceston -Book of Praise**
- FRC of Launceston - FRCA Website**
- 30 **FRC of Launceston - Theological Training**
- FRC of Launceston - ICRC**
- FRC of Launceston - OPC**

- FRC of Launceston - RCN
- FRC of Launceston - RCNZ
- FRC of Launceston - United Reformed Churches NA
- FRC of Baldivis - Indonesia Sister Churches
- 5 FRC of Baldivis - Theological College
- FRC of Baldivis - Book of Praise
- FRC of Baldivis – ICRC
- FRC of Darling Downs - Book of Praise (Final Copy)
- FRC of Darling Downs - Book of Praise
- 10 FRC of Darling Downs - URCNA
- FRC of Darling Downs - DGK and GKN
- FRC of Byford - Letter regarding Theological Training
- FRC of Byford - Letter regarding DGK, GKN & RCN
- FRC of Mount Nasura - Letter regarding Theological Training
- 15 FRC of Mount Nasura - Letter regarding RCNZ
- FRC of Mount Nasura - Letter regarding Book of Praise
- FRC of West Albany - Letter regarding Theological Training
- FRC of West Albany - Letter regarding DGK & GKN
- FRC of West Albany - Letter regarding GGRI
- 20 FRC of Albany - Agenda 9-I-i- Letter regarding DGK and GKN
- FRC of Albany - Letter regarding Theological Training
- Appeals - J Numan - Appeal regarding Synod Baldivis's Decision on RCNZ
- Appeals - J & A Eikelboom - Appeal regarding Synod Baldivis's Decision on RCNZ
- Appeals - G J Bosveld - Appeal regarding Synod Baldivis's Decision on RCNZ
- 25 Deputy Reports - Additional Article (Pg 162 Deputy Reports) Reformed Churches of Indonesia
- Deputy Reports - Supplementary Report about Work of Deputies Article 48
- Treasurers Audit Report
- Financial Statement and Budget for Synod Treasury
- Letter from MH Oostohuis (RCN) accompanying decisions of synod in relation to Male/Female and the office.
- 30
- SYNOD 2018 OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE
- Letters of Appointment
- Deputies - General Secretary Br. Jack den Boer Alternate: Br. Willem Amoraal

- Deputies - Website Committee Sr. Bronya Mulder Br. Martin Pot (Southern River) [convenor] Br. Gerrit van Burgel Br. Len Vermeulen Alternate: Br. Thomas Brown
- 5 Deputies for Interchurch Relations – outside Australia Rev. S 't Hart [convenor] Rev. H Alkema Rev. R. D Anderson Br. Brian Bosveld Br. Gerrit Brouwer Br. Eric de Haan Rev. A Hagg Br. Eric Heerema Br. Colin Mulder Rev. R Pot Rev. A Souman Br. Bert Veenendaal Br. Pete Witten 1st Alternate: Br. Henk Terpstra 2nd Alternate: Br. Henry Hamelink
- Deputies - Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise Rev. R Eikelboom Br. R Eikelboom Sr. G Plug Rev. C Vermeulen [convenor] Alternate: Br. D J. Swarts
- 10 Deputies - Training for the Ministry Rev. R Bredenhof Rev. W Bredenhof Br. B Huizinga Rev. D Poppe [convenor] Br. A Terpstra Alternate: Br. W Vanderven
- Deputies - Contact with the EPC/SPC: FRC Launceston, FRC Legana, Rev. W Bredenhof [convenor]
- Deputies Article 48 CO Classis North: Rev. A Souman, Alternate: Rev. S 't Hart, Rev. R. D Anderson, Alternate: Rev. R Eikelboom, Rev. R Pot, Alternate: Rev. H Alkema
- Deputies - Article 66 Days of Prayer FRC Launceston
- 15 Deputies - Indexing Synod Decisions Br. J Numan, Br. Warnar Spyker
- Deputies - Synod Archive FRC Mount Nasura
- Deputies Marriage Act Br. H Faas Br. W Spyker
- Deputies - Synod Venue and Infrastructure Br. E 't Hart, Br. Alan vander Wal
- Deputies - Synod Treasurer Br. R Dekker, Alternate: Br A Bonker
- 20 Audit Deputies for the Training of the Ministry FRC Southern River
- Deputies - Inspection of Archives FRC Byford
- Deputies - Audit Synod Treasurer FRC Darling Downs
- Convening Church Synod 2021 FRC Albany
- Letters of Discharge/Thanks
- 25 Deputies - General Secretary Br. M Pot
- Deputies for Sister Churches Br. W Pleiter Br W Spyker Br. M ten Haaf
- Deputies for Sister Church Relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia Rev. A Van Delden Rev W vanderJagt Br Tim de Vos
- Deputies for contact with RCNZ Br. M Bax
- 30 Deputies for contact with FERC of Singapore Br. S Fokkema Br. K VanderVeen, Rev. T Van Spronsen
- Deputies Book of Praise Br. G Groenewold, Br. G Spyker
- Deputies - Training for the Ministry Br. J vanderPlas, Rev. PKA de Boer
- Deputies Article 48 CO Rev. C Vermeulen, Rev. John Kroeze, Alternate Rev. Al Hagg
- Deputies - Article 66 Days of Prayer FRC Baldivis
- 35 Deputies - Indexing Synod Decisions Br. R Eikelboom
- Deputies Marriage Act Br. T Houweling

Deputies - Synod Treasurer Br. A Braam

Deputies - Audit Synod Treasurer FRC West Albany C

Convening Church Synod 2015 FRC Bunbury

Outgoing Letters

- 5 **Letters to Synod 2020 of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN) conveying the decision of Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art 45) to Synod 2020 of the RCN and copy of the letter sent by deputies on 7 March 2016 in response to Synod Ede 2014 of the RCN**
- Response to Appeals Br. Jelte Numan (Mt Nasura)**
- Response to Appeals Br. G.J. Bosveld (Darling Downs)**
- 10 **Response to Appeals Br./sr. J. & A. Eikelboom (Mt Nasura) johnoake@tpg.com.au**
- Response to submissions from FRC Albany regarding DGK and GKN, Theological Training**
- Response to submissions from FRC Baldivis regarding Indonesian Sister Churches, Theological College, Australian Version of the Canadian Book of Praise, ICRC**
- 15 **Response to submissions from FRC Byford regarding Theological Training, DGK, GKN & RCN ,submissions from Classis Central to amend Article 36 of the Church Order**
- Response to submissions from FRC Darling Downs regarding Book of Praise, United Reformed Churches of North America, DGK and GKN**
- Response to submissions from FRC Kelmscott regarding Report of Deputies for relations with Sister Churches – Indonesia, Deputies Reports**
- 20 **Response to submissions from FRC Launceston regarding Acts of Synod Online, Jelte Numan , Book of Praise,FRCA Website, ICRC , OPC , RCN , RCNZ , Theological Training, United Reformed Churches , submissions from Classis North Proposal regarding ecumenical relations with EPC and SPC ,format of the Acts of Synod**
- Response to submissions from FRC Legana regarding Classis North Proposal regarding ecumenical relations with EPC and SPC**
- 25 **Response to submissions from FRC Mt Nasura regarding Theological Training, RCNZ, Book of Praise**
- Response to submissions from FRC Rockingham regarding Classis Central Proposal for revision of the English translation of art. 30 of the Belgic Confession, Classis Central Proposal for revision of the English translation of Lord's Day 38 of the Catechism, Classis Central Proposal for change to Book of Praise Psalm 2, 8, 130, 150, Classis Central Proposal for a Theological College of the FRCA**
- 30 **Response to submissions from FRC Southern River regarding Classis North Proposal regarding the addition of 19 Hymns to the Book of Praise, Classis North Proposal regarding relations with Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**
- Response to submissions from FRC West Albany regarding Theological Training, DGK and GKN, GGRI**
- 35 **Copy of cover letter to all the churches**
- SYNOD 2018 CLOSED SESSION**
- Correspondence Inward**
- Article 48 Deputies – Report for Churches**
- Appeal Rev. David Winkel re Classis South West**

Correspondence Outward

Response to Appeals Rev. David Winkel

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS USED IN INDEX

CanRC Canadian Reformed Churches

5 FERCS First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore

FRCSA Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

FRCA Free Reformed Churches of Australia

GGRC Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvin

GGRI Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia

10 RCN Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

RCNr Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored)

EPC Evangelical Presbyterian Church

SPC Southern Presbyterian Church

OPC Orthodox Presbyterian Church

15 GKN Reformed Churches Netherlands

RCNZ Reformed Churches of New Zealand

DGK Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

ICRC International Conference of Reformed Churches

Synod Archives Review 2020

Current Procedure

The procedure that is currently in place is as follows:

- 5 • As per 3.2 of Synod rules the second clerk forwards a copy of all outgoing correspondence to be added to Synod archive
- Acts of Synod are placed in the Synod library
- Copy of all matters sent to Synod are forwarded to Archivist and are collated in manila folders and added to archive
- 10 • All material added to Synod archive is noted on the Chronological index to Synod decisions
- Matters dealt with in closed session are stored in a separate drawer in the filing cabinet
- 6 months before Synod, the archives are inspected by the appointed church and a audit report is sent to Synod. All files are then sealed.
- 15 • Other items such as bound copies of Synod acts are added to the library and noted on the index
- Any items from the archives that is required by a church member is okayed by the secretary of consistory. The items are then scanned and sent to the member by email. The files accessed are left unsealed to be sealed again at the next audit.

20 Current Rules

The following rules apply to the archives. These are taken from the Church Order and current Synod rules:

Church Order

25 CO ARTICLE 49 – *Archives: The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.*

[https://Synod.frca.org.au/ecclesiasticaldocs/ChurchOrder_of_the_FRCA_\(2018\).pdf](https://Synod.frca.org.au/ecclesiasticaldocs/ChurchOrder_of_the_FRCA_(2018).pdf)

Rules for Synod Archivist

Instructions for the archivist

- 30 1. *The church council of the church keeping the Archives is in charge of the Archives of Synod.*
2. *The church council will appoint an archivist.*
3. *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.*
4. *The church council reports to Synod.*

5. *The archivist shall carefully store everything, using files which will be placed in the filing cabinet, taking care that everything is clearly catalogued.*
6. *Access to items in the general archives requires permission of the church keeping the archives. Access to items in the secret archives requires permission of two churches, or of Synod.*
7. *Original documents shall not be lent out, but the archivist shall supply photo copies instead. The name of the inquirer the title of the document and the date shall be recorded. (Albany 1975, Art.53; re-stated Kelmscott 1983, Artt.114 and 112; amended Bedfordale 1992, Art.52).*

10 https://Synod.frca.org.au/ecclesiasticaldocs/CO_Appendix6_RulesForSynodArchivist.pdf

Rules for Synod

3. OFFICERS OF SYNOD

15 3.2 *The vice-chairman shall assist the other officers of Synod where needed and shall prepare the Press Release of Synod. The first clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod. He shall have responsibility for Synod's administration facilities and ensure the timely distribution of materials to the delegates. An assistant recommended by the convening church (see Rules 1.6) shall be appointed to record the Acts of Synod during the open sessions. At the conclusion of Synod he shall be responsible for printing and distributing these Acts. The second clerk shall prepare all outward correspondence. He shall place a copy of all such correspondence in Synod's archives*

20

10. DEPUTIES

25 *Synod shall appoint its deputies in closed session and provide them with clearly defined written instructions to which deputies shall strictly adhere. Deputies shall submit a written report on their activities. Unless otherwise instructed, they shall submit their report in time for inclusion in the Provisional Draft Agenda. If a supplementary report is found necessary, it shall present only relevant information that has come to notice after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda. Deputies must make available at Synod for referral and consultation, copies of all correspondence, minutes, and records of other work done. They should also submit the same to the archivist.*

30

https://Synod.frca.org.au/ecclesiasticaldocs/CO_Appendix4_Rules-for-Synod-FRCA.pdf :

Recommendations

35 Perusal of past decisions of Synod has shown that various items that were agreed upon for the Synod archive have not been included in the rules. It is also clear that further material which should have been archived has never been received from deputies or Synod offices.

We recommend to Synod 2021 the following:

- a) **Revise Synod Rules in relation to Church Order Article 49 – adding rule 6, 9 and 10 as highlighted below**

Article 49 - Archives

40 *Instructions for the archivist*

1. *The church council of the church keeping the Archives is in charge of the Archives of Synod.*
2. *The church council will appoint an archivist.*
3. *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.*
4. *The church council reports to Synod.*
5. *The archivist shall carefully store everything, using files which will be placed in a fire-proof filing cabinet, taking care that everything is clearly catalogued.*

6. Background and reference material shall be stored in a fire-resistant storage cupboard.

7. *Access to items in the general archives requires permission of the church keeping the archives. Access to items in the secret archives requires permission of two churches, or of Synod.*
8. *Original documents shall not be lent out, but the archivist shall supply photo copies instead. The name of the inquirer the title of the document and the date shall be recorded. (Albany 1975, Art.53; re-stated Kelmscott 1983, Artt.114 and 112; amended Bedfordale 1992, Art.52).*

9. All matters pertaining to the secret sessions shall be segregated from the general archives and be placed in a separate section of the archives. (Kelmscott 1983, Art.106 sub 2)

10. All archives shall be kept in envelopes which are sealed by the auditors. Where archives are accessed according to the rules, the opened envelopes shall be resealed at the next audit. (Armadale 1990, Art.126)

b) Amend article 3.2 of Synod Rules to include more detail on what is required by Synod Archivist as highlighted below:

3.2 The vice-chairman shall assist the other officers of Synod where needed and shall prepare the Press Release of Synod. The first clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod. He shall have responsibility for Synod's administration facilities and ensure the timely distribution of materials to the delegates. An assistant recommended by the convening church (see Rules 1.6) shall be appointed to record the Acts of Synod during the open sessions. At the conclusion of Synod he shall be responsible for printing and distributing these Acts. The second clerk shall prepare all outward correspondence. He shall place a copy of all such correspondence in Synod's archives forward all material submitted to Synod, all correspondence, reports, speeches as well as all outgoing correspondence, in hardcopy and softcopy format, appropriately indexed for the Synod Archivist

c) Amend article 10 of Synod Rules to include more details on what the deputies should forward to archivist as highlighted below:

10. DEPUTIES

Synod shall appoint its deputies in closed session and provide them with clearly defined written instructions to which deputies shall strictly adhere. Deputies shall submit a written report on their activities. Unless otherwise instructed, they shall

submit their report in time for inclusion in the Provisional Draft Agenda. If a supplementary report is found necessary, it shall present only relevant information that has come to notice after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda. Deputies must make available at Synod for referral and consultation, copies of all correspondence, minutes, and records of other work done. They should also submit ~~the same to the archivist~~ **to the Archives all materials that are deemed relevant to be stored for future reference.**

5

d) Instruct all past and present deputies to forward missing archive material to the archivist.

10

With respect to material presently missing from the archives, we recommend that since it is not the task of the archivist nor the archive church to chase any missing material, Synod instructs all past and present deputies to ensure that all missing relevant material in their possession, be forwarded to the archivist by December 2021 for archiving. These materials should be submitted as hardcopy in chronological order and appropriately indexed. Where available, electronic copies should also be kept in pdf format on an external storage device and appropriately marked and indexed.

15

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
NOMINATING AUTHORITIES - MARRIAGE ACT 1961

14 December 2020

Synod 2021
C/- Free Reformed Church of Albany
PO Box 825
ALBANY WA 6331

Esteemed brothers

Deputies' Report

Mandate

Synod Bunbury 2018 made the following decision with respect to Nominating Authorities (Article 24 – Deputies Marriage Act – Nominating Authorities):

To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

Background

On 22 September 1999, the Governor-General first declared the Free Reformed Churches of Australia as a “recognised denomination”, such declaration having been made under section 26 of the *Marriage Act 1961 (Cth)*. This declaration has since been repeated, most recently under the *Marriage (Recognised Denominations) Proclamation 2018*.

The declaration of the FRCA as a “recognised denomination” entitles all ministers of religion within the bond of the FRCA, by virtue of that fact, to become registered as marriage celebrants (see section 29 of the *Marriage Act 1961*).

The Act requires that the “recognised denomination” nominate ministers of religion within that denomination for registration. To that end, deputies are required to be appointed by each Synod with the authority to nominate new ministers within the bond for registration.

The *Marriage Act* is administered by the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department – Marriage Law and Celebrants Section. From time to time this Department issues information updates which deputies then circulate to the various ministers within the bond.

Helpful information as to the administration of the Act and related links can be found at <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/marriage>

It should finally be noted that, whilst the declaration of a “recognised denomination” is made by the relevant Commonwealth department (Attorney-General’s Department), the registration of the individual minister is performed by the relevant State Department

(Department of Justice in Western Australia, Department of Justice in Tasmania and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in Queensland).

Execution of Mandate

Deputies have been able to execute their mandate over the past 3 years.

In summary, the following has been carried out:

- Incoming ministers have been nominated by deputies to the relevant State Registrar, and these ministers have become registered as marriage celebrants (Rev Eikelboom, Rev Pol)
- The relevant State Registrars have been advised of departing ministers from the bond of the FRCA (Winkel, Van Spronsen)
- The records of the ministers within the FRCA kept at the relevant State Registrars have been kept up to date. Rev J Kroeze's nomination changed from Tasmania to Queensland.
- Information disseminated by the Commonwealth Attorney-General, and by the Western Australian Department of Justice has been forwarded to all ministers within the FRCA.

There have been no further significant amendments to the *Marriage Act 1961* since the 2017 amendments which redefined marriage as the "union of 2 people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life".

Deputies remain of the view that it is administratively convenient that, for the purposes of marriage celebrancy within the FRCA, the FRCA remain a "recognised denomination". We recommend that 2 deputies be appointed for the task of nominating ministers and circulating information.

Recommendation

Deputies recommend that Synod Albany 2021 resolve:

To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

Respectfully submitted



Humphry Faas



Warnar Spyker

Synod Financial Audit



FREE REFORMED CHURCH OF SOUTHERN RIVER

504 Southern River Road, Southern River, WA 6110
PO Box 1662, Kelmscott Delivery Centre, WA 6957
email: sr.secretary@frcs.org.au www.frcsr.com

31 October 2020

Dear Deputies,

The consistory from FRC of Southern River requested the undersigned to complete a financial audit on the following funds.

On the 29th of October we audited the financial statements and books for the Needy Student Fund. We found the books to be an accurate reflection of the accounts and the books in good order.

On the 29th of October we audited the financial statements and books for the Theological Library Fund. We found the books to be an accurate reflection of the accounts and the books in good order.

On the 29th of October we audited the financial statements and books for the Hamilton Theological Fund (CRTS). We found the books to be an accurate reflection of the accounts and the books in good order.

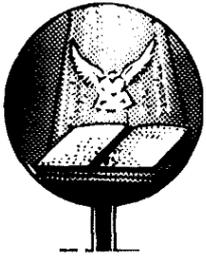
With brotherly greetings:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Dykstra', written over a horizontal dashed line.

Rolph Dykstra

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Schoof', written over a horizontal dashed line.

Matthew Schoof



The Free Reformed Church of Byford (WA)

POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX 24, BYFORD, WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6122

7 December 2020

Synod Albany 2021
c/o secretary FRC Albany
PO Box 825,
Albany WA 6331

Inspection of Synod Archives

Dear Brothers,

Consistory hereby reports that on Thursday 3 December 2020, two representatives for the FRC Byford inspected the 2018 Synod Archives. These have been found to be complete and in good order.

Consistory notes the following observation received:

May it be noted that there are many public documents that are now many decades old, some even handwritten. If it is the intention to digitise these items in the archives at some point in the future, consideration could be given to entrusting the originals into the care of the FRC Historical Society for preservation.

Brotherly greetings,
on behalf of the consistory

H Pitlo
Chairman

M Plug
correspondence secretary