

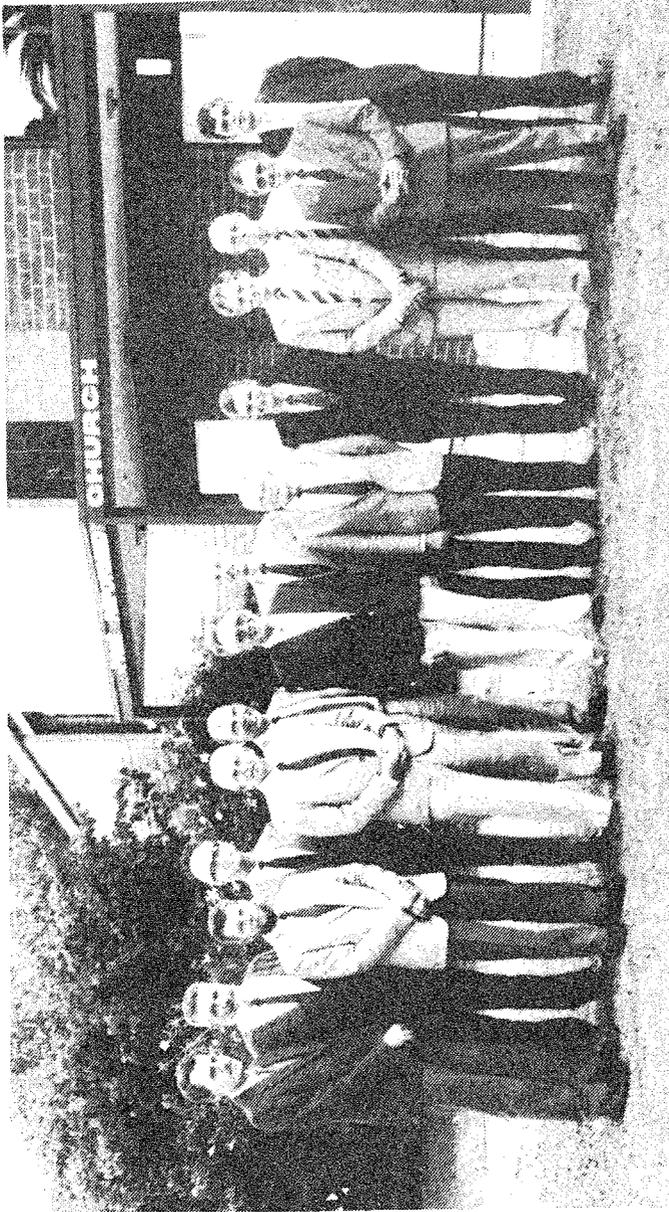
ACTS OF THE 1990 SYNOD

OF THE

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA**

Convened at Armadale, Western Australia

1st May, 1990

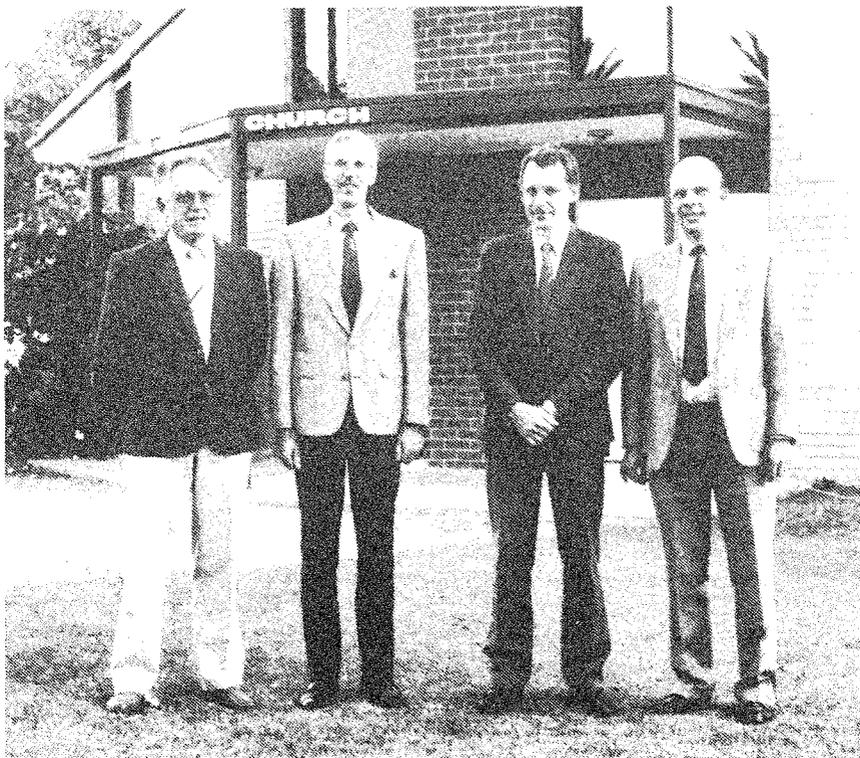


Delegates to Synod 1990:

(left to right) Rev C Bouwman (Byford), Elder SH Terpstra (Byford), Rev K Jonker (Launceston), Elder J VanderKos (Launceston), Elder L Woonings (Kelmscott), Rev C Bosch (Kelmscott), Elder A Stobe (Armadale), Rev W Huizinga (Armadale), Elder FJ Veldhuis (West Tamar), Rev C Kleyn (West Tamar), Elder H Oide (Albany), Elder J Eikelboom (Bedfordale), Rev A Veldman (Albany) and Elder J.L van Burgel (Bedfordale).

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Office Bearers for Synod 1990:

(left to right) A Slobe (2nd Clerk), Rev W Huizinga (Chairman), Rev C Bouwman (Vice Chairman) and Rev C Bosch (1stClerk).

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

listed in alphabetical order of the name

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

FIRST DAY - Tuesday, 1st May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 1

On behalf of the convening Church of Armadale Reverend W Huizinga calls the meeting to order. He requests the singing of Psalm 24:4,5 and leads in prayer, asking our Lord for wisdom and guidance. He reads from Colossians chapter 1 and addresses the meeting as follows:

WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS

On behalf of the convening church at Armadale it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you here for a Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We are thankful that all the delegates have successfully and safely arrived so that a Synod may finally be convened. Heartily welcome. It is good to have all the ministers together along with the delegated elders from the seven churches. It is the hope of Armadale that you will feel welcome and will enjoy the hospitality offered. From the records I noted that Armadale has hosted a Synod five times previously, so that it should not feel strange to the seasoned delegates to meet here.

Yes, seven churches come together in this broadest assembly. This thought leads me to recall some memorable moments since the last Synod. At the last Synod in Albany there were five churches and ten delegates; now there are seven churches and fourteen delegates. That represents quite a growth and improvement for Synods. Fourteen delegates can represent the churches better than ten. We welcome the churches of Bedfordale and West Tamar who are represented here at a Synod for the first time. May God cause this growth to continue, so that all the assemblies may be held and used for the benefit of the churches.

That two newly instituted churches have sent delegates had repercussions as far as new ministerial manpower goes. West Tamar called Reverend C Kleyn, a former Free Reformed Aussie, who accepted their call. Welcome Reverend C Kleyn. Bedfordale, after some disappointments, called the Reverend A VanDelden, who accepted their call. Congratulations, and we with you look forward to the arrival of the A VanDelden family, the Lord willing. Kelmscott rejoiced when the Reverend C Bosch accepted their call. After a busy time of building, they could welcome their new pastor and teacher. We heartily welcome you Reverend C Bosch to your first Synod here, indeed, to your first Synod. Yes, the small bond of churches means that ALL ministers have the privilege of taking part in the broadest assembly.

In between the last Synod and the one to be officially opened today there was the extraordinary Synod at which Candidate J Koelewijn was admitted to the ministry of the Word and sacraments. He has now been working in Papua-New Guinea for some time. His thoughts will be with us today. May that work flourish and grow under God's blessing. We should also remember that Reverend A Veldman declined the call from the sister-church at Winnipeg, Canada. We shivered, brrrrr, at the thought of you leaving. Honestly, we too, along with Albany, thanked God that He allowed you to stay in the bond of churches here.

Besides these memorabilia we can also pass on something of a more personal note. Not only have the ranks of the ministers swelled, but ministerial families too have grown. Recently the male- dominated ministerial family in Byford rejoiced at the birth of a healthy baby daughter and sister. Congratulations. Having now completed our tour of the churches, we note that with the exception of Bedfordale who soon

hope to have their minister, all churches have a minister of the Word. There is even a missionary as well as retired ministers, who too have helped vacant churches. For all this our thanks goes to the LORD GOD who has shown to us his steadfast love and faithfulness.

We read together Colossians 1. Since a church service was held last night in which the Word of God was opened and prayer made, this part of the opening address can be kept brief.

Allow me to focus on the verses 15-20 where Paul shows **THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST**. That apostolic thought of verse 18, "that in everything he (Christ) might be pre-eminent" should also be our rule and norm in church assemblies. Paul adduces many reasons, rich theological truths, for this assertion of Christ's all surpassing excellence. A short address cannot do justice to this whole passage. Yet, quickly, follow with me some of these outstanding reasons.

First, Christ is the **FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION**. Here Paul's thoughts center on the work of creation. Christ is the image of the heavenly, majestic, invisible God. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Bearing the exact same nature as the Father, He truly is the image of God in the full sense. For He too could speak and powerful, miraculous deeds occurred at the beginning of this world. A beautiful world, full of orderly splendor, appeared. Its crowning climax was the creation of man, male and female. Yet He not only created the visible world with man at its centre, but He also stands above the invisible ranks of the angels whom Paul enumerates as "thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities". Truly, in all creation Christ is **PRE-EMINENT**. He is the **FIRSTBORN** of all creation. In the Bible the firstborn is the heir. Christ is the **HEIR OF ALL CREATION**, having created it all, and upholding it all by the Word of his power. He has a keen interest in this created world. It is his!

But then leads Paul to the second major reason for asserting the supremacy of Christ. He is the **FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD**. In **REDEMPTION** Christ too is pre-eminent; He stands out and deserves all the honour. Please note that for this work of recreating man, of redeeming sinful man, "all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell in him bodily". Jesus not only was a true and righteous man but true God at the same time. God used his only-begotten Son to effect a universal reconciliation, a cosmic harmony - to reconcile to himself all things on earth and in heaven, by the blood of the cross. We have remembered Good Friday and Easter just recently. It reminded us how much we owe to Christ. He died for our sins and rose for our justification. He is the **FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD**. Not only did the resurrection start with Him but He is the resurrection, holding the power over life and death. He assures that all those who now sleep in the Lord will also be raised bodily to glorious, new life. Surely this testifies to his all-encompassing importance, especially in the church. For in his description of the global pre-eminence of Christ, Paul also says that Christ is the head of the body, the church. Now a physical body depends on the head. Does the head not direct the growth of the body from the pituitary gland in the brain; and does the head not govern the thoughts and actions of the body? That is what Christ does, also for the seven churches in the bond here in Australia.

Therefore Christ deserves and has pre-eminence in the church, also in the assemblies of the church. May He as the Head direct our thoughts and actions in Synod; may He continue to bless us with growth in the bond; and may He also keep before our eyes his world-wide work of bringing reconciliation and harmony.

May all our deliberations and decisions show how He has pre-eminence in everything.

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

After this opening address we sing Hymn 19:1,4 and 6.

ARTICLE 2

EXAMINATION OF CREDENTIALS

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

Albany	Reverend A Veldman Elder H Olde
Armadale	Reverend W Huizinga Elder A Slobe
Bedforddale	Elder J Eikelboom Elder J L VanBurgel
Byford	Reverend C Bouwman Elder S H Terpstra
Kelmscott	Reverend C Bosch Elder L Woonings
Launceston	Reverend K Jonker Elder J VanderRos
West Tamar	Reverend C Kleyn Elder F J Veldhuis

None of the churches have given instructions to their delegates.

ARTICLE 3

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following officers are elected:

Chairman	Reverend W Huizinga
Vice Chairman	Reverend C Bouwman
1st Clerk	Reverend C Bosch
2nd Clerk	Elder A Slobe

ARTICLE 4

CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD

The Chairman declares Synod duly constituted.

ARTICLE 5

AGREEMENT WITH THREE FORMS OF UNITY

The delegates are requested to rise in order to show their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise to comply with this request.

ARTICLE 6 ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourns Synod to allow the moderamen time to make proposals and procedures for Synod as well as to allow a healthy lunch to be enjoyed by all.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 7 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 121:2,4. The moderamen takes its place.

ARTICLE 8 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

After a number of additions to the provisional agenda the final agenda is proposed as follows:

1. Opening by the convening Church
2. Signing of the Attendance List and examination of Credentials
3. Election of Officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of the Agenda
7. Adoption of meeting procedure
8. Incoming Correspondence
 - a. Bedforddale - Appeal against Article 82 of Synod 1987
 - b. Bedforddale - Proposal regarding *Rules for Synods*
 - c. Launceston - Proposal for a study regarding Classes
 - d. Launceston - Appeal against Article 41 of Synod 1987
 - e. Albany - Costs of Synods and overseas travel
 - f. Launceston - Travel costs for one church visitor
 - g. Reformed Church of Papua-New Guinea - Greetings and request for a sister-relation
 - h. Byford - Costs of Synods
 - i. Kelmscott - Appeal against Article 100.D.2 of Synod 1987
 - j. Kelmscott - Rules for Colloquium Doctum
 - k. Bedforddale - Contact with other churches
 - l. Reverend G van Rongen - Request for permission to use the *Acts*
 - m. Bedforddale - Costs of Synods
 - n. P 'tHart - Bible Translation
 - o. M Berkelaar - Bible Translation
 - p. Albany - Bible Translation
 - q. W L Dekker - Contact with churches within the ICRC
 - r. J Eikelboom and J L VanBurgel - Report about the ICRC
 - s. Albany - Study-debt of Dutch candidates
 - t. Bedforddale - Appeal against Article 99 of Synod 1987

- u. Bedforddale - Tasmanian church visitation
 - v. Armadale - submission regarding PCEA report
 - w. J Byl - Contact with FCS and PCEA
 - x. Bedforddale - Decisions on contact with foreign and/or Presbyterian churches
 - y. Byford - Deciding the date of Synod
 - z. J Numan - Presbyterian church government
 - aa. Byford - Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
 - bb. P W Dekker - Churches Abroad
 - cc. Armadale - Synod cost allocation
 - dd. Armadale - Churches abroad
 - ee. Reformed Churches of Australia - Request for admission of an observer
 - ff. Byford - Meeting times of Synod
 - gg. L 'tHart, A H Terpstra and B Vermeulen - ICRC
 - hh. W and A Amoraal - ICRC
 - ii. J Byl - PCEA
 - jj. J Eikelboom - PCEA
 - kk. K A Wieske - Appeal of Bedforddale under item 8.t
 - ll. J L VanBurgel - Supplementary Report of DpRCA (RCNZ)
 - mm. M and T van Dongen - Bible Translation
 - nn. M and T van Dongen - Appeal against Article 82 of Synod 1987
 - oo. H Ballast - ICRC
 - pp. A M Hidding - Appeal against Classis-church decision
 - qq. Launceston - Contact with RCA
9. Instructions
10. Deputies' Reports
- a. Bible Translation
 - b. Synod Treasurer
 - c. Audit of the Books of Synod Treasurer
 - d. PCEA and EPCA
 - e. Archives
 - f. Supervision of Archives and Library
 - g. Hymns
 - h. Relations with Churches Abroad
 - i. Linguistic Revision of Ecclesiastical Ordinances
 - j. Linguistic Revision of Church Order
 - k. Training for the Ministry
 - l. Audit of Books of Deputies ad Articles 18, 19 CO
 - n. Pulpit Exchanges
 - o. Church Visits
 - p. Articles 48, 76 CO
 - q. Article 66 CO
 - r. Classis-churches
 - s. Supplementary - PCEA
 - t. Supplementary - Relations with Churches Abroad
 - u. Supplementary - Relations with Churches Abroad - Minority
 - v. Supplementary - Synod Treasurer
11. Budget of Synod
12. Calculation of the Churches' share of Synod costs
13. Appointment of Deputies

14. Appointment of convening Church, and the place and time of the next Synod
 15. Questions according to Article 41 CO
 16. Personal Questions
 17. Adoption of *Acts*
 18. Approval of Press Release
 19. Censure according to Article 47 CO
 20. Closing of Synod
- Moderamen proposes that the advisory Committees will deal with the admissibility of the items they are assigned.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 9

TIME SCHEDULES AND PROCEDURES

A. TIME SCHEDULES

Moderamen considers the submission (agenda item 8.ff) of the Church of Byford. After making a minor change in the recommended times it is submitted to Synod in the following form:

OBSERVATIONS

1. Previous Synods fixed their working hours as follows (coffee and tea breaks not considered; they were fixed by Synod 1987 alone):
 - a. Synod 1975: 10:00 am to 12:30 pm
2:00 pm to 5:30 pm
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm
Total time: 8 hours
 - b. Synod 1978: 10:00 am to 12:30 pm
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm
Total time: 6 1/2 hours
 - c. Synod 1980: identical to those of Synod 1978
 - d. Synod 1983: 9:00 am to 12:00 noon
2:00 pm to 5:00 pm
7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Total time: 9 hours
 - e. Synod 1985: 9:00 am to 12:00 noon
2:00 pm to 5:00 pm
7:00 pm to 9:30 pm
Total time: 8 1/2 hours
 - f. Synod 1987: 9:00 am to 12:15 pm
2:00 pm to 5:15 pm
7:00 pm to 9:30 pm
Total time: 9 hours
2. Historically conversation in corridors has proved to be very worthwhile.
3. Not all the brothers serving at Synod are
 - a. used to working long hours in active thought, or in a sitting position,
 - b. able to keep up under long hours.

4. The agenda for Synod contains numerous items that require a considerable amount of thought and conversation.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. One ought not to extend Synod to unnecessary lengths since the various delegates have commitments to meet in their own families, their own congregations, and at work.
2. One ought not to compress Synod into as short a time span as possible since the decisions taken ought to be well thought out, bearing the evidence of ripeness.
3. The *Rules for Synods* stipulate that “wherever possible, decisions should be taken unanimously” (Article 6.a). In order to attain a unanimous decision, it is necessary to convince one another. This takes time.
4. At the moment there exists in the bond of churches a measure of tension, as is also reflected by the numerous submissions directed to Synod. Particularly in this climate, it will work counter-productively to make decisions without time for careful reflection and clear-headed communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Monday to Friday:	9.00 am to 12.00 noon 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm
Saturday 5th May:	9.00 am to 12.00 noon

B. PROCEDURES

1. There is to be no smoking during the sessions and in the buildings on the premises.
2. Incoming correspondence received after this proposal is adopted will not be dealt with unless Synod agrees for exceptional reasons to permit a late submission.
3. Opening and closing at meal times will be conducted by delegates in alphabetical order and daily closing of Synod in reverse alphabetical order.
4. Deputies are invited to attend the meetings of the advisory Committees as well as the full sessions when their reports are discussed. Deputies may ask to speak when they deem a clarification to be necessary.
5. All proposals and amendments shall be submitted in writing.
6. The *Acts* of each day will be adopted, as much as possible, in a full session on the following day.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 10 ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Moderamen presents a proposal for appointment of advisory Committees. After discussion the following advisory Committees and their mandates are adopted:

COMMITTEE 1

Members: Reverend A Veldman - Convener
Elder J Eikelboom
Elder J VanderRos

Agenda items:

- 8.e Albany - Costs of Synods and overseas travel
- 8.h Byford - Costs of Synods
- 8.i Kelmscott - Appeal against Article 100.D.2 of Synod 1987
- 8.j Kelmscott - Rules for Colloquium Doctum
- 8.m Bedforddale - Costs of Synods
- 8.n P 'tHart - Bible Translation
- 8.o M Berkelaar - Bible Translation
- 8.p Albany - Bible Translation
- 8.cc Armadale - Synod cost allocation
- 8.ll J L VanBurgel - Supplementary Report of DpRCA (RCNZ)
- 8.mm M and T van Dongen - Bible Translation
- 10.a Bible Translation
- 10.b,v Synod Treasurer
- 10.c Audit of the Books of Synod Treasurer
- 10.h,t,u Relations with Churches Abroad - RCNZ
- 10.i,j Linguistic Revisions of Ecclesiastical Ordinances and Church Order
- 11. Budget of Synod
- 12. Calculation of the Churches' share of Synod costs

COMMITTEE 2

Members: Reverend K Jonker - Convener
Reverend C Bosch
Elder A Slobe
Elder J L VanBurgel

Agenda items:

- 8.a Bedforddale - Appeal against Article 82 of Synod 1987
- 8.v Armadale - PCEA Report
- 8.w J Byl - Contact with FCS and PCEA
- 8.y Byford - Deciding the date of Synod
- 8.z J Numan - Presbyterian church government
- 8.aa Byford - Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
- 8.bb P W Dekker - Churches Abroad
- 8.ii J Byl - PCEA
- 8.jj J Eikelboom - PCEA
- 8.mn M and T van Dongen - Appeal against Article 82 of Synod 1987
- 10.d,s PCEA and EPCA
- 10.h,t Relations with Churches Abroad - FCS and RPCI

COMMITTEE 3

Members: Reverend C Bouwman - Convener
Reverend C Kleyn
Elder F J Veldhuis
Elder L Woonings

Agenda items:

- 8.d Launceston - Appeal against Article 41 of Synod 1987

- 8.f Launceston - Travel costs for one church visitor
- 8.q W L Dekker - Contact with churches within the ICRC
- 8.r J Eikelboom and J L VanBurgel - Report about ICRC
- 8.t Bedforddale - Appeal against Article 99 of Synod 1987
- 8.bb P W Dekker - Churches Abroad
- 8.gg L 'tHart, A H Terpstra and B Vermeulen - ICRC
- 8.hh W and A Amoraal - ICRC
- 8.kk K A Wieske - Appeal of Bedforddale under item 8.t
- 8.oo H Ballast - ICRC
- 10.e,f Archives and Supervision of Archives and Library
- 10.h,t Relations with Churches Abroad - General section, ICRC, EPCI
- 10.g Hymns

COMMITTEE 4

Members: Reverend W Huizinga - Convener
 Elder H Olde
 Elder S H Terpstra

Agenda items:

- 8.b Bedforddale - Proposal regarding *Rules for Synods*
- 8.c Launceston - Proposal for a study regarding Classes
- 8.g Reformed Church of Papua-New Guinea - Greetings and request for a sister-relation
- 8.k Bedforddale - Contact with other churches
- 8.l Reverend G van Rongen - Request for permission to use the *Acts*
- 8.s Albany - Study-debt of Dutch candidates
- 8.u Bedforddale - Tasmanian church visitation
- 8.x Bedforddale - Decisions on contact with foreign and/or Presbyterian churches
- 8.dd Armadale - Churches Abroad
- 8.ee Reformed Churches of Australia - Request for admission of an observer
- 8.pp A M Hidding - Appeal against Classis-church decision
- 8.qq Launceston - Contact with RCA
- 10.h,t Relations with Churches Abroad - RPCS, GGRIS, Timor- Musyafir, RPCT, RCJ, RCU
- 10.k Training for the Ministry
- 10.l Audit of Books of Deputies ad Articles 18, 19 CO
- 10.n Pulpit Exchanges
- 10.p Articles 48, 76 CO
- 10.q Article 66 CO

ARTICLE 11

ADJOURNMENT

Synod is adjourned in order to give the advisory Committees time to organise and begin their discussions. Items which ought to receive priority are noted.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 12 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 123:1.

ARTICLE 13 GREETINGS FROM OTHER CHURCHES

1. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, by means of a letter on behalf of its Synod, extends fraternal greetings.
2. A letter from the Free Church of Scotland, extending greetings and expressing regret it was unable to send a delegate to attend our Synod.
3. A letter from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches, extending greetings and best wishes.
4. A letter from the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, extending fraternal greetings and commending Synod to the care of God.
5. An extensive letter from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands extending prayerful best wishes for wisdom and guidance by God's Holy Spirit in all our deliberations.

ARTICLE 14 RULES FOR SYNODS

Committee 4 presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 8.b : Bedforddale - proposal regarding *Rules for Synods*.

ADMISSIBILITY

This proposal is a consequence of a decision taken by Synod 1987; it was sent in June 1989; and therefore is lawfully placed on the agenda of Synod.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Bedforddale requests that it be spelled out in the rules that the appointment of deputies be done in closed sessions. This was decided at Synod 1987, *Acts*, Article 66.
2. Bedforddale requests that the heading for the time schedules and procedures of Synod not be called "Rules for Synods" as in the 1987 *Acts* since this creates confusion with the other adopted *Rules for Synods*. They propose to name them "domestic rules" or "time schedules and procedures"
3. Bedforddale also asks that the index to the *Acts* of Synod be improved, since the last *Acts* contained a few instances where all the articles were not enumerated.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The grounds for inserting a rule about the appointment of deputies are solid

since it follows the decision of Synod 1987 and the other rule that business of a personal nature should be dealt with only in closed sessions.

2. The ground for the second request is reasonable. Confusion should be avoided.
3. Though the previous index was already of a high standing, it can be improved. This should be possible in our computer age.
4. As far as the *Rules for Synods* go, the 1987 *Acts* contain them in Appendix C. This version is approved, though it contains one error (the reference in Article 3.c.3 should be to Article 9(b), not 10(b). The version given for information in the 1990 deputies' reports (p145) is faulty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To add to Article 9 of the *Rules for Synods*
"e. Deputies shall be appointed in closed session."
2. To rename the household rules for each Synod "Time Schedules and Procedures"
3. To ask the first clerk, in conjunction with the typists and printers, to improve the much-appreciated index to the *Acts*.
4. To have the *Rules for Synods* amended, corrected and republished as an Appendix.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 15

REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA - OBSERVER

Committee 4 presents a proposal. After two rounds of discussion it is sent back to Committee for reconsideration.

(See *Acts*, Article 38)

ARTICLE 16

ADJOURNMENT

After the singing of Psalm 119: 34,35,65 elder L Woonings leads in prayer and Synod is adjourned.

SECOND DAY - Wednesday, 2nd May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 17

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 124:1,3 after which the Chairman reads Revelation 1:9-20 and leads in prayer.

After some housekeeping chores are assigned Synod adjourns in order that the delegates may meet in their advisory Committees.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 18 **REOPENING**

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 125:1,2.

ARTICLE 19 **ADOPTION OF ACTS**

The *Acts* of the first day are adopted after a number of corrections have been made. Synod discusses the standardisation of the abbreviations used in the *Acts* for the designation of churches. Someone will be asked to propose a Glossary for inclusion in the *Acts*.

Reverend C Bouwman presents the following proposal:

that Synod delete the use of the word “unanimously” when recording decisions, unless Synod decides to the contrary in a specific case.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The lack of the word “unanimously” highlights that there is a definite lack of unanimity in a given decision.
2. Whether a vote is unanimous is ultimately irrelevant as far as the weight of the decision of major assemblies is concerned.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 20

LAUNCESTON'S APPEAL AGAINST ARTICLE 41 OF SYNOD 1987

Committee 3 presents a proposal. After two rounds the discussion is suspended because of time constraints. (See *Acts*, Article 25)

ARTICLE 21 **ADJOURNMENT**

Reverend A Veldman invites all present to sing Psalm 20:3,4 after which he leads in thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

THIRD DAY - Thursday, 3rd May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 22 **REOPENING**

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 126:1,2, reading of Revelation 2:1-7 and prayer. The Chairman welcomes everyone. He passes on the good news that Reverend A VanDelden, minister-elect of the Church of Bedforddale, hopes to arrive

on 14th July, 1990, the Lord willing. The Chairman extends Synod's congratulations to Bedfordale.
Synod meets in advisory Committees.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 23 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 127:1,2. The Chairman welcomes all present.

ARTICLE 24 ADOPTION OF ACTS

The previous day's *Acts* are adopted after discussion and correction.

ARTICLE 25 LAUNCESTON'S APPEAL AGAINST ARTICLE 41 OF SYNOD 1987

Committee 3 presents:

MATERIAL:

Agenda item 8.d : Launceston - Appeal against Article 41 of Synod 1987.

ADMISSIBILITY

Launceston appeals a decision of Synod 1987 according to Article 31 CO and requests a revision of the decision of 1985 (Article 67) according to Article 33 CO.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1985 made a declaration regarding true and faithful church (Article 67):
"our recognition of another Church as being "true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ"
 - a. means that both our churches and that recognised church stand on the foundations as expressed in Articles 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;
 - b. has as a direct consequence that a sister-church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical development may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity;
 - c. 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".
2. Launceston appealed this decision to Synod 1987, requesting that Article 67 be rescinded. In their appeal, Launceston brought forward the following grounds (as formulated by Launceston in their appeal to Synod 1990)
"..... because it was made and issued contrary to Article 33 CO. Moreover, no proposal from the minor assemblies was tabled to amend the guidelines recorded in the *Acts* of Synod 1983 (Article 96, Observation B). That these guidelines were used by previous Synods proves

that this matter was finished, and should not have been reintroduced unless amendment was desired”;

“..... because the declaration was not proposed by a minor assembly but by a member of Synod”;

“..... because it conflicts with Article 30 CO. Since points 2 and 3 of the declaration of Article 67 were new, it should have arisen from the churches and been prepared in minor assemblies”;

“..... the *Rules for Synods* (Article 3b, page 25 of *Acts of Synod 1980*) stipulate that such new items must be placed on the agenda eight weeks before the Synod. Since this was not done, the declaration is illegal and should be rescinded”.

3. Synod 1987 decided not to accede to this request. In coming to this decision, Synod 1987 considered the following (Article 41):
 - a. the *Acts of Synod 1983*, Article 96, deal with the PCEA. In its observations it outlines the guidelines used in the past for the RECOGNITION of true and faithful churches. The *Acts of Synod 1985*, Article 67 also deal with the PCEA. It records a declaration about the CONSEQUENCES of recognising churches as true and faithful. In order to decide whether the Synod was ready to recognise the PCEA as true and faithful churches, it first considered the practical results of such a possible recognition of the PCEA. Thus there is an obvious difference between the observation of 1983 in Article 96 and the declaration made in 1985 in Article 67. One cannot thus conclude that this matter was finished in 1983;
 - b. Article 67 records a declaration of Synod, which was made in the context of the discussion about the PCEA. This shows that 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;
 - c. Article 67 of the *Acts of Synod 1985* deals with the contact with the PCEA. Admittedly, the declaration is couched in general terms, but this was unavoidable, since what applied to the PCEA would also apply to other churches. So this declaration must be read in the context of the contacts with the PCEA. As such it is not a new matter, since the contacts with the PCEA had been in progress for some time;
 - d. the rule that agenda items must be in eight weeks before the convening of Synod is irrelevant here because it concerned deliberation on an item which was properly on the agenda of Synod.
4. The Church at Launceston is not satisfied with this response, and hence desires Synod 1990 to rescind as yet the decision of Synod 1985. Launceston presents the following grounds:
 - a. the decision of Synod 1985 (Article 67) deviates from the ecclesiastical way:
 - “(a) Synod 1983, *Acts* Article 96 (Observation B) records the situation governing the recognition of “true and faithful churches” in past and present (refer *Acts 1975*, Article 82; *Acts 1983* Articles 75,76,77,78). None of these *Acts* had been rescinded, or appealed against. Yet, the 1985 decision recorded in Article 67 directly conflicts with those earlier decisions. The historical background has been ignored entirely. The 1985 decision pretends (‘Declaration regarding the meaning of “true and faithful

church” ’) to interpret Scripture and Confession without mentioning the PCEA specifically, therefore it purports to have universal application”;

- “(b) It is against the Church Order (Article 30) and the *Rules for Synods* (Article 3b) when a decision pretending to interpret Scripture and the Confession is made by a Synod without giving the churches a prior opportunity to discuss its implications. We must guard against the danger of Synods lording it over the churches”;
- b. the contents of Article 67 (*Acts* 1985) lack proof from Scripture and Confession:
“This is fatal in any declaration which pretends to interpret Scripture and Confession. It is also contrary to the common accord of our life as churches of the Lord (*Acts* 1954, Article 8). More seriously even, if it is not unequivocally based on Scripture, it brings the churches in contempt of the clear admonition of their Head in Revelation 22:18-19”.
- c. the contents of Article 67 (*Acts* 1985) are incompatible in themselves - compare sections 2 and 3 of the Declaration.
“Whenever it is conceded that stumbling blocks may be lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity, it cannot be Scriptural to state that ‘our church members must join that church’ ”.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. In Article 31 CO the churches have agreed to accept the decisions made by major ecclesiastical assemblies, unless these decisions be proven to conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.
2. Accordingly, Launceston’s dissatisfaction with the response of Synod 1987, Article 41, must be based on their conviction that the response of Synod 1987 to their appeal ran contrary to Scripture or Church Order.
3. In their submission to Synod 1990, Launceston does not tackle the decisions of Synod 1987 in an effort to demonstrate that they run contrary to Scripture or Church Order; Launceston instead comes up with old and new arguments contra Article 67 of *Acts* 1985.
4. Although Launceston contends that “the 1985 decision recorded in Article 67 directly conflicts with ... earlier decisions”, Launceston fails to demonstrate how the 1985 decision conflicts with the earlier decisions. Synod 1987 (Article 41) indicated that the 1985 declaration did not conflict with the earlier decisions; whereas the earlier decisions spoke of the guidelines used in the **RECOGNITION** of true and faithful churches, the 1985 declaration enumerated what were the **CONSEQUENCES** of recognising a church as true and faithful.
5. Launceston’s contention that the 1985 decision pretends to interpret Scripture and Confession is not substantiated. Launceston’s reference to the heading (‘Declaration regarding the meaning of “true and faithful” ’) is not itself proof that an interpretation is given.
6. Because Launceston does not demonstrate that the 1985 declaration interprets Scripture and Confession, Launceston’s reference to the Church Order and the *Rules for Synods* is out of place. Further, Synod 1987 already addressed Launceston’s concerns about the Church Order and the *Rules for Synods* (Article 41, Considerations 2 and 4).

7. Seeing the 1985 declaration gives a practical application of the Confession, it is not necessary that explicit proof from Scripture be given. The Articles of the Confession referred to have sufficient Scriptural basis.
8. Sections 2 and 3 of the Declaration are not incompatible. Synod 1985 determined that recognition as true and faithful "has as a direct consequence" that (Article 28, Belgic Confession) God's people must join that church in the event that this church is nearest to them (point 3). Similarly the bond of churches is to establish a sister-church relationship with such a church (point 2). This norm of Scripture, however, does not do away with the practical difficulties preventing immediate sister-relations that arise from historical reasons as mentioned in Point 2.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide not to accede to the request of Launceston.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 26

LAUNCESTON - TRAVEL COSTS FOR ONE CHURCH VISITOR

Committee 3 presents:

MATERIAL:

Agenda Item 8.f : Launceston - Travel costs for one church visitor.

The Church of Launceston requests that:

1. monies forwarded by Launceston to pay for the air fares of one church visitor to this congregation be reimbursed;
2. new deputies for church visitation be instructed to arrange future church visitations to the churches in Tasmania by two of their number.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The church of Launceston paid for the air fares of one church visitor from Western Australia in 1988. This congregation forwarded the needed monies at the "urgent request of the Synod Treasurers".
2. The church of Launceston feels that church visitations to the churches in Tasmania ought to be done by two church visitors.
3. The churches have agreed in Article 44 CO, a.o. the following: "each year the classis shall authorise some of its most experienced and capable ministers to carry out church visitation in all the churches in its region. When it is necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister".
4. In Synod 1978 the churches decided that "until the next Synod the church visitations are arranged in the following way:
 - the ministers of Armadale are appointed for visitation in Albany and Launceston (by correspondence).
 - the minister and an elder (to be appointed by the Church Council) of Launceston are appointed for church visitation at Armadale unless this can be done orally by a minister and elder from Albany" (Article 55).
5. In Synod 1980 the churches decided that "1. Church visitation will, after the institution of the Church of Kelmescott, be undertaken by two ministers of the

Word whenever possible; otherwise by one minister and one elder to be appointed by the church council concerned". (Article 21).

6. In this same Synod the churches, in response to a discussion at Synod on the effectiveness of the church visitation, instructed "the church visitors to bring verbal church visitations to the church of Launceston whenever possible". (Article 47).
7. *Acts* 1983 include the following decision:
"The chairman tables the proposal from the Free Reformed Church of Albany to do church visitation in Launceston verbally rather than by mail as is the present practice". This proposal was adopted. (Article 94)
8. The instructions given to Deputies for Church Visitation, *Acts* 1985 include the following:
"The Church of Launceston should receive visitation at the time of Pulpit exchange". (Article 95.14)

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Scriptural injunction that every word be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6, Matthew 18:16) leads to the good practice to send more than one church visitor to any given congregation.
2. The practice in the last decade was that one church visitor went to Launceston at any given time for church visitation. At no time other than 1988 did two ministers travel to Launceston, except in 1985 when church visitation coincided with Synod in Launceston.
3. Launceston's request for a second church visitor in 1988 was approved by the Deputies for Church Visitation. As such, those authorised to visit the churches felt that a trip to Launceston by a second deputy was warranted.
4. The fact that Launceston in times past did not receive two visitors per visitation does not imply that this congregation must now pay for the travel of a (needed) second visitor.
5. Work done by deputies for the bond of churches is commonly paid for by funds from the bond of churches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synod accede to the request of the Church of Launceston to reimburse this congregation to the amount of \$918.00.
2. Synod accede to the request of the church of Launceston to:
"instruct new deputies for church visitations to arrange future visitations to the churches in Tasmania by two of their members, preferably to coincide with a 'pulpit exchange'".

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 27 ADJOURNMENT

Elder F J Veldhuis leads in closing prayer after the singing of Hymn 11:1,3. Synod is adjourned.

FOURTH DAY - Friday, 4th May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 28
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 129:1,2, reading of Revelation 2:8-11 and prayer. The advisory Committees give progress reports.

ARTICLE 29
GREETINGS TO GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND

It is proposed to send a letter of greeting to our sister- churches in the Netherlands, meeting in Synod at Leeuwarden.

ADOPTED

Synod then adjourns in order to meet in advisory sessions.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 30
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 128:1.

ARTICLE 31
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Committee 1 presents a proposal and an initial round of discussion takes place. (See *Acts*, Article 34)
Synod adjourns.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 32
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 130:3,4. Roll call reveals that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 33
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The previous day's *Acts* are Adopted.

ARTICLE 34
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

The discussion of Committee 1's proposal is continued. After two rounds the Committee withdraws it for re-formulation. (See *Acts*, Article 53)

ARTICLE 35
ADJOURNMENT

After the singing of Psalm 4:2,3 elder J VanderRos closes with thanksgiving and Synod is adjourned.

FIFTH DAY - Saturday, 5th May, 1990

ARTICLE 36
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 131, reading of Revelation 2:12-17 and prayer. Deputies present are welcomed. Synod adjourns to go into advisory sessions.

ARTICLE 37
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 132:8,9.

ARTICLE 38
REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA - OBSERVER

Committee 4 presents its re-drafted proposal. After discussion and amendment the following results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 8.00 : Reformed Churches of Australia - Request for admission of an observer.

ADMISSIBILITY

The RCA have addressed themselves to the proper body, the Synod through its convening church, for this request, and thus the letter should be declared admissible.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The letter of the RCA (stated clerk) requests that Synod receive an observer from their churches, specifically, Reverend Sjirk Bajema of the Reformed Church of Gosnells. This minister received permission from his local consistory to attend the open sessions of this Synod. He had their stated clerk request that this Synod permit him to attend the Synod.

2. They refer to the local contacts that have been occurring and suggest that an observer at this Synod would be helpful.
3. They on their part invite us to send an observer to their next Synod.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The *Rules for Synods* state that members of the FRCA have the right of admission to the open sessions of Synods, but the Rules do not cover the position of those outside the FRCA with whom we have no contact. In the absence of a clear rule it is good that a person requests the Synod itself to make a ruling on this matter.
2. Church assemblies deal with matters that are not only of concern to the churches within the bond, but should also be of concern and benefit to others. A Synod should therefore be open to such interested parties. As such there is no objection that such a person simply sits, as other visitors from the midst of the Free Reformed Churches, to observe the proceedings of Synod.
3. Such a person from a federation of churches with whom we have no contact at the broadest level should not become part of Synod, either at open sessions or in the advisory Committees; nor should such a person take part in discussions. Simple christian courtesy implies that such a person receives the invitation to share a meal with delegates if that is helpful and needful.
4. The stated clerk of the RCA requests that this Synod receives Reverend S Bajema as an observer. Since the status of observers and visitors has not been clearly defined, and since the question will continue to present itself, it would be good to define what observers and visitors and what their status and (non-) privileges are. It would be best to give this task to the DpRCA who face this question most often. They then could serve the churches and the next Synod with a proposal.
5. It would also be good to inform the RCA (stated clerk) that its (his) expressed optimism that the "fruitful local contacts" are already "small steps in a process of perhaps one day appreciating one another and recognising that both our churches are in the business of proclaiming the same gospel, that of the saving power of the Jesus Christ" may be premature. The obstacle which separates us, and which the Synods of the FRCA have repeatedly brought to the attention of the RCA in the past, needs to be addressed first before any real progress can be achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Not to accede to the request of the RCA to receive Reverend S Bajema as an observer.
2. To advise the Reverend S Bajema that he is welcome to attend Synod.
3. To inform the RCA it is premature to speak about any real progress in contacts until the obstacle which separated us in the past and which our past Synods have addressed is removed. The FRCA continues to be grieved because of the issues that divide us. These must be addressed before we can receive a representative of your Churches.
4. To request the DpRCA abroad (to be appointed) to recommend to the churches and the next Synod a definition of a visitor and an observer from other churches and a description of their status and privileges.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 39
ADJOURNMENT

Elder J L VanBurgel requests the singing of Psalm 86:2,4 and closes with prayer and thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

SIXTH DAY - Monday, 7th May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 40
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 133:1,2 and the reading of Revelation 2:18-29 after which the Chairman leads in prayer. Every one is welcomed and the chairman speaks some words of encouragement. Synod then adjourns in order to meet in advisory Committees.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 41
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 134:1. The visitors are welcomed. Advisory Committees give brief progress reports.

ARTICLE 42

CONTACT WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 4 presents a majority as well as a minority proposal. After amendment the majority report is presented as follows:

Committee 4 (Majority) presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda items 10.t (Appendix 8) and 8.qq

1. A letter from the RCA passing on the decision of their 1988 Synod which requests a dialogue committee.
2. A submission from the Church of Launceston about their contact with the RCA, Classis Tasmania.

ADMISSIBILITY

1. The letter from the RCA:
 - a. It is admissible on the grounds of Article 30 CO and past decisions. This letter is an official piece of correspondence from the RCA, through its deputies, to our Synod. It contains the decision by their 1988 Synod about our churches, i.e. a request for a dialogue committee with us. It is properly addressed to Synod, according to Article 30 CO, because it is a matter which is of common concern to all the churches and which cannot be resolved in the minor assembly. Past Synods have

- requested that the RCA address themselves to Synod and not to local churches (cf. 1985 *Acts*, Article 78, Grounds #2).
- b. It is admissible on the grounds of Article 30 CO, since it is not a new matter, but an old matter, which has occupied numerous past Synods.
 - c. Since the matter came to Synod through the DpRCA, by the *Rules for Synods* the letter is technically inadmissible; however, the RCA cannot be expected to be aware of these Rules.
2. The submission from the Church of Launceston:
 - a. Launceston submits a report in the form of notes concerning meetings held with some Reformed Churches in the Tasmanian Classis. It submits these notes and then asks for advice according to Article 41 CO. What precise advice is needed is not specified. Also, what should be done with the notes on the contacts is not stated either.
 - b. Article 41 CO, the Article quoted by Launceston in support of including its submission to Synod's agenda states:

"The Chairman shall ask whether ... there is any matter about which the consistories require the judgment or the help of classis for the proper continuation of their congregational life."

The question relates specifically to matters pertaining to congregational life. It does not include matters relating to the church in common. Relations with other churches is a matter pertaining to the churches in common. Such matters ought to be placed on the agenda in the regular way, following the *Rules for Synods*. It can therefore not be included on the agenda by means of Article 41 CO.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Declare the letter from the RCA admissible.
2. Receive the notes from Launceston on the contacts with the RCA for information only.

ADOPTED

The minority proposal is thus not brought to a vote.

ARTICLE 43 SYNOD FINANCES

Committee 1 presents its proposal. After discussion it is sent back to the Committee for further consideration. (See *Acts*, Article 48)

ARTICLE 44 COLLOQUIUM DOCTUM

Committee 1 presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 8.j : Kelmscott - Rules for Colloquium Doctum

OBSERVATION

1. The Church of Kelmscott requests Synod to amend the rules governing the Colloquium Doctum so that the calling church be more directly involved through representation by two delegates.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. At present there are no explicit rules for the Colloquium Doctum. Synod 1983 decided to merely remind the appointed classis to conduct such meetings.
2. In a normally organised bond of Reformed churches, the classis includes the church which has issued the call. At this stage, the FRCA have "classis churches" only.
3. It is obvious that the calling church has a special interest in the Colloquium Doctum and has the right to be represented.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide that at a Colloquium Doctum the calling church may be represented by two delegates.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 45 ADJOURNMENT

Synod adjourns until evening.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 46 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 135:1,2.

ARTICLE 47 ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 4th and 5th May are Adopted.

ARTICLE 48 SYNOD FINANCES

Committee 1 presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.e : Albany - Costs of Synods and overseas travel
 8.h : Byford - Costs of Synods
 8.m : Bedforddale - Costs of Synods
 8.cc : Armadale - Synod cost allocation
 10.b,v : Synod Treasurer - Report and Supplementary Report
 10.c : Report from Auditors

ADMISSIBILITY

Although the Supplementary Report of the Synod Treasurer contains a proposal regarding the *Rules for Synods*, the proposal is deemed to be admissible, since it is in line with suggestions contained in his original Report dated 19th July, 1989.

OBSERVATIONS

1. In the Synod Treasurer's Report it is stated that total expenditure exceeded the Budget as a result of two reasons:
 - a. inadequate provision for some items in the Budget;
 - b. some substantial accounts relating to Synod 1985 activities.
2. In the Synod Treasurer's Supplementary Report a proposal is submitted containing an expansion of the present Article 12 of *Rules for Synods*, aiming at more effective operation of the Synod Treasury.
3. the Supplementary Report also presents a draft Budget for the ensuing two years;
4. the Supplementary Report proposes the sharing of Synod costs based on Article 11(c) of *Rules for Synods*;
5. the Auditors' Report submitted by the Church of Kelmscott thankfully notes that the Synod Treasurer's books were found to be in excellent order per 15th July, 1989;
6. the letter from the Church of Albany expresses concern that the 1987 Synod's programme of work "resulted in unwarranted strain on the financial ... resources of the church at Albany", and asks Synod to restrain its programme of activities;
7. the Church of Bedfordale makes the suggestion that
"any member incurring expenditure on behalf of Synod should seek reimbursement from his/her local Church. This Church in turn claims from the Synod Treasury";
8. the Church of Byford proposes that:
"All accounts and reimbursement requests for costs associated with the Synod and allowable by the Churches, be received by the appointed Synod Treasurer within six months of the close of Synod. Accounts not so received will be deemed inadmissible by the Synod Treasurer and returned by mail within ten days of receipt";
9. the Church of Armadale proposes:
"that in future the assessment is based on the number of Confessing members under the age of 65",
with as main ground
"2. That some churches in the bond have a larger percentage of older members than others".

CONSIDERATIONS

1. It is apparent from Synod Treasurer's Reports and from the letter from Albany that in recent years the workload of the Synod Treasurer has increased substantially. At the same time, the organisation of the financial procedures of Synods was embryonic and not as strong as it should be. Specific guidelines should assist to remedy this situation;
2. Since in the past problems were encountered with the allocation of items of expenditure, it is pleasing to note that the draft Budget provides for more specific areas in greater detail than hitherto available. Monitoring of expenditure will thus be facilitated;
3. The problems referred to in the letter from Armadale are not restricted to persons over the age of 65; they also occur in groups such as students and

young families. Any discrimination between age groups of church members would tend to become inequitable;

4. Regarding the proposals of Bedforddale and Byford, these matters are covered in the proposed *Rules for Synod Treasury*, Articles B.3 and B.4

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synod decide to adopt the proposed *Rules for Synod Treasury*. This proposal, as amended and adopted as *Rules for Synod Treasury* is shown in Appendix K to these *Acts*.
2. Synod decide to adopt the draft Budget for the ensuing two-year period.
3. Synod decide to adopt the proposed cost sharing.
4. Synod decide not to accede to Armadale's request.

The budget portion and cost sharing arrangement of this item are presented as draft proposals to be adopted tentatively. (See *Acts*, Article 157)

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 49

PRESENTATION TO SISTER G VEURINK

The Chairman extends a token of appreciation to sister G Veurink for her services rendered to the delegates at coffee and meal times, and wishes her and her husband an enjoyable stay in Tasmania.

ARTICLE 50

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Committee 1 presents its re-formulated proposal. After some rounds of discussion it is decided to send it back to Committee once more. (See *Acts*, Article 53)

ARTICLE 51

ADJOURNMENT

Elder S H Terpstra leads in closing prayer after the singing of Psalm 122:1,3. Synod is adjourned.

SEVENTH DAY - Tuesday, 8th May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 52

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 136:1-4 after which Revelation 3:1-6 is read and the Chairman leads in prayer. He welcomes the visitors as well as the delegates.

ARTICLE 53
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Committee 1 presents its report. After discussion the following amended proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.11 : J L VanBurgel - Supplementary Report of DpRCA (RCNZ)
10.h : Deputies Report - Part O
10.t : Deputies Supplementary Report - Section 7
10.u : Deputies Minority Report

ADMISSIBILITY

The reports of deputies are admissible, although the lateness of the supplementary report is to be deplored. Item 8.11 is admissible since it deals with deputies' report. Item 10.u is admissible as a Deputies Minority report for that part that informs Synod that this deputy does not support the recommendation that the Reverend J Sawyer of the RCNZ be received as an observer at Synod. The remainder of this submission must be classed as an appeal against Synod 1987 decision (*Acts*, Article 105).

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave deputies the following mandate:
 - a) Synod decides to convey its thanks to the RCNZ that it has terminated all ties with the GKN(S) and that it has decided to oppose very strongly the membership of the GKN(S) in the REC as well as to withdraw from the REC if the GKN(S) are not expelled;
 - b) Synod decides to instruct deputies to continue the contact with the RCNZ and specifically to call their attention to relations with other churches with which we have broken all ties.
2. Deputies have:
 - a) informed the RCNZ of the decisions of Synod 1987;
 - b) explained to them why Synod 1987 views the contact which the RCNZ have with the RCA as an impediment to come to sister-relations.
3. Deputies Report mentions growing contacts at a personal level with some of the local congregations of the RCNZ.
4. The 1989 Synod of the RCNZ confirmed the action of their delegates to withdraw from the REC.
5. The RCNZ:
 - a) have sister-relations with the RCA, the CGKN, the OPC and the GKSA;
 - b) recently restored their correspondence relationship with the CRCNA to a sister-relation, and instructed deputies to register their pastoral concern over the present trends in these churches;
 - c) have lower level contact with the RCN(L) and the NGK.
6. Deputies of the RCNZ recommended to their 1989 Synod that "in view of the restriction which the RCN(L) impose on us with respect to contact with other churches, we terminate our discussions with the RCN(L)". The 1989 Synod did not adopt this recommendation, but decided "to continue our discussion with RCN(L)".

7. Deputies of the RCNZ recommended to their 1989 Synod that “in view of the restriction which the FRCA impose on us with respect to our sister-church relationship with the RCA we terminate our discussions with them”. The 1989 Synod did not adopt this recommendation, but decided “not to accept the restrictions the FRCA impose on us with respect to our sister- church relationship with the RCA, but that we continue our discussions with the FRCA”.
8. Deputies conclusions and recommendations are :
 - 8.1 On the basis of this report it can be seen that progress has been made in the following areas:
 - a) the withdrawal of the RCNZ from the REC;
 - b) the desire on the part of at least some of their churches to draw into closer contact with us;
 - c) the use of the Theological College in Hamilton by one of their students;
 - d) better understanding and contact with them.
 - 8.2 A remaining obstacle towards recognition and sister- relations is the sister-relation which the RCNZ have with the RCA. This needs to be discussed further.
 - 8.3 Deputies therefore recommend:
 - a) to discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies;
 - b) to continue the contacts with the RCNZ at the present level of contact between Synodical deputies;
 - c) to express our thanks that the RCNZ have withdrawn from the REC;
 - d) to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties, especially with the RCA, with whom we do not have any official relations;
 - e) to indicate our willingness to have more direct contacts in order to improve the contacts;
 - f) to consult with the Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts with the RCNZ;
 - g) to keep the churches posted about any progress;
 - h) to report to the next Synod;
 and in their Supplementary Report:
 - i) that Reverend J Sawyer be accepted as an observer to our Synod, and that he in that capacity be given certain privileges.
9. The RCNZ Synod of 1989 did not consider the contacts with the FRCA “at a mature enough stage to warrant sending an observer”. Further correspondence with their Interchurch Relations Committee reveals that the sending of an observer was deemed unwise given the limitations of their financial resources. It was also decided that priority should be given to those churches with which they have been in correspondence for a longer period of time.
10. The letter from J L VanBurgel:
 - a) refers to the question whether Reverend J Sawyer could be considered an observer from the RCNZ, when their Synod specifically decided not to send an observer to our Synod;
 - b) in his opposition to granting Reverend J Sawyer and through him the RCNZ any official status, refers to the decision by Synod 1985 concerning the sister-relations between the RCNZ and the RCAralia.
11. In his minority report, J Eikelboom considers that
 - a) the decision taken by Synod 1985 (*Acts*, Article 75) conveys that

existing contacts are terminated if specific impediments are not removed;

- b) contacts between the RCNZ and the RCA have been maintained;
 - c) new contacts with the NGK have been further developed;
- and recommends that Synod revoke the decision of Synod 1987 (*Acts*, Article 105), implement the decision of Synod 1985 (*Acts*, Article 75), and not consider the proposal to receive an observer from the RCNZ.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Synod 1962 stated that the RCNZ were not faithful churches because of their sister-relations with the RCA and the GKN(S). Synod 1985 stated that the continuing relationship between RCNZ and RCA were an impediment to continuing contact. Because of encouraging developments since 1985 (the RCNZ broke ties with the GKN(S)), Synod 1987 decided (though there was no recommendation from its deputies to that effect) to renew contact with the RCNZ whereby deputies were specifically instructed to call the RCNZ's attention to relations with other churches with which we have broken all ties.
2. It is a reason for gratitude and joy when churches are given the obedience of faith to withdraw from apostate bodies such as the REC; however, it is disappointing that the RCNZ have not severed their ties with other churches with whom we could not have contact. In the case of the CRCNA and the NGK contacts have actually been strengthened despite warnings from our, and Dutch deputies regarding the latter.
3. To promote the good developments within the RCNZ and to give full, confessional information about the relations and contacts which disturb us and which endanger the RCNZ, so that we can give a timely warning, it is good to have more direct contacts with the RCNZ. This is also true because we are geographically close to New Zealand.
4. We have not reached the stage of accepting an observer; the RCNZ Synod of 1989 was of the same opinion; and our Synods should take note of the decisions of the major assembly of the RCNZ in church relations.
5. The overall situation indicates that in the struggle for the truth that is going on within the RCNZ, there are calls at local levels for strengthening the bonds with us. Seen in that light Synod can view the request from Wellington Presbytery that Reverend J Sawyer be accepted as an observer with sympathy. Since the status of observer delegate would be inappropriate with our level of contact it would be best to designate him as visitor from the RCNZ, who is not a member of Synod and has no privileges, but will be given the right to address Synod once for the purpose to pass on greetings and to tell us something about his churches.
6. With respect to the contact that the RCNZ have with other churches, Synod should instruct deputies to use the present contact to warn the RCNZ, rather than cease all contact as was decided by Synod 1985.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide :

1. to thank deputies, discharge them and appoint new deputies;
2. to express its joy over the obedience granted to the RCNZ in withdrawing from the REC;
3. to reject the appeal against Synod 1987 decision (*Acts*, Article 105);

4. to welcome Reverend J Sawyer at open sessions of Synod on personal title, without privileges; he will be given the right to address Synod once for the purpose to pass on greetings and tell us something about his churches;
5. to maintain the contact at the present level, in order that the FRCA may be a hand and a foot in the struggle by the RCNZ to preserve the Reformed faith in their churches, to address the obstacles that kept us apart in the past and to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties with whom we do not have any official relations, specifically, to encourage them to break the ties with overseas churches such as the RCA, the CRCNA and the contacts with the NGK, since if these continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ;
6. to adopt deputies' recommendation regarding more direct contacts with the RCNZ, and to permit the deputies to visit the RCNZ in order to clearly address the impediments mentioned in Recommendation 5;
7. to consult with the Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts;
8. to keep the churches informed about any progress;
9. to report to the next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 54

LIMITING MANDATES FOR DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS AND CONTACTS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Committee 4 presents its report. Three rounds of discussion take place. (See *Acts*, Article 58).

ARTICLE 55

ADJOURNMENT

Synod is adjourned for lunch and to allow the advisory Committees to meet in the afternoon.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 56

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 137:1,2. The Chairman extends a word of welcome to everyone present, including Reverend J Sawyer of the RCNZ.

ARTICLE 57

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* are Adopted after some changes.

ARTICLE 58

LIMITING MANDATES FOR DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS AND CONTACTS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

The discussion regarding this matter is continued and the following amended proposal results:

Committee 4 presents :

MATERIAL:

Agenda items: 8.e : Albany - Costs of Synods and overseas travel
8.k : Bedforddale - Contact with other churches
8.dd : Armadale - Churches abroad

ADMISSIBILITY

All three items are letters from consistories of churches about matters relating to Synod mandates.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The three items express concern about:
 - a) the unwarranted strain on the manpower resource of the churches;
 - b) the workload of deputies;
 - c) the time devoted to preparing for Synods in order to service the many contacts with Churches abroad.
2. It is requested that Synod concentrate the activities of deputies with other churches to those within our own or nearby countries.
3. It is proposed to enter into new contacts only by way of Article 30 CO, to phase out those where no progress is being made, and to maintain only limited contact or relations with those churches geographically near to our sister churches or to those churches whom we have recognised as true and faithful.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Consistories of Armadale and Albany were not in the position to allow their ministers leave to attend the ICRC because of the heavy workload within the local Church.
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.
3. There are increasing demands placed on office bearers within the local church, though the trend toward more (smaller) churches is healthy.
4. Distant 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.
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.
7. It must 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, e.g. PCEA, Sumba-Savu, Singapore, and RCNZ (think also of RCPNG).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides to follow the policy with respect to the mandates for deputies for relations with other churches:

- a) to limit the requirements of the relative mandates to a manageable level;
- b) to limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad and with churches 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 us and for whom we have a greater responsibility;
- d) to phase out contact with Churches with whom we appear to be making no progress.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 59

PAST DECISIONS CONCERNING OTHER CHURCHES

Committee 4 presents a report. After discussion and amendment it is presented in the following form:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 8.x : Bedforddale - decisions on contact with foreign and/or Presbyterian churches

ADMISSIBILITY

The letter is from a Consistory about contact with other churches, which is a subject legitimately on the agenda of Synod. It was submitted before the opening of Synod and as such is admissible.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The submission draws attention to inconsistencies and ambiguities of previous Synodical decisions regarding contact with foreign and/or non-sister churches.
2. These inconsistencies have apparently caused considerable disquiet and concern in the bond of churches.
3. Bedforddale requests Synod to appoint deputies with the mandate to make a detailed examination of these matters.
4. Synod is requested meanwhile to maintain the status quo on existing contacts and relations.
5. Bedforddale has submitted an extensive overview of past decisions.
6. In its considerations Bedforddale presents the view that many of these decisions violate the consistency demanded by Scriptural and confessional practices.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Bedforddale's submission is not an appeal ad Article 31 CO, nor a request for

revision ad Article 33 CO, but a letter of pastoral concern about past inconsistencies and ambiguities which have caused disquiet and concern in the churches.

2. Bedfordale presents a wealth of material in support of its requests. Since this is not an appeal ad Article 31 CO, it is not necessary for Synod to evaluate the details presented.
3. Past Synods have acknowledged that there have been inconsistencies and ambiguities in past decisions, causing concern. An example of this is recorded in the 1985 *Acts*, Article 43, points 1 and 2:
 - “1. that the decisions recorded in Articles 72 and 75 of the *Acts* of Synod 1983 were taken with undue haste and without due consideration”.
 - “2. that in future such like decisions be not made on the basis of oral information supplied to Synod.”
4. There are other items before Synod requesting various measures be taken to restrict the workload of deputies so as to make it more manageable.
5. It is not necessary for Synod to delve into all the material presented, since Bedfordale states that this submission does not seek a reversal of all things done in the past.
6. Over the past few Synods greater care is evident in the formulation and recording of decisions. Also, deputies' reports are more thorough.

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.
2. To express that future Synods should give mandates which are consistent with one another.
3. Not to accede to the request to appoint deputies to make a detailed examination of these past decisions.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 60

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO USE THE ACTS

Committee 4 presents the following:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 8.1 : Reverend G van Rongen - Request for permission to use the text of the *Acts* of Synod for publication.

ADMISSIBILITY

Admissible: received within time limits set by *Rules for Synods*.

CONSIDERATION

1. Previous Synods, for example *Acts* of Synod, 1987, Article 31, have given permission for the use of the *Acts* for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide to accede to this request.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 61

REQUEST TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITY OF CLASSES

Committee 4 presents its report. The discussion is suspended after one round. (See *Acts*, Article 64)

ARTICLE 62

ADJOURNMENT

After Synod attends to some organisational matters, elder A Slobe requests the singing of Hymn 40:1,2 and leads in thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

EIGHTH DAY - Wednesday, 9th May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 63

REOPENING

Synod is reopened by singing Psalm 138:2,4, reading Revelation 3:7-13 and prayer. The Chairman extends a welcome to everyone present.

ARTICLE 64

REQUEST TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITY OF CLASSES

The discussion concerning this matter is continued. The report, as proposed, reads as follows:

Committee 4 presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda item : 8.c : Launceston - proposal for a study regarding Classes.

ADMISSIBILITY

This proposal from one of the churches is dated 27th July, 1989 and is thus properly tabled and admissible.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Launceston points to the past when it was agreed that Classes could not be formed.
2. Launceston argues that the situation has changed since 1956 and that the benefits of Classes warrant a study-committee.
3. Launceston agrees that the difficulties caused by physical distance between East and West cannot be underestimated.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. It would indeed be good to come to the point that Classes could be formed and that all the directives of the CO regarding the broader assemblies could be complied with.
2. Launceston itself admits that distance is a great factor. At present the two churches in Tasmania would have to be included in a Classis in the West. For this reason they see little benefit in such a situation. Thus until the time that Tasmania or the Eastern states include three churches the formation of Classes has little benefit for the churches there. It is thus better to wait until the number of churches, especially in the East, increases so that formation of Classes is warranted.

RECOMMENDATION

Not to accede to the request of the Church of Launceston.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 65

HYMNS

Three rounds of discussion take place on the proposal of the advisory Committee. After some amendments the following proposal results:

Committee 3 presents:

MATERIAL:

Agenda items: 8.t : Bedforddale - Appeal against Article 99 of Synod 1987
8.kk : K A Wieske - Appeal of Bedforddale under item 8.t
10.g : Report from Deputies

Synod considers the first part of the report viz.:

1. Appeal from the Church of Bedforddale

Letter from K A Wieske

ADMISSIBILITY

1. Bedforddale appeals a decision of a major assembly according to Article 31 CO.
2. K A Wieske reacts to an item on the provisional agenda of Synod.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Bedforddale argues that appellant to Synod 1987 was not permitted to address Synod on the matter of Hymns since Synod 1983 (Article 31) had 'finished' the matter in question. Accordingly, in agreement with Article 30 CO, the matter of Hymns could not be placed on the agenda of the major assembly again unless it had been prepared in the minor assembly. The appeal regarding Hymns discussed in Article 99 of *Acts* 1987 was not prepared in any minor assembly.
2. Bedforddale refers also to Article 33 CO, where the churches have agreed that a matter 'once finished must not be brought up again, unless it is considered that amendment is essential.' Bedforddale indicates that 'the 1987 decision does not record anywhere that amendment was considered essential.' Accordingly,

Synod 1987 ought to have declined to deal with the appellant's request on Hymns.

3. K A Wieske submits a communication to Synod in which he for a number of reasons urges Synod not to accede to Bedfordale's request.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Article 30 CO states that new matters can be placed on the agenda of Synod only if these have been prepared in a minor assembly.
2. The matter of Hymns raised by the appellant did not constitute a 'new' matter because he appealed a decision made by a previous Synod, arguing that the grounds used to make that decision were inadequate and even unsound. Appealing a decision made by a previous Synod does not constitute placing a 'new' item on the agenda of Synod.
3. Article 33 CO stipulates that a matter once finished is not to be brought up again unless it is considered that amendment is essential.
4. By advancing new grounds and demonstrating that previous grounds were inadequate and unsound, appellant to Synod 1987 indicated that he considered amendment essential. Synod agreed. (cf *Acts* 1987, Article 76; Article 99 Consideration 2)

RECOMMENDATION

1. Not to accede to Bedfordale's request.
2. To consider K A Wieske's communication answered herewith.

ADOPTED

After taking some refreshments Synod considers the following second part of the report of the advisory Committee. A counter proposal is also tabled.

2. Report from Deputies

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 introduced the probationary use of the deleted Hymns in the Book of Praise.
2. Deputies for the Hymn section of the Book of Praise were instructed by Synod 1987 as follows:
 - a. to solicit submissions from the churches;
 - b. to compile a report evaluating the received submissions and prepare a recommendation whether to accept the complete Hymn section for use in the worship services;
 - c. to maintain contact with the CanRC concerning the matter of any revision or changes to the Psalms or Hymns in the Book of Praise;
 - d. to report to the following Synod."
3. Deputies have solicited submissions from the churches, but received a meagre response.
4. Deputies have compiled a report evaluating the received submissions and in their conclusions recommend that the complete Hymn section be approved for use in the worship services (cf Obs 10).
5. Deputies have maintained contact with the Canadian Reformed Churches regarding the matter of revision or changes to the Psalms or Hymns. Deputies have received a copy of the report prepared by their Canadian counterparts to

the recent Synod of Winnipeg. As far as the matter of Hymns is concerned, they report that the Standing Committee of the CanRC was unable to fulfill its mandate to add the word 'Christian' to Hymn 1A, and have recommended to their Synod "that Hymn 1A be left as it is".

6. Synod Winnipeg of our Canadian sister-churches has adopted the following recommendation: "to make the new melody with the 'new text' [of the Apostles' Creed] by brother D Zwart available to the churches and evaluate any response from the churches" (Article 145).
7. Two of our churches have indicated to the Deputies that they have no objections to the full use of the Hymn section in the worship services. One church felt that they did not have enough time to test the probationary Hymns and asks for more time. A fourth church submitted to the deputies for consideration and evaluation all previous reports on the church book.
8. The three personal submissions come from previous deputies. All suggest that various probationary Hymns are unsuitable because of their contents and/or their musical arrangements.
9. These submissions have been evaluated in detail by deputies as to their text and musical arrangements. Deputies note that the objections raised are not of such a nature as to warrant departure from uniformity with the Canadian sister-churches.
10. Deputies present the following recommendation:
"In view of these points we recommend that Synod decides to accept the complete Hymn section of the Book of Praise for use in the worship services, so that in accordance with the decision of Synod Armadale 1954, there should be as much uniformity as possible amongst the sister-churches of the English speaking world concerning the matter of a church book (*Acts*, Article 17)."

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Deputies have satisfactorily fulfilled their mandate.
2. Deputies correctly conclude from the meagre response received that the matter of the Hymn section of the Book of Praise does not rate highly amongst the majority of our people.
3. In light of the decision of our Canadian sister-churches regarding Hymn 1A, it appears advisable that deputies from Australia keep in touch with Canadian deputies on this point (cf *Acts* 1980, Article 30).
4. More than two years have passed since the Hymns previously not approved were given into probationary use in the churches. This ought to be sufficient time to evaluate these remaining Hymns.
5. Deputies have satisfactorily evaluated the submissions from the individual brothers and concluded that their submissions do not prevent approving the Hymns for use in the churches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

1. to thank the deputies for their work and to discharge them;
2. to accede to the recommendation of the deputies;

3. to instruct other deputies to keep in touch with the Canadian sister churches regarding Hymn 1A.

ADOPTED

As a result the counter proposal lapses.

ARTICLE 66

**REQUEST FROM THE REFORMED CHURCH OF
PAPUA-NEW GUINEA FOR SISTER-RELATIONS**

Committee 4 presents its report and one round of discussion takes place. (See *Acts*, Article 82)

ARTICLE 67

ADJOURNMENT

Synod adjourns for lunch and to allow the advisory Committees to meet in the afternoon.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 68

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 139:1,4. The Chairman welcomes delegates and the large audience.

ARTICLE 69

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 8th May are Adopted.

ARTICLE 70

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Committee 2 presents its report. After one round the discussion is suspended due to the constraint of time. (See *Acts*, Article 73)

ARTICLE 71

ADJOURNMENT

Elder H Olde requests the singing of Psalm 49:1,2 and leads in thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

NINTH DAY - Thursday, 10th May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 72
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with singing Psalm 140:1,2, reading of Revelation 3:14-22 and prayer. The Chairman extends a hearty welcome to all.

ARTICLE 73
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Two rounds of discussion take place after which the report is sent back to advisory Committee for further consideration. (See *Acts*, Article 77)

ARTICLE 74
ADJOURNMENT

Synod adjourns for lunch and to allow advisory Committees to meet in the afternoon.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 75
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 141:1,3,4. The Chairman extends a welcome to everyone, including the many visitors.

ARTICLE 76
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of Wednesday, 9th May, 1990 are adopted after some corrections.

ARTICLE 77
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

After additional discussion and amendment the following proposal is tabled:

Committee 2 presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.v : Armadale - submission regarding PCEA Report
 8.z : J Numan - Presbyterian church government
 8.ii : J Byl - PCEA
 8.jj : J Eikelboom - PCEA
 10.d,s : Reports of deputies

ADMISSIBILITY

The reports by deputies were submitted to Synod within the time stipulated by the *Rules for Synods*. The letters from J Numan, J Byl and J Eikelboom were regarding items which were already on the Agenda. We deplore the fact that one letter of substantial length was placed on the Synod Agenda on the morning Synod convened, giving delegates or minor assemblies no time to properly consider it. We question whether a letter of reaction to another letter of reaction to a report of deputies is a sound ecclesiastical practice and does in fact belong on the table of Synod.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 expressed its joy that between the FRCA and the PCEA there is indeed a mutual desire to serve God according to His Word.
2. Synod 1987 mandated deputies to:
 - a. work further towards reaching sister-relations with the PCEA. Rules for such sister-relations should be mutually discussed and accepted before the establishment of sister- relations;
 - b. continue, for the mutual benefit of both federations of churches, the discussion about areas of concern mentioned in Consideration 8, e.g.,
 1. The fencing of the Lord's table
 2. Pulpit exchanges
 3. Children in the Covenant
 4. The problem of adherents
 - c. issue press releases for the benefit of the churches concerning progress made.
3. Deputies have been active in fulfilling their mandate also meeting with PCEA delegates and publishing press reports in *Una Sancta*.
4. Regarding instruction 2(a), deputies report that a copy of the current rules for correspondence with sister churches (*Acts Synod 1970, Article 26*) was sent to the PCEA. PCEA delegates at a meeting (November 1988) felt more comfortable with the Dutch proposals, preferring the Dutch rule No 1 to our rule No 1 because they felt that the term "pay heed to" implies less interference in the other church than the term "take care of". (In this respect the report appears in error, the major change to the Dutch proposed rules is to delete the rule "to take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline do not deviate from the Reformed Confession".) Deputies report that the suggestion was made by the PCEA that the rules between the FRCA and the PCEA be "reformulated and revised as the relation between the two bonds of churches grows".
5. Concerning instruction 2(b) deputies report that "it came to their attention" that the causes of concern "might possibly all flow out of one root". In further discussion with the PCEA, deputies concluded two areas viz., the PCEA's manner of fencing the Lord's Supper table as well as the practice of inviting ministers from other churches into their pulpits flow out of their concept of the church. This was admitted by the delegates of the PCEA. Initially deputies considered that these areas of concern may be the consequence of laying too much stress on the subject of election. This was discussed with the PCEA and as a result deputies set aside this possibility.
6. Deputies considered the biblical concept of the Church is rich and varied and cannot be captured in any one word. This truth, however, does not detract from the need to evaluate whether the Scriptures characterise the church primarily

in terms of it being a gathering of God's people, or of it being the sum total of God's own. Which characterisation predominates?

7. Consequently deputies decided to delineate from Scripture and Confession what we believe concerning the church and to point out where the PCEA's understanding of the church may be deficient. In this "excursus" deputies stress that the church is a gathering of true believers whose duty it is to be assembled there where Christ has instituted His Church. Deputies conclude that God's Word does not deny that the Church is rooted in God's election but state that "in our description of the church the concept of gathering is to feature more prominently than the concept of election."
8. Deputies noted that the Westminster Confession "also presents a characterisation of the church" and they further note that here the "concept of gathering does not feature as prominently as in the Belgic Confession".
9. In a letter to the PCEA it was said that the work of the Spirit is not restricted to the church with its preaching as if He could work faith only there where the full gospel is proclaimed. Nevertheless the norm for the concrete gathering or assembling of Christ's church must be adhered to. In considering where Christ would have His people gather, deputies make reference to Belgic Confession, Article 29 (the marks of the true church). Deputies state that "from these marks one can discern easily whether a church indeed does govern itself according to the pure Word of God or not, whether a church is true or false, genuine or counterfeit, real or imitation. And it will be evident that there are no degrees of genuineness or counterfeitness. Either something is authentic or it is not."
10. The PCEA in a letter of 10th August, 1988 pointed out that the issues of concern raised by our deputies have all been discussed in the past. They pointed out that as results of these discussions both sides said "that there is substantial agreement among us on these points even if there are differences in emphasis and terminology".
11. The PCEA hold to the view:
" ... that the eternally elect are not co-extensive with the membership of the visible church. Accordingly, we confess that "the purest churches under heaven are subject to both mixture and error...". We would for this reason, as well as our own imperfection, not be so certain that one can discern easily" whether a particular church is true. We do not think in terms of true/false so much as pure/impure."
12. Deputies addressed the concern about children in the covenant in joint discussions with the PCEA with the result that the subject would be studied by both parties. Deputies recommend that new deputies receive the mandate to discuss this area "in coming years".
13. Concerning adherents deputies were assured that today the existence of adherents was minimal in the PCEA. In the PCEA adherents are challenged to full responsibility i.e they are challenged and admonished to join the church. Deputies are of the opinion that the subject of adherents be no longer considered a problem in our contacts with the PCEA.
14. From the deputies' supplementary report it is noted that although it was mutually agreed that the discussion on the matter of church gathering with the PCEA be continued, the paper promised by the PCEA on the topic was not received.
15. Deputies recommend to Synod that:

- a. Synod express its thankfulness to the Lord that the PCEA gives continued evidence of desiring to serve God according to His Word;
- b. Synod express to the PCEA its appreciation for the fact that their deputies for relations with other churches have taken time to study and discuss matters with the deputies from the FRCA;
- c. Synod not extend sister-relations to the PCEA at this time, but instruct deputies to work further toward this goal. Rules for such sister-relations should be mutually discussed and accepted before the establishment of sister-relations;
- d. Synod appoint new deputies with instructions to study and discuss further with the PCEA the areas of concern, e.g., the doctrines of church (including fencing of the Lord's table and pulpit exchange) and covenant.

SUBMISSION OF THE CHURCH OF ARMADALE

- 16. the Church of Armadale in its letter:
 - a. observes that the PCEA deputies have made very definite conclusions;
 - b. alleges that deputies have "unfortunately offered a one-sided view of the Scriptural and confessional doctrine of the church. Other important images of the church e.g. bride and groom, the people of God, the body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, a building or a field (all biblical and confessional images) are not dealt with. Armadale considers that laying the whole accent on the church as gathering, to be an unfortunate limitation of the doctrine of the church.";
 - c. considers deputies to have viewed the church as confessed in the Westminster Standards in a limited manner. They point out that the Westminster Confession gives a much broader definition than that based on election for the church of Christ;
 - d. considers the deputies' analysis of the PCEA concept of church to be inaccurate and unfair;
 - e. recommends future discussions should reflect a balanced and full view of the doctrine of the church;
 - f. states deputies failed to give Scriptural and confessional substantiation to their alleged contrast between the concept true/false church (Belgic Confession) and pure/less pure (Westminster Standards). They consider "it is fully possible to view the church using both the concept of "true/false" and "more/less pure" in a biblical sense." Useful proof-texts are given in editions for both confessions;
 - g. regarding concern about children in the covenant, Armadale observes that deputies do not specify what areas need further study;
 - h. regrets very little practical information is given about fencing the Lord's Table, pulpit exchange and the children in the covenant;
- 17. The Church of Armadale recommends a.o.:
 - 3. "... to give the new deputies the mandate to work towards mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. To do this they are to discuss further, in a practical and theological manner, the two leftover areas of concern - the fencing of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges, and the leftover discussions about children in the covenant. It should be understood that when the issue of the church comes into these discussions full justice must be done to both sets of confessional standards" (see Armadale's considerations);

4. "... to request the new deputies to investigate the issue of how any eventual unity between the two bonds of churches could be best expressed, seeing that we both live in the same country";
 5. "... to accept the current rules for sister churches in the discussions leading towards mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ."
18. In his letter J Byl informs Synod that he disagrees with the Armadale submission in the following areas in that he:
- a. interprets Armadale's Consideration 3 to imply that Armadale says that our Confession is not balanced and is incomplete and therefore the Westminster Confession is needed to give a balanced and full doctrine of the church;
 - b. is in agreement with the deputies in seeking an underlying cause for the areas of concern and suggests in order to discuss practical issues these must be a result of considering the theological issues first;
 - c. states that "as long as the PCEA is prepared to discuss and study the most important doctrinal issues we must continue to do our utmost to seek unity with the PCEA." He supports the deputies' recommendations to the full.
19. Letter from J Eikelboom
J Eikelboom writes to Synod because of his concern about the course charted in the submission by Armadale. He says that the present shift of attention away from churches far away, to those nearby (RCNZ, PCEA), depending on the outcome, could have immediate effect on our practical churchlife.
20. In the letter he:
- a. observes that Synod instructions to deputies PCEA to consider areas of concern did not limit the areas but only listed them as examples;
 - b. observes that appendix 3 of the Report records that the PCEA visitors agreed that much of their position on the Church revolves around the concept of "pure/less";
 - c. is of the opinion that Armadale's submission places the issue of the doctrine of the Church in the background and he opposes this;
 - d. notes that the theological slant taken by the deputies is justified by Synod Albany, Article 115, Consideration 7. This Synod considered ongoing discussion was needed since "the remaining differences between the PCEA and the FRCA touch on the essential marks of the church";
 - e. disputes Armadale's evaluation that the deputies analysis and conclusion regarding gathering and election are deficient;
 - f. alleges that Armadale's submission suggests that the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity have a somewhat equal standing amongst us. He disputes this by referring to Armadale's Observations 3, 4 and 5 and states that our Three Forms of Unity are our only norm. The Westminster Standards can function only as a reference document;
 - g. suggests that Armadale's complaint that deputies make unsubstantiated statements in respect of true/false and pure/less pure is an unsubstantiated complaint;
 - h. is of the opinion that in discussing the matter of church, scriptural substantiation is not always necessary since our Confessional stand-

ards have their own specific authority since “we believe them to be fully in accordance with Scripture”;

- i. takes issue with Armadale’s Recommendation 4. He is of the opinion that at this stage of the contact there is no need to discuss such practical matters.
21. In his letter J Numan
- a. alleges that Synod 1987 concluded that the differences between the Presbyterian Church government and our own are insignificant;
 - b. seeks to show from different sources that the Presbyterian churches have a hierarchical structure of Church government;
 - c. sees a clear need to address (alleged) differences in our respective forms of Church government and urges Synod to incorporate this as part of any mandate given to deputies for contact with Presbyterian Churches.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Previous Synods (1983, Article 96; 1987, Article 115) considered:
 - a. that the catholic church of Christ is spread and dispersed over the whole world and yet is joined and united in one and the same Spirit in the unity of the true faith by means of preserving the true doctrine and administration of the sacraments and the discipline in accordance to the ordinances of Jesus Christ as the Only Head. This is so, according to the Word of God (John 17:11,20,21; Ephesians 3:14 - 4:16; 2 Timothy 3:15,16) and the confessional documents based on the Word of God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21 and Belgic Confession, Articles 27-29);
 - b. that it is the calling of true believers and of the true churches to strive for unity in every place and every country with those who possess the same faith and maintain the pure preaching of the Word, the pure administration of the sacraments and the pure exercise of church discipline;
 - c. that the true believers and true churches ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church so as to practice unity of faith and ecclesiastical fellowship, and reject unity of faith and ecclesiastical fellowship with churches which publicly and continuously despise the Word of God and the true faith;
 - d. that churches ought to consider that the Lord Jesus congregates His church in other countries along other roads of historical progress so that differences become manifest in the way other churches profess their faith and practice ecclesiastical fellowship, e.g. as to liturgical and church government, whereas they do not deviate from the Word of God and maintain the true doctrine.
2. In 1987, deputies after a thorough investigation of the PCEA concluded (*Acts* Appendix B, Conclusions 7 a):

“Employing the Scriptural yardstick, formulated in Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession, deputies have found that the PCEA is a true church; it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head. In considering the PCEA in the light of Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession deputies found that “the three solas - sola fide, sola gratia,

sola Scriptura - are adamantly maintained by the PCEA.” (Appendix B, 6.1,a)

3. Synod 1987 did not go so far however as to recognise the PCEA as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It considered, (Article 115, Consideration 3) that:
“... employing the biblical directives as confessed in Articles 27-29 the deputies have amply shown that the PCEA demonstrates a strong desire to adhere to the three marks of a faithful church.”
4. Synod 1987 further considered (Article 115, Consideration 5) that:
“The report of deputies demonstrates that there is a oneness in desire to serve the Lord according to His Word between the FRCA and the PCEA.”
5. Although previous Synods placed no absolute restrictions on deputies as regards the areas of concern they were to discuss with the PCEA, it is clear that the four areas as listed by Synod 1987 (Article 115, Consideration 8) were the primary areas which needed to be cleared up before the PCEA could be recognised as a true and faithful church.
6. Synod 1987 also considered (Article 115, Consideration 7) that “ongoing discussion is needed” with the PCEA regarding the essential marks of the church.

The same Synod did not specify that the doctrine of church as such constitutes an “area of concern”. This doctrine is of fundamental importance however and deputies cannot be faulted for discussing it with the PCEA. Deputies report that the PCEA itself judged this matter to be of importance.

7. It is evident that in its excursus re the doctrine of church, deputies placed emphasis on the aspect of gathering because it considered that the PCEA’s understanding of church might be deficient. Deputies examined the Westminster Confession and concluded that:

“In the Westminster Confession description of the church, the concept of gathering does not feature as prominently as it does in the Belgic Confession.”

Deputies report that the PCEA delegates agreed that the practices which were of concern to us (pulpit exchange and fencing of the Lord’s table) are based on the PCEA’s concept of church (pure/less pure). In the light of deputies mandate it would have been a helpful course of action to have examined whether these practices are in conflict with other areas in the Westminster Standards concerning the catholicity of the church which is to be evident in the local church. Deputies however, have worked in the framework of contrasting both sets of confessions, examining whether the deficiency is to be found in the Westminster Confession itself.

8. It is to be noted that the Westminster Standards speak about the church in two ways:
 - a. the church as it is known to God only by virtue of His eternal decree;
 - b. the church as we can see it by means of faith.

Although it is true that in these Standards there is considerable emphasis on #1 both the Larger Catechism and the Westminster Confession do not fail to place emphasis on #2 as well. The Westminster Standards speak of the church in terms of “the house and family of God” (Westminster Confession, Chapter XXV) and those who “do profess the true religion, and their children.” (Larger Catechism Question and Answer 62) They speak of “the gathering and

perfecting of the saints in this life” (Westminster Confession, Chapter XXV) and of “being protected and preserved in all ages.”

In speaking of the “special privileges of the visible church” the Larger Catechism (Question and Answer 63) mentions “enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation” as well as the “offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the Gospel.”

In order to do justice to the PCEA, deputies in their excursus ought to have drawn attention to these elements of the Westminster Standards as well. It appears that deputies limited themselves to the Westminster Confession. Their report does not include references to the Westminster Standards as a whole.

9. Although it is correct that the Westminster Standards in speaking about the church place considerable emphasis on the aspect of election we must not forget that the Three Forms of Unity emphasise this aspect as well. Lord’s Day 21 speaks of a church “chosen to everlasting life.” The Canons of Dort also speak of the church in terms of election. In Chapter I, Article 7 we read:

“He (i.e. God) has also from eternity appointed Christ to be the Mediator and Head of all the elect and the foundation of salvation and thus He decreed to give to Christ those who were to be saved ...”

In Chapter II Article 9 we read (concerning God’s Counsel):

“This counsel, proceeding from eternal love for the elect, has from the beginning of the world to the present time been powerfully fulfilled, and will also continue to be fulfilled, though the gates of hell vainly try to frustrate it. In due time the elect will be gathered together into one, and there will always be a Church of believers, founded on the blood of Christ.”

The Belgic Confession as well as the Form For Baptism also draw our attention to “the faithful and elect” who “will be crowned with glory and honour.” (Belgic Confession Article 37) and those who will “finally be presented without blemish among the assembly of God’s elect in life eternal.” (Form For Baptism).

10. Although it is correct that Scripture says a great deal about the church in terms of a gathering or an assembly yet it may not be overlooked that it uses many other descriptions of the church. We may think of those “who are called” (Romans 1:6, 8:30; Jude), those “chosen and destined by God” (1 Peter 1:2), “the elect lady and her children” (2 John 1), etc.
11. In view of the above, the objections by Armadale that deputies did not do full justice to Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are to the point but this is explained in part by deputies in their report saying that their excursus on the church had as aim to “point out where their (the PCEA) understanding of the church may be deficient”.
12. In maintaining the confession concerning the distinction between a “true and false church” we may not overlook the fact that true churches can often be guilty of grave errors.

J Byl and J Eikelboom interpret Armadale’s request to imply that deputies in carrying out their mandate are to work by the norms of the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. Such an interpretation of Armadale’s request is not justified.

We may remember God’s chosen people Israel in the old dispensation. Though they often grieved the Lord with their corporate sins He nevertheless continued to call them after His name for a long time.

Though Paul writes to “the church of God which is at Corinth” God had many

things to allege against them. It was far from being the kind of holy church with which the Lord was pleased, yet Christ does not condemn her as a “synagogue of satan”, i.e. a false church.

Among the “seven churches that are in Asia” (Revelation 1-3) there were varying degrees of shortcomings and errors. Some were diligent in maintaining one or more of the ‘marks of the church’ yet were guilty of grievous faults. It was not only a matter of individual sins but of collective culpability.

Of all these churches it must be said however that they would have become false churches if they did not listen to the admonitions of Paul and Jesus Christ. Revelation 2:5 “I will remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent” and Revelation 3:16 “I will spew you out of my mouth”.

John Calvin notes (Institutes of the Christian Religion IV,I,) that:

“The pure Ministry of the Word and pure mode of celebrating the sacraments are, as we say, sufficient pledge and guarantee that we may safely embrace as church any society in which both these marks exist. The principle extends even to the point that we must not reject it so long as it retains them, even if it otherwise swarm with many faults.”

“What is more, some fault may creep into the administration of either doctrine or sacraments, but this ought not to estrange us from communion with the church.” (IV,I 12)

13. On the basis of Scripture it cannot be maintained therefore that there is a necessary contrast between the concept of “true and false” and “pure/less pure” within the framework of a true church. What we confess in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession does not exhaust the Scriptural, Reformed confession regarding the church.

On speaking about the church Reformed theologians in the days of the Reformation often combined both distinctions (cf William Farel’s Genevan Catechism 1636. Antonius Walaeus - in Synopsis Purioris Theologia - a textbook used by the Dutch churches for many years subsequent to its publication in 1625.)

Used in an unscriptural way, in which the distinction true/false is blurred and such a “relatively pure” church is seen as a manifestation of the one church of Christ, the distinction must be considered dangerous. It is disconcerting to read (appendix 3 - deputies’ report) that the opinion of the PCEA delegates appears to go in the direction of embracing a ‘pluriformity theory’ about the church.

14. However we learn from Scripture, (and it is confirmed in the history of the church) that when the demands of Christ for a true, faithful, pure and holy church are neglected a false ecumenism and interdenominationalism often results. It is because of the high demands of our Lord Jesus Christ that we must continue to maintain the whole of our true Confession.
15. The PCEA’s practice of allowing for ‘pulpit exchanges’ with ministers of other (evangelical churches) as well as allowing guests of other non-affiliated churches to partake of the Lord’s Supper is of considerable concern to us and must continue to be discussed.
16. In our discussions with the PCEA we must on the one hand strive to honour God’s command that the church of Christ avoid all error. If we are to be one in faith and hope, all things which are contrary to God’s Word must be rejected. On the other hand we must take note of Article 46 CO and not demand more of the PCEA than of ourselves. We are called to go forward, “...with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3). We are to avoid any threat of false ecumenism

and interdenominationalism while avoiding at the same time, another evil, viz., sectarianism.

17. No Free Reformed Synod has stated that the Westminster Standards are un-reformed. On the contrary, we have decided that:
 - a. in our contacts with sister-churches we have recognised the Westminster Standards as a Reformed Confession (*Acts* 1985, Article 88, grounds 5);
 - b. churches who have, and faithfully adhere to, a Reformed Confession have an obligation to promote their unity of faith and thereby present a reformed testimony to the world (*Acts* 1985, Article 88, grounds 7).

18. A previous Synod decided (1985, Article 43, grounds 6):

“... because church government is not a ‘minor point’ in the sense of Article 46 CO, a Synod can only recognise a Church as a true and faithful Church after a careful and earnest investigation of this aspect.”

19. Previous deputies for contact with the PCEA (1985) have considered the matter of church government in the PCEA extensively, concluding:

“In comparison with our churches, the PCEA knows fewer structures in its ecclesiastical life. Such lack of organisation does not preclude recognition of the PCEA as a true church according to our Confession.” (*Acts* 1987, Appendix B,7,b)

20. Synod 1987 considered that:

“In its form of government the PCEA strongly acknowledges Jesus Christ as the only Head of the churches. The PCEA also practices a presbyterian form of church government, which is not identical to ours in all respects but which nevertheless uses biblical norms and rejects hierarchy.” (*Acts*, Article 115, Consideration 4)

The same Synod, in considering the EPCI stated that deputies report:

“gives good attention to the form of government in the EPCI. Good orderly and biblical principles are followed for the government of the church. Jesus Christ is certainly recognised as the only Head of the Church.” (*Acts* 1987, Article 79, Consideration 6)

21. Although church-political differences should continue to be discussed with the PCEA before an (eventual) union of our churches would take place these ought not to stand in the way of recognising the PCEA as a true and faithful church.
22. Since 1983 “we are testing the waters” in our contact with the PCEA. Synod 1987 considered that deputies “have amply shown that the PCEA demonstrates a strong desire to adhere to the three marks of a faithful church” (*Acts* 1987, Article 115, 3).

In 1985 the PCEA became a member of the ICRC. One of the purposes of this conference is “to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches.”

Through the years progress has been made in our contact with this church. This progress should be expressed in our contacts with the PCEA and this can be done by having more official visits.

23. Where two federations of sister churches are found in the same country there is the demand of God that, “brothers dwell in unity” (Ps.133:1). However because of the different cultural and historical background between the two bonds of churches such eventual organic unity, although a goal, cannot be expected to be achieved quickly and may need to develop slowly.

24. With these considerations, Armadale's overture as well as the letters from J Byl, J Numan and J Eikelboom have been addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synod thanks deputies and expresses its appreciation to them for the considerable work done.
2. Synod expresses its thankfulness to the Lord that the PCEA continues to give evidence of desiring to serve the Lord according to His Word.
3. Synod expresses its appreciation for the fact that the PCEA deputies for relations with other churches have taken time to study and discuss matters with our deputies and encourages the PCEA to intensify these discussions.
4. Synod discharges deputies appointed by Synod Albany for contact with the PCEA.
5. Synod appoints new deputies with the following mandate:
...to work towards a mutual recognition of each other as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ
and in the light of this goal:
 - a. to continue to study and discuss further with the PCEA the remaining areas of concern specified by Synod 1987 viz, the supervision of the Lord's table, the practice of pulpit exchanges and the position of children in the covenant;
In this discussion about the areas of concern the confession of the doctrine of the church should be addressed when applicable. Due attention must be given to our concern about possible unscriptural concepts regarding the 'pluriformity of the church'. All this should be done in the light of God's Word giving heed to the complete doctrine of salvation;
 - b. to exchange visitors at deputy and Synodical level;
 - c. to use the current rules for sister churches in the discussions leading towards mutual recognition as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 78

REVEREND J SAWYER - ADDRESS TO SYNOD

The Chairman introduces Reverend J Sawyer of the Reformed Church of Hastings, New Zealand. Reverend J Sawyer addresses Synod concerning the history as well as the present circumstances concerning the RNCZ.

ARTICLE 79

ADJOURNMENT

Reverend C Kleyn requests the singing of Psalm 111:1,2 and leads in thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

TENTH DAY - Friday, 11th May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 80
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 142:4,5,6, reading Revelation 4 and prayer. Synod is then adjourned in order to meet in advisory sessions.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 81
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 143:1,4. The Chairman welcomes everyone present.

ARTICLE 82
REQUEST BY THE REFORMED CHURCH OF
PAPUA-NEW GUINEA FOR SISTER-RELATIONS

The discussion concerning this request continues. After amendment the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 8.g : Reformed Church of Papua-New Guinea - Greetings and request for a sister-relation.

ADMISSIBILITY

Admissible: received before due date set by *Rules for Synods*.

OBSERVATIONS

1. RCPNG sends christian greetings to Synod.
2. RCPNG draws attention to the close relations it has with the Church of Albany in its capacity as sending church for the FRCA.
3. Reverend J Koelewijn, the missionary of Port Moresby, is sent by the Church of Albany and is supported by the FRCA.
4. RCPNG requests sister-relations with the FRCA.
5. Reference is made to a church visitation report to support this request. The report is not present.
6. RCPNG expresses the desire to be Reformed "just as you are in Australia."
7. RCPNG equates the establishing of sister-relations to accepting them as brothers in Christ.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The request of RCPNG is motivated by:
 - a. the fact that it has no cooperating sister-churches in Papua-New Guinea;
 - b. the desire to have close relations with the FRCA;
 - c. the desire to be Reformed;
 - d. the acknowledgement that they cannot live in isolation.
2. RCPNG does have a very close relationship with the FRCA through Albany as sending Church.
3. There is little material to support the request. This is especially so due to the absence of the church visitation report and a supporting submission from the sending church.
4. Acceptance of the members of the RCPNG as brothers and sisters is acknowledged through the tie between the FRCA and RCPNG. Thus the individual Free Reformed congregations already accept them as brothers and sisters.
5. Sister-relations imply that both parties involved are able to carry out the rules for sister-relations. It is better to wait until it is clear that the RCPNG is able to carry out effectively the obligations toward us that sister-relations would lay upon them.
6. Not to enter sister-relations in no way indicates our unwillingness to recognise Christ's work of gathering His people in Papua-New Guinea, nor an unwillingness to help the (new) church in Papua-New Guinea. On the contrary, our respective congregations have pledged such recognition and support through an agreement of cooperation with the Church of Albany.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Thankfully to accept greetings.
2. Not to accede to the request of RCPNG at this time.
3. To forward a letter of brotherly encouragement to the RCPNG.
4. To ask the Church of Albany to explain Synod's decision to the RCPNG.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 83

STUDY DEBT OF DUTCH CANDIDATES

A round of discussion takes place after which the proposal is sent back to advisory Committee for re-formulation. (See *Acts*, Article 86)

ARTICLE 84

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

A glossary is proposed and Adopted.

ARTICLE 85

PULPIT EXCHANGES

Committee 4 presents a report. After some changes it is proposed as follows:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 10.n : Letter from the Church of Albany reporting on pulpit exchanges.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Albany advises Synod that the roster of pulpit exchanges as agreed at Synod 1987 (Article 32) has been complied with.
2. Albany recommends that the exchanges continue along similar lines.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. With the institution of the West Tamar Church the necessity for pulpit exchanges has been reduced, since there are now ministerial contacts and pulpit exchanges in Tasmania.
2. It is still advantageous for the well-being of the bond of churches to have pulpit exchanges, particularly for those churches and ministers who reside in comparative geographic isolation.
3. Pulpit exchanges made by the minister in Albany to the Perth churches can be coordinated with the fulfillment of other duties, eg. meetings of deputies and church visits. These trips to Perth will already afford time to have ministerial contact and to have pulpit exchanges.
4. Pulpit exchanges made by the ministers of the West in the Tasmanian churches should be combined with church-visitation. The church-visitations to Albany cannot be combined as easily, seeing the two ministers concerned usually travel there and back together.
5. Seeing the above two considerations it is possible to reduce the number of pulpit exchanges by one-half of those allotted by Synod 1987.
6. The Synodical Budget did not budget for the Tasmanian ministers having pulpit exchanges in Western Australia. This should be included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank the Church of Albany for coordinating and monitoring the roster of pulpit exchanges.
2. To appoint a church to coordinate and monitor the roster of pulpit exchanges and church-visitations listed below.
3. To increase the adopted budget for pulpit exchanges with the addition of \$1600 for two pulpit exchanges (one per year) from Tasmania to Western Australia.
4. To accept the following schedule of pulpit exchanges, to be coordinated with church-visitations wherever possible:

MINISTER OF	1990	1991	1992
Albany	Metro (done)	Arm/Kelm	Bedf/Kelm/Laun/WT
Armadale	Launc/WT	Albany	
Bedfordale	Albany	Launc/WT	
Byford		Albany	
Kelmscott			
Launceston	Metro (done)	Alb/Metro	
West Tamar	Metro (done)	Albany/Metro	

Notes:

1. pulpit exchanges to Tasmania and those made by Tasmanian ministers to Western Australia should include two Sundays;
2. the actual dates are to be arranged by the minister(s) concerned, the minister who arranges church visits and the consistories;
3. if a church is vacant, the minister of another church will be asked to fill the appointment.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 86

STUDY DEBT OF DUTCH CANDIDATES

Committee 4 presents its re-formulated proposal. After some amendments the following results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 8.s : Albany - study debt of Dutch candidates

ADMISSIBILITY

Admissible: received within time limits set by *Rules for Synods*.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The FRCA have been made responsible for the study debt for Reverend J Koelewijn to the Dutch sister-churches.
2. Consistory of Albany has endeavoured to have this debt waived. All attempts have been unsuccessful.
3. Correspondence referred to by Albany is not present.
4. Albany proposes that deputies for Training for the Ministry be given the mandate to address the Dutch sister- churches with the view to changing their rules.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Free Reformed Churches support the Theological Institutions of our sister-churches in the Netherlands and Korea. The bond of churches agreed to support the Theological College at Hamilton.
2. The FRCA support their students during the course of their studies, stipulating that repayment of such costs is waived if students serve overseas sister-churches upon being ordained to the Ministry.
3. The insistence by our Dutch sister-churches for repayment seems to create an inequitable situation.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides to instruct Deputies for Training for the Ministry to address, through the DpRCA, the appropriate and corresponding Deputies (Interressortale Samenwerking's Vergadering) of the Dutch sister-churches with a view to removing this apparent inequity.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 87
APPEAL - A M HIDDING

Committee 4 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion it is sent back to advisory Committee. (See *Acts*, Article 105)
Synod is adjourned until evening.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 88
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 144:1,5. The Chairman extends a cheerful welcome to all present.

ARTICLE 89
ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of Thursday, 10th May, 1990 are Adopted.

ARTICLE 90
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
RULES FOR SISTER- RELATIONS

Committee 3 presents its report. Two rounds of discussion take place. The following proposal is tabled:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.h : Report from DpRCA - Section C.
 10.t : Supplementary Report from DpRCA - Section 2.6

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave to DpRCA the following mandate (as it pertains to Rules):
 - a. "to renew the mandate that the deputies, after consultation with the sister-churches is finished, draft rules for relations with churches abroad."
 - b. "to renew the mandate that the deputies, after their consultation with sister-churches is finished, draft rules for temporary contact with churches abroad, keeping Article 74.II, *Acts* 1985 in mind."
Article 74.II, *Acts* 1985 reads: "as there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister-churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of sister-relations. Ground: It is essential that Rules for temporary contact embody this principle (see *Acts* 1985, Article 67)."
 - c. "to instruct the deputies to stress and to clarify to the churches the requirement of declarations for visiting ministers."

2. The deputies have stressed and clarified to the churches the requirement of declarations for visiting ministers.
3. Deputies have received an extensive communication from the RCN(L) on rules for correspondence.
 - a. The Dutch deputies have formulated for discussion the following rules for sister-relations:
 1. The churches will pay heed to each other's doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy;
 2. The churches will receive one another's representatives at their Assemblies/General Synods and invite them to serve as advisers in matters concerning relations;
 3. The churches will inform one another of the decisions taken at these Assemblies/General Synods by exchanging Minutes/Acts or at least by forwarding those decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned;
 4. In cases of changes in or additions to confessions, Church Order or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature, the church concerned will lay these changes before the corresponding churches, so that consultations can take place, if considered necessary;
 5. The churches accept each other's letters of testimony and consequently admit members of the churches concerned to the sacraments on presentation of such letters;
 6. The churches admit, in principle, one another's ministers into the pulpit, taking into account rules which have already been agreed upon in the churches concerned;
 7. The churches will inform each other regarding new relations with third parties.
 - b. Dutch deputies indicate they would like nothing better than that these rules be agreed upon by all those churches which are true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. Dutch deputies propose a second form of relations termed "fraternal relations", if it should appear that no agreement can be reached regarding establishing sister-relations due to differences which are the result of geographic location, historical background, difference in language, culture, etc. Rules for such relations would be developed with each such church in turn.
 - d. If the above mentioned categories would be realised, the qualification "temporary relation of ecclesiastical contact" would cease to exist as far as new relations are concerned.
4. Our deputies have in turn responded to the above mentioned letter.
 - a. Our deputies expressed displeasure at the DpBBK proposal to change the current formulation of Rule 1 from "to take care for each other that the doctrine, church services, church government and discipline do not deviate from the Reformed confession" to "the churches will pay heed to each other's doctrine, church government, discipline and liturgy." Our deputies consider that the proposed rules "do not allow for a proper functioning of a sister-relation which may require the admonition of a church which begins to deviate from its Reformed doctrine and confessions."
 - b. Our deputies have indicated to the DpBBK that with Articles 67 and

74 of *Acts* 1985 the FRCA have made clear the direction our churches wish to go.

- c. Regarding the DpBBK proposal on fraternal relations, our deputies expressed uneasiness as to which churches would be offered this fraternal relation. They consider that striving for sister-relations should not be abandoned in favour of fraternal relations where difficulties such as divergencies in doctrine or practice cannot be removed or where the rules are not accepted or understood.
5. At the recent ICRC, a workshop on Ecclesiastical Relations resulted in a frank and open dialogue among the Presbyterian and Reformed representatives present. This workshop did not resolve any issues.
6. In their report on the recent ICRC, deputies report that comments from the part of the delegates from the FCS give further substance to their concern about the Dutch proposal of Article 1 of the Rules (cf Observation 4 a).
7. The DpBBK have presented to their Synod their final report on Rules for Ecclesiastical Relationship with Churches Abroad. That report is in line with what has been mentioned in Observation 3.
8. Deputies recommend that Synod discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. "to consult with sister churches abroad regarding proposed changes to rules for ecclesiastical relations";
 - b. "to adhere to the rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact and continue the study of these rules in consultation with sister churches."

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Apparently the consultations with sister-churches are not yet finished and consequently rules have not been drafted.
2. Deputies have fulfilled their mandate regarding the declarations for visiting ministers.
3. Deputies correctly expressed concern regarding the DpBBK proposal to change the current formulation of Rule 1. Even as brothers and sisters within a congregation are instructed to encourage and exhort one another, so also churches must encourage and exhort each other to remain faithful.
4. The questions deputies had regarding the DpBBK proposal on fraternal relations are in place. Because of the difficulties that surround language barriers, geographic locations, etc., one can imagine that fraternal relations could be possible. However, the unity of Christ's catholic church implies that sister-relations should be pursued as much as possible. Divergencies in doctrine cannot be considered adequate reason to be content with fraternal relations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

1. to thank the deputies for their report and to discharge them;
2. to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. consult with sister churches abroad regarding proposed changes to rules for ecclesiastical relations and present to the churches a final proposal as soon as possible;
 - b. continue the study of the rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact

in consultation with sister churches, keeping in mind Article 74.II, *Acts* 1985.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 91

CHURCH VISITATION IN TASMANIA

Committee 4 presents a report. After discussion and amendment it is presented as follows:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 8.u : Bedforddale - Tasmanian church visitation

OBSERVATIONS

1. Article 119, *Acts* 1987, point 13 appoints the active serving ministers as Deputies for Church Visits.
2. The Free Reformed Church of Bedforddale brings to Synod's attention the fact that Reverend G van Rongen carried out a church visitation in Tasmania.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Reverend van Rongen was temporarily serving the congregation of West Tamar at the time he carried out the church visitation in question.
2. Since only active, serving ministers were appointed as deputies, Reverend van Rongen was not appointed as deputy.
3. There is nothing that can be rectified.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod receives Bedforddale's letter for information, and accepts the exhortation that Synod make practical arrangements.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 92

CONTACT WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 4 presents its report. No discussion takes place. The proposal is **ADOPTED** (See *Acts*, Article 102)

ARTICLE 93

PRESENTATION TO ASSISTANTS

On behalf of Synod the Chairman presents some flowery tokens of appreciation to a number of sisters who have assisted Synod in various capacities.

ARTICLE 94

RESPONSE TO REVEREND J SAWYER

On behalf of Synod, Reverend A Veldman replies to the address of Reverend J Sawyer heard the previous night.

ARTICLE 95
ADJOURNMENT

Reverend K Jonker requests the singing of Psalm 84:3,4,6 and leads in closing prayer. Synod is adjourned.

ELEVENTH DAY - Saturday, 12th May, 1990

ARTICLE 96
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 145:2. The Chairman reads Revelation 5 and leads in prayer. He extends a welcome to everyone present.

ARTICLE 97
BIBLE TRANSLATION

Committee 1 presents a report. One round of discussion takes place. (See *Acts*, Article 138).

ARTICLE 98
ADJOURNMENT

Elder J Eikelboom requests the singing of Psalm 132:6,8 and leads in prayer. Synod is adjourned.

TWELFTH DAY - Monday, 14th May, 1990
Morning Session

ARTICLE 99
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with singing Psalm 146:2,3, reading Revelation 6:1-8 and prayer. The Chairman welcomes all present. Synod then adjourns in order to meet in advisory sessions.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 100
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 147:4. The Chairman welcomes everyone. He mentions with sadness the sudden death of sister G vander Wal of Albany, the mother-in-law of two of the delegates. He also congratulates Reverend C Bouwman who received a call to our sister-church at Smithville, Ontario, Canada.

ARTICLE 101

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of 11th and 12th May are Adopted.

ARTICLE 102

CONTACT WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

See *Acts*, Article 92. After a round of discussion the following proposal is tabled:
Seeing that: there was no response to the chair's invitation for a first round, so that the decision was taken without discussion;

and considering that:

delegates were tired after 10 days of Synod work with one break;

Synod decides:

1. that the matter was not given the due consideration it deserves;
2. to reconsider the RCA report.

ADOPTED

Another round of discussion on the RCA proposal takes place. A counter proposal is tabled. The Committee's amended proposal is presented as follows:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.qq : Launceston - contact with RCA
 10.t (Appendix 8) : A letter from the RCA passing on the decision of their 1988 Synod which requests a dialogue committee.

ADMISSIBILITY

The matter of admissibility has been decided before (cf. *Acts*, Article 42).

OBSERVATIONS

1. The Synodical Interim Committee of the RCA communicates the decision of their 1988 Synod to ask us to set up with them a dialogue committee.
2. The purpose of this dialogue committee would be "to seek to heal the rift" between the RCA and the FRCA.
3. The stated background for this request is the brotherly request of the PCEA that the RCA heal the "rift" with the FRCA. The RCA "delights to comply" with this request and asks us to be willing as well.
4. As a first step in this direction the RCA asks for a dialogue committee to discuss these matters at a personal level.
5. The Church of Launceston passes on some notes about their informal contact with the RCA in Classis Tasmania.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The matter of contact with the RCA has been a recurring agenda item of past Synods. To be more specific, requests for personal discussions have come from the RCA to past Synods (cf. 1962 *Acts*, Article 12; 1964 *Acts*, Article 26). If the present request is to be entertained, then it must be ascertained first of all that a reconsideration is essential, ad Article 33 CO.
2. One matter that pleads for a reconsideration for personal contact concerns new developments within the RCA. In the 1983 *Acts*, Articles 102,103 a proposal

to organise a meeting with the RCA was defeated. Judging by the points raised in the discussion which led to this decision Synod 1983 considered that the relationship which the RCA has with the GKN(S) had changed but was not broken, and that the change reflected uncertainty rather than reformation. This stance needs updating. In their report about the RCNZ our deputies have summarised what has happened in the RCA. We quote:

"The Reformed Churches of Australia have meanwhile terminated its sister-relation with the GKN(S). In 1982 it decided "on account of the divergence of theological thought it is no longer true to speak of a sister church relationship between them and our churches" (1982 *Acts*, III-173) and therefore terminated it. Instead it wished to "maintain a close correspondence relationship with the GKN(S) to continue the discussion on issues which have caused the GKN(S) and our churches to part ways" (1982 *Acts*, III-173). When in 1985 the type of relations were changed to "Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (CEF) it was stated that "the situation in the GKN(S) does not warrant a change in our relationship in terms of our new CEF" (1985 *Acts*, I-30). So though the 1982 decision to terminate sister-relations was subject to review, the Reformed Churches of Australia did not revert to sister-relations with them, but only kept corresponding about those issues of concern. We have learned that the 1989 Synod of the RCA decided to terminate its membership in the REC if the GKN(S) were allowed to remain as member at the next REC.

Thus the RCA has definitively broken with the GKN(S) and has correspondence, i.e. writes letters, only to keep the channels of communication open. Also, the RCA finally sees that its association with the GKN(S) through the REC needs to be undone. These developments are strong evidence that a reconsideration for personal contact with the RCA is warranted.

3. The request of the 1988 RCA Synod "to set up a dialogue committee to discuss these matters at a personal level" is motivated in part by the request of the PCEA that the RCA "seek to heal the rift" with the FRCA. The new element which pleads for amendment is the request of the PCEA with whom both the RCA and the FRCA have contacts. In these triangular contacts it is good that all parties have personal contacts, so that contacts with third parties are cleared up before any relations are cemented.
4. The agenda for such dialogue should be pre-set in accordance with past decisions of the FRCA Synods. The impediments toward unity between the FRCA and the RCA have been clearly spelled out by past Synods (cf. the 1959 and 1962 Synods which approved letters to the RCA, letters which are appended to the *Acts* of those Synods). The 1962 RCA Synod authorised its deputies to answer the correspondence. In the latter they themselves spell out the FRCA's conditions 'sine qua non' for reunion:
 - a. "the recognition from our side (RCA) of the Liberation as an unmistakable work of God;" and
 - b. "the breaking of all correspondence (i.e. sister- relations) with the GKN(S)" (quoted from the 1964 *Acts*, p.23; translation is ours).
5. The present generation ought to be made aware of past (sinful) decisions taken by their Synods. It is a scriptural principle that "the LORD visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" and that as

- much as possible the past should be undone by not maintaining the past wrongs and by steering a new course in their relations.
6. Separate deputies should be appointed for this task, since present mandates for deputies do not cover this matter.

RECOMMENDATION

1. To appoint deputies with the mandate to engage in dialogue as stipulated in Considerations 2, 4, 5.

ADOPTED

As a result the counter proposal lapses.

ARTICLE 103

AJOURNMENT

Reverend C Bouwman requests the singing of Psalm 25:4,6 and leads in thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

THIRTEENTH DAY - Tuesday, 15th May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 104

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 148:1, reading Revelation 6:9-17 and prayer. The Chairman extends a welcome to everyone.

ARTICLE 105

APPEAL - A M HIDDING

Committee 4 presents its re-formulated report. After a round of discussion the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda Item 8.pp : A M Hidding - appeal against Classis-church decision.

ADMISSIBILITY

Synod 1985 appointed second-appeal churches to cater for second appeals within the two year time span between Synods. The appellant could have appealed to the second-appeal church (*Acts of Synod 1985, Article 81 and Acts of Synod 1987, Article 119, 12b*). It is not known why he did not do so.

The appeal is within the time limit for this Synod.

OBSERVATIONS

1. In 1988 appellant appealed to Bedfordale against decisions made by Launceston in relation to the proposed institution of the Church of West Tamar.
2. Appellant claims that Bedfordale did not deal with his appeal on the ground that he had not exhausted all avenues of appeal within his own Consistory (cf. Article 30 CO).

3. Appellant asked for a revision.
4. Bedfordale refused on the ground that supporting evidence provided by appellant did not indicate conclusively that the dispute had been dealt with to finality and could not be solved in the minor assembly.
5. Appellant now claims that Bedfordale's interpretation of Article 30 CO, is wrong and requests Synod to pronounce that:
 - a. the Classis Church erred in deciding not to deal with the appeal;
 - b. Bedfordale's grounds for doing so are invalid.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. It is disappointing that this appeal was received too late to allow proper preparation and evaluation by delegates before Synod commenced. This is especially so because the matters raised in the appeal took place in the latter part of 1988, some 18 months prior to Synod.
2. The appellant errs in his interpretation that Bedfordale did not deal with the appeal. Bedfordale's reply, dated 15th Sept, 1988, states that his appeal was dealt with in detail, but could not be upheld. This is further confirmed in the correspondence of 8th Nov, 1988 which indicates that Bedfordale:
 - a. appointed a committee which made a thorough study of the matter;
 - b. conducted a lengthy discussion on the appeal before coming to a decision.
 Bedfordale did deal with the appeal but could not uphold it.
3. Bedfordale contributes to confusion by responding to appellants request "to admit" with a reply that the appeal cannot be "upheld".
4. The matter has had extensive attention by the Consistories of Launceston and Bedfordale, as well as the Church Visitors. The claim that it has not been dealt with by Bedfordale as Classis Church is incorrect.
5. Bedfordale correctly interprets Article 30 CO, to mean that everything possible must be done to resolve a dispute in a minor assembly before appealing to a major assembly. Appellant failed to produce evidence that this had been done and that a "stalemate" situation existed making an appeal necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

Not to accede to the appeal.

ADOPTED

Elders J Eikelboom and J VanderRos do not participate in the vote since the appeal concerns their churches.

ARTICLE 106

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 2 presents its report. After one round of discussion the Committee withdraws it for further consideration. (See *Acts*, Article 118)

ARTICLE 107
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF SINGAPORE

Committee 4 presents its proposal. Two rounds of discussion take place. The following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 10.h : Report by deputies, Section P.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave deputies the following mandate:
 - “to instruct the deputies to investigate this church thoroughly to discern whether or not this church is a true church according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession. Special attention is to be given to the distinctives of the Protestant Reformed doctrines (viz. covenant and free offer of the gospel) and to report to the next Synod”;
 - “to investigate and evaluate the influence of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America (PRCA) in the ERCS”;
 - “to inform the church membership about this congregation in Singapore”;
 - “to authorise the deputies to send delegates to visit these churches en route to the EPCI and the FCS”.
2. The idea that deputies visit ERCS in combination with proposed visits to Scotland and Ireland in January 1988 proved impracticable for the deputies concerned. It was, however, possible to arrange a visit coinciding with Reverend and sister K Bruning’s return from Europe to Australia in September 1988, and brother J A Swarts joined Reverend Bruning at that time for a five day visit to these churches. It was made quite plain to us that the ERCS very much appreciated the interest shown by the PRCA in their decision to send deputies.
3. Synod 1987 directed that special attention be given to the distinctives of the PRCA with whom the ERCS has full sister relations. The PRCA hold to a particular view of the covenant. According to this view the covenant promises are for the elect only and not for all who are baptised. On the basis of this view one cannot say that covenant children who die in infancy are saved. Article 17 of the First Head of the Canons of Dort, they say, is not a statement that such children are saved but an instruction to God fearing parents not to doubt. (Refer “Believers and their Seed”, Herman Hoeksema, Chapter 11). The deputies also lament that the so-called distinctives are not all that distinct.
4. The deputies give a valuable overview of the origins and background history of the ERCS, “a story of the sovereign leading of God of a people who were once not a people but are now the people of God ...”
The ERCS was instituted on the 24th January 1982, with 102 founding members.
5. The deputies also give a valuable description of the present day ERCS as well as its church-life. At present there are two congregations, namely, the one instituted in January 1982 which is now known as the “First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore” and a second congregation instituted on 6th September, 1987 known as the “Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church.”

6. The deputies returned in their report to the question of the influence of the PRCA. The ERCS is obviously very thankful for the contribution of the PRCA in leading them to the reformed faith, in training their ministers, in providing literature and tracts for Bible study and evangelism. Hence they value their sister-relations with the PRCA and generally cherish the contact they have with them. At the same time the ERCS aims to be an independent federation. It sees its task in Singapore and adjacent regions and welcomes contacts with churches such as ourselves and with any church that serves God according to truth as revealed in His infallible Word. This does mean that differences have to be discussed.
7. The deputies end with some useful observations/conclusions which are as follows:
 - a. there can be no doubt that our Lord who gathers His church has led these people from the worship of pagan gods to the Reformed Faith, and that the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore wholeheartedly desire to serve God according to scriptures and the reformed confessions, namely the Three Forms of Unity;
 - b. the congregations are active students of God's Word and zealous in their task of bringing others to the Reformed Faith which they have come to love as the Way of Truth;
 - c. problems relating to what one ought/ought not to do on Sundays, hymns versus psalms, life or term elders, birth control and family planning are vigorously studied and debated so that in all areas God's will may reign in the lives of His subjects. We see evidence of ongoing reformation;
 - d. neither the emissaries from the PRCA nor the ministers presently serving the two congregations have made an issue of a particular covenantal view. The churches have not adopted the "Declaration of Principles" of the PRCA and it would be true to say that the content and background to the Principles are virtually unknown to all except the ministers who received their theological training in America;
 - e. as a result of their theological training in America and perhaps also due to earlier presbyterian influence both ministers do adhere to and strongly defend the distinctively PRCA view of the covenant. However, they do not hold this view as binding, and in the past members of our Canadian sister churches have been members of the ERCS;
 - f. the ERCS values its sister-relations with the PRCA and would liaise with these churches before entering into any formal relationship with the FRCA. It also believes that any expression of unity should be based on true unity and hence differences like the ones that appear to exist should be thoroughly discussed first;
 - g. from our meeting with representatives of the ERCS there can be no doubt that they would welcome continuing contact and discussions.
8. Finally, the deputies come to their recommendations which are as follows:
 - a. that Synod express its gratitude to the ERCS for the welcome and the assistance extended to its delegates;
 - b. that Synod discharges deputies appointed by Synod Albany and appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 1. to offer whatever assistance can be given to help the ERCS to be and remain reformed;
 2. to prepare a paper for the ERCS on how we see the covenant with

the offer to discuss with them this and other distinctive Protestant Reformed Theology.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The report of deputies gives a wealth of information; shows how the contacts with the ERCS intensify, also by means of visits from our members; and demonstrates that we should concentrate on such contacts.
2. This present report of deputies does not come with a final investigation and evaluation of the ERCS to discern whether or not this is a true and faithful church according to Article 29, BC. Thus this report should be seen as an interim one. The present and the previous valuable reports should be used in coming to a final evaluation of these churches. Thus the mandate to investigate the ERCS should be renewed. If deputies find that they cannot finalise this mandate for the next Synod, then they should report on progress made only.
3. The investigation and evaluation of the influence of the PRCA in the ERCS has been useful, but is also not finalised. The mandate to continue to discuss their sister-relation with the PRCA and its influence on the ERCS should be renewed.
4. Our church membership has become well aware of the ERCS. The interest in God's church-gathering work there should be maintained by periodic updates in our church-magazine.
5. The visits to the ERCS by our deputies and other members have been useful. These should continue.
6. Seeing that this 1990 Synod has decided to concentrate on contacts with churches which are geographically close to us and for whom we feel responsibility, it is good to be prepared to develop the contact by whatever means in order to encourage the ERCS to be and to remain reformed.
7. Seeing that the relation between the two ERCS have not even been formalised, and seeing that there are but two (missionary) churches in Singapore, it will be necessary and good to discuss with them their views on coming to sister-relations, or possibly, a working-relation with them in which we accommodate our rules for sister-relations to their situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank the deputies for their work done, and to discharge them.
2. To renew the mandate that deputies investigate thoroughly this church to ascertain whether it is a true and faithful church, according to our confessions.
3. To continue to discuss with them their sister-relations with the PRCA, and any other relations/contacts with other third parties.
4. To prepare for the ERCS a paper on how we see the "covenant and election" together with the offer to discuss this with them.
5. To be prepared to develop the contacts by visits, and whatever other help requested so that the ERCS is encouraged to be and to remain reformed.
6. To discuss with the ERCS their views on coming to sister-relations, or possibly, a type of working-relation (cf. Consideration 7).
7. To ask the deputies to issue periodic updates about the ERCS.
8. To report to the next Synod on progress made.

ADOPTED

Synod then adjourns for lunch.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 108 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 149:4.

ARTICLE 109 THE WORD "CHRISTIAN" IN THE APOSTLES' CREED

Committee 4 presents both a majority and minority report. After two rounds of discussion the majority report is proposed as follows:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 8.i : Kelmscott - appeal against Article 100.D.2. of Synod 1987.

ADMISSIBILITY

This is a request for revision of a Synod decision, Article 33 CO, and is therefore admissible.

OBSERVATIONS

1. The Church of Kelmscott is convinced that the word "Christian" is an important, if not an essential part of this Article and should be included in the adopted text.
2. As grounds the Church of Kelmscott mentions:
 - a. "Although it is correct that the received text (*textus receptus*) does not contain the equivalent of the word "Christian" (Observation B.3.a of Article 100, *Acts* 1987) the Dutch as well as the German text have included it ever since the time of the Reformation.
 - b. At least one Reformed scholar (Prof. J. Kamphuis - "De Reformatie" Volume 55, 47) has presented evidence that the inclusion of the word involved more than a simple "double translation of the word 'catholicam'". (Obs.B.d.b. Article 100, *Acts* 1987). Luther as well as the authors of the Catechism of Emden 1554 apparently wanted to stress the central significance of the primacy of Christ as Head of the Church. Eliminating the word "Christian" from the text must therefore be considered a loss, especially in light of today's prevailing "climate" of horizontalism which does not honour Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church.
 - c. Synod 1987 reasoned that:

Scripture speaks of "the churches of God", not of "the Christian Church". The creeds should follow the language of Scripture consistently." (Observation B.3.f of Article 100, *Acts* 1987).

It would appear that this Synod followed a tradition rather than giving adequate attention to Scripture.

Although it is correct that Scripture does not speak of "the Christian Church", as such the "language of Scripture" abounds with evidence that the Church is of Christ. In light of: Matthew 16:18; *Acts* 20:28

(following the alternate reading, "church of the Lord"); Romans 16:16, Ephesians 2:22, 4:11-13, 5:21-23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5; (a.o.) the Consistory is convinced that it is wise to retain the word "Christian" as it gives expression to the fact that the Church belongs to Christ, her Head.

- d. We should not forget that as long as the Free Reformed Churches have been in Australia we have confessed "a holy, catholic, Christian Church".
Our sister churches in Canada have adopted a text of the Apostles' Creed which retained the word "Christian", after considerable debate."

CONSIDERATIONS

1. As regards ground (a) Synod 1987 rejected this point (ref. *Acts*, Article 100 under B.3.b and C.3).
2. As regards ground (b) Luther time and again shows that his use of the term "Christliche" is not related to the primacy of Christ as Head of the Church, but to the "Christenheit" (Shorter Catechism, Larger Catechism), employing the meaning known in the Middle Ages. The Catechism of Emden (1554) also refers to the "Christenheit" being the Church (ecclesia). John Calvin, in his Genevan Catechism (1542) speaks thus: "Je croy la sainte Eglise catholique." It is thus difficult to agree with Kamphuis that more is involved than a double translation of the word "catholicam", or that the omission of the word "Christian" "must therefore be considered a loss ..."
3. Although the expression "Christian Church" is not unscriptural, Scripture primarily speaks of the Church of God. The creeds should follow the language of Scripture consistently, rather than follow a tradition which was introduced centuries later.
4.
 - a. In the English services the churches have used firstly the old Psalter Hymnal, then the 1961 edition of "Book of Praise", so that until at least 1972 the word "Christian" did not appear in the material used. Thus it is incorrect to state that "as long as the FRC have been in Australia we have confessed 'a holy, catholic, Christian church.'"
 - b. The decisions taken by the Canadian churches are not binding in Australia, although uniformity would be a desirable aim.
5. In summary, the Church of Kelmscott has supplied no valid grounds for its request "to reverse the decision of Synod Albany 1987 (*Acts*, Article 100, D.2)".

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide that it does not accede to the request of the Church of Kelmscott.

ADOPTED

As a result the minority proposal lapses.

ARTICLE 110

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA

Committee 1 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

- Agenda items: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section E
10.t : Deputies Supplementary Report - paragraphs 1, 2, 3.5 and Appendix 1

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies received an invitation to attend the 38th General Assembly of the PCK, held September 1988. Deputies responded with fraternal greetings and sent information on recent developments within the FRCA.
2. Some of the decisions made at the 38th Assembly were conveyed to our deputies by the PCK Fraternal Relations Committee.
3. Response was received to greetings extended to the PCK General Assembly held September 1989.
4. Reverend Dr S G Hur as president of the Korea Theological Seminary provided information which was also sent to all our churches.
5. Deputies report extensively on chapters 34 and 35 added by the PCK to their Westminster Confession in 1983, and conclude that these can be seen as (34) an enrichment of the Westminster Standards, and (35) strongly founded on the Scriptures.
6. Developments within the PCK:
 - a. From the report by DpBBK to Synod Leeuwarden 1990 our deputies learned that in 1988 a crisis situation threatened the Kosin College at Pusan. The 1980 addition of a medical faculty created considerable problems for students and management which were overcome only after the 1988 Assembly decided to move the Seminary to Incheon. The Seminary has now been detached from the College;
 - b. The 1988 Assembly also decided to recommend to the churches to have the catechism preached in the afternoon services
 - c. The teachings of professor Ahn concerning baptism with the Holy Spirit were rejected by Seminary and churches;
 - d. It has not been possible as yet to replace the retired missionary professors Batteau and Gootjes.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Deputies' report is limited in scope and thus reflects the difficulty in maintaining the sister-relations.
2. It is a matter for gratitude that the evaluation of their additions to the Westminster Confession clearly shows that the PCK desire to express their Reformed faith in obedience to the Scriptures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To appoint new deputies with the following instructions:
 - a. to intensify efforts to improve the exchange of information between our churches;
 - b. to continue the sister-relations under the adopted rules;
 - c. to recognise the Scriptural content of Chapters 34 and 35 as added by

the PCK to the Westminster Confession and inform the PCK accordingly.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 111
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Committee 1 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section F
 10.i : Deputies Supplementary Report - paragraph 2

OBSERVATIONS

1. The sister-relations were continued in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. Deputies refer to a meeting of two of their members with the RCN(L) deputies (Deputaten Buitenlandse kerken or DpBBK) during their visit to the Netherlands in February 1988. In this meeting discussions centred on (a) rules for contacts, (b) the mutual relationships with the FCS, EPCI and RPCI, (c) contacts with PCEA, matters pertaining to the ICRC and developments with the RCNZ.
3. A letter was received from DpBBK on the subject of forms of, and rules for relations with churches abroad, setting out their revised proposals and requesting a reply. At an earlier stage deputies had already written about their reservations over some of these proposals, referring in particular to the suggestion that there could be different rules for different churches. The Dutch sister-churches have now proposed to do away with the form of contact known as "temporary ecclesiastical contact", and propose to create a form of contact known as "fraternal relations".
4. The deputies give a useful summary of the important decisions of the *Acts of Synod Spakenburg 1987*.
5. In their supplementary report deputies give a summary of the report of Dutch deputies to their 1990 Synod Leeuwarden.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Deputies have fulfilled their mandate.
2. From the correspondence with the RCN(L) and their Synod *Acts* we may gratefully conclude that these sister-churches are faithful to God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to their adopted Church Order.
3. As regards the Rules for relations with churches abroad, these are dealt with in Synod's decisions on the general activities of deputies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank and discharge deputies.

2. To appoint new deputies with the instruction to continue the sister-relation under the adopted rules.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 112

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA

Committee 1 presents its report and proposes:

MATERIAL

- Agenda items: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section H
10.t : Deputies Supplementary Report - paragraph 3

OBSERVATIONS

1. The sister-relations were continued in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. Deputies give a useful summary of a supplementary report received from VGKSA deputies on their 1988 Synod of Johannesburg.
3. In a letter to the 1988 Synod of the GKSA (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Africa) VGKSA deputies refer to the scriptural injunction to seek unity. They express thankfulness for GKSA's breaking ties with the GKN(S); at the same time they observe a new stumbling block on the road towards church unity in the form of GKSA's correspondence with the NGK (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken) and implore them to re-assess this situation so as to make room for closer contact with VGKSA. The GKSA Synod rejected this request, which led VGKSA to the conclusion that there would be no sense in further talks with GKSA on church unity at this moment.
4. Johannesburg Synod 1988 decided to send two delegates to the 1989 meeting of the ICRC.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Our deputies have fulfilled their mandate.
2. The available information shows that the VGKSA have remained faithful to the Word of God as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to their adopted Church Order.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 113

APPEAL - M AND T VAN DONGEN

Committee 2 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item 8.nn : M and T van Dongen - appeal against Article 82 of Synod 1987

ADMISSIBILITY

This submission presents itself as an appeal, alleging certain grounds. It is admissible in the light of Article 31 CO.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Brother and sister Van Dongen request Synod to rescind the decision of Synod 1987 *Acts*, Article 82 stating as grounds:
 - a. in view of Article 46 CO it has now become evident that the differences between the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia cannot be described as “minor points of church order and ecclesiastical practice”;
 - b. with regard to the above, we would point out that from the major differences in doctrine flows also a difference in practice. We find a brief summary of these differences in doctrine in *Information Booklet 3*, published by J Eikelboom of the Church of Bedfordale, page 15;
(Then follows a statement comparing the Three Forms of Unity to the Westminster Confession).
2. They furthermore point out the following alleged differences in practice between the FCS and ourselves as grounds for their appeal:
 - a. Article 10 CO, with which the FCS is in direct conflict, by its own admission in transcriptions of the ICRC of 1989;
 - b. Article 60 CO, regarding attestations, as opposed to membership certificates in the FCS;
 - c. Article 80 CO, which warns against lording it over each other, as opposed to the power of a presbytery in the FCS.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. When appealing a decision of an ecclesiastical assembly it is incumbent upon the appellant to “prove” such decision to “be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.”
2. Brother and sister Van Dongen allege “major differences in ”doctrine” basing these alleged differences on official material. They make no reference whatsoever to the grounds used by Synod 1987 (Article 82) which re-affirmed the FCS to be a “faithful church of the Lord”.
3. The alleged differences in practice must also be considered unsubstantiated. The burden of proof lies with the appellants to show that the alleged differences in practice are indeed major and thus would conflict with Article 46 CO. Appellants have not done so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Not to accede to the request.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 114

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD REFORMED CHURCHES OF SUMBA-SAVU-TIMOR

Committee 4 presents its report:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section G.
10.t : Deputies Supplementary Report - Section 4.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies were instructed to:
 - a. do everything possible to ensure that the exercise of these relations according to the adopted rules is fruitful;
 - b. to continue the relations as sister-churches according to the adopted rules;
 - c. to send two delegates to the 1987 Synod of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia, East Sumba-Savu.
2. Deputies report that two delegates (Reverend K Bruning and C DeMan) could attend the Synod in Mau Maru. They gave valuable information about the young bond of churches there (cf. Report).
3. At this Synod, which decided favourably to cooperate with the Musyafir churches, the delegates of the FRCA met Reverend Fangidae of the Gereja Masehi Musyafir. Deputies also received a letter from these churches, requesting us to enter into sister-relations with them. The report of the deputies gives some preliminary information to consider that request.
4. The Supplementary Report informs us that brother C DeMan at the request of our DpRCA attended their third Synod (7- 11 November 1989) at Lai Handangu. He submitted a report giving translations of the major decisions (based on their *Acts* in Indonesian) of this Synod. Again, the matters of the 'adat' and the relations with the Musyafir churches in Timor were important issues. Concerning the latter, the report relates the decision of the sister-churches of Sumba-Savu-Timor to "strengthen and extend the existing bond with the Musyafir Churches."

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The report about the sister-churches gives much information about the history and present situation in Sumba-Savu-Timor. In spite of the struggle to be and to remain reformed churches, e.g. the struggle about the 'adat', the Lord continues to gather and preserve his church on these islands.
2. The visits to the two Synods have had the desired effects of improving the exercise of sister-church relations (cf *Acts* 1987, Article 54, C.2). The needs of these churches and our close proximity to them should cause us to continue to concentrate on these sister-relations.
3. The contact established with the Musyafir Churches through the Reverend Fangidae, and the decisions of the Synods of our sister-churches in Sumba-Savu-Timor recorded in Observations 3 and 4, give sufficient reason to follow up contact with these churches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank deputies for their work and to thank brother C DeMan for his cooperation in translating decisions and *Acts* from Indonesian into English and for his work in representing our churches so that these relations could be exercised fruitfully.
2.
 - a. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches of Sumba-Savu-Timor (RCSST) in accordance with the adopted rules;
 - b. To continue the contact with the RCSST by correspondence and, where possible, visits;
 - c. To seek contact with the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor to see whether we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according to our confessions;
 - d. To gather information about the progress of the reformed activities of the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 115 ADJOURNMENT

Reverend C Bosch requests the singing of Hymn 46 and leads in prayer. Synod is adjourned until Thursday at 10.30 am. This will allow some delegates to travel to Albany for the funeral of sister G vander Wal.

FOURTEENTH DAY - Thursday, 17th May, 1990 Morning Session

ARTICLE 116 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 150:1, reading Revelation 7 and prayer. The Chairman welcomes everyone.

ARTICLE 117 ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of Monday, 14th May are adopted.

ARTICLE 118 EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Committee 2 presents its re-formulated report. After discussion the following proposal is presented:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.d : Report of deputies, pp 43,44
10.s : Supplementary report of deputies

ADMISSIBILITY

The deputies sent their report to the churches in time. The supplementary report gives information about correspondence in the period of August 1989 - April 1990.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 (*Acts* article 20) gave the following mandate to deputies for contact with the EPCA:
 - a. to comply with the request for information from the EPCA;
 - b. if the EPCA seeks membership in the ICRC, Synod instructs these deputies to investigate the EPCA and provide the deputies responsible for the ICRC with information about these churches.
2. From the report of deputies it is evident that the information requested under 1.a was given.
3. The EPCA considered that information at their Synod of September 1988. In August 1989 their clerk responded: "Our Synod is undecided as to how to proceed with further contact".
4. Fraternal greetings were sent and a copy of their *Acts* 1988 was forwarded by the EPCA to Synod.
5. It has come to our attention that in a letter to our deputies for the PCEA, Rev Jonker (the previous convener of deputies for PCEA appointed by Synod 1983 and 1985) advised that he had an encouraging meeting with four ministers of the EPCA in September 1987. He reported that the EPCA was very interested in our church life and they wished to receive information about our form of church government, the training for the ministry and our reformed schools.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Deputies have complied with their mandate to send the information requested by the EPCA in their letter dated 28th July, 1987.
2. It is not clear what EPCA's intention is regarding membership of the ICRC.
3. We have not yet complied with the later request from these churches. More information (e.g. on other contacts we have with Presbyterian churches; our reformed church government) can be given; and other information about their reformed stand can be requested. Information can also be gleaned from their *Acts* and be reported on. If the reaction from the EPCA is positive more work can be done in order to foster mutual knowledge and understanding about each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To discharge deputies.
2. To instruct new deputies to send our greetings and to provide them with the material requested via Reverend Jonker and also information about our stand in the faith, and how we strive to fulfil our mandate for the true ecumenicity.
3. If the EPCA seeks membership in the ICRC, Synod instructs deputies to investigate the EPCA.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 119
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

Committee 1 presents its report:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section D
 10.t : Deputies Supplementary Report - paragraph 5

OBSERVATIONS

1. Fraternal greetings were sent in response to an invitation to attend the 1989 Synod of Winnipeg.
2. Deputies have presented a useful overview of decisions taken by Synod 1989, related to - among others - the Theological College at Hamilton, the Book of Praise, Relations with other churches (OPC) and relations with churches abroad.
3. Deputies ask Synod to instruct the new deputies to examine the revisions in the Book of Praise excluding those made to the Church Order and Hymn section.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. In our relations with the CanRC there is evidence that the correspondence has been fruitful.
2. The available information shows that the CanRC have remained faithful to the Word of God as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to their adopted Church Order.
3. The examination of the changes in the Book of Praise is too heavy a work load for these deputies, and Synod should consider appointing other deputies for this task.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To appoint new deputies with the instruction to continue the sister-relations under the adopted rules.
3. To appoint deputies for the examination of the changes in the Book of Praise excluding these made to the Church Order and Hymn section.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 120
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF UGANDA

Committee 4 presents its report. After three rounds of discussion the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section N

OBSERVATIONS

1. No contact has been made with PCU.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Synod 1987 records that no contact with PCU occurred.
2. *Acts* 1990 Article 58 records a decision to phase out contacts with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Synod decide to cease further contact with the PCU.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 121

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

REFORMED CHURCH OF JAPAN

Committee 4 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following amended proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 10.h Deputies report - Section M

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies have sent 2 letters.
2. Letters have not received responses.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Synod 1987 records that there was no response from the RCJ to our previous correspondence pertaining to the membership of RES (now REC).
2. Despite 2 letters having been sent, no response has been forthcoming.
3. *Acts* 1990, Article 58 records:
 - a. to limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad to the minimum level necessary for us to remain acquainted with their situation ...;
 - b. to phase out contact with churches with whom we appear to be making no progress.
4. Japan is relatively close to the PCK.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synod decide to cease further contracts with the RCJ.
2. To inform the PCK of this decision.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 122
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TAIWAN

Committee 4 presents its report. After a round of discussion the Committee withdraws it for further consideration. (See *Acts*, Article 135).
Synod adjourns for lunch.

ARTICLE 123
REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 150:3.

ARTICLE 124
RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Committee 2 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following amended proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.aa : Letter from the Church of Byford
 10.h,t : Report and Supplementary Report DpRCA

ADMISSIBILITY

The report of Deputies and the letter of the church of Byford are submitted in accordance with the *Rules for Synods*

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave deputies no mandate regarding the RPCI.
2. Representatives of our deputies however, visited this church in Ireland during their visit to the EPCI. Being reformed in doctrine and presbyterian in church government has given rise to their name, Reformed Presbyterian.
3. The acquaintance visit was short but a lot of information was received. Deputies have not been able to study this material. Recently deputies received a letter from RPCI containing further information (see Supplementary Report, Item 10).
4. Deputies recommend to investigate the RPCI "to see whether it should be recognised as a federation of churches which is true and faithful, as that is confessed in the Belgic Confession (Arts 27-29) and the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 21)".
5. The Church of Byford requests Synod not to follow this recommendation, since "within our relatively small bond of Churches manpower is a limited resource. Therefore further meaningful investigation is beyond our scope at the present time".

CONSIDERATIONS

1. From deputies report it becomes clear that the acquaintance visit was the first

official contact which our churches had with the RPCI. This initial contact is promising. The RPCI claims to take their ecumenical relations very seriously.

2. Both federations in Ireland, viz. EPCI and RPCI are members of the ICRC and its constitution encourages us to acquaint ourselves with their churches.
3. The distinctiveness of the RPCI is that it adheres to the "purity of worship" and does not take part in political activities. It is more a rural and traditional church, whilst the EPCI is more a city church, contending with contemporary issues.
4. There is a yearly conference between the EPCI and the RPCI; the relation is official, following the purpose of the ICRC but at this stage the RPCI is not prepared to make this contact any closer; the 'purity of worship' seems to be the main barrier.
5. Other evidence of close contact between both churches is that some students from the EPCI study at the 'Theological Hall' of the RPCI. Regular pulpit exchanges also occur between the 2 federations.
6. Our Dutch sister churches have had contact with the RPCI since their Synod 1981, and visited them in 1984. Much information can be gleaned from reports to Synods of our sister churches in the Netherlands.
7. Our Synod made a decision on limiting the mandate of deputies for churches abroad regarding contacts with churches which are geographically far away, (see *Acts* 1990, Article 58). In the light of this decision our contact with the RPCI is not our first priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

1. not to accede to the recommendation of the church of Byford, but to keep the contact at a low level;
2. that deputies be given a mandate to study all the material received and the reports from our sister churches in the Netherlands. If necessary to ask the RPCI for more information in order to commence investigation to see whether the RPCI may be recognised as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ;
3. to report to Synod concerning progress made.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 125

TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

Committee 4 presents:

MATERIAL

- Agenda items: 10.k : Deputies report
 10.l : Audit of books of Deputies ad Articles 18, 19 CO

OBSERVATIONS

1. The deputies received the following mandate (1987 *Acts*, Article 84.D):
 2. a. assess the churches \$30.00 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton;

- b. that deputies be charged with the collection of these funds from the churches and with forwarding the same to the College;
 - c. encourage the churches to continue to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theologische Universiteit at Kampen;
 - d. to charge deputies to continue correspondence with Kampen to obtain necessary information and documentation;
 - e. instruct deputies to continue publishing all relevant news about the training for the ministry so that our church members may receive a good understanding of the need to support those colleges and the training of the students;
 - f. instruct deputies to continue their efforts to support theological students and to ask the churches to provide funds for financial support.
3. That deputies be instructed to investigate the possibilities of working towards our own theological training and the facilities required for such an undertaking.
 4. That deputies report their findings to next Synod.
2. Reports received from the Board of Governors provided a regular flow of information concerning developments in and around the Hamilton College. The deputies highlight some of them:
 - a. the special course leading to a "Diploma of Theological Studies" as approved by Synod 1986 of the Canadian Reformed Churches has been put into place (ref. *Acts Synod 1986*, report on the Diploma Course of Theological Studies, page 198);
 - b. two new professors were appointed by Synod 1989 of the CanRC. Dr N H Gootjes is due to take Dr J Faber's place as professor of dogmatology when the latter retires on 31st December, 1989. Dr J DeJong has been appointed to the department of diaconiology and ecclesiology as from May 1990, just prior to the retirement of Dr K Deddens. That the vacancies could be filled by these two brothers will be a cause for deep gratitude.
 - c. despite conscientious endeavours by the Finance and Property Committee of the College we have not been able to show the video tape of a "College Evening at Hamilton" to our congregations. However, brother J G VanDooren was very helpful in showing his own tape of the college when he visited the Australian churches during the winter of 1988.
 The deputies report their disappointment that the financial support decided on by Synod 1987 did not materialise as expected. The deputies "had expected the churches to respond as from 1st January, 1988. However, after several attempts by deputies in their correspondence with the churches, it would appear a sad reflection on the strength of the bond of churches when we have to report that the churches did not live up to their promise."
 3. Deputies reminded the churches of their responsibilities towards "Kampen" through regular collections.
 4. Pertinent data from information received from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" were passed on to the membership through four items in *Una Sancta* (Volumes XXXV/21, XXXVI/2,3,5). The deputies also publicised the need for ministers. Some young men have heeded this. They are now in the process of

preparing themselves for training overseas. At this juncture, there are no requests for financial support.

5. The deputies give a statement of receipts and payments - 1/7/87 to 30/6/89. The opening balance was \$18328.20 and the balance as at 30/06/89 was \$3473.28.
6. The deputies have commenced "to investigate the possibilities of working towards our own theological training and the facilities required for such an undertaking". They had to address the following basic considerations:
 - a. spread over the face of Australia there are now seven congregations counting some 2600 members including 5 or 6 ministers on active service and 2 emeriti. The question arises: is this resource base broad enough to support a properly accredited institution which will meet the requirements of the churches?
 - b. the sister churches in Canada and the U.S., spread over an equally vast continent, have been singularly blessed when, in faith, they established the Hamilton College. That College has a capable faculty and excellent facilities, supported by the churches in Australia. Yet, its very considerable resources are under-utilised at present, and are likely to be so for some time to come;
 - c. a system of itinerant students depends on regular availability of tutor ministers. The workloads of our ministers are such that it may realistically be queried whether their consistories would be happy to make adequate blocks of their ministers' time available for the purpose;
 - d. another weighty consideration is that the student's place and involvement in an established institution of academic studies normally gives him the optimum full-time support he is entitled to;
 - e. it would appear to be a good Scriptural stewardship to utilise the Hamilton resources to their fullest extent, given also the language, and to monitor the Australian resource base as well as student numbers in view of longer term requirements.
7. The deputies come with the following recommendations:
 - a. to assess the churches \$35 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton, as from 1st January, 1990;
 - b. to discharge deputies, and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 1. continue our combined support for the Theological College of the CanRC at Hamilton, and to request the churches to forward \$35 per communicant member annually for this cause;
 2. collect funds for Hamilton from the churches and forward them to the college;
 3. encourage the churches to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theological Seminary/University in Korea and/or Kampen;
 4. continue correspondence with both Hamilton and Kampen in order to maintain contact and to obtain information;
 5. publish relevant news about the training for the ministry so that church members understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 6. arrange the support of theological students whenever needed in

- accordance with Article 19 CO and the stipulated rules for this fund;
7. alert the churches to the requirements and the possibilities for an Australian based theological training in the light of changing circumstances;
 8. The Church of Launceston reports that the books for the Training for the Ministry have been audited for the time-period of 1987-1989. The books were found to be in good order.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The deputies have indeed fulfilled their mandate for which they deserve the thanks of Synod.
2. It is cause for thanks that faithful men were found able and willing to replace Dr J Faber and Dr K Deddens.
3. It is indeed sad that the pledged support made in September 1987 was not begun in 1988 by all churches. The newly recommended amount of \$35 per communicant member should begin 1st July, 1990 when the fiscal year begins for the churches. This gives the churches time to budget for this rise in our donations.
4. The deputies rightly point out the difficulties and unnecessary duplication in working toward our own training for the ministry at this moment. However, it is still good that the churches have a long-range outlook, planning and preparing now already for the future. One matter that could receive attention is the beginning of a library for such training for the ministry, since this is always an expensive item and needs planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides to thank the present deputies, to discharge them, and to give new deputies the mandate to:

1. continue our combined support for the Theological College of the CanRC at Hamilton, and to request the churches to forward \$35 per communicant member annually for this cause, starting 1st July, 1990;
2. collect funds for Hamilton from the churches and forward them to the college;
3. encourage the churches to hold regular collections for the maintenance of the Theological Seminary/University in Korea and/or Kampen;
4. continue correspondence with both Hamilton and Kampen in order to maintain contact and to obtain information;
5. publish relevant news about the training for the ministry so that church members understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
6. arrange the support of theological students whenever needed in accordance with Article 19 CO and the stipulated rules for this fund;
7. alert the churches to the requirements and the possibilities for an Australian based theological training in the light of changing circumstances;
8. appoint deputies from Perth, Western Australia to investigate the possibility of finding a facility to house some books.

Synod also decides to appoint a church to audit the books of these deputies.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 126

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY OF SYNOD AND THEIR SUPERVISION

Committee 4 presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.e : Archives
10.f : supervision of the Archives and Library

OBSERVATIONS

1. The church of Kelmescott reports on the discharge of their duties for the archives and Synodical library. They delegated this task to brother J Numan whose letter to the Kelmescott consistory is passed on to Synod.
2. Since previous Synod a number of Synod deputies have borrowed various items from the archives and library relating to the particular subjects for which they were deputies. In most cases these were returned, while some had to be replaced.
3. Synod 1987 (Article 42.D.4) instructed deputies to continue the search for the missing minutes of closed sessions of Synods 1964-1980. Despite further investigations, the missing minutes have not been located and there seems to be no benefit in continuing efforts to locate them.
4. Synod 1987 (Article 43.D.2) instructed deputies "to draw up an independent accession register for the contents of archives and library." This has been done. In the process the archivist took the liberty to translate the tables of contents for each Synod into English (contents lists for the years 1954 through 1972 were in Dutch). A complete printout, as well as the computer disk, have been forwarded to Synod.
5. Brother J Numan comes with some considerations for Synod. He writes : "every Synod appoints deputies to check the Synod's archives. To do this reasonably thoroughly takes two men several hours. This task can be speeded up considerably if the deputies appointed for this task were to place each Synod's documents into large, labeled envelopes and to put their seal on them. Future deputies would then only need to check the contents of those envelopes which had been opened subsequent to the seal having been placed on them." His second consideration is that a "number of the documents, particularly those on flimsy paper, written in ink or pencil and of earlier years, are becoming tattered and some are barely legible. It may be worth investigating the cost of putting the archived documents onto microfilm. This would have the additional advantage of safeguarding the archives in case of fire, or vandalism through a 'break and entry'." Lastly, he considers that "as the files of progressive Synods are becoming larger it would be advantageous to compile a subject/keyword index of the contents, and to update this with each successive Synod. The cost would be minimal because it can be done on "PCF", a public domain database file (IBM compatible)."
6. The Synodical archivist and librarian makes the following recommendations:
 - a. to declare the "missing" minutes for Synods 1964-80 lost and to discontinue efforts at finding them;
 - b. to instruct the deputies appointed for the inspection of the archives and library of Synods to insert the archives' documents in large, appropriately labeled envelopes and to seal them after having inspected the archives;

- c. to instruct deputies appointed for the care and supervision of the archives and library of Synods:
 1. to investigate the cost of putting the archives' documents onto microfilm and of buying a microfilm projector;
 2. to compile a subject/keyword index of the archives' contents.
7. The church of Byford reports that its inspection of the archives and library shows that all has been immaculately kept.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The work of the Synodical archivist and librarian shows diligence and care. Appreciation for these careful labours should be expressed by Synod.
2. The registration of the contents of the archives and library on computer is a great benefit. This mandate has been well done.
3. The considerations of the archivist are reasonable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank the church of Kelmscott, and especially brother J Numan, for the excellent care of the archives and library, and to discharge them.
2. To adopt the recommendations of the archivist:
 - a. to discontinue efforts to find the "missing" minutes for Synods 1964-80;
 - b. to instruct the deputies appointed for the inspection of the archives and library of Synods to insert the archives' documents in large, appropriately labeled envelopes and to seal them after having inspected the archives;
 - c. to instruct deputies appointed for the care of the archives and library of Synods:
 1. to investigate the cost of putting the archives' documents on to microfilm and of buying a microfilm projector;
 2. to compile a subject/keyword index of the archives' contents.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 127

BEDFORDALE - APPEAL AGAINST ARTICLE 82 OF SYNOD 1987

Committee 2 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following is proposed:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.a : Bedforddale - appeal against Article 82 of Synod 1987
 8.w : J Bijl - contact with FCS and PCEA

ADMISSIBILITY

Item 8.a is an appeal of a minor assembly concerning certain decisions of a previous Synod. It is admissible.

OBSERVATIONS

1. a. The Church of Bedforddale appeals against the following decision contained in Recommendation #2 (*Acts* 1987, Article 82):

to reaffirm the statement made by the 1983 Synod that the Free Church of Scotland is a faithful Church of the Lord.

Bedfordale states as its grounds that:

“this decision conflicts with previous and concurrent decisions of Synods, namely Article 67, Launceston 1985 and Article 115, Albany 1987. As such it is in conflict with the Church Order that “all things ought to be done decently and in order.””

- b. In his letter J Bijl supports this appeal.
2. In support of its appeal Bedfordale makes reference to various decisions of Synod 1983 re the PCEA as well as to reports of Dutch Deputies and to papers and reports. Referring to these, Bedfordale suggests that the differences between ourselves and Presbyterian churches are not minor. Furthermore Bedfordale is of the opinion that “these differences are not local but rather global.”
3. Bedfordale states that the four areas of concern expressed by Synod 1987, (i.e., fencing of the Lord’s table, pulpit exchanges, children in the covenant, the problem of adherents) regarding the PCEA are also present with regard to the FCS.
4. Bedfordale also alleges that:

“the decisions of our Synods are conflicting in that some Presbyterian churches such as Ireland and Scotland have been recognised as “true and faithful”, while Synod 1987 could not come to the same conclusion as regards the PCEA even though these churches are in essence the same.””

Bedfordale suggests, that “this not only confuses our church members who perceive in this a double standard but must also appear inconsistent to the Presbyterian churches.”

5. Bedfordale also appeals against decisions of Synod 1987 Article 82, Recommendations 3 and 4:

“to instruct deputies to move in the direction of becoming sister-churches with the FCS;”
“to instruct deputies not to implement sister-church relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon.”

As grounds for this Bedfordale states that:

“these decisions can be interpreted to mean that deputies themselves could make the decision to implement sister-relations without further reference to Synod.”

6. Bedfordale asks Synod:

To rescind these decisions and instruct deputies in a manner leaving no doubt that decisions of such nature can be made only by the churches in Synod, after consideration of all the materials reported by the deputies.
7. Furthermore Bedfordale appeals against the decision of Synod 1987 contained in Recommendation #5 of Article 82:

“in the meantime, temporary ecclesiastical contact is to be established with the FCS.”

As grounds for this Bedfordale states:

- a. this recommendation came from Synod itself, it not having been part of deputies’ report circulated to the churches prior to the Synod;

- b. this manner of decision making is clearly against the Church Order which requires that everything must be done decently and in order;
 - c. it is against Synod rules in that churches did not have prior opportunity to discuss the implications of establishing a new form of contact;
 - d. this decision is not in harmony with earlier directions given to deputies to study the matter of forms and rules for inter-church relations in consultation with sister-churches.
8. Bedfordale, in requesting Synod to rescind this decision asks Synod: to decide not to consider or introduce another form of inter-church relations until its deputies have concluded their work and made suitable recommendations.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Bedfordale's submission is presented as both an appeal and a request to "rescind the decisions subject of this appeal." It must therefore be considered in the light of Article 31 CO.
2. It is incumbent upon the appellant therefore to show that it has been wronged by the decisions of Synod 1987, Article 82, in that these decisions conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.
3. Synod 1987 after considering that the marks of the true church are indeed present with the FCS (*Acts* 1987, Article 82, Consideration 5) decided:
 - a. to reaffirm "the statements made by the 1983 Synod that the Free Church of Scotland is a faithful church of the Lord." (Article 75, Recommendation 2);
 - b. to instruct Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to move in the direction of becoming sister-churches with the FCS (Recommendation 3);
 - c. to instruct "its deputies not to implement sister-relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon." (Recommendation 4);
 - d. "in the meantime, Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact is to be established with the FCS with the following rules" (the rules are then listed).
4. In its appeal Bedfordale does not show that these decisions conflict with the Word of God.
5. The decision regarding the FCS and the PCEA have their own historical context and must be judged accordingly. Synod 1983 had already declared the FCS "a faithful church of the Lord". Whilst Synod 1985 considered this decision had been made in haste, Synod 1987 could reaffirm the decision. We should keep in mind that the Word of God requires us to keep our word unless there is a very good reason to change it. (Psalm 15:4; Matthew 5:36) Synod 1987 did not offer a sister-relationship however, since, a.o., the FCS had difficulty accepting the rules and because of items of mutual concern. Synod 1987 was concerned with the re-affirmation or repeal of the 1983 decision rather than an initial declaration concerning a "true and faithful" church. It established a relationship of Temporary Contact which was to be actively used to come to sister-relations. In all this, Synod acted in an orderly way and thus the appeal of Bedfordale cannot be sustained.
6. Bedfordale's contention that Recommendations 3 and 4 of *Acts* 1987, Article 82:

can be interpreted to mean that deputies themselves could make the

decision to implement sister-relations without further reference to Synod

cannot be sustained. The recommendations speak of "moving in the direction" of becoming sister-churches with the FCS and "not to implement sister-relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon." It is clear that in such an important matter a Synod would have to make a final decision.

7. Bedforddale's contention that it was not within the jurisdiction of Synod 1987 to decide on the matter of a temporary form of ecclesiastical contact must be considered unfounded. It is consistent with the decision of Synod 1985, Article 74. It is clear that the decision to offer a form of temporary ecclesiastical contact to the FCS was made with due regard for the good order in the churches.
8. In the light of Consideration 6 (above) the allegation that "this manner of decision making is clearly against the Church Order" cannot be maintained.
9. With this J Bijl's letter has also been answered.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide not to grant Bedforddale's appeal.

ADOPTED

Evening Session

ARTICLE 128

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Hymn 1B. The Chairman welcomes everyone, including the visitors. The advisory Committees report on their progress.

ARTICLE 129

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of Tuesday, 15th May, 1990 are Adopted with the exception of Article 114.

ARTICLE 130

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Committee 2 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the committee withdraws it for further consideration. (See *Acts*, Article 139)

ARTICLE 131

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Committee 3 presents its report and it is placed into discussion.

ARTICLE 132

ADJOURNMENT

Elder L Woonings requests the singing of Psalm 85:3,4, and leads in closing prayer. Synod is adjourned.

FIFTEENTH DAY - Friday, 18th May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 133

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with singing Hymn 2:1, reading Revelation 8:1-5 and prayer. The Chairman extends a welcome to everyone.

ARTICLE 134

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The discussion is continued and suspended after one round. (See *Acts*, Article 142)

ARTICLE 135

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD **REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF TAIWAN**

Committee 4 presents its report. An alternative proposal is tabled. After discussion the Committee's proposal is Defeated. The alternative proposal is presented as follows:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 10.h : Deputies Report - Section L

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies have had no communication from the RPCT since 1987. Previous contact has also been scarce.
2. Deputies report that DpBBK : "are investigating those churches as well as the division between the presbyteries. It would be wise to consult with them and to await their report so that we do not duplicate our efforts".
3. Deputies recommend to renew the mandate given by Synod 1987.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. DpBBK propose to visit Taiwan in 1990/91.
2. Duplication of effort is undesirable. (*Acts* 1990, Article 58)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

1. to discharge deputies;
2. to instruct new deputies to consult with DpBBK and to await their report;

3. to try to re-establish exchange of letters with RPCT.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 136

BIBLE TRANSLATION

Committee 1 presents its re-formulated report and a round of discussion takes place. (See *Acts*, Article 138). Synod is adjourned.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 137

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with singing Psalm 93:4. Elder F J Veldhuis is absent due to health reasons.

ARTICLE 138

BIBLE TRANSLATION

Committee 1 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following is proposed:

MATERIAL

Agenda items:

- 8.n : P 'tHart - Bible translation
- 8.o : M Berkelaar - Bible translation
- 8.p : Albany - Bible translation
- 8.mm : M and T van Dongen - Bible translation
- 10.a : Deputies Report

ADMISSIBILITY

All items are admissible, since they deal with the report from deputies for Bible translations.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies were given the following mandate :
 - a. to investigate once more the NIV and NASB and to investigate the New KJV to see if any of these translations would be better than the RSV. The reports of previous deputies and the reports of deputies of our Canadian sister-churches can be consulted and used for this investigation;
 - b. to use as criteria:
 1. faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts;
 2. readability and suitability for worship services, for instruction and for memorisation;
 3. consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures;
 - c. continue to monitor developments regarding the use of the RSV within the churches, in cooperation with similar committees in sister-churches;

- d. monitor further work of the Translation Committee of the RSV;
 - e. maintain archives of relevant matter regarding Bible translations;
 - f. report to next Synod.
2. Deputies addressed the following matters:
- a. the text of the OT and NT;
 - b. method of translating;
 - c. criteria for suitability;
 - d. preliminary report on the 1990 edition of the RSV;
 - e. the NASB;
 - f. the NKJV;
 - g. the NIV.
3. As regards point 2.a deputies conclude:
- a. do not elevate the Byzantine text-type as the Textus Receptus (received or accepted text);
 - b. do not demote the Byzantine text-type as too late, too full, too sub-standard as has been done in the past decades since Westcott and Hort's theory won the day;
 - c. do not promote only the Alexandrian text-type as the pre-eminent one as Westcott and Hort tended to do, blindly disregarding the other manuscripts;
 - d. do not count the manuscripts and abide by the majority of manuscripts. The Majority Text, which tends to count instead of to evaluate the manuscripts, has this weakness;
 - e. instead, use the acquired skills of textual scholarship to evaluate which is the best text. This unavoidably involves eclectism, selecting the best text from ALL the text-types while using the principles stated above;
4. As regards point 2.b deputies discuss both the formal and dynamic equivalent methods of Bible translation and conclude as follows:
- a. to sum up then, the best points of both approaches should be kept:
 - 1. the accent placed on the very words of Scripture, and on giving an accurate, complete and clear translation should be kept from the formal equivalent method;
 - 2. the double accent on the meaning of the OL (original language) and the transference of that total meaning into the linguistic equivalent of the contemporary RL (Receptor Language) should be kept from the dynamic equivalent approach.
 - b. the weaknesses of both methods should be seen and avoided:
 - 1. the tendency in the formal equivalent to make the translation depend on the form of original instead of transferring the total meaning from the form of the OL to the form of the RL should be avoided.
 - 2. the tendency in the dynamic equivalent to interpret rather than to translate should also be avoided.
5. As to point 2.c deputies mention the following criteria for translating the Bible:
- a. the doctrine of verbal inspiration demands:
 - 1. Faithfulness. Every word of Scripture must be given its due. No word should be added or subtracted;
 - 2. Consistency. The Bible must be treated as a unity, as one book, and not as a collection of 66 separate books.
 - b. The doctrine of organic inspiration demands:

1. recognition that God used human speakers/writers without nullifying their characters, backgrounds, history, vocabulary, etc;
 2. recognition that God used the contemporary, common languages of these writers/speakers;
 3. recognition that languages change over years and do not stay uniform;
 4. a grammatical, historical, exegetical and linguistic approach to translation;
 5. that God not only gave the Scripture (singular) but also the Scriptures (plural);
 6. recognition of the various types of revelation (e.g. history, poetry or parables).
- c. Suitability for Use in Church and School demands:
1. Clarity. Though not all parts of the Bible are easy to understand, the language should be clear;
 2. Simplicity. The translation should be able to reach many ages and a variety of people;
 3. Preservation of the style of the various writers;
6. As to point 2.d deputies stress that the small sample available does not permit us to make definite conclusions or recommendations. They reach the following tentative conclusions:
- The modernisation of antiquated language can be seen as an improvement. The incorporation of "inclusive" language, as limited as it seems to be, shows a drift in an unacceptable direction. Even the norm for retaining male-oriented language (see observation 4, above) has been imposed on Scripture rather than derived from it. If the samples we could study are representative of the proposed revision as a whole, then we may well have to come to the conclusion: The NRSV will be an unacceptable translation of the Scriptures. In effect in the NRSV we are looking at a new translation.
7. As to point 2.e whereas deputies conclude (p17) that both NASB and RSV use basically the same text we read on p5 that on choice of text deputies consider the NASB to be an improvement on the RSV. Also (p17) that the NASB tends to be more cautious in its use of the ancient versions of the OT and conjectural emendations, and in the NT is marginally more likely to take up readings from the Majority Text. As to accuracy of translation:
- In the great majority of cases the NASB says the same thing as the RSV, only the RSV says it more clearly;
- Is the NASB a valuable translation of the Scriptures? The answer must be 'Yes'. But its value lies not in its potential as a family, Church or school Bible. It is a reliable translation which provides valuable information to anyone studying the Scriptures. Its aim of staying close to the Greek and Hebrew provides the attentive student (whether theologian or 'layman') with a wealth of information about original languages, and a useful check on other more idiomatic translations such as the RSV or the NIV. This is where its strength lies;
8. As to point 2.f deputies conclude as follows:
- regarding reliability, we appreciate the fact that the NKJV has not followed the RSV in that translation's apparent surrender to liberal influences. However, some objections, particularly about the textual choices, the submission to dispensationalist thoughts, and the confus-

ing policy to capitalise pronouns referring to the Godhead, negatively affect the reliability of this translation and constitute a formidable stumbling block to our acceptance of the NKJV as a viable alternative to the RSV. Deputies record some critical notes about the method of translation, the mixed word usage, and the stilted sentence structure which together make us conclude that it can hardly be called a modern translation. Summing up, deputies cannot recommend the New King James Version for use in the church services.

9. As to point 2.g deputies conclude that in comparison with the RSV:
 - a. the NIV is much better than the RSV as far as the choice of the OT text from which to translate goes;
 - b. the NIV is better than the RSV as far as the choice of the NT text from which to translate goes;
 - c. the NIV and RSV both are generally accurate in translation, both have strengths and faults;
 - d. the NIV has greater clarity and readability than the RSV;
 - e. the NIV adheres much more strongly to the unity between the two testaments than the RSV;
 - f. thus, on the basis of the above points, the NIV is more suitable for worship, instruction, and memorisation.On the basis of these findings the conclusion is clear that the NIV is better than the RSV;

10. Deputies Final Recommendations are:

Having made a preliminary examination of the planned 1990 edition of the RSV, the Deputies conclude that this version holds little promise for a real improvement on the current edition of the RSV. The main objections to the 1971 edition are still present. As to clarity and readability, the 1990 edition has gained. Over against that, the incorporation of "inclusive" language is a major step in the wrong direction. There may be some value in a further evaluation of the 1990 edition of the RSV when it appears, but the deputies consider it highly unlikely that RSV/1990 will ever be recommended for use in the Churches.

It has been clear from the previous reports that the deputies can only recommend one translation as being better than the RSV, namely the New International Version. However, before this is recommended, one has to look at the consequences. There is the inconvenience and expense of changing to another translation. Also, another change after the churches have only recently adopted the RSV may cause unrest. Seeing that the matter of translations, beside their use in the church services, instruction classes, and Bible-study clubs, has many consequences such as:

- a. its use in confessions, liturgical forms, prayers, psalms and hymns;
- b. cooperation with the sister-churches in Canada for one common Book of Praise; and
- c. its use in school classrooms.

it would be good to stand still and consider these repercussions before changing quickly to another translation.

As far as cooperation with Canada on one common BOOK OF PRAISE is concerned, we can only expect that their present committee on Bible translations (which has a mandate only to keep an eye on the

RSV and on general development) will be able to present a proposal to the next Synod in 1992, and that any action would have to wait at least till 1995 Synod, DV. One should also keep in mind that one can use the present BOOK OF PRAISE on its own merits, even if one stops using the RSV, which was used for Scripture selections. Another possibility, though not too desirable is the obtaining of the rights to print our own version of the BOOK OF PRAISE. But this matter of the BOOK OF PRAISE should not hinder the use of a different Bible translation. It would be good to phase in the use of another translation in order to give not only deputies and consistories a good look at the translation, but also to give the church members an opportunity to test it. One possible manner to do this is to introduce its use in school and in church functions, excluding the worship services, as well as at home. By using it, one can truly test it.

The deputies have discussed all these points and come with the following recommendations:

1. to discharge the deputies;
2. to keep the archives that have been started;
3. to declare at this time already that the NIV is deemed better than the RSV for use within the church;
4. to recommend to the churches that the NIV be used for study, instruction, and family purposes;
5. to withhold final endorsement of the NIV in the church services till a subsequent Synod;
6. to ask the new deputies to send all relevant suggestions and improvement to the Committee on Bible translation of the NIV;
7. to await and evaluate any replies on these;
8. to consult with the sister-churches about this matter to see whether a common approach can be reached, with a view to the use of a common BOOK OF PRAISE;
9. to appoint new deputies with a mandate:
 - a. see No.6, 7, and 8 above;
 - b. to watch for new developments in the RSV and NIV;
 - c. to solicit and evaluate comments from the churches about the NIV;
 - d. to maintain and keep the archives of its work and findings;
 - e. to report to the churches about its progress or findings;
 - f. to make a final recommendation about the NIV to a subsequent Synod;
11. P 'tHart explains the withdrawal of his signature from deputies' report and pleads that we do not make a compromise, saying: "We either keep on accepting the Textus Receptus, with which the vast majority of available manuscripts agree - or we accept that the Church did not possess the Word of God in its fulness during the past centuries";
12. M Berkelaar voices the same opinion and appeals to return to the KJV;
13. M and T van Dongen similarly plead for the Textus Receptus. On the basis of a comparison of the texts referred to in deputies' report they say that the accusation of dispensationalism in the NKJV must equally apply to the KJV;
14. The Church of Albany considers that there appears to be a lack of positive guidance in the area of reliability of manuscripts and approaches to translation and asks that this matter be studied further. Albany also expresses concern

over deputies' recommendation which encourages the use of one translation in the home and study clubs, and another in the church.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Deputies have presented a very extensive report and Synod will do well to express appropriate thanks. The committee feels rather inadequate to the task of giving it the evaluation it merits. This limits the aspects that can be presented here to those that are of immediate importance, the foremost of these being the choice of another translation for use in the churches;
2. The problem of the original text is a complex issue. Deputies 1987 report says "No ecclesiastical assembly will be able to responsibly take a decision in this respect" (*Acts* 1987, page D2). Present deputies confirm this by saying (p5 of their report) : "After having read some important works on this subject the deputies grow in appreciation for the complexity of the problem. Simplistic answers, such as that the Lord has always preserved the "church-text" (meaning the Byzantine text- type used by the KJV) and we should not deviate from it because of our high view of Scripture, are not to the point. In the first place, "church-text" is a misnomer, since the church obviously used the other text-types too. Secondly, to elevate the Byzantine text-type because of its numbers, while disregarding its lateness and while not being sure of its origin, does not seem sound either."
There must therefore be room for a careful eclectic method. Consequently a choice for a specific translation can not be made merely on the basis of the underlying text. This is in line with previous Synod decisions. (1956, Article 36 and 1983, Article 35);

3. THE METHOD of translation.

- a. the choice of method of translating the Bible is another complex issue. Deputies in discussing the methods of Formal Equivalent (FE) and Dynamic Equivalent (DE) remark

1. as regards FE (see paragraph C on p 10) : "To sum up, the FE certainly gains the favour of the Bible-believer in that it abides by the exact words of Scripture. That it also tries to keep as much as possible to the forms of the original gives cause for concern";
2. as regards DE (see paragraph D on pp 10,11), after quoting Callow and Beekman : "Dynamic fidelity requires that a translation communicate familiar or unfamiliar information meaningfully; it does not generally require that unfamiliar information be recast by substituting concepts already known nor does dynamic fidelity require an answer to all of the questions which might be raised about a topic under discussion", deputies continue:

"One is happy to hear this. For experience tells one that the DE approach, for the sake of ease in understanding, is at times too prone to interpret than simply to translate".

After asking

"Does this mean that the whole concept of DE is without value? Certainly not"

deputies conclude with a quotation from prof B Holwerda on Bible translation :

"... a careful paraphrase is sometimes more accurate than a literal translation",

which they say is in line with the DE method.

- b. Prof. J van Bruggen in : 'The future of the Bible', pages 167, 168 summarises his discussion on this topic as follows: "The DE method of translation can rightly appeal to linguistics for the proposition that the language-bound manner of expression cannot and may not be imitated in a FE way in the Receptor Language (RL). However, the DE method extends this proposition illegitimately when it also applies it to the author's form, the form which the author chose for his text. The translation should not attempt to render sentences the author could have written in the original, but the sentences that he has in fact written. The form of the latter ought to be respected in the RL as much as possible. The neglect of the author's form by a process of re-structuring is non-linguistic and tempts the translator to add more interpretation to the translation than is necessary for clarity's sake." (pp 167-168)
 - c. On balance we may conclude that by its very nature there is a danger in the DE method, which conclusion appears to be in line with Synod 1975 decision.
4. THE TRANSLATIONS considered:
- a. Deputies' report does not contain a separate section on the 1971 RSV presently in use in our churches. Various statements made throughout the report strengthen the 1987 Synod finding that the RSV "at times displays liberal tendencies" (p19). As to the choice of text "The RSV is too free" (p5). As to the Divine authority of the Scriptures, "... this has always been a doubtful point with the RSV" (p17);
 - b. Based on the provisional nature of the samples of the draft revision of the NRSV, deputies say that "the incorporation of "inclusive" language, as limited as it seems to be, shows a drift in an unacceptable direction" (p13), further aggravating the liberal tendencies noted, making it an unacceptable translation;
 - c. As to observation 7 there seems to be some conflict in what deputies write on p5 and p17 of their report. It appears that overall the NASB is a more reliable translation than the RSV. Noting deputies' summing up: "the NASB's wooden style, lack of clarity and poor readability are its major drawbacks" (p17) we conclude that the NASB is still worthy of further consideration;
 - d. As to observation 8 it must be concluded that the NKJV is a more reliable translation than the RSV. Deputies give also examples of this on p19. Criticism of the NKJV being inclined towards dispensationalism can also be levelled at the KJV, but that has not been a difficulty for us in using the KJV. We feel that this aspect bears further investigation. On the criterion of reliability (p21) it is difficult to accept deputies preference for the RSV with its liberal tendencies over against the NKJV which they themselves judge to be a translation that "has not followed the RSV in that translation's apparent surrender to liberal influences". Since we should not accept or reject any translation on choice of text alone (Cons 2), the NKJV should be further investigated with respect to loss of reliability as a result of text choice and method of translation;
 - e. Deputies say and quote references that the NIV uses a combination of formal and dynamic equivalent translation and consider that a point in its favour (p26). However, quoting Callow and Beekman again (in Translating the Word of God, p21) "...each translation has been

produced with one or the other approach in mind". In view of Consideration 3.c this poses the question which approach has dominated in the NIV, i.e. where on the alleged 'continuum' between DE and FE the NIV translation is located. This whole matter needs also to be reconciled with other references to the effect that the NIV tends to be an interpretive rather than accurate translation. We note here what is said in the majority report of the Committee on Bible translation of the CanRC, appointed by Coaldale 1977: "although the NIV uses clear and contemporary English, the so-called DE manner of translation makes this version too free for use in the pulpit". The DE method has been an ongoing issue in our churches (1975, Article 52; 1983 Deputies' Report, p115-116 of the *Acts*; 1987, Article 109). Synod 1975 decided against the advice of deputies: "to reject the NIV on the ground that the dynamic equivalent method of translation does not do full justice to the inscripturated, inspired Word of God" (*Acts*, Article 52.1).

5. Besides faithfulness and readability, deputies had to address as third criterion the "consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures". Deputies conclude that the NASB clearly upholds this unity (p16). The same is said about the NKJV (p21), whilst deputies judge that "overall the NIV is keenly eager to have both testaments read consistently where there are direct quotes. In this one sees a marked improvement over the RSV which often seems to drive a wedge between the two testaments. However, one must temper this statement by saying that the NIV goes too far in its harmonising" (p28).
6. The reading of deputies' report strengthens earlier suspicions that although it cannot be called an unscriptural translation the RSV is not sufficiently reliable to maintain its indefinite use in the churches (see also Consideration 4.a). Therefore deputies' recommendation to move towards another translation can be supported. However, in view of considerations 3.b, 3.c and 4.e deputies' recommended choice (the NIV) cannot be supported without further study being undertaken as to the degree that the DE method of translation has affected the NIV's reliability;
7. In summary, every one of these translations has some drawbacks. A perfect or near-perfect translation does not exist. Of course, the ideal answer would be that the churches themselves should accept the responsibility for the work of translation. This is in line with history where the Synod of Dort decided to give a mandate to Reformed scholars for a faithful, scriptural Bible translation. Compared with the simple means available in that time, today's modern technology given by the Lord combined with the huge amount of research that has already been done over the years, puts the churches in a much more favourable position to undertake this task. We should also recognise that God has given His Word to the Church and not to an organisation for translating the Bible.
8. On the information available, a responsible decision in favour of an alternative translation cannot be made at this time. Further evaluation is required. On the criteria of reliability and consistency in maintaining unity of Scripture the NASB (consideration 4.c) and NKJV (consideration 4.d) appear to be acceptable translations for such evaluation. Both use basically the FE approach. The NIV (considerations 4.e and 6) with its mixed FE/DE approach needs to be further evaluated on reliability.
9. In the meantime the churches will have to keep using the RSV. For those who

have difficulty with this there is the option of using the KJV (Synod 1983, Article 35).

10. To introduce another translation for study, instruction and family purposes only whilst retaining the RSV in the church services is not a practical answer on several grounds. Such a partial introduction now would also prejudice a final decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

1. to thank deputies, express appreciation for the considerable work done and discharge deputies;
2. to keep the archives that have been started;
3. as regards the underlying text, to accept the premise that there is room for a careful eclectic method;
4. to declare at this time already that the NASB, NKJV and NIV are deemed better translations than the RSV;
5. to express caution over the DE approach to translation;
6. to appoint new deputies with the following instructions:
 - a. to explore, in consultation with (in the first instance) the sister-churches, the feasibility of the churches themselves undertaking the task of translating the Bible;
 - b. as regards the NASB, NKJV and NIV translations, to supplement the 1989 report and:
 1. to further study in line with considerations 4.c and 4.d the suitability of NASB and NKJV to replace the RSV;
 2. to further evaluate the NIV in line with considerations 4.e and 6, in respect of its method of translation;
 3. to make use of previous deputies' reports including those of our Canadian sister-churches;
 4. to monitor developments in these translations;
 5. to send relevant suggestions and improvements to the Committees on Bible translation concerned, and await and evaluate any replies on these;
 6. to invite comments from the churches on these translations;
 7. to consult with the CanRC to see whether a common approach can be reached.
 - c. to report to the churches on progress and findings;
 - d. to report, and if possible make recommendations, to next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 139 **RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD** **FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**

Committee 2 presents its reconsidered report, and propose:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.bb : P W Dekker - Churches Abroad

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave the following mandate to DpRCA with respect to the FCS:
 - a. Synod instructs DpRCA to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS;
 - b. Synod instructs deputies not to implement sister- relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon;
 - c. to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of relations as sister churches, specifically to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations with sister churches;
 - d. Synod authorises the deputies to send delegates to visit the FCS to help implement the above mentioned decisions.
2. Two delegates paid a visit to the FCS. Deputies published a report, asked for and received comments.
3. These delegates gave a favourable impression of their visit to the FCS. They took the opportunity to discuss with the FCS matters of mutual concern including the position of children in the covenant, the position of adherents, and the purity of the worship service. Regarding adherents, deputies report that "... within the FCS there is a growing understanding of the commitment which these adherents are to make."
4. Deputies indicate that:

"... it became evident that the FCS is a church that governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head. Sometimes they use different terminology and different practises, but in line with Article 46 CO, there is no reason to condemn the FCS for it."

P W Dekker in his submission questions "this rather bold statement", claiming it to be inconsistent with the report's mention of pulpit exchange with Reformed Baptists.
5. Delegates did discover (cf. Appendix 2.3) that "occasionally ministers of the FCS don't hesitate to fill the pulpit in a Reformed Baptist Church, e.g. in case of sickness of the local minister."

Deputies indicate that this was something new to them as this information came to their attention just before they left. Deputies do state this 'pulpit exchange':

"...is no common practise within the FCS and should therefore be no obstacle in recognising them as sister churches."

They consider it a matter of concern however, which should be addressed in our contacts with the FCS.
6. Deputies note that according to the delegates who attended the ICRC in Vancouver statements were made by representatives of the FCS "which appeared to be at variance with our Confession and Church Order."
7. Deputies report concerning the Rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact that (a.o.):
 - a. a letter has been sent to the FCS inviting them to delegate some representatives to Synod Armadale;
 - b. delegates who visited the FCS met with two representatives from their

Committee on Ecumenical Relations at which the decision of Synod 1987 was explained;

- c. as yet there hasn't been any progress in working out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations with sister churches.
8. In their Supplementary Report deputies state that they have now received a reply to the offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact made by Synod 1987. A letter from the FCS to our deputies (dated 10th Oct, 1989) states that our deputies' letter to the FCS of 30th Dec, 1987 had apparently gone astray, giving occasion for the delay in the FCS' response to our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact.
9. Deputies recommend (a.o.) that:
 - Synod appoint new deputies with the instructions that if and when the FCS accepts the offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact:
 - a. to use the Rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to discuss issues of concern as mentioned in their report;
 - b. to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS;
 - c. to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for sister-relations.
10. From the Report of the visit made to the FCS by the two delegates we learn (a.o.) that:
 - a. the sermons heard by delegates during the four worship services they attended were "really Scriptural and Reformed";
 - b. the Lord's Day is observed as a real day of rest within the family circle;
 - c. there is evidently a growing tendency towards not baptising the children of adherents. The matter of adherents has the attention of their broadest assembly;
 - d. there continues to be misunderstanding among some in the FCS concerning the position of children in the covenant;
 - e. delegates were impressed by the high standard of lectures heard at the Free Church College.
11. In a discussion with two members of the Committee of Ecumenical Relations delegates heard that it was difficult for them to understand why the FRCA "did not offer them a full sister-relation". According to these representatives the FCS doesn't see the need for fixed rules with respect to such a sister-relation.
12. Delegates report that "as regards the FCS there are surely no impediments to establish full sister-relations with the FRCA."
13. Delegates report that they expressed our concern re the proposal of the FCS to the ICRC (Vancouver) in which the FCS proposed that the Constitution of the ICRC should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognise the membership, ministry, and sacraments of the other member churches.
14. The letter of the FCS of 10th October 1989 (cf. Appendix 5) states that the Ecumenical Relations Committee:

welcome fraternal association with the FRCA and are agreeable to the exchange of Minutes and *Acts* of General Assemblies or General Synods as also to discussions on matters of mutual interest. The Committee are also ready to recommend to our General Assembly that when delegates from your Churches are present they be received by the Assembly.

The letter goes on to indicate that visiting delegates would be given the floor only to convey greetings and to address the assembly briefly.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Deputies have done their task in seeking to fulfil their mandate. The report of delegates who visited the FCS is enlightening. It served the purpose of getting to know the FCS on a more personal basis. It is obvious that although there are differences between the FCS and ourselves we nevertheless have a great deal in common in our service of the Lord.
2. The decision to acknowledge the FCS as a faithful church was confirmed by Synod 1987, after an extensive report from deputies was considered. We are obliged to realise and to act upon the consequences of this decision.
3. Rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact were proposed to the FCS. These rules involve, a.o., the:
 "...exchange of Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications of major issues of mutual concern, specifically, the problem about the adherents, and to solicit comments on these documents (*Acts* 1987, Article 82, Recommendation 5.a)"
We accept the restriction which the FCS places on a delegate at its General Assembly. Such a restriction ought also to form part of our rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact.
4. It is not clear whether the FCS has accepted the recommendation of its Ecumenical Relations Committee that Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact be accepted. Neither is it clear what the FCS understands by "fraternal association".
5. The FCS's practice of pulpit exchange with Reformed Baptists (as reported by Deputies) is a matter of concern which must be addressed by means of official communications. Concern has also been expressed about some public statements made by representatives of the FCS at the ICRC and in the press. We are to keep in mind however that public statements are not necessarily the same as official positions.
6. In light of the above the concerns of P W Dekker are addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synod thanks deputies for their work.
2. Synod discharges DpRCA appointed by Synod 1987.
3. Synod appoints new deputies with the following instructions:
 - a. to seek clarification whether or not our offer of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, as well as the associated rules, have in fact been accepted by the FCS and to ask the FCS to clarify their understanding of "fraternal association";
 - b. to use the Rules for Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact to discuss issues of concern as mentioned in the report of deputies;
 - c. to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the FCS while giving due heed to the concerns outstanding.
4. To amend the rules of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact as follows:
 - a. to invite delegates to each other's Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates the privilege of the floor to convey greetings and allow them to briefly address the Assembly/Synod (Synod 1987 *Acts*, Article 82, Recommendation 5).

ADOPTED

Evening Session

ARTICLE 140 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 2:3. All delegates are present.

ARTICLE 141 ADOPTION OF ACTS

Article 114 as well as the *Acts* of Thursday, 16th May are Adopted.

ARTICLE 142 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Two rounds of discussion take place. (See *Acts*, Article 145)

ARTICLE 143 ADJOURNMENT

Elder F J Veldhuis requests the singing of Psalm 117 and leads in prayer and thanksgiving. Synod is adjourned.

SIXTEENTH DAY - Saturday, 19th May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 144 REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 105:11,14, reading Revelation 8:6-13 and prayer. The Chairman extends a welcome to everyone present. Elder F J Veldhuis is absent having returned home for health reasons.

ARTICLE 145 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

Committee 3 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following amended proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 8.q : W L Dekker - contact with churches within the ICRC
8.r : J Eikelboom and J L VanBurgel - report about the ICRC
8.bb : P W Dekker - Churches Abroad
8.gg : L 'tHart, A H Terpstra and B Vermeulen - ICRC
8.hh : W and A Amoraal - ICRC
8.oo : H Ballast - ICRC
10.h,t : Deputies Reports

ADMISSIBILITY

1. The communications from W L Dekker, P W Dekker, and L 'tHart, A H Terpstra, B Vermeulen are admissible because they deal with items already on the agenda.
2. The communication from J Eikelboom and J L VanBurgel, though addressed to Synod about an item already on the agenda, ought properly to have been addressed to the DpRCA since it is the DpRCA that have submitted the ICRC report to the churches.
3. W and A Amoraal express their dissatisfaction with the reply they received from their consistory in answer to the concerns they expressed about the ICRC. Article 31 CO stipulates that decisions of major assemblies are to be considered settled and binding unless they be proved to conflict with Scripture and confession. Brother and sister Amoraal do not prove (let alone argue) that their consistory's answer is incorrect. As such, Synod can do nothing with their submission.
4. The communication from H Ballast deals with an item already on Synod's agenda. As such, Synod can deal with it. The fact that he signs his letter "on behalf of 16 other brothers and sisters of the Albany congregation" is irrelevant. Synod must consider arguments not on the basis of popular support, but on the basis of Scripture and Church Order.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave to DpRCA the following mandate (as it pertains to the ICRC):
 - "to send two members of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad as delegates to the next meeting of the conference to be held on June 19-23, 1989 in Vancouver (Cloverdale), Canada.
 - "to submit to the secretary of the ICRC the following proposals for amendment of the Constitution:
 - a. to add to Article IV after (d)
 - (e) show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country; (Article 84 of the *Acts* of Synod 1983);
 - b. a stipulation in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members;
 - c. that membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC;
 - d. that "Constitution Article V - Authority" be amended to read:
 - "The conclusions of the conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation" (amendment underlined);
 - e. that "Regulations Article II" be amended to read:
 - "Each conference shall elect the following officers: a chairman, a vice-chairman, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary." (amendment underlined);
 - to ask the next meeting of the Conference:
 - f. to give matters related to the Constitution priority
 - g. to place on the agenda once again the issue of inter- church relations and if possible come with recommendations to the member churches;

- h. to make a clear statement about the position of the observers and advisers, and furthermore which churches can be invited as observers by the convening church;
 - i. to reconsider the decision taken by the previous conference regarding travel expenses of delegates in line with the following proposal:
 - “Traveling expenses should be borne by the member churches on the same basis as the ordinary costs of the conference.”
 - Ground: Without accepting this proposal the member churches which are bigger in number are privileged compared to member churches smaller in number;
 - j. to place the matter of Bible translations on the agenda of the next conference;
 - k. to draw conclusions on matters discussed.
2. Deputies have attended the Conference in 1989. Delegates from the FRCA were J Eikelboom and J L VanBurgel.
 3. The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa applied for membership in the ICRC, and were received. Beside these (now) ten member churches, ten other churches were represented by observers (Minutes 1.1; 1.7).
 4. In accordance with instructions, Deputies have submitted to the secretary of the ICRC the proposals for amendment of the Constitution as mentioned in Observation 1. Proposals d. and e. (the latter in slightly amended form) were accepted by the Conference.
 5. As to the requests to be laid before the Conference (Observation 1), it may be gleaned from Minutes and Deputies Report that:
 - a. Constitutional matters received adequate priority.
 - b. a workshop was held on inter-church relations. No recommendations flowed from this workshop however, for no issue was resolved in these discussions (Minutes 10.3.vii; Deputies Report 11).
 - c. a proposal was remitted to the interim committee to examine the position of observers and advisers, and to report to the next Conference (Minutes 3.2.10; Deputies Report 7.10).
 - d. the request about traveling expenses was rejected (Minutes 7.3).
 - e. the subject of Bible Translations has been suggested as a subject for a paper for the agenda of the next Conference (Minutes 12, Discussion 1, iii).
 - f. the Conference as a whole did not draw specific conclusions from the matters discussed.
 6. As to the reasons why proposals from the FRCA were not adopted, the following can be said:
 - as regards a. and b., the Committee responsible for dealing with Constitutional matters dealt with these proposals together. Proposal a. disappeared when proposal b. was rejected. In considering proposal b. it was suggested by two member churches that the FRCA “misunderstood” the intent of Article IV of the Constitution in that the Constitution does not require subscription. A suggestion voiced at the Conference by a.o. our delegates that a statement be made to the effect that no subscription is required of officebearers except to the adopted standards of their own churches was not acted upon.
 - In further discussion it was indicated that the present Basis of the

Conference declares the unity that exists between member churches and gives recognition to the doctrinal unity that exists between the standards listed. It was questioned further whether the Conference needed a statement that could be taken as some sort of protection for member churches from guilt by association (Minutes 7.5). After this discussion, proposal b. was rejected.

As regards c., in the opinion of the Conference, the matter of the REC was adequately covered by Article IV, 1(d) of the Constitution (which reads: "Those churches shall be admitted as members which: ...d. are not members of the World Council of Churches or of any other organisation whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis") (Minutes 3.2.3; Deputies Report 7.3).

7. The Free Church of Scotland tendered the following proposal:

"The Constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognise the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches."

This proposal was not accepted, "since the matter is covered by Article III.2 of the Constitution." The Committee responsible for Constitutional matters felt that:

"member churches should strive to achieve the above mentioned goal, but this situation does not automatically arise from being a member of the ICRC. Before a sister-church relation can be established, time should be taken for the necessary contacts and discussions."

Our delegates to the ICRC summed up the ensuing discussion as follows:

"Extensive discussion followed which highlighted the different ways in which member churches see the role of the Conference. The Presbyterian Churches tended to still see the Conference as an ecclesiastical fellowship and drew inevitable conclusions from that view. The Reformed churches tried to emphasise that the ICRC was a conference" (Deputies Report 7.2).

8. In the discussions on the FCS proposal, our delegates said a.o., the following: "...despite the emphatic statements in the Constitution that member churches in the Conference express the unity of faith they have, this wider gathering presents us with the unsatisfactory situation of a meeting of churches some of which have as yet not formally recognised each other as having unity of faith in Christ, and even others who have had little or no contact."

Further:

"The FRCA would like to see this unsatisfactory situation redressed. Unity of faith in Christ must be clearly established back at home before it can be expressed here." (Deputies Report 7.2)

9. Our deputies presented two prepared statements contained in the Conference Papers. These were on the matters of Agenda (ought "Apartheid" to be included) and the commitment Conference members have to the Constitution vis a vis seeking unity with one another.
10. The report prepared by the Committee appointed by the 1985 Conference on Ecumenical Creeds was presented and discussed. The Conference decided as follows:

"The Conference commends the Report to the careful attention of the member churches and invites them to submit their comments if any, to the next meeting of the Conference." (Minutes 8.1)

11. The following papers were presented and discussed:
 - Nehemiah the Rebuilder
 - Baptism with the Holy Spirit
 - Christology
 - Apartheid
 - Contextualization in Mission
 - The Tangun Shrine Worship and Radical Christian Movements in Korea
 - The Elder as Preserver and Nurturer of Life in the Covenant
 On these papers no conclusions were reported.
12. Regarding Missions: Various efforts are made by member churches to assist each other and coordinate efforts. A letter from the FRCA was read "stating that their churches would cooperate in actual mission activities with sister churches only." The Minutes record that "it was agreed that since this issue was basic to the whole Conference it should not be discussed in the Missions Committee" (Minutes 10.2.2).
13. Various possible ways for member churches to support each other further in missions were listed. "The Conference decided to draw the attention of member churches to this information" (cf Minutes 10.2).
14. The Conference decided to appoint a committee mandated to "take up the suggestion of the PCEA regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a "true church" and the consequences of such a statement for intercommunion, etc." (Minutes 12.3.v). Our delegates opposed such a committee since "we do not need an agreed statement on what we already confess." Our delegates further "assured" the Conference that "the FRCA would not reduce its Confession by one word, particularly as it speaks clearly regarding the church and inter-communion." A second objection our delegates had to the formation of a Committee on Theological Affirmation was that it is first of all the responsibility of member churches to discuss these matters at a local level, as indeed the FRCA and the PCEA are doing (Deputies Report 12.2).
15. At the end of the Conference, efforts were made to have a meeting of sister churches to be held the day after the Conference ended. For our delegates this suggested meeting "was too late, in more ways than one" (Deputies Report 12.3).
16. The next Conference is scheduled for September 1993 in Seoul, Korea, as guests of the Presbyterian Church in Korea.
17. Three of the DpRCA, including the two who attended the 1989 ICRC, recommend to Synod that the FRCA withdraw their membership in the ICRC. They mention the following points:
 - a. Contrary to the provision in its Constitution (cf Article III.1: "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ"), the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organization where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist. Delegates write: "despite the repeated FRCA claims that the Constitution demands that establishment of church unity at the local level should precede, or at least be concurrent with, a coming together in the Conference, this aspect remained largely ignored." Indeed, deputies feel, there can be but little hope for improvement in this regard since the problem arises because of the divergent views the participating churches have on the Church. Write delegates:

“we clearly detected in the Conference that the different understanding of the meaning of the Church with the different emphasis placed on it by the Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity and the Presbyterian Churches with their Westminster Standards would result in a divided approach to fundamental matters, and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas.... There was the outward show of unity, but no real commitment to it. Also our sister churches were unprepared to face the issues frankly and openly. Some seemed uninterested, others were divided in their stand” (Deputies Report B1 B(b)).

- b. Delegates feel that there was an “almost common opinion” at this 1989 Conference that “will inevitably push the ICRC in the direction of an organisation which will make public statements on a variety of ‘important’ political and social issues.” The delegates conclude this from the Conference’s insistence to include on its agenda “the largely political ‘Apartheid’ paper.” Delegates state that “Scriptural norms set as task for the Church the proclamation of the gospel only.”
 - c. The decision of the Conference not to include a reference to the REC in its Membership restrictions prompts the Delegates to conclude that “the Conference is insufficiently guarding against the danger of a false ecumenism. This refusal to include the REC in its Membership restrictions is of particular concern to the delegates because the REC represents where ‘the interface with the ICRC currently lies’.”
 - d. “The establishment of a Committee on Theological Affirmation with the mandate to prepare an ‘agreed statement’ on the Church...is the first step on a path that leads to becoming a superbody, making conclusions and resolutions for its members.” Although ICRC decisions are not binding on member churches, delegates feel that “honesty to the ICRC’s purpose demands that member churches take such decisions seriously, and many will do so without much question.”
18. The other three DpRCA disagree with the recommendations of the first three mentioned. The latter three present to Synod the following recommendations:
- a. the FRCA continue the membership in the ICRC;
 - b. the FRCA send two delegates to the next conference to be held in Korea, in 1993.

These recommendations are based on the following conclusions:

- a. The ICRC has met in Vancouver in complete accordance with the Purpose of its Constitution.
- b. The outcome of the Constitution/Regulation amendment proposals indicate more efficiency and maturity. Many of our proposals were (unanimously) adopted. These discussions and decisions certainly show continuing adherence to the Constitution as originally adopted. Also, the decisions have not proven that the ICRC is no longer a Conference but is moving in the direction of becoming an ecclesiastical superbody.
- c. Taking into account the decision taken by Synod 1985 (*Acts* Article 88) which mentions the grounds on which basis the FRCA can continue membership within the ICRC, there is no need to withdraw from the ICRC, but instead there is much reason to continue the “opportunity for contact by way of a conference with foreign churches of reformed confession” (*Acts*, Article 88, 1985).

19. W L Dekker expresses his concern regarding the direction the ICRC is taking.
 - a. Since the original purpose of the ICRC was abandoned, differences of opinion regarding fundamental issues have come to the fore.
 - b. The ICRC needs to become a Conference where present difficulties and the differences in confession and church life can be honestly discussed together, striving to be of one mind.
20. P W Dekker informs Synod that he shares the concerns of the delegates regarding the character and purpose of the ICRC.
21. L 'tHart, A H Terpstra and B Vermeulen seek to serve Synod with some observations and considerations on the subject of the ICRC. Their various observations and considerations lead the brothers to recommend that: Synod decide:
 - a. that the FRCA withdraw their membership of the ICRC,
 - and
 - b. continues its official contacts with other church federations by means of the DpRCA.
22. H Ballast states that:
 - a. the Name (Article I) "International Conference of Reformed Churches" is misleading.
 - b. the Basis (Article II) is unacceptable because the inclusion of the Westminster Standards is an impediment to true unity.
 - c. the Purpose (Article III) is in conflict with the Church Order.
 Accordingly, H Ballast urges Synod "to withdraw from this body forthwith."
23. In their letter to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Deputies of our Dutch sister churches ask us to consult with the sister-churches in case decisions are made regarding the ICRC which take a direction different from the course set by previous Synods ("...besluiten die...een belangrijke koerswijziging betekenen t.o.v. het beleid van voorgaande Synodes"). They indicate that there is sufficient time for such discussion before the next meeting of the ICRC in 1993.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Synod 1983 adopted the following proposal:

"Having adopted the proposals of the deputies regarding the ICRC, its Constitution, Regulations and Interim Rules, Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decides to join the ICRC" (Article 87).
2. Synods 1983 and 1985 listed various changes considered necessary for the Constitution of the ICRC (cf 1983, Article 84; 1985, Article 88, Point 3.2).
3. Synod 1985, in answer to various appeals against the 1983 decision to join the ICRC, decided "not to revoke the decision of Synod 1983" (Article 88, Point 2). This same Synod decided further:

"that Synod 1987 is to make a decision regarding our continuing membership of the ICRC on the basis of the reports of Conference delegates and on the report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, giving due consideration to the stated grounds for this and the above decisions" (Article 88, Point 4).
4. Synod 1987 was served with a report about the 1985 ICRC in which it was stated that the 1985 meeting of the ICRC had not dealt with the amendments to the Constitution proposed by the FRCA since the member churches had

insufficient time to study these proposals (cf Article 88, Observation 5). Deputies also reported that "this first meeting of the ICRC demonstrated 'that although there is difference in tradition between the reformed and prebyterian churches there is still unity of faith'" (Observation 13). These observations assisted Synod in coming to its decision "to continue membership in the ICRC churches" (Article 110, D.1).

5. Synod 1987 adopted as final recommendation the following:

"That the 1989 Synod make a decision regarding our continuing membership in the ICRC on the basis of the reports of conference-delegates and of the report of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, giving due consideration to the stated grounds for this and the above decisions" (Article 110, D.5).

It will be noted that this final decision is a repeat of the decision made by Synod 1985 (Article 88.4), necessary because the 1985 ICRC had not dealt with the proposed amendments to the Constitution (referred to in the phrase: "the stated grounds for this and the above decisions").

6. The *Acts* of Synod 1985 reflect an increasing reservation towards the ICRC. This is apparent from the fact that whereas 1983 mentioned two aspects of the Constitution for which alteration was considered desirable (ie RES membership and the stipulation that member churches ought to show willingness to strive for unity with other member churches in their own country), Synod 1985 after listening to three letters of appeal, decided to "re-define and expand the 1983 decision" (Article 88.3). This re- definition and expansion of the previous decision included the desire to have the Constitution altered on four more points, including "a stipulation...that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the Churches of which they are members." This decision to "re-define and expand the 1983 decision" was followed by the decision concerning what 1987 was to decide regarding continuing membership in the ICRC (Article 88.4). Although it is true that previous Synods have not mentioned conditions sine qua non for continued membership, previous Synods did indicate the need to evaluate the response our proposals received.
7. Concerning the recent meeting of the Conference held in Langley, Canada, it gives reason for gratitude that churches who desire to serve the Lord according to His Word met together in an effort to satisfy the stated purpose of the ICRC. It is also encouraging to note that more churches are taking an interest in this organisation which desire to be faithful to the Word of God.
8. By default the proposal to add to Article IV after (d) of the ICRC Constitution "(e) show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the conference in their own country" was not voted on. It is, however, to be noted that in the discussion on the proposal of the FCS (mentioned in Observation 6), the Constitution Committee, referring to Article III.2 of the Constitution, stated that sister-church relationships was a goal member churches were to strive after (Minutes 3.2.2).
9. The proposal "to stipulate in the Basis of the ICRC that the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members" was made on the ground that "the present Constitution of the ICRC could imply that member Churches subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity as well as to the Westminster Standards" (*Acts* 1985, Article 88, Ground 6). During the discussion on this proposal it was argued that Article IV of the Constitution "does not in fact refer to 'subscription' at all." It rather "gives

recognition to the doctrinal unity that there is between the standards listed” (Minutes 7.4).

Although one may lament that no statement was made delimiting that subscription to confessions other than one’s own was not meant by this Article of the Constitution, it must also be remembered that acceptance of the FRCA proposal could be interpreted in the Conference as doubt on our side regarding the Scriptural character of the Westminster Standards which in turn would jeopardise the basis of the Conference.

10. Regarding the FRCA proposal to add to the Constitution that “membership of the RES is an impediment to membership in the ICRC”, Synod 1983 (Article 82) mentions the following reason:

“all churches, which were members of the RES have been fully informed by GKN about the RES in the booklet ‘For the Sake of True Ecumenity’ [sic].”

Synods 1985 and 1987, have again stipulated that RES membership ought to be considered impediments to membership in the ICRC.

The 1989 Conference did not adopt the proposal of the FRCA on the grounds that “the point is adequately covered by Article IV, 1(d) of the Constitution.” In the years since Synod 1983 first expressed the desirability of mentioning the RES (REC) by name in the Constitution, this organization has deteriorated further to the point of unmistakably representing false ecumenicity. As such, it would indeed have been desirable to spell out that membership in the REC is incompatible with the Basis of the ICRC. Meanwhile, it is too much to say it is “evident” from the rejection of the proposed Constitutional amendment that the Conference “is insufficiently guarding against the danger of false ecumenism” (Deputies Report B1,C(c)).

11. Admittedly the Conference as a whole did not draw specific conclusions from the matters discussed. Though one must take into account that the ICRC is still a young organisation that has to grow to maturity, it nevertheless remains desirable that the Conference would produce specific conclusions on the items on its agenda (cf *Acts* 1987, Article 110, Consideration 3).
12. A suggestion from the PCEA (“Conference aim to develop an agreed statement on what is a ‘true church’, together with the implications of such for issues as inter-communion, acceptance of attestations, etc., and that such statement relate the centrality of Jesus Christ to these issues”) resulted in the establishment of a Committee on Theological Affirmation mandated to “take up the suggestion...regarding an agreed statement.” As deputies in Recommendations B2 state: “The establishment of this committee is completely in line with Article III.4 of the Constitution, ‘to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters.’ If the doctrine of the church is indeed at the heart of recognising each other as true and faithful churches, why not have this matter studied by a committee of theologically skilled persons both of Reformed and Presbyterian background?” (B2, B.4; cf also *Acts* 1987, Article 110, Consideration 3). What is problematic, however, is that an “agreed statement” could readily develop a life and authority of its own, irrespective of what individual churches think of the statement, simply by virtue of the fact that it is a statement uttered by the ICRC. Especially in a climate of disagreement on the subject involved, this could have a negative bearing on discussion between churches.
13. The statement made in B1,C3 of the Deputies Report that there was an “almost

common opinion at this 1989 Conference" that "will inevitably push the ICRC in the direction of an organisation which will make public statements on a variety of 'important' political and social issues" suggests more than it proves. Neither the topics discussed in 1989 nor suggested for 1993 (Minutes 12.3.3), nor the proceedings recorded in the Minutes, give substance to this sentiment. Although it is true that the subject "Apartheid" has a distinct political aspect to it, it ought to be remembered that the Christians of South Africa face also the ethical aspect of the subject. The light of the gospel must be cast on the specific problems believers face in their daily lives.

14. Whereas deputies report of the 1985 ICRC that "although there is difference in tradition between reformed and presbyterian churches there is still unity in faith" (*Acts*, Article 110, B.13), delegates to the 1989 meeting of the Conference report that "there was the outward show of unity, but no real commitment to it" (B1,B(b)). Indeed: "Contrary to the provision in its Constitution, the ICRC is demonstrating to be an organisation where 'unity of faith' between most of the member churches does not exist" (Deputies Report B1,C,2). This difference between the report of the delegates to the 1985 Conference and that of those who attended the 1989 Conference raises the question as to why a lack of unity is now reported. The following considerations arise:

- a. The disappointment of our delegates to the ICRC seems to be related to their view of what the Conference, according to its own Constitution, ought to be. This Constitution states, a.o.,

"The purpose of the Conference shall be: 1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ; 2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches" (Article III).

At the Conference, our delegates stated, a.o.:

"despite the emphatic statement in the Constitution that member churches in the Conference express the unity of faith they have, this wider gathering presents us with the unsatisfactory situation of a meeting of churches some of which have as yet not formally recognized each other as having unity of faith in Christ, and even others who have had little or no contact."

Further:

"The FRCA would like to see this unsatisfactory situation redressed. Unity of faith in Christ must be clearly established back at home before it can be expressed here."

On this point it should be noted that the procedure followed at the 1983 Synod gives legitimate reason to conclude that Synod "saw the need to first establish that there was (had been) unity of faith in the Constituent Assembly before deciding to join" the ICRC, as the delegates write in their report (B1,B(a)). Synod after all interrupted its discussions on the ICRC and declared all participating non sister-churches "faithful Churches of the Lord" (cf *Acts* 1983, Articles 72,75).

However, future Synods implicitly accepted the fact that various churches could be members of the ICRC without the one having recognised the other as true and faithful. This is evident from the fact that we decided to continue membership in the ICRC irrespective of the fact that we had not yet recognised all other member churches as true and faithful. In fact, Synod 1985 stated that "the decision to join

the ICRC was based on our acceptance of the constitutional BASIS and PURPOSE, and not an any evaluation of potential member Churches" (Article 88, Ground 6). More, the very fact that the FRCA proposed to add to Article IV of the Constitution that member churches must "show willingness to strive for unity with member churches of the Conference in their own country" indicates that they saw sister relationships as an aim and not as a prerequisite. These data call into question whether the FRCA delegates at the recent ICRC indeed spoke words accurately representing the stance adopted by the FRCA.

Still, in light of a. the delegates' understanding of the Constitution, b. the conclusion inferred by the 1983 Synod, and c. the failure of previous Synods to grapple effectively with the matter of sitting with a non-sister church at the ICRC, it is understandable that our delegates come with their particular statements.

It is unsatisfactory that the matter of sitting with churches not yet recognised remains inadequately addressed. This is the more so because appellants to this Synod raise this point (cf H Ballast c.s. regarding Article 3; L 'tHart, A H Terpstra, B Vermeulen, Consideration 2).

- b. A second consideration bearing on the disappointment registered by our delegates appears to be due to the "lack of agreement and direction in several discussions at the 1989 Conference" (Deputies Report B1,B(b)). Our deputies judge this lack of direction to be the result of the different understandings present surrounding the doctrine of the Church. They write:

"We clearly detected in the Conference that the different understanding of the meaning of the Church with the different emphasis placed on it by the Reformed Churches with their Three Forms of Unity and the Presbyterian Churches with their Westminster Standards would result in a divided approach to fundamental matters, and a stumbling block for cooperation in many areas" (B1,B(b)).

On the basis of decisions made at our previous Synods, it is incorrect for deputies to suggest that there is within the Three Forms of Unity on the one hand and the Westminster Standards on the other an inherent difference in the doctrine of the Church (cf *Acts* 1985, Article 88, Ground 5,7). Nevertheless, that there was at the Conference indeed a different emphasis surrounding this doctrine with its various practical implications is indicated by the various discussions reported in the Minutes (cf Minutes 3.2.2; 5.5.3; 7.4; see also 10.2.2(a)). This different emphasis present at the Conference is further footnoted by the Conference's decision to "take up the suggestion...regarding an agreed statement as to what constitutes a 'true church' and the consequences of such a statement for inter-communion, etc."

15. The Conference purposes "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ" (Constitution Article III.1). This "unity of faith" is rooted in the Basis of the Conference, ie, "the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (...) and the Westminster Standards..." (Article II). Before a church can be admitted as a member of the ICRC, the Conference must be convinced that this potential member adheres and is faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis

(Article IV). As such, we in the FRCA accept that there is unity of faith with other member churches sitting with us in the Conference.

A problem arises when evidence appears that (a) member church(es) maintain(s) practices which conflict with the Standards mentioned in the Basis and thus with Scripture.

16. Given the common heritage the FRCA shares with sister churches of Continental origin, these sister-churches ought to be able to understand the concerns we have about the ICRC. It would accordingly be desirable to confer with the sister churches about these concerns.
17. The workshop on Rules for Interchurch Relations unfortunately did not produce conclusions, while the discussions offered useful interaction and ideas. This Synod has decided to give deputies the task to review all this and, in consultation with the sister churches, to come with recommendations to the next Synod (cf Article 90).
18. Our membership in the ICRC obliges us to seek the “fullest ecclesiastical fellowship” with other member churches (Constitution Article III.2). This obligation gives rise to the query what is to happen if sister relations prove impossible. Does it imply departure from the ICRC? Or ought a lesser level of permanent relations to be considered? This matter needs to be addressed since *Acts* 1985, Article 88, Grounds 8,9,10,11 suggest that cooperation is possible only with sister churches. This too may be a matter to discuss with the sister churches.
19. In decisions previously made regarding the ICRC, our Synods have hardly forwarded positive grounds for joining the ICRC. All we find is an indirect reference to the opportunity for contact by way of a conference with foreign churches of Reformed Confession (cf *Acts* 1985, Article 88, Ground 4). This matter needs to receive more attention so that it becomes clear whether we have a (continuing) calling with respect to the ICRC, and if so what it is.
20. H Ballast is incorrect in his contention that the name of the ICRC (“International Conference of Reformed Churches”) is misleading. A dictionary definition of the word “conference” allows for “perpetual activity with membership and constitution.”
21. As regards the concerns H Ballast has about the Purpose of the ICRC, the references to the Church Order are out of place because the Church Order does not concern itself with matters beyond the direct bond of churches. To say that (local) churches have certain tasks does not mean that these churches may not seek assistance from, eg, a conference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decides:

1. To thank the deputies for the work done and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. to study the concerns signalled in the Considerations with respect to the ICRC (cf Considerations 14, 15, 18, 19).
 - b. to consult with the sisterchurches regarding these concerns.
 - c. to publish the results of their study for the interest of the churches.
 - d. to serve the following Synod with a report and recommendations.
3. Meanwhile, Synod expresses that our concerns may affect our continuing membership in the ICRC.

4. to appoint deputies to study the Report on Ecumenical Creeds and report their findings to next Synod.

ADOPTED

Synod adjourns for lunch.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 146

REOPENING

Synod is reopened.

ARTICLE 147

RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Committee 2 presents its report. After two rounds of discussion the following is proposed:

MATERIAL

Agenda items: 10.h : Deputies Report
 8.bb : P W Dekker - Churches Abroad

OBSERVATIONS

1. Synod 1987 gave deputies the following mandate:
 - a. Synod decides to re-confirm the decision of the 1983 Synod that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland is a faithful church of our Lord;
 - b. Synod decides to offer the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland the relation of Temporary Contact with the following rules:
 1. to invite delegates of each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the Assembly or Synod but no vote;
 2. to exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, and to solicit comments on these documents;
 3. to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching full correspondence
 - c. Synod decides that this temporary relation will be reassessed by Synod 1989.
 - d. Synod decides to instruct the deputies to send two delegates to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland for a visit. This could be done in conjunction with the ICRC.
2. Deputies report that much progress was made by means of a visit of two of the delegates to the EPCI in 1988. Questions were answered, first hand information was gained, while 'probing' into various aspects of EPCI doctrine and church life received gratifying answers. Deputies conclude that "it proved to be a very valuable, positive and satisfying visit."

3. The EPCI have accepted our offer of temporary ecclesiastical contact.
4. Delegates who visited the EPCI returned with the recommendation to other deputies that the EPCI be offered a sister-relationship at Synod 1989.
5. Deputies received the EPCI's Minutes of the Presbytery Reports. We learn that the EPCI does not (as yet) hold a general assembly.
6. In 1987 the EPCI participated in a conference with the FCS and the RPCI which evidently led "to a greater appreciation of each other's situations".
7. Deputies considered that the relationship of temporary contact was established in order to enable the FRCA and the EPCI to get to know each other better. Since the relationship has been in force for only a short period they recommend that it continues for some time before a sister-relationship is entertained. They advise to move cautiously "especially since in other relations with Presbyterian churches several divergencies and impediments have become evident".
8. In his letter P W Dekker also advocates caution contending that the EPCI's "...lack of confessional membership has consequences for doctrine and discipline". He also contends that "no detailed study has been performed with respect to the marks of the church," and takes issue with the "satisfaction with the degree to which the EPCI has tried to safeguard itself against the danger of hierarchy" as expressed by previous deputies.
9. Deputies recommend that:
 - a. Synod discharges deputies appointed by Synod 1987;
 - b. Synod decide to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 1. To express thankfulness to the EPCI for their acceptance of the relationship of temporary ecclesiastical contact;
 2. To use this contact to intensify discussions and exchange of information with the purpose of improving understanding of each other with the aim of eventually to be able to come to a recommendation to Synod to establish full sister relations;
 3. to allow the deputies to invite a delegate from the EPCI, with our financial assistance if necessary, to visit our churches.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. We ought to be very thankful for the very positive news concerning the EPCI. All the information indicates that here is a faithful church of our Lord which submits itself to the Word of God and is steadfast in faith. The EPCI has been sister church of the RCN(L) since 1981. The EPCI are reported to have said that they understand the rules for church correspondence. "Though they practice their inter-church relations in a somewhat more informal manner this does not mean that they are unprincipled in this area" (Deputies Report, page 85 2:1).
2. It is evident that the EPCI is not careless concerning its responsibilities towards the RPCI and the FCS.
3. Their position concerning the children in the covenant does justice to God's reliable promise and His pertinent demands.
4. Church membership via a "credible profession of faith" may not be said to do injustice to the Word of God. This depends on the nature of such a "credible confession" and may very well be in line with, e.g. Matthew 10:32, 1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 11:1-3.

5. Over the years it has become quite clear that the EPCI cherishes and displays the three marks of a true and faithful church.
6. Both prior and present Synods have considered that:
 - the true believers and true churches ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church so as to practice unity of faith and ecclesiastical fellowship...
 Although the EPCI is geographically far removed we may not neglect our ecumenical responsibilities towards them.
7. Although there has been a very fruitful visit, more and personal contact is desirable before a sister-relation is offered. Within our churches we must leave time for a better understanding to develop concerning the EPCI.
8. New deputies should be mandated to discuss and explain our current rules for sister-churches, with the EPCI.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 148

LINGUISTIC REVISION OF ECCLESIASTICAL ORDINANCES

Committee 1 presents its proposal:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 10.i Deputies Report

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies present the work which could not be finalised after Synod 1985 (*Acts*, Article 39) decided to have the linguistic aspects of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances examined.
2. Deputies have submitted linguistically amended - and in some cases edited - versions of:
 - a. Subscription form for elders and deacons;- 3.1
 - b. Subscription form for Ministers of the Word;- 3.2
 - c. Certificate of eligibility for call;- 3.3
 - d. Certificate of admission to the office of Minister of the Word;- 3.4
 - e. Certificate of release from the Consistory;- 3.5
 - f. Certificate of release from the Classis Church;- 3.6
 - g. Request for release from the Consistory to the Classis Church;- 3.7
 - h. Emeritus declaration from the Classis Church.- 3.8

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The amended versions of these documents show commendable improvement in comparison with the present versions, both in vocabulary and in style.
2. Changes to the "Certificate of eligibility for call", although not confined to the "linguistic aspects" of Deputies' mandate, produce a text which suits the requirements of our churches better.
3. The titles of the forms 3.5 to 3.8 do not express the intention sufficiently clearly and can be improved.
4. The new text of the item under Observation 2h is more concise and expresses more accurately what is intended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To adopt the new texts of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances as submitted, with the following changes:
Titles to be reworded:
 - 3.5 Certificate of release of minister (by the Church);
 - 3.6 Certificate of release of minister (by the Classis);
 - 3.7 Request for release of minister;
 - 3.8 Emeritus declaration.
3. The names of the churches, as decided by Synod 1954, to contain "of" instead of "at". This should be followed in all the texts.
4. To arrange the printing of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 149

LINGUISTIC REVISION OF THE CHURCH ORDER

Committee 1 presents its proposal:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 10.j : Deputies Report

OBSERVATIONS

1. Deputies were charged by Synod 1987 (*Acts*, Article 33) to, on the one hand, scrutinise and improve the language use of the Church Order, and on the other, make use of the Canadian text in so far as possible.
2. Deputies, upon comparing the Australian and the Canadian texts, observed that they differed little in substance but that in terms of language use, the latter was far superior.
3. Deputies argue that the dual aim of Synod 1987 would be best served by an examination of the Canadian Church Order and by its adaptation to our circumstances.
4. They recommend that new deputies examine the substance of both texts and adapt the Canadian Church Order so that it clearly reflects the substance of the Australian Church Order.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. It is a matter of concern that the relatively minor linguistic update commenced by Synod 1983 (*Acts*, Article 99) and pursued by Synod 1987 (*Acts*, Article 33) still has not taken place.
2. Uniformity between the Australian and the Canadian bonds of churches remains a desirable aim, also with respect to the Church Order.
3. Careful stewardship of our resources points in the direction of adaptation of the Canadian document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To thank and discharge deputies.
2. To appoint new deputies and to instruct them to:
 - a. adapt the Canadian text so that it clearly reflects the specific Australian circumstances. Where there are noteworthy differences deputies must report these to Synod.
 - b. maintain the division of Articles of the Canadian Church Order;
 - c. submit a final draft to next Synod.

ADOPTED

ARTICLE 150

DECIDING THE DATE OF SYNOD

Committee 2 presents its report. After discussion the following proposal results:

MATERIAL

Agenda item: 8.y : Byford - deciding the date of Synod.

ADMISSIBILITY

1. Byford's letter asks Synod to regulate that in future the convening Church consults the classis church if postponement of Synod is required. This is a new matter and according to Article 30 CO shall be prepared by the minor assembly. Such an item should have been sent to the churches in accordance with the *Rules for Synods*. It is regrettable that Byford sent its submission very late. As the request concerns the date of this Synod, Committee 2 decided to deal with this matter.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Byford observes that our Church Order speaks about the date of Synod in Article 45.
2. It also observes that the Church Order does not stipulate in so many words what is to happen when Synod cannot be convened at the specified time, and must therefore be postponed.
3. Byford quotes the following paragraph of Article 45 CO:
"when at least two classical meetings consider that the Synod must be convened within the three year period the church appointed for the purpose of convening the next Synod shall, with the approval of its classis, determine the time and place for it."
4. Byford considers that the stipulation of Article 45 CO "suggests that it is

appropriate for the convening church to confer with 'its classis' in the event of a parallel request to have Synod postponed".

5. Byford recommends to Synod to decide that "in the event of there being in the future a need to postpone Synod, the convening church shall consult the sister churches via the classis church."

CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Church of Byford is correct that Article 45 CO is to be used in case of a postponement of Synod.
2. Synod 1985 (*Acts*, Article 81 in speaking about Article 45 CO) decided to refer the task of the classis to the classis church or Synod. The applicable part of this Article reads as follows:

"Where at least two churches consider that the Synod must be convened within the three year period, the church appointed for the purpose of convening the next Synod shall, with the approval of the Classis Church, determine the time and place for it." (See: 'Decisions pertaining to the referral of the task of the Classis Church or Synod', prepared by deputies appointed by Synod 1985).
2. This rule says two things:
 - a. the request has to come from at least two churches in order that the convening church may entertain the request;
 - b. the decision of the convening church must be approved by the classis church.
3. The Church Order covers the recommendation of Byford.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod decides that with this, Byford's request is answered.

ADOPTED

Synod is adjourned.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 151

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with the singing of Psalm 66:1.

ARTICLE 152

CLOSED SESSION

Synod goes into closed session in order to consider appointments.

ARTICLE 153

ADJOURNMENT

Reverend A Veldman requests the singing of Psalm 139:10,13 and leads in prayer.
Synod is adjourned.

SEVENTEENTH DAY - Monday, 21st May, 1990

Morning Session

ARTICLE 154

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with singing Psalm 66:2,3, reading Revelation 11:1-13 and prayer. Roll call reveals that elders J Eikelboom and A Slobe are absent due to work commitments. Elder M Eikelboom takes the place of elder A Slobe. He rises to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

ARTICLE 155

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The *Acts* of Friday 18th May, 1990 are Adopted.

ARTICLE 156

CLOSED SESSION

Synod goes into closed session in order to hear reports of church visitations made during 1987-1989. Elder J VanderRos leaves in order to return home.

Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 157

SYNOD FINANCES

The revised draft budget is presented. (See *Acts*, Article 48). In connection with this a letter from the treasurer A Hordyk is read. Based on the cost sharing rule in Article 11.c of *Rules for Synods* the cost sharing arrangement is presented. After discussion and amendments the proposed budget and cost sharing (shown in Appendix L to these *Acts*) are Adopted.

It is noted that at this time elder A Slobe returns and his alternate, elder M Eikelboom leaves the meeting.

ARTICLE 158

PERSONAL QUESTION PERIOD

Personal question period is held.
Synod is adjourned.

Evening Session

ARTICLE 159

REOPENING

Synod is reopened with singing Psalm 33:1,6. The Chairman welcomes everyone to this closing session of Synod.

ARTICLE 160

ADOPTION OF ACTS

The corrected *Acts* of 19th May, as well as the *Acts* of 21st May are Adopted.

ARTICLE 161

APPOINTMENTS

The following list of appointments is read:

	APPOINTMENTS	<i>Articles of Acts of Synod 1990</i>
1.	Publishing of the <i>Acts</i> - The First Clerk	
2.	Archives and Library of Synods - the Church of Bedfordale	126
3.	Inspection of Archives and Library - the Church of Byford	126
4.	Treasurers of Synod - Ad. Hordyk, and J Versluis as assistant	
5.	Auditors for Synodical Treasury - the Church of Kelmscott	
6.	Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad	38, 53, 86, 90, 107, 110, 111, 112, 114, 119, 121,124, 135, 139, 145, 147

Reverend A Veldman (Convener), Reverend W Huizinga, L 't Hart,
J L VanBurgel, H Plug, K A Wieske, H Swarts, A VanLeeuwen.
Alternates: J van Dyk and Reverend C Bosch

RULES FOR CORRESPONDENCE

- 1.1 Synod 1983 requested deputies to draft rules for correspondence with sister-churches. These were printed in the *Acts* of the Synod 1970, Article 26 as follows:
 - a. to take care for each other that the doctrine, liturgy, church government and discipline do not deviate from the reformed confession;
 - b. to send each other the agenda and decisions (*Acts*) of the general Synods and the receiving of subsequent delegates from these other churches as advisers;
 - c. to consult each other prior to making any amendments or additions to confessional standards, church orders or liturgical forms;

- d. to accept each other's attestations and admit each other's ministers of the Word to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, applying what was determined at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1893, Article 165, which was further detailed at the Synod of Groningen in 1927, Article 161 (which includes the closer definition made at Synod of Amsterdam in 1936, Article 122, decision 1, 4);
- e. to be responsible to each other concerning correspondence with third parties.

7. Deputies for Contact with the PCEA 77
 Reverend C Bouwman (convener), Reverend C Bosch, J Bruning, J Eikelboom. Alternate/adviser Reverend A VanDelden).
8. Deputies for Bible Translations 138
 Reverend C Kleyn (convener), J VanderRos, G Groenewold, G Brouwer. Alternate/adviser Reverend K Jonker).
9. Deputies for Training for the Ministry (ad Articles 18, 19 CO) and Possibility for Theological Library 86, 125
 L Schoof (convener), J Bolhuis, A T Schiebaan. Adviser Reverend A VanDelden.
10. Pulpit Exchanges - the Church of Albany. 85
11. Deputies for Revision of the Church Order
 J Eikelboom (convener), J Numan, S H Terpstra. Adviser Reverend C Bouwman.
12. Classis Churches and Second-appeal Churches
- a. Classis Churches: the next church in alphabetical order.
 - b. Second-appeal Church: the preceding church in alphabetical order.
 - c. It is understood that if another church is instituted, this new congregation would take its place according to the alphabetical order in the list below:
- | | Classis-churches | Second-appeal churches |
|----------------|------------------|------------------------|
| For Albany | Armadale | West Tamar |
| For Armadale | Bedfordale | Albany |
| For Bedfordale | Byford | Armadale |
| For Byford | Kelmscott | Bedfordale |
| For Kelmscott | Launceston | Byford |
| For Launceston | West Tamar | Kelmscott |
| For West Tamar | Albany | Launceston |
13. Deputies for Church Visits 26, 85
 The ministers (Reverend A Veldman - convener), Alternates - the convener may request the consistory of the church neighbouring the one to be visited to appoint an experienced elder from its midst.
14. Deputies ad Articles 48, 76 CO - Reverend A Veldman, Reverend C Bouwman and L 'tHart.
15. Deputies ad Article 66 CO (Days of prayer) - the Church of Launceston.
16. Deputies for Auditing the books ad Art 18, 19 Co - the Church of Bedfordale.

17. Deputies for Examining Sections of the BOOK OF PRAISE: (Ecumenical Creeds, Canons of Dort, Revisions of Liturgical Forms, Hymn 1A), and ICRC Report on Ecumenical Creeds 65, 145, 119
 Reverend K Jonker (convener), Joe Hidding, G Reitsema.
 Alternate J J Hoekstra.
18. Deputies for Correspondence with the EPCA 118
 Reverend K Jonker (convener) and S Reitsema. Alternate/adviser Reverend C Kleyn.
19. Deputies for dialogue with the RCA 102
 Reverend W Huizinga (convener), Reverend C Bosch, J van Dyk. Alternate L Woonings.
20. Convening Church for the next Synod:
 Church Bedfordale
 Place Bedfordale
 Time April/May 1992

ARTICLE 162

PERSONAL QUESTION PERIOD

A delegate who was not present at personal question period (see *Acts* Article 158) is given the opportunity to ask questions.

ARTICLE 163

QUESTIONS AD ARTICLE 41 CO

The Chairman asks the questions in accordance with the stipulations of Article 41 CO and delegates from each church answer in turn.

ARTICLE 164

ADOPTION OF ACTS

All *Acts* have been adopted except those of the closing session. Synod appoints the members of Moderamen to scrutinise and approve these before they are included in the *Acts*.

ARTICLE 165

APPROVAL OF PRESS RELEASE

Reverend C Bouwman reads the Press Release which is then approved.

ARTICLE 166

CENSURE AD ARTICLE 47 CO

The Chairman notes with gratitude that there is no need for any censure at the close of this lengthy Synod.

ARTICLE 167

CLOSING OF SYNOD

On behalf of the churches the Chairman addresses words of appreciation to the many assistants who have worked so hard at this Synod. He then presents the following closing address:

Brothers delegates,

The 1990 Synod of Armadale of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is about to become history. Brothers, I would now like to address you personally. On behalf of the Moderamen, we thank you for the confidence placed in us. We hope that it was not ill-placed or abused. Some of us had to become accustomed to our positions and responsibilities. Even as your task as delegates may have been a learning experience, so it was for us.

I, as chairman, also wish to thank you as fellow delegates. We have worked hard together, struggled and prayed together. That develops a bond between us. But that is not all for which I thank you. Your brotherly cooperation has meant that chairing this Synod was not at all as difficult as I had anticipated. For this I thank you. If I have dealt with anyone unjustly during the course of the discussions and deliberations, please accept my apologies.

As far as your task as delegates goes, it now comes to an end. Advisory Committee rooms are swept clean of all the paper-piles. Yes, the end! This Synod turned out to become the longest Synod in our short history. That is not your fault. The churches and church-members gave you a very long agenda, to be precise, there were 82 points on the agenda, counting all the incoming correspondence and the various reports. It was your task to deal with all these items. Our method of wading through observations, admissibility, considerations towards recommendations meant that all had to be done thoroughly. If it was not thorough, back it went to the advisory Committee for further thought; right, Committee 4?! Indeed, that was one of the hallmarks of this Synod. It was slow, sometimes tediously slow for some maybe, but it was thorough, paying attention to all aspects and angles. May these careful decisions serve the churches well, for time to come.

The *Acts* now go to the churches. They can read and test them, deciding whether our work was well-founded or not. Mind you, these decisions are settled and binding on the churches, unless the churches find them to be against the Word of God, the Confessions or Church Order.

We will not review all the decisions, but we do want to say here and now that the predictions of gloom and doom about this Synod have blown past without doing any damage. In the press we could read that tensions and divisions existed. Who will deny that it was so? Even the sermon in the church service before Synod mentioned "contentious issues" on which "opinions are divided"/ The press even went as far as to say that members were declaring each other heretical for their divergent views. "Hard words such as 'sectarian' and 'ecumenical' were being uttered; the polemics were fierce and without precedent." Those are fighting words. Many expected exactly that. Yet what happened? Allow me to use an example. Sometime this year, around Labour Day I think, a cyclone came down the West Australian coast. Our senior meteorologist warned the inhabitants of Perth to take precautionary measures. High winds with gale force, storm and rain, thunder and lightning were on the way. Many of us stayed home that day. What happened? The seas stayed level, the skies were clear that day! It had passed us by, thanks be to our Lord. Now something similar happened at Synod 1990.

Why? God heard our many prayers. When you know that danger looms ahead,

when you can foresee tensions and divisions, then as christians we pray, we pray hard and from the heart. In church services, in our homes and abroad prayers were multiplied for the peace of Jerusalem. God heard them. The church service before Synod set the tone. *How good it is when brothers dwell in unity!* That theme echoed in our minds, especially the first days. We recalled it often. Unity is a precious gift. On the opening day we felt that as we all stood up to declare our adherence to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. That was the source of our unity. Obedience to the Word cemented us together. But unity also had to be practised. For we all served one Lord - we all wanted to show that "Christ is pre-eminent." We had to strive so that we did not seek our own opinion. That spirit of striving for consensus remained strong, right to the end. We did not always achieve that goal of perfection, but we did strive for it.

May these decisions be received in the spirit in which they were made.

It is now time to say farewell. Two delegates from Tasmania have left already. After three weeks of intensive work, it is time to unwind and to resume our normal labours. May God go with you, in the case of the Tasmanian brothers may He bring you safely home to wife and family who have missed you. God strengthen you for your respective offices.

We also think of the many brothers appointed to serve the next Synod. God grant wisdom to them all that the workload of the next Synod, the Lord willing, may be lightened by good reports.

God bless our bond of seven churches here in Australia. May his Spirit and Word be like the cloud and the pillar of fire to direct our path towards the land of hope and glory.

Thank you.

Reverend C Bouwman requests the singing of Psalm 84:3,4,5,6 and leads in closing prayer and thanksgiving.

Synod is closed.