
MORNING SESSION**Tuesday, 22 June 2021**

Article 87 - Alternate

Br I 't Hart takes the place of Rev A Hagg as alternate. The chairman asks Br I 't Hart to rise to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Br I 't Hart rises.

Article 88 - Reopening

Br P Witten reads Matthew 12:22-30 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 74:12 and 13. The chairman reopens the meeting with all delegates present.

Article 89 - Appeals concerning Hymns of Australian Book of Praise**I. Material**

Item 8.b.4 –Appeal from FRC Mount Nasura – FRC Mount Nasura requests synod to judge that Synod Bunbury 2018 erred in approving 8 of the 19 new hymns in the Book of Praise, namely Hymns 9, 10, 30, 33, 57, 75, 79 and 81.

Item 8.h.1 – Overture from Launceston – FRC Launceston interacts with the content of FRC Mount Nasura's appeal and argues in favour of the hymns.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections regarding Hymns 33, 57 and 79 are inadmissible;
2. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objection about the unbiblical character of the phrase 'world without end' in Hymn 9 is not valid;
3. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objection about the unnecessary duplication of Hymn 10 and Psalm 72 is not valid;
4. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections about the ambiguous language of Hymn 30 are not valid;
5. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections about the lyrics and tune of Hymn 75 are unsubstantiated;
6. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections about the lyrics of Hymn 81 are not proven; and
7. remind the churches to forward any concerns about the psalms and hymns of the *Book of Praise* to the Standing Committee for their evaluation.

Grounds

1. While it may have been helpful to the churches for synod to consider each hymn individually, this was not the approach of Synod 2018. However, FRC Mount Nasura's overture to Synod 2018 was listed in the Material of Article 60 (Acts of Synod, 2018). Synod Bunbury 2018 Article 16 decided that 'under the heading Material, the Acts shall also summarise the material considered'. By recording a summary of the overtures from the churches, Synod asserts that any concerns raised, or feedback provided, by the

churches was considered in its overall decision-making process. Thus, comparing the FRC Mount Nasura overture to Synod 2018, with the appeal presented to Synod 2021, it is clear that many of their concerns about the new hymns were previously considered. In relation to Hymns 33, 57 and 79, FRC Mount Nasura does not substantiate their claims with any significant new grounds.

2. The language 'world without end' in Hymn 9 comes from Scripture in the King James Version of Isaiah 45:17 and Ephesians 3:21. The phrase does not suggest that the world in its present form will endure forever, but it is a poetic expansion of the hymn's previous phrase 'and ever shall be.' The same phrase is sometimes translated as 'forever and ever.'
3. Basing a hymn on a small portion of a Psalm, as Hymn 10 does with Psalm 72, can do justice to the content of the inspired text; for example, see Hymn 46, which is based on Psalm 72:8-19, and Hymn 54, which is based on Psalm 90:1-6.
4. FRC Mount Nasura considers some of the language of Hymn 30 ambiguous, such as 'Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands,' and 'it was a strange and dreadful strife.' However, these lines—when considered in the context of the entire hymn—celebrate the meaning of Christ's victory over the power of death (1 Cor 15:54-57). When He died, Christ commended His spirit to the Father, but His body was laid in the grave; thus, it is legitimate for verse 1 to speak of Christ 'laying in death's strong bands.' When verse 2 says it was a 'strange and dreadful strife,' this is a reference to the 'mystery' of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:51).
5. FRC Mount Nasura asserts but does not prove that the language of Hymn 75 fails to be soundly biblical. Likewise, FRC Mount Nasura expresses a subjective opinion about this tune's lack of dignity and majesty.
6. Although FRC Mount Nasura questions various phrases in Hymn 81, it is incumbent on them to prove that these phrases are unbiblical. Furthermore, it is legitimate for verse 2 to say, 'assist me to proclaim through all the earth abroad the honours of your name,' because this is the task attributed to the church and to all believers in Acts 8:4, Colossians 4:5-6, and 1 Peter 2:9. The statement in verse 3 regarding the name of Jesus bringing 'health' can be understood in a figurative way, in line with Psalm 103:3 and Exodus 15:26. When verse 6 alludes to the miraculous healing of those who are physically handicapped, this is poetic language referring to how Christ breaks the power of sin (see Hy 81:4). The reference to 'the church in heaven' in verse 7 can be understood with reference to Hebrews 12:22-23 which speaks of 'the heavenly Jerusalem ... the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,' and Revelation 6:9-10, where John sees under the altar the souls of those who had been slain.
7. The Standing Committee has been mandated to receive feedback from the churches regarding the contents of the Australian *Book of Praise*.

ADOPTED

Article 90 - International Conference of Reformed Churches

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the proposal from Classis North and the appeal from FRC Mount Nasura regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches. The matter is referred back to an Advisory Committee.

Article 91 - Training for the Ministry

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Advisory Committee's amended proposal regarding the Training for the Ministry. The matter is referred back to the Advisory Committee.

Article 92 - Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Deputies' proposals regarding the Australian Book of Praise.

AFTERNOON SESSION**Tuesday, 22 June 2021**

Article 93 - Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Deputies' proposals regarding the Australian Book of Praise. The matter is referred to an Advisory Committee.

Article 94 - First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore**I. Material**

Item 11.c.5 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

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;
 - 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;
 - 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. Discharge 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 to continue to strengthen our relationship, subject to finances;
 - 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 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; and
 - e. invite delegates of the FERC of Singapore to our next Synod.

Grounds

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.

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.

ADOPTED**Article 95 - Canadian Reformed Churches****I. Material**

Item 11.c.6 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, to discharge them, 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), subject to finances.

Grounds

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
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.
4. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the personal contact at the synodical level, which reinforces our contact with them.

ADOPTED**Article 96 - United Reformed Churches of North America****I. Materials**

Item 11.c.7 – Deputies' Report

Item 10.a.3 – Overture from Classis Central re Sister Churches URCNA

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work.

2. Continue to liaise with the URCNA with a view to determining whether to establish a sister church relationship.
3. Take note that Synod has mandated Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop guidelines which may have implications for any future decisions about a relationship with the URCNA.
4. Refer grounds submitted by Classis Central to Deputies for Interchurch Relations for consideration when developing these guidelines.
5. Thank the deputies for their work, to discharge them, 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. if invited, send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport (Redeemer) Ontario in 2022, subject to finances;
 - d. submit a report six months prior to the next synod; and
 - e. extend an invitation to the URCNA to send an observer to the next Synod.

Grounds

1. Due to circumstances beyond the control of deputies, the mandate issued by Synod Bunbury 2018 could not 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 for Interchurch Relations have been mandated to develop and propose guidelines concerning interchurch relations, and these guidelines could provide further direction for how to progress our relationship with the URCNA.
4. Deputies were unable to attend the URCNA Synod Wellandport (Redeemer) 2020.
5. The grounds cited by Synod Bunbury (Acts 2018, Article 63, Grounds 1, 2 and 3) remain valid.

ADOPTED**Article 97 - The Reformed Churches Indonesia (GGRI)****I. Material**

Item 11.c.10 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, to discharge them, 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 GGRI Regional & National synods subject to available finance;
 - c. continue to offer assistance in improving the Reformed character of the GGRI 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; and
- g. as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI-Kalimantan Barat and GGRI-Papua, focusing on and 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.
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.
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.
4. Our visits to Indonesia and their visits to us have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
5. The Indonesian churches request ongoing financial support for their theological seminary 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.
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-Kalimantan Barat and GGRI-Papua but this is not sufficient to come with a good report and create a clearer picture.

ADOPTED**Article 98 - GGRI – Theological Training****I. Material**

Item 11.c.10.iv – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. To mandate deputies to:
 - a. 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;
 - b. 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;
 - c. 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. 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 Van Delden; and
- e. 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

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.
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.
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 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.

ADOPTED**Article 99 - Committee work**

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION**Tuesday, 22 June 2021**

Article 100 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 84:1. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 101 - Training for the Ministry**I. Admissibility**

All the materials for each Part below are deemed admissible.

Part 1: Australian Reformed Theological Training**II. Material**

Item 11.e – Deputies’ Report (pp. 127-38).

Item 8.i.2 – Overture from FRC Melville: Support shown for continuing a feasibility study to work towards a CRTS Australian affiliate but cautioning against implementing a levy on the churches at this time. A request that the deputies complete their mandate with regards to Synod Bunbury Art 80 “to continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by Synod Bunbury 2018 as reasons for not establishing our own theological seminary at this time, as outlined in ground 1”.

Item 8.f.3 – Overture from FRC Kelmscott: Recommend that the feasibility study into an Australian affiliate of the CRTS be discontinued for a period of three years to allow the board and senate of the CRTS to focus on other matters. Disagreement with the introduction of a levy with regards to motivation and stewardship.

Item 8.j.4 – Overture FRC Bunbury: Pointing out concerns that the deputies’ mandate from Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art 80) has not been completed thus making evaluation of the Deputies’ proposal (Deputies’ Reports, p. 155) difficult. Requesting that any new mandate for Deputies Training for the Ministry include those mandates from Synod Bunbury 2018 that were not completed:

- “b) solicit the churches’ input regarding an Australian theological seminary that could serve the wider Reformed community;
- 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 ground 1;
- e) consult with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRCs have contact, regarding the potential benefits of an Australian theological seminary as described above;“

III. Decision

Synod decides to discharge deputies and thank them for the work done and to appoint new deputies with a mandate to:

1. Continue discussion with CRTS to explore the feasibility of a CRTS Australian affiliate and, assuming a positive outcome, to 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 responsible timeline
 - Governance

- Financing and infrastructure
 - Faculty
 - ATS Accreditation requirements
2. Engage a consultant to advise on the development of a CRTS Australian affiliate within the TEQSA regulatory framework.
 3. Introduce an additional levy to the regular assessments towards the implementation of a CRTS Australian affiliate in the medium term.
 - \$3.00 pcm for 2022, \$6.00 pcm for 2023, \$9.00 pcm for 2024
 4. Present a report to the churches, if possible, 12 months before the next synod to enable adequate time for a written evaluation from the churches to be collated by the deputies and presented to synod.
 5. Communicate with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRCs have contact, regarding the potential benefits of a CRTS Australian affiliate.
 6. Solicit the churches' input regarding an Australian theological seminary that could serve the wider Reformed community (eg, office bearer training).
 7. 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 Acts of Synod Bunbury Art 80 Ground 1.
 8. Continue to oversee the Library and the Library Fund.

Grounds

1. The COVID-19 pandemic, the obstacles in international travel, and increasing secularisation and anti-Christian sentiment in Australia show that the need to develop possibilities for local training of ministers has become urgent.
2. A CRTS Australian affiliate appears at the moment to be the only viable option for the FRCA to offer accredited Reformed seminary training in Australia. Further discussion with the CRTS Board of Governors, as well as further investigation into the TEQSA regulatory framework is required.
3. The desire to have Australian based theological training in the future also requires a commitment from the churches to start accumulating funds for the implementation of this project.
4. The churches need to be engaged in this process.
5. Although Kelmscott's assessment of the situation at CRTS is noted, in developing a model deputies will be dealing with the Board of Governors, not the faculty.
6. 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.
7. With the benefit of extensive input from the churches, Synod Bunbury 2018 identified the matters mandated in 5, 6, and 7 as important factors to consider before making any decision about an Australian seminary. These aspects of the mandate given by Synod Bunbury 2018 have not yet been completed or reported on.

Part 2: Contact with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

IV. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' report (pp.139-43).

V. Decision

Synod decide to mandate new deputies to:

1. Continue to assess and collect monies from the churches at a rate of \$90 per communicant member.
2. Continue to oversee the Hamilton Theological fund.
3. Continue to arrange a guest lecturer from CRTS every three years, subject to finances.
4. Continue to arrange a deputy to attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governors meeting in the inter-synodical period, subject to finances.
5. Continue to arrange the financial matters associated with hosting a conference every inter-synodical period.
6. Approve the proposed refund regarding loss of income of \$1,180 to the deputies.
7. Approve the proposed budget for the 2021-2024 period, namely \$14,000 consisting of:
 - a. \$7,500 for a guest lecturer from the CRTS;
 - b. \$4,000 for a deputy to represent FRCA and attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next inter-synodical period; and
 - c. \$2,500 for the promotion of the ministry of the gospel amongst young men through means of a conference held during the next inter-synodical period.
8. Maintain contact with CRTS and to express appreciation for the work undertaken by the CRTS across all fronts.
9. Continue to be as closely as involved as is practically possible in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS.
10. Convey congratulatory messages and words of support and encouragement on special occasions such as the annual convocation.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. Continue participation in the CRTS ad hoc Distance Education Committee.
14. Promote the CRTS within the FRCA.

Grounds

1. The proposed annual contribution of \$90 per communicant member matches the Acts of Synod 2018 Art. 90 contribution currently paid by the Canadian churches, which are the criteria that deputies were mandated to use to determine this figure (Acts of Synod Baldivis, Art 93, VIII.12.1.a).
2. It is beneficial for the Australian churches to keep close contact with the seminary where our students study.

Part 3: Contact with other Churches**VI. Material**

Item 11.e – Deputies' report (p.143).

VII. Decision

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

Grounds

It is good for the FRCA to keep up-to-date with activity regarding theological training among all our sister churches and in particular with CRTS.

Part 4: Needy Student Fund**VIII. Material**

Item 11.e – Deputies’ reports (pp.143-45), Appendix (pp. 172-84).

Item 11.e – Further Deputies’ Material (pp. 1-2)

Item 8.i.2 – Overture FRC Melville requesting that financial aid not be characterised as ‘loan’ and that repayment not be required; and to be more circumspect with respect to the level of detail included in financial reports.

IX. Decision

1. To task new deputies to continue to levy the churches and oversee the Needy Student Fund for the support of theological students.
2. To approve the following regulations and forms relating to the financial aid for theological students.

Refer to Appendix 2 for the adopted regulations and forms.

Grounds

The proposed Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students:

1. are more up to date and in line with current expectations;
2. read as a coherent document;
3. provide clarity surrounding students who become ministers in a sister church of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
4. provide clarity for the expectations of families of theological students;
5. provide assurances for students that repayments of financial aid are not required when students, in good faith, pursue theological training; and
6. provide a transparent process for preparing and applying for financial aid.

Part 5: Promoting ministerial study and supporting prospective and current students**X. Material**

Item 11.e – Deputies’ report (pp. 146-47).

XI. Decision

Synod charge new deputies to:

1. Promote the study for ministry among young men in whatever way possible.
2. Meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to provide encouragement and support and to have good oversight over their education.

Grounds

1. We have agreed in CO Art 18, “The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology.”
2. It is essential to actively foster and promote the work of ministry among young men so that the churches and mission fields can continue to be well supplied with ministers of the gospel.

Part 6: FRCA Vicariate Model**XII. Material**

Item 11.e – Deputies’ report (pp. 147-49).

Item 8.i.2 – Overture from FRC Melville – Expressing reservations on developing a vicariate model based on that of the RCNZ.

XIII. Decision

Synod decide to mandate new deputies to develop guidelines for a voluntary vicariate program (including financial arrangements) to be presented to Synod 2024 for implementation beginning in 2025.

Ground

1. A vicariate system would be both advantageous and feasible for the FRCA and its seminary students. Advantages would include:
 - a. Giving students further opportunities for training and growth;
 - b. Providing the churches further opportunities to develop and evaluate men regarding their suitability for the ministry; and
 - c. Bringing FRCA seminary graduates back to the FRCA, where there is more likelihood that they would serve our churches.

Part 7: Number of deputies**XIV. Material**

Item 11.e – Deputies’ Report (p. 158).

XV. Decision

Synod appoint one additional deputy to the Deputies Training for the Ministry.

Grounds

An extra deputy is needed for assisting and supporting the treasury work associated with their mandate.

ADOPTED**Article 102 - Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC)****I. Material**

Item 11.f – Deputies’ Report

Item 8.c.4 – Overture FRC Darling Downs proposing that synod (a) withhold the declaration that both the EPC and the SPC are true churches; (b) withhold the declaration that Synod 1985 Article 67 has no bearing on the matter. Further, that synod reappoint deputies with a mandate to (i) complete their investigation of the EPC and the SPC as given by Synod 2018 as well as several other areas of concern, and to report back respecting the feasibility of further ecumenical contact; (ii) encourage reconciliation between the EPC and the SPC.

Item 8.j.2 – Overture FRC Bunbury proposing (a) that synod withhold the declaration that “both the EPC and the SPC give evidence of being true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ” until it is sufficiently substantiated, and areas such as doctrinal commitment of communicant members, and the EPC’s position on the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology are investigated; and (b) the need for consistency in interchurch relations which implies that the FRCA first need to make a clear decision about with whom, how, and when to establish sister church relations, especially in cases such as churches in close proximity.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Acknowledge the report submitted by deputies and thank them for their work.
2. Appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. continue discussions with the EPC regarding the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. Discussions should specifically focus on:
 - i. the doctrinal points of the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology;
 - ii. the doctrinal commitment of communicant members of the EPC;
 - iii. the level of unity desired and how that unity ought to be expressed in our ecumenical contact;
 - b. continue discussions with the SPC regarding the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. Discussion should specifically focus on:
 - i. the doctrinal commitment of communicant members of the SPC;
 - ii. the level of unity desired and how that unity ought to be expressed in our ecumenical contact; and
 - c. submit a report six months prior to the next synod.
3. Take note that Synod has mandated Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop guidelines for interchurch relations, which will have implications for any future decisions about a relationship with the EPC and SPC, including the relevance of Synod 1985 Art 67.

Grounds

1. While synod gratefully takes note of the judgement expressed by the committee that "both the EPC and SPC give evidence of being true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ," several churches suggest that more discussion is required to substantiate this judgement.
2. Deputies report that in order for ecumenical relationship with the EPC to advance, discussion is needed with the EPC about the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology to determine whether and to what degree diversity on these points can be accommodated in an ecumenical relationship between the EPC and the FRCA.
3. Deputies report that further discussion is needed with both the EPC and SPC about the question of confessional membership, to determine what sorts of disagreements with the confessional standards would be tolerated for communicant members.
4. Deputies for Interchurch Relations have been mandated to develop and propose guidelines concerning interchurch relations, and these guidelines could provide further direction for how to develop these relationships.
5. Because of the close proximity of the churches in Tasmania, a desire for closer ecumenical contact should be expressed by all churches involved.

ADOPTED**Article 103 - Adjournment**

The chairman advises synod that Rev W Bredenhof will depart after tonight as he is required back in Tasmania by Friday. It is agreed that for the short remaining duration of synod, an alternate is not required.

Rev R Eikelboom reads Psalm 4 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 4:2 and 3 and synod is adjourned.

APPLICATION FORM FOR FINANCIAL AID

WHO SHOULD USE THIS FORM?

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:

Name _____

Church _____

UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS

Prior to making application for financial aid 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 the 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

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 12, 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 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.

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 _____

Student's Signature _____ **Date** _____

As witness, I am a (select):

- Representative of the consistory of the supporting church
 Office bearer

Witness Name _____

(either supporting church consistory representative or another office bearer)

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
3. Any other documentation you deem relevant to this application

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 12 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 _____

Date of Agreement _____ / _____ / _____

Witness (name) _____ (Signature) _____

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

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.

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;
3. have made satisfactory progress in their undergraduate courses (usually a Bachelor of Arts degree);
4. be accepted and enrolled in an approved theological seminary;
5. be committed to undertake full-time studies at the approved seminary;
6. demonstrate a genuine financial need. See Article 5 for further information.

FINANCIAL AID

Article 3 Support from Deputies for Training for Ministry

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;
3. living expenses;
4. clothing;
5. fares;
6. health insurance;
7. incidental expenses;

8. 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:

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).

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.

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 Aid.

As part of this application, the student must:

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.

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.

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 10 – 12).

Article 8 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.

Article 9 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.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT**Article 10 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.

This agreement is made between the Deputies for Training for Ministry and the student requesting financial aid.

Article 11 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 financial aid.¹

The Agreement ceases and the student will not receive any more funds when any of the following occurs:

1. the student terminates his 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 available for call by one of the churches mentioned in Article 2.2;
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;
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 financial aid or any outstanding amount thereof and the Agreement will cease.

¹ To act in good faith is honest intent to act without taking an unfair advantage.

Article 12 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;
3. the student agrees to adhere to his obligations as outlined in Article 13;
4. the deputies agree to adhere to their obligations as outlined in Article 15;
5. that upon the request of the student the deputies shall annually assess if financial aid can be made available to assist in financing the student;
6. financial aid will end at the time when the student has completed his 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 debt for the interest free financial aid provided by the deputies administering the NSF on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia;
9. the student is bound by the stipulations of Article 11;
10. repayment of the financial aid provided will be waived, and the Agreement dissolved once the student is ordained as minister of one of the churches mentioned in Article 2.2, at the rate of two years of financial aid for every year of ministry;
11. in case of financial hardship when immediate repayment in full would be too difficult, deputies may consider a request for repayment in instalments.

OBLIGATIONS

Article 13 Obligations of the Student

For the duration of the Agreement, the student is obliged to:

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 his financial position in either income or assets, as this may affect the amount of financial aid given in subsequent years;
3. keep the deputies informed about his study progress at the seminary;
4. inform the deputies as soon as possible if, for whatever reason, the student desires to end his studies.

Article 14 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:

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 Aid and forwarding relevant material to the deputies as part of this application;
4. honour any financial commitment under the Agreement, if applicable;
5. maintain good contact with the student, once studies have commenced.

Article 15 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:

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 Aid* 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 seminary;
4. report to the next synod financial aid being given.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Article 16 Exceptional and Special Circumstances

During the Agreement there may arise exceptional or special circumstances.

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;
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 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 deputies will consider this request only if the 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 financial aid may be waived in cases of sickness, death or other exceptional circumstances.

AUTHORITY

Article 17 Lack of Provision

In any case where these Regulations do not make provision, deputies have the authority to decide.

Article 18 Disputes

In cases of disputes, the home church's classis shall adjudicate.