

ACTS OF THE 1998 SYNOD

**and
Reports to the 1998 Synod**

of the

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA**



Delegates to Synod Launceston 1998

(from left to right) Elder J Postmus (Rockingham), Rev W Huizinga (Armadale), Rev P De Boer (Mount Nasura), Elder CW Mulder (Launceston), Elder AA 't Hart (Albany), Rev C Kleyn (Legana), Elder A Mulder (West Albany), Rev W van der Jagt (Byford), Rev C Bouwman (Kelmescott), Elder J Hidding (Legana), Elder J Eikelboom (Mount Masura), Elder J Bruning (Kelmescott), Rev J Poppe (West Albany), Rev A van Delden (Rockingham), Rev A Veldman (Albany), Elder A Slobe (Armadale), Elder GJ Bosveld (Byford)

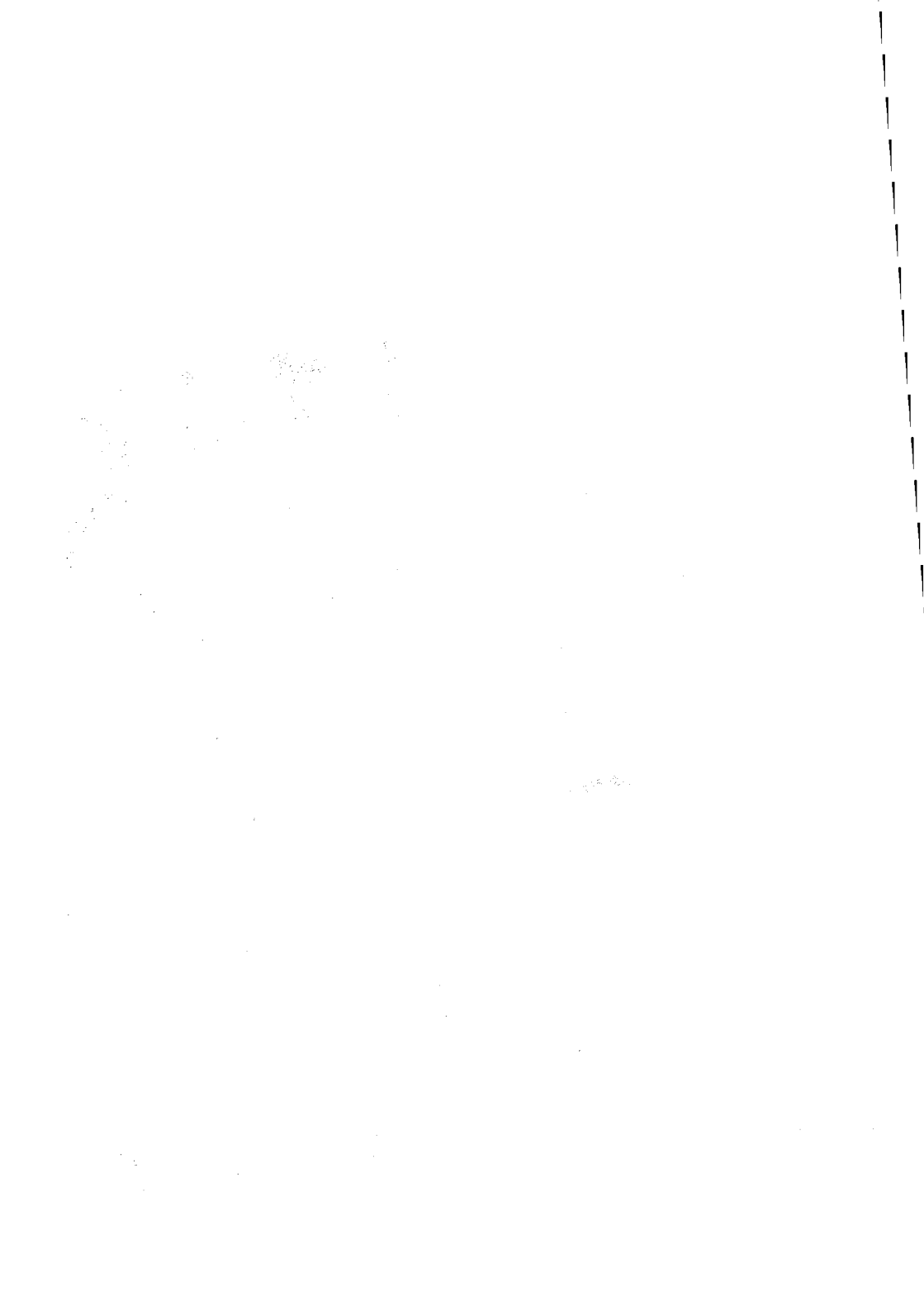


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Photograph of Synod delegates

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Tuesday, 2 June 1998

EVENING SESSION

Article 1

Opening by the convening church

After a prayer service led by Reverend W Huizinga, Reverend FJ vanHulst on behalf of the convening church of Launceston, opens Synod 1998, asks those present to sing Psalm 53:1-5, reads from Scripture Isaiah 55, and leads in prayer. He then speaks the following opening address:

Dear brothers delegates!

It is a pleasure and a privilege for the church of Launceston to receive the delegates for the biennial meeting of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

Though the church of Launceston might not be the first Free Reformed Church instituted in Australia, I am pretty sure that the city of Launceston is one of the oldest cities of Australia. This afternoon most of the delegates had a walk through the Gorge, a monument of God's creation. He has shaped this natural treasure many centuries ago without any human involvement. It was all according to His divine plan. It was His pleasure to make it the way we can still marvel at.

With regards to the city itself, the picture is somewhat different. The city has been developed according to human planning over a period of about two centuries. So if you have a walk through town, you will become aware that you walk in human history.

We at the end of the 20th century, are not the first people living and working here. We are building on the shoulders of what previous generations have achieved. That does not mean that we have to copy what they did, or that we cannot go beyond what they discovered. Life goes on. New ideas develop. New insights come through and we can make progress.

But by the same token, it is good for us to have a positive historical awareness. Especially immigrants who enter a country where they are rather free to shape things according to their own ideas, run the risk of thinking that they are the first ones to invent all kind of things. They live in a New World, which they can shape in their own way. This situation however, can be rather deceptive. You might be inclined to think that you have to find solutions for brand new problems. While in actual fact the problems are not that new at all. It is just that for the first time you are confronted with them and have to find a solution.

The point I want to make with this meditating on historical awareness, is that it helps to develop a proper perspective on old and venerable truths.

If there is one thing important in a meeting of churches, then it is that we go for the truth. That we do not just plod along the way we assume to be right, but that we always seek the truth. Isn't the church a pillar of truth? Should not the church be a city on a hill? A light for people who live in darkness?

Well, there is only one way that we can abide with truth. That is by careful listening to the Scriptures, under the constant prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Since on Pentecost Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to lead us in the truth, we would do well to allow ourselves to be guided by Him. That is why I hope and pray that this Synod will be characterised by a reverent atmosphere where we always try to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Acts of Synod

In our prayer we prayed for strength to abide with God's Word as our only standard and rule. For only then, our work can be to the glory of God's Name. Only then an ecclesiastical assembly can be a blessing. Then a Synod can be a tool in the hands of the Spirit who is concentrating on one thing: The promotion of the Kingdom of our glorious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This prayer is necessary all the time for we have to realise that a Synod is a meeting of people. Of people with limited understanding; people with different characters. Characters that now and then might clash. Approaches can sometimes be so different that it causes tension. That is the reality. And we would do well to be aware of that. That keeps us humble.

Synod will have many open sessions where an audience is quite welcome to sit in and listen. Now and then Synod will have closed sessions. Not open for anyone else than official delegates. But however closed a Synod may try to make its sessions, it cannot stop two observers from outside to be there all the time. They are even more than observers. They will actively take part in the discussions. And even the most, strict chairman can't stop them. For these other guests will make themselves invisible.

You might wonder by now, which two observers from outside Launceston has invited to come at the Synod. Now actually we only invited one of the observers I am thinking of. But we simply could not stop the other one from coming. The invited observer and partaker is the Holy Spirit. We have prayed for his active involvement. And I am sure He will be there. Since we have just celebrated Pentecost again, there is no doubt about the Holy Spirit working in and through people.

The one, we as convening church have not invited but who, impertinent as he is, invited himself, is the devil. He brought sin with him, as his most destructive tool. And unfortunately he works through people as well. He will be there all the time. So just beware of him. Do not give him a foothold. Keep the flesh at bay. Instead, think and act spiritually. Keep in step with the Spirit. Be guided by Him all the time.

Before I finish my speech, I know that it is the privilege of the chosen chairman of Synod to thank the convening church for the excellent preparation of Synod. So I hope indeed that he will start his office with expressing his appreciation for all the work done by the convening church. But do not praise me or the consistory of Launceston for our hard work. We hardly put in any effort. The one who put in all the efforts, is Br John Everts and his team.

I suspect the whole Everts' family has been suffering under Br John's efforts. For a few months he thought Synod, he talked Synod, he even dreamt Synod, I fear. Now his dream has become true. So on behalf of the convening church: Many, many thanks John, for your efforts.

I declare the twentieth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia officially opened.

Let us sing Hymn 58

Article 2

Examination of Credentials

The chairman of the convening Church requests the brothers of the Church of Legana to examine the delegates' Credentials. Having completed this task, the brothers report that all the Churches are properly represented by their delegates, as follows:

the Church of	has delegated
Albany	Reverend A Veldman Elder A A t'Hart
Armadale	Reverend W Huizinga Elder A Slobe (alternate)
Byford	Reverend W vanderJagt Elder GJ Bosveld
Kelmscott	Reverend C Bouwman Elder J Bruning
Launceston	Reverend FJ vanHuilst Elder CW Mulder
Legana	Reverend C Kleyn Elder JJ Hidding
Mount Nasura	Reverend PKA deBoer Elder J Eikelboom
Rockingham	Reverend A vanDelden Elder J Postmus
West Albany	Reverend J Poppe Elder A Mulder

The churches of Armadale, Byford, Launceston, Legana and Mount Nasura provided their delegates with an Instruction.

Article 3

Election of officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman	Reverend C Bouwman
Vice Chairman	Reverend C Kleyn
First Clerk	Elder J Eikelboom
Second Clerk	Reverend J Poppe

Article 4

Constitution of Synod

The chairman declares Synod duly constituted and thanks the convening church of Launceston for its contribution to the arrangements for this Synod.

Article 5

Adjournment

The chairman asks those present to sing Psalm 4:3. Reverend Kleyn then leads in closing prayer, and the chairman adjourns Synod.

Wednesday, 3 June 1998

Article 6
Reopening

The chairman re-opens Synod, asks those present to sing Psalm 25: 2 and 4, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 12, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all delegates are present.

Article 7
Time Schedules, Homepage on Internet

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

Mondays to Fridays	9 am to 12 noon
	1.30 pm to 4.30 pm
	7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

A proposal from the executive to place the *Acts of Synod* also on the Internet is adopted, on the proviso that matters of personal nature are excluded.

Also, any decision relating to other churches will not be uploaded until after these churches have been informed.

Article 8
Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity

Before asking the delegates to rise to show their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity, the chairman announces that the five Instructions brought to Synod (see Article 2) all relate to this ceremony. These Instructions will be distributed to delegates after the rising ceremony, for their perusal. The chairman then asks delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

All delegates rise.

Article 9
Adjournment

After the first clerk has distributed the five Instructions from the churches, (see Article 8) the chairman adjourns Synod to allow delegates to examine the material.

Article 10
Instructions from the Churches (refer Articles 13, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105, 122)

The chairman re-opens Synod at 10.30 am. Synod goes in Closed Session to consider the Instructions received from the churches of Armadale, Byford, Launceston, Legana and Mount Nasura.

Towards the end of the afternoon a Committee is appointed with the mandate to formulate a proposal that deals with the situation.

Article 11
Adjournment

Elder GJ Bosveld asks Synod to sing Psalm 56:4. He then leads in closing prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Thursday, 4 June 1998
MORNING AND AFTERNOON SESSIONS

Article 12

Re-opening

The chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 62 : 1 and 3, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 13, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Synod continues in Closed Session.

Article 13

Instructions from the Churches (refer Articles 10, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105, 122)

The Committee appointed in Article 10 presents its proposal. After amendment it is voted upon.

Material:

1. The church of Byford, in an instruction, raises concerns about the confessional integrity of Rev F vanHulst. This church proposes that Synod request a further explanation of his views, and if these are not in agreement with the Three Forms of Unity not to admit him as delegate to Synod.
2. The church of Arnadale proposes that the Question Period after Article 41 of the Church Order be moved up to point 6 of the Agenda, and that it be used to ask Rev F vanHulst for a further explanation of his sentiments regarding beliefs and practices in order to preserve uniformity.
3. The church of Mount Nasura questions the integrity of Rev F vanHulst regarding his position and writings about reformed education, conversion, regeneration, the law, forgiveness from sins, relations with other churches, mixed courtship, marriage and celebrating the Lord's supper elsewhere.
4. The church of Launceston responds to the Instruction of Mount Nasura, and objects that this matter has not found its way to Synod in a Christian manner, and should therefore not be dealt with. It uses Articles 30 and 80 of the Church Order as grounds.
5. The church of Legana requests "Synod's judgement and help with regard to the doctrinal issues which are causing great confusion and division in the Legana congregation." Legana has been in discussion with Rev FJ vanHulst on particular points, and tables 14 pages of Rev FJ vanHulst's answers to their questions (Agenda item 8.22).

Decisions:

1. Synod has some understanding for the complaint in Launceston's instruction, that the complainants would have done better to approach Rev FJ vanHulst and/or his consistory with their concerns about Rev FJ vanHulst's teaching and conduct. However, an opportunity exists at Synod to question delegates on the basis of the Form of Subscription for Ministers, and therefore the objections raised in Launceston's instructions do not apply.
2. Launceston's argument that charges relating to confessional integrity form a new matter which needs to be resolved in the minor assembly (Article 30 of the Church

Acts of Synod

Order) is not correct. Neither is Launceston's assertion that by questioning their delegate Synod is lording it over this church (Article 80 of the Church Order).

3. While Rev FJ vanHulst's confessional integrity is being questioned, Synod should not include Rev FJ vanHulst in Committee work, nor should Synod meet in plenary session to deal with items on the Agenda.
4. Synod asks Rev FJ vanHulst to provide a "further explanation" of his opinions regarding those parts of doctrine brought forward by the churches;
5. Synod appoints a Committee with the mandate to:
 - a) collect the material in the submissions from the churches;
 - b) consult with the delegates of the churches who sent these submissions to ensure that their concerns are received and properly formulated;
 - c) lay these concerns before Rev FJ vanHulst for reply;
 - d) evaluate the reply;
 - e) report to Synod, together with a proposed course of action
6. In carrying out its mandate, the committee may, if necessary, seek the advice of professors from the Theological Colleges of our sister churches.

Grounds:

1. Since within the bond of churches we are our brother's keeper, it would have been fitting to approach Rev FJ vanHulst and/or his consistory about his teaching first of all.
2. The churches have agreed that in their Synods all delegates rise to express agreement with the three Forms of Unity. For this to be of any value, the delegates, on good grounds, may question the rising of delegates.
3. In its Form of Subscription for Ministers the churches agree that a Consistory, Classis or Synod, upon sufficient grounds, may question a minister of the Word regarding his confessional integrity. The Church Order does not specify how or when questioning with regard to confessional integrity should occur.
4. The matters listed in Materials above are of a public nature.
5. Via Instructions, the churches at Armadale, Byford and Mount Nasura have requested that a "further explanation" be provided on the basis of the Subscription Form.
6. When a Consistory is investigating a charge against a congregation member, Consistory withholds that member from the table of the Lord for that one occasion – not as a judgement on the member in question, but rather to provide room for investigation. In like manner, as long as an investigation is under way regarding Rev FJ vanHulst's confessional integrity, no judgement is made about the brother, and yet it is wiser that he does not participate in Synod's decision-making processes.
7. The submissions from Byford and Legana contain "sufficient grounds" to warrant a "further explanation".
8. By requesting Rev FJ vanHulst to give a "further explanation" of his sentiments, Synod is equipping itself to give Legana the requested assistance.

ADOPTED

Article 14

Adjournment

The chairman adjourns Synod to 7.30 pm

Thursday, 4 June 1998
EVENING SESSION

Article 15

Re-opening

The chairman re-opens Synod at 7.30 pm and asks the brothers to sing Psalm 62:4 and 7. Synod continues to meet in Closed Session.

Article 16

Adoption of Acts

Articles 1 to 9 of the *Acts* are adopted. Synod decides to write *Acts of Closed Sessions* only for the purpose of recording confidential matters.

Article 17

Publication of the Decision made in Article 13 (refer Articles 10, 13, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105, 122)

A proposal moved and duly seconded is tabled as follows:

Decision:

To put the decision regarding the Instructions from the churches in the public *Acts*.

Grounds:

1. The matters dealt with in the Instructions refer to public statements and actions of Rev FJ vanHulst;
2. The churches have a right to know how Synod dealt with these public statements and actions.

ADOPTED

Article 18

Adoption of Agenda

The Draft Agenda, to which two items of correspondence are added, is tabled:

1. Opening by the convening church
2. Examination of credentials
3. Election of officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of Agenda
7. Adoption of meeting procedure
8. Incoming correspondence from:
 - 8.1 the Church of West Albany, appealing Article 95 of *Acts* 1996
 - 8.2 the Church of Albany, regarding Article 95 of *Acts* 1996
 - 8.3 the Church of Launceston, on *Rules for Synods* (Voting)
 - 8.4 the Church of Launceston, on Annual Conferences
 - 8.5 the Church of Launceston, on Women's Voting
 - 8.6 Reverend G van Rongen, requesting permission to use *Synod Acts*

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- 8.7 the Church of Byford, regarding daily re-opening of Synod
 - 8.8 the Church of Kelmscott, regarding RC Janssen's examination request
 - 8.9 the Church of Kelmscott, regarding the Report of Deputies for Presbyterian Churches
 - 8.10 the Church of Kelmscott, regarding the proposal on Women's Voting
 - 8.11 the Church of Legana, requesting pulpit supply
 - 8.12 J Dijkstra, appealing a Classis-church decision
 - 8.13 the Church of Byford, regarding Article 95 of *Acts* 1996
 - 8.14 the Church of Byford, regarding the Church of Launceston's contact with the Reformed Church of Launceston
 - 8.15 the Church of Mount Nasura, regarding Church relations
 - 8.16 the Church of Mount Nasura, regarding *Rules for Synods* (proposals)
 - 8.17 the church of Mount Nasura, proposing an Instruction to Deputies for relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches
 - 8.18 the Church of Mount Nasura, appealing Article 89 of *Acts* 1996
 - 8.19 the Church of Mount Nasura, regarding *Rules for Synods* (chairman)
 - 8.20 the Church of West Albany, regarding the formation of Classes
 - 8.21 the Church of West Albany, regarding Lanka Reformed Church
 - 8.22 the Church of Legana, requesting advice regarding Rev FJ vanHuist
 - 8.23 the Church of Legana, requesting inclusion of Rev FJ vanHulst's book as an appendix to Agenda item 8.22
 - 8.24 Geneva Free Reformed church (New Zealand)
9. Instructions from the churches of Armadale, Byford, Launceston, Legana and Mount Nasura
10. Reports by Classis Churches
11. Deputies Reports:
- 11.1 Archives and Library of Synods
 - 11.2 Inspection of the Archives and Library of Synods
 - 11.3 Synod Treasurer Report
 - 11.3.1 Draft Budget for 1998 Synod
 - 11.4 Audit Report for Synod Treasurer's books
 - 11.5 Relations with other Churches
 - 11.5.1 General Secretary's Report
 - 11.5.2 Sister Churches
 - 11.5.2.1 Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika
 - 11.5.2.2 the Presbyterian Church in Korea
 - 11.5.2.3 Canadian Reformed Churches
 - 11.5.2.4 Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
 - 11.5.2.5 Supplementary Report (Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika)
 - 11.5.3 Presbyterian Churches
 - 11.5.4 Other Churches (Reformed)
 - 11.5.4.1 Indonesian Churches (Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia and Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir)
 - 11.5.4.2 Reformed Churches of New Zealand
 - 11.5.4.3 Geneva Free Reformed Church
 - 11.5.4.4 Reformed Churches of Australia
 - 11.5.4.5 Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines

11.5.5 Supplementary Reports

11.5.5.1 Indonesian Reformed Churches (Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia)

11.5.5.2 Reformed Churches of New Zealand

11.5.5.3 Reformed Churches of Australia

11.6 Training for the Ministry

11.7 Nicene Creed

11.8 Pulpit Exchange

11.9 Civil Registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

11.10 Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod

11.11 Formation of Classes

11.12 Ecclesiastical documents, and Rules for Church Visitation

11.13 Church Visitation Reports

11.14 Articles 48 and 76 of the Church Order

11.15 Article 66 of the Church Order

11.16 Audit Report for the books of Deputies for Training for the Ministry

12. Audit Report for Synod Treasurer's books (see also item 11.4)

13. Calculation of the Churches' share of Synod costs

14. Appointment of Deputies

15. Appointment of convening church, and place and time of next Synod

16. Questions after Article 41 of the Church Order

17. Personal questions

18. Adoption of *Acts*

19. Adoption of Press Release

20. Censure after Article 47 of the Church Order

21. Closing of Synod

ADOPTED

Article 19

Committee Division and Tasks

The Executive proposes the following Committees to prepare Synod's business:

Committee 1

Members:

J Bruning, W Huizinga*, A vanDelden, A Veldman

Items & Agenda numbers:

Synod's decision recorded in Article 13 of these *Acts*.

Committee 2

Members:

J Eikelboom, C Kleyn, C Mulder, A Slobe, W vanderJagt*,

Items & Agenda numbers:

Appeal against Article 89 of 1996: 8.18

Archives & Library: 11.1, 2

Churches Abroad: General: 11.5.1, 8.21

Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order: 11.15

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Ecclesiastical Documents & Rules for Church Visitation: 11.12
Nicene Creed: 11.7
Rules for Synods: 11.10; 8.3, 7, 16, 19
Sister Churches: 11.5.2; 8.17
Treasurer's Report: 11.3, 11.4; 12; 13
Women's Voting: 8.5, 10
Indonesian Churches: 11.5.4.1, 5; 11.5.5.1
Convening Church: 15

Committee 3

Members:

GJ Bosveld, P deBoer*, J Hidding, A 'tHart,

Items & Agenda numbers:

Appeals and Correspondence, *Acts* 1996 Article 95: 8.1, 2, 13
Civil Registration: 11.9
Classis formation: 11.11; 8.4, 20
Deputies for Church Order Articles 48 and 76: 11.14
Presbyterian Churches: 11.5.3; 8.9
Pulpit Exchange: 11.8; 8.11
Request Rev G vanRongen: 8.6
Request RC Janssen: 8.8
Training for the Ministry: 11.6, 16
Reformed Churches of Australia: 11.5.4.4; 11.5.5.3

Committee 4

Members:

C Bouwman*, A Mulder, J Poppe, J Postmus

Items & Agenda numbers:

Appeal J Dykstra: 8.12
Mount Nasura's overture regarding Church Relations: 8.15
Reformed Churches: 11.5.4.2, 3; 11.5.5.2; 8.24

Note: * denotes convener

ADOPTED

Article 20

Letters of greeting

Synod goes into Open Session. The chairman reads letters of greeting from (1) the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and (2) the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. He also passes on oral greetings and well wishes from the 1998 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, which he attended as a delegate from our bond of churches.

Article 21

Adjournment

Elder J Bruning asks the brothers to sing Psalm 127:1, following which he leads in closing prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Friday, 5 June 1998 – Thursday, 11 June 1998

Article 22

Opening and Closing Sessions and Committee work

Note: Synod work on these days was conducted mainly in Committees during the scheduled time periods. Activities in the plenary sessions were limited to re-opening Synod every morning with singing, Bible reading and prayer; and adjourning Synod at the end of the day after singing and prayer; with occasional house-keeping work such as Adoption of Acts, and making announcements.

Synod is re-opened on **5 June** with the singing of Psalm 22:2. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 14, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present with the exception of Rev F vanHulst who gave notice that he would not be in attendance. The day is closed by Rev De Boer who asks Synod to sing Psalm 86:4 and leads in closing prayer.

Synod is re-opened on **6 June** with the singing of Psalm 33:6. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 15 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present with the exception of Rev F vanHulst who gave notice that he would be in attendance only for the adjournment session. The day is closed at 12 noon by elder J Eikelboom who asks Synod to sing Psalm 119:5 and leads in closing prayer. In the adjournment session **Synod adopts Articles 10 to 21 of the Acts.**

Synod is re-opened on **8 June** with the singing of Psalm 33:5. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 16, and leads in prayer in which he remembers the Queen's birthday. All delegates are present with the exception of Rev F vanHulst who gave notice that he would not be in attendance. The day is closed by elder J Hidding who asks Synod to sing Psalm 27:6 and leads in closing prayer. In the closing session Committee 1 presents a progress Report.

Synod is re-opened on **9 June** with the singing of Psalm 147:5,6. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 17, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present with the exception of elder J Hidding and Rev F vanHulst who gave notice that they would not be in attendance. The day is closed by Rev W Huizinga who asks Synod to sing Psalm 138:3, 4 and leads in closing prayer.

Synod is re-opened on **10 June** with the singing of Psalm 91:3,4. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 18, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present. The day is closed by Rev C Kleyn who asks Synod to sing Psalm 111:1, 2 and leads in closing prayer.

Synod is re-opened on **11 June** with the singing of Psalm 139:12, 13. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 19, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present with the exception of Rev F vanHulst who gave notice that he would not be in attendance. The day is closed by elder A Mulder who asks Synod to sing Psalm 27:2 and leads in closing prayer.

Friday, 12 June 1998

Article 23

Re-opening

Synod is re-opened with the singing of Psalm 25:7, 10. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 20, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present with the exception of Rev FJ vanHulst, who gave notice that he would not be in attendance. The chairman reads out the greetings part of a letter received from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

Article 24

Instructions from the churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105, 122)

Synod decides to go into Closed Session. Synod decides that office bearers from the local churches may attend the Closed Sessions that deal with this Agenda item. The meeting is adjourned for 10 minutes to allow elder C Mulder to ring around to inform these office bearers accordingly. A number of office bearers attend Synod for the rest of the day.

Article 25

Adjournment

The chairman asks Rev Veldman to close. After Synod has sung Psalm 25:2 Rev Veldman leads in prayer, and the chairman adjourns Synod.

Saturday, 13 June 1998

Article 26

Re-opening

Synod is re-opened with the singing of Psalm 1. The chairman reads 2 Chronicles 21 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present with the exception of Rev FJ vanHulst, who gave notice that he would not be in attendance. Synod continues to meet in Closed Session. A number of office bearers from the local churches are in attendance.

Article 27

Adoption of Acts

Synod adopts Articles 22 to 25.

Article 28

Instructions from the churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105, 122)

Committee 1 presents its Report as follows:

EVALUATION OF REV FJ VANHULST'S TEACHINGS

Note: Wherever this Evaluation shows '(p. _ , Legana)' this is reference to the document submitted to Synod by the church of Legana (see Article 13, Material, point 5)

Regarding regeneration and conversion:

I. Rev FJ vanHulst teaches that there are two faiths, both of which are real, viz., historical faith and true faith. Both are worked by the Holy Spirit. 'Historical faith' is a work of the Holy Spirit through 'preparatory grace,' (p.9 Legana) which work is common both to the elect and the reprobate and is resistible (*superabilis*). 'Historical faith' is not sufficient for salvation. He defines 'historical faith' in this way: "you accept the Bible as God's Word and also the doctrine of the church with your heart and mind, but your heart is not regenerated yet" (p.3 Legana). True faith, as defined in Lord's Day 7, is also the work of the Holy Spirit through saving grace, which work is restricted to the elect only and is irresistible (*insuperabilis*).

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

By speaking of 'historical faith' as the result of 'preparatory grace,' Rev FJ vanHulst regards 'historical faith' as a stepping stone (for some) towards true faith. Nowhere in Scripture or confession do we read of such a 'preparatory grace' apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit who prepares us for reformation. "Without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit [men] ...neither will nor can return to God, reform their depraved nature, or prepare themselves for its reformation". (Canons III/IV,3; cf Tit 3:5). Inasmuch as this 'preparatory work' of the Holy Spirit is a part of man's regeneration, it is invincible.

Although Rev FJ vanHulst refers to the parable of the seed (Mt 13) which speaks about "those who believe for a time" (Canons, III/IV,9; RE V,7) the parable itself does not show this "believing for a time" as a stepping stone towards true faith. Rather, it shows that this 'faith' is choked so that it fails to produce the fruit of faith. It is not in line with Scripture and confession to speak, then, of a 'preparatory grace' that produces 'historical faith' and prepares a person to make the step to saving faith.

II. Rev FJ vanHulst distinguishes conversion from regeneration, and restricts conversion to the "personal reaction of man to his regeneration" or the "experience" (p. 2 Legana) whereby "people are very much aware of this most exciting change in their heart" (p. 2 Legana), "being made certain of your personal election to salvation" (p. 4 Legana).

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

By speaking in this way, Rev FJ vanHulst restricts conversion to man's personal reaction or experience to God's work. This is contrary to our confessions which speak of conversion, not as the reaction of man to his regeneration, but as the regenerating work of God itself. This is clear from Canons of Dort, III/IV, 12 which reads: "This conversion is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, the making alive, so highly spoken of in the Scriptures, which God works in us without us."

III. Rev FJ vanHulst has this order of salvation: "repentance (combined with believing the promise of forgiveness of sin); then regeneration by the Spirit; then conversion (in the narrow sense), then renewal of life" (also called 'sanctification').

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

It is contrary to our confessions to speak of repentance and faith as 'attitudes' or 'pre-conditions' to conversion. Rather, conversion or regeneration is the source of such good

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works as faith and repentance. Lord's Day 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism unites repentance and conversion. In the Canons of Dort, III/IV, 12 we confess the same. As a result of the regenerating work of the Spirit, *"man himself is rightly said to believe and repent through the grace he has received."* In the same article we confess that *"all those in whose hearts God works in this amazing way are ...regenerated and do believe."*

IV. Rev FJ vanHulst teaches that a man must display certain attitudes or meet certain 'pre-conditions' before he is regenerated or converted, such as being prepared to listen; humbling oneself to the point of detesting oneself (repentance) because of one's sin and sinfulness (p. 3 Legana); confessing one's total depravity (p. 5 Legana); ridding oneself of the idea (legalism) that one must do certain things in order to be acceptable to God (p. 3 Legana); being prepared to give away your life for Christ, denying yourself, taking up your cross. He also teaches that a lack of faith is a hindrance to conversion (p. 3 Legana). *"If you refuse to repent and believe you will not be converted"*. He states that these attitudes or 'pre-conditions' are the work of the Holy Spirit, but are not a part of the Spirit's work of regeneration or conversion.

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

This goes contrary to our confessions, which regard these attitudes as fruits of conversion, and not as 'pre-conditions' to conversion. In LD 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we confess that we are *"totally unable to do any good and inclined to all evil ...unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God."* In the Canons of Dort, III/IV, 12 we confess *"This conversion is the regeneration, the raising from the dead, the making alive...."* This conversion becomes the source of those good works as described by Rev FJ vanHulst (cf. Canons of Dort III/IV,11 where we confess that the regenerating Spirit *"makes the will, which was dead, alive ...so moves and strengthens [the will] so that, like a good tree, it may be able to produce the fruit of good works"*). Only those who have been converted or regenerated by the Holy Spirit can display the good fruits of humility, contrition and repentance, readiness to give away one's life for Christ, denying oneself, and taking up one's cross.

V. Rev FJ vanHulst was first of the opinion that children of believers are not *"in Christ,"* nor in the kingdom of God, nor are they members of the Holy Catholic Church. As a result of our questions regarding statements in our confessions and forms, he has modified his view on this matter, and is now of the opinion that *"someone who is engrafted into the church by baptism enters the body of Christ. He is a part of the bride of Christ. He is in the temple of the Holy Spirit."* However, he qualifies this by saying that *"this speaking is comparable with what we call the 'sacramental way of speaking'...Only when you accept this promise with true faith (your justification) are you engrafted into Christ, into his real body (Lord's Day 7). If there is in church members no response of faith, which shows in the fruits, then there can come a moment that they are cut off from the body of Christ. That is also a sacramental way of saying. For they were never in the real body of Christ, though they enjoyed all the benefits from it."*

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

Rev FJ vanHulst endeavours to instil in the youth of the church an awareness of the need to respond to the promises in the covenant in order to appropriate what God has promised them. He does so, however, at the cost of denying what the children already have in Christ. Concerning the children, Christ said, *"Theirs is the kingdom"* (Mark 10:14). Our

confessions state clearly that children belong to "God's congregation. Therefore by baptism...they must be grafted into the Christian church..." (Lord's Day 27). In Article 34 we confess: "By baptism we are received into the church of God". In the Form for Baptism we read: "Do you confess that our children...are sanctified in Christ and thus as members of His church ought to be baptised?"

To interpret these statements, as a "sacramental way of speaking" is to deny the reality of what they say, and is itself contradictory inasmuch as the sacraments speak in the way that they do in order to assure us of the reality of what is signified. In the Form for Baptism, we read: "Just as they share in the condemnation of Adam, so are they, without their knowledge, received into grace in Christ." Just as their condemnation is a present reality, so their reception into grace in Christ is a present reality. In the prayer of thanksgiving in the Form for Baptism we pray: "Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins through the blood of Christ."

VI. Rev FJ vanHulst endeavours to avoid placing guilt on God for the condemnation of people who refuse to believe. He goes so far as to teach that reprobation is determined by man's disobedience. "In not believing you are responsible for your own reprobation. ...Your reprobation is not caused by [God's] eternal rejection of you, but by your own disobedience to Him."

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

The decree of reprobation is described in the Canons of Dort (I, 15) as consisting of two parts: firstly, the decree to leave some in the common misery into which they have plunged themselves; and secondly, the decree to condemn and punish them eternally on account of their unbelief and sins.

To state simply that God's eternal decree of reprobation is based upon the actions of men, rather than in the good pleasure of God, contradicts what we confess in the Canons of Dort (I, 15): "Out of His most free, most just, blameless, and unchangeable good pleasure God has decreed to leave them in the misery into which they have by their own fault plunged themselves, and not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion." The apostle Paul writes in Romans 9:11-13 "(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'"

The Arminians taught (Canons of Dort, RE I,8): "God did not simply by an act of His righteous will decide to leave any person in the common state of sin and condemnation since his fall in Adam, nor did He decide to pass by any one in granting such grace as is necessary for faith and conversion". To this the fathers of Dort responded: "Scripture, however, states, 'He has mercy upon whomever He wills, and He hardens the heart of whomever He wills' Romans 9:18. It also declares 'To you has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given' Mt 13:11. Likewise, 'I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was Thy gracious will'. Mt 11:25,26."

VII. In relation to the administration of church discipline, Rev FJ vanHulst regards church discipline as a medicine, which can have no effect upon hearts that have not been made

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alive. Therefore he does not regard the discipline of baptised members as proper. In cases where a baptised member is a "notorious sinner" he would see room for a public chastisement, if the member is a source of defilement for other church members. But this does not require the consistory "to go all the way of church regulations for church discipline."

In the same vein, he does not regard church discipline as a medicine for those members who have made profession of faith, but who are not converted. In this context, he writes, "The discipline cannot work as a medicine in unconverted people.... But in general our discipline approach should be focusing rather on bringing the gospel of grace and the message of God's love in a personal form, than be considered as applying medicine to a heart (which was never alive in the first place.)"

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

Church discipline is a means of grace that God uses in the conversion and regeneration of His people. We confess in the Canons of Dort, III/IV, 17: "...the aforementioned supernatural working of God whereby He regenerates us, in no way excludes or cancels the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them, reverently instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory and to the abasement of all pride. In the meantime, however, they did not neglect to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So today those who live or receive instruction in the church should not dare to tempt God by separating what He in His good pleasure has willed to be closely joined together."

Neither Scripture nor confession discriminates between church members with respect to church discipline. Church discipline is to be exercised upon our "brothers" in the faith, and upon "anyone" who does not obey the Word (cf. 2 Thes 3:14). Furthermore, it is virtually impossible to tell at any given moment whether a person is converted or not, for only God is able to know the heart.

Since discipline is a means by which God regenerates us, Rev FJ vanHulst is not correct when he seriously limits the use of church discipline to those who are converted.

Ecclesiology:

1. Rev FJ vanHulst believes there is a definite connection between regeneration and the doctrine of the church. The holy, Catholic Church is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers who are washed in Christ's blood and sealed by the Spirit. According to Rev. F.J. vanHulst all and only regenerated persons, by their regeneration, are grafted into the holy, Catholic Church. This holy, Catholic Church cannot be identified with the local true churches, though the latter reflect the attributes of the holy, Catholic Church. Belonging to this holy church is a spiritual matter. These true believers must then also seek visible unity with other true believers. Art 28 makes clear the duty to join such a visible church. In this respect, one needs to apply the marks of the true church to ascertain that one joins a true church. Thus the principle order of arts.27-28 is: come to faith by rebirth and thus belong to the holy, Catholic Church; and then join a true, visible, local church. He thus believes that art 27 speaks about the holy, Catholic Church while arts 28-29 speaks of the visible, local church.

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

In showing the connection between regeneration and the doctrine about the church, Rev FJ vanHulst goes against Scripture and confession, when he makes a sharp delineation between the church as confessed in Article 27 (the real body of Christ or the holy, catholic church, according to him) from the church of Articles 28,29 (true churches which are local manifestations of the real body, according to him).

While Article 27 gives an overview of the "one, catholic or universal church," in Article 28 the norms for believer (to join the church, to maintain the unity of the church, to submit to the instruction and discipline of the church, to bend their necks under the yoke of Christ, and to serve the edification of the brotherhood) are given. These are not two churches, but one church. To join the assembly of true believers is to join the one, holy, catholic and Christian church. To contrast the church of Article 27 from the church of Article 28,29 would lead to a nebulous concept of the holy, catholic church of all the regenerated and the elect, a church which is contrasted with the true, local churches. (*This is borrowed from the Acts of the 1986 General Synod of our Canadian sister churches, art.184).

2. Rev FJ vanHulst believes that a regenerated person can be a member of the holy, Catholic Church without being a member of a true church, e.g. he stays in the Church of Rome.

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

Rev FJ vanHulst begins with the holy, Catholic Church, as do our confessions. Although beginning with the one, Catholic Church (in the singular) can give us valuable lessons, yet Rev FJ vanHulst goes against Scripture and the Confessions when he teaches that all those who are regenerated are by their regeneration made members of the holy, catholic church even if they are not members of a local true church.

- a. Article 27 as an introductory article describes the church in general terms. It nowhere states that everyone who is regenerated is already a member of the holy Catholic Church even if the member is not a member of a true, local church. This would make the concept of the holy, Catholic Church into a nebulous term devoid of meaning, since "Church" means an assembly which Jesus Christ gathers, defends and preserves, and which can be discerned by means of three marks, i.e. the preaching of the pure Word, the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline. Article 27, then, does not postulate a vague concept of a non-observable Catholic Church, which is to be separated from local gatherings. When Article 27 speaks about the holy, Catholic Church as a congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, this church is gathered locally by Christ - the word "ecclesia" indicates a visible, assembly of believers and the term "congregation" defines a flock that is called together by the voice of the Good Shepherd.
- b. To state that everyone who is regenerated is already a member of the holy catholic church undermines the urgent call for all believers to join the true church wherever God has established it, and it neglects the norms mentioned in Article 28. (*Much of these two statements, 'a' and b', are quoted from Art.184, Acts of the 1986 General Synod of our Canadian sister churches).

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3. Though Rev FJ vanHulst believes that a regenerated person can belong to the holy, catholic church without belonging to a true, local church, he also believes that such a person acts contrary to the ordinance of God, if he does not join a true church.

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

Rev FJ vanHulst does stress the need for regenerated persons to obey the call of Christ to join the true church. He also stresses that there is a need to utilise the marks of the true church to ensure that one does join the true church. Also, he with his consistory does work hard for the visible unity of the church.

4. We observe the following concerning ecumenical contacts:

- a) Rev FJ vanHulst believes that the holy, catholic church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. Also, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith. Where Rev FJ vanHulst sees this oneness with other Christians or Christian Churches, he is willing to join them in worship and in celebrating the Lord's supper.
- b) Rev FJ vanHulst (with his consistory) endeavour, through God's blessing, zealously to promote visible unity with these local churches, e.g. Reformed Churches of Australia, in obedience to the Scriptural call for unity, cf. Art.28, B.C. The consistory of Launceston sees in certain local churches, specifically the local Reformed Churches of Australia, the marks of the true church. If these contacts are blessed by the Lord, then they see that the bond of churches would have to be involved, since formal recognition is given only via the Synods.
- c) As far as Hobart goes, the consistory presented the option of encouraging the members there to attend the St John's Church of Hobart, since they considered it to have the marks of a faithful church. Rev FJ vanHulst thus wanted to attend this church in order to keep abreast with what is preached there. Since the Lord's supper was being celebrated, he also participated. No inquiries or objections have been made by his consistory about this.
- d) Two other practical issues flow out of his view on the church. One concerns Bible study. Rev FJ vanHulst (with his consistory), though not endorsing Bible study for the senior youth with youth from the Reformed Churches of Australia (invited as guests), would encourage it. The spiritual and pastoral concern for the youth, and the views of parents, must be considered. Another practical issue concerns marriage. As minister it is his concern that members marry only in the Lord. Marrying a church member is not automatically marrying in the Lord. The important point is not that someone is in the church but that he is in Christ. Since there is a limited choice of marriage partners in the the Church of Launceston, this is a matter of pastoral concern. Mixed marriages are discouraged. In cases of courtships with a person from a non-sister church the church question should be solved and decided on before marriage. He leaves the choice of which church to join to the couple.

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

It is hard to escape the conclusion that membership in the holy, Catholic Church, in his definition, is the more important of the two, and is the determining factor in one's approach to contacts with other churches, in celebrating the Lord's Supper in a non-sister church, in Bible study with others and in the matter of the choice of marriage partners.

Regarding Forgiveness of Sins

Concerning the forgiveness of sins we observe the following:

- a. In his sermons Rev FJ vanHulst does not distinguish, for example by having one point for the converted and another point for the unconverted, between the converted and unconverted re the forgiveness of sins. He preaches to each and every believer that God has really forgiven all their sins as often as they by true faith accept the promise of the gospel. Instead of emphasising the need to ask for the forgiveness of sins he stresses the need to believe that their sins are forgiven on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. By believing they are true believers, and thus they can claim the benefit of Christ's redemption for them. He writes,
Christ has already taken the punishment for it. Those who believe this, have therefore a free conscience. The burden of sin is taken away from their conscience. So there is not so much reason to ask for forgiveness as there is reason to ask for true faith to believe the forgiveness of sins, so that you can truly experience this freedom of conscience and can rejoice in it.
- b. Rev FJ vanHulst has a pastoral concern that some stress their sins and asking for forgiveness without a real conviction that their sins are forgiven in the blood of Christ. He writes,
The point I try to make is that the forgiveness of sins is yours per promise. And it is not the asking, or the seriousness, or the humility with which you ask, which makes this forgiveness a reality...I have found in pastoral practice that many people think that forgiveness of sins comes to them in the way of daily asking for it...What everyone should do is: claim the forgiveness of sins in faith.
- c. Rev FJ vanHulst thus does not stress daily prayer for forgiveness. He writes, "*I believe the forgiveness of sins.*" *It does not say: I believe that I can ask for forgiveness of sins and that they then will be forgiven. No I believe the forgiveness of sin.*" But he also says that the more strictly the law is preached to the converted "*the more eagerly they seek the forgiveness of sins.*"

Committee 1 makes the following evaluation:

The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 45 clearly states "God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who constantly and with a heartfelt longing ask Him for these gifts and thank Him for them." This reference to God's grace includes the forgiveness of sins. The Lord taught his disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." In the Sermon on the Mount He teaches, "Ask and it will be given, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." (Mt 7:7).

Although it is indeed true that on the basis of Christ's perfect sacrifice we may *claim* the forgiveness of sins in true faith, it is contrary to Scripture and the confessions that we no longer have to *ask* for the forgiveness of sins. In the parable of the prodigal son the father embraced his son before he had even spoken one word, yet this did not mean that the son could simply claim forgiveness. He still had to ask for it. The texts in the paragraph above clearly show this. Reference could also be made to Psalm 51, where David, the man after God's own heart, asks for forgiveness of sins, and even pleads, "*Wash me thoroughly from*

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my iniquity and cleanse me from sin ... Purge me with hyssop... wash me..." (vss. 2 and 7).
God wants to be asked.

Rev.FJ vanHulst speaks about appropriating the forgiveness of sins through faith, a forgiveness, which we already have in Christ. Yet this appropriation takes place through asking, and not because of asking. Faith is expressed in the asking.

Rev. FJ vanHulst seems to contradict himself. On the one hand he says there *is "not so much reason for asking for forgiveness,"* whilst on the other hand in his teachings about the law (with reference to Lord's Day 44 Heidelberg Catechism) he states, *"the more strictly the law is preached to the converted, the more eagerly they seek the forgiveness of sins."* Yet he defines "seeking forgiveness" as "claiming forgiveness". However, in Scripture "to seek" is to ask, e.g. "seek and you will find" being a parallel for "ask and it will be given (Mt 7:7)." In this matter Rev FJ vanHulst is thus not in line with Scripture and our confessions.

Rev. FJ vanHulst rightly stresses the need to believe the forgiveness of sins. However, his fight against the danger that people consider their asking or their seriousness to be the basis for forgiveness, leaves room for the danger that people no longer worry about their sins, since in Christ they have already been forgiven anyway.

The following proposals are tabled:

Decision 1:

having seen the Report of Committee 1, Synod judges that this Report has shown that Rev FJ vanHulst's teachings on regeneration and conversion, the church, and the forgiveness of sins are not in accordance with Scripture and Confession

Ground:

The Report of Committee 1 is conclusive in showing that Rev FJ vanHulst in his teachings deviates from Scripture and the Confessions.

ADOPTED

Decision 2:

having made the above judgement, Synod decides that Rev FJ vanHulst can not remain seated as member of Synod

Grounds:

1. Since Synod answered the question of Rev FJ vanHulst's confessional integrity in the negative, the consequence must be that he cannot remain seated as member of Synod.
2. All members of Synod need to participate in making decisions in relation to the doctrines of the church; decisions that in fact can touch the foundations of the church. The churches have a right to be assured that the persons sitting at Synod are faithful judges in such matters.

ADOPTED

Decision 3:

to send a copy of the Report to, and judgement of, Synod to Rev FJ vanHulst, and to the consistory of the church of Launceston

Ground:

The confessional integrity of Rev FJ vanHulst has been judged by Synod. His consistory, which has supervision over its minister, should receive a copy of the judgement regarding his teachings. Since in signing the Form of Subscription for ministers of the Word, Rev FJ vanHulst promised to submit to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies about his doctrine, this judgement should be forwarded to him.

ADOPTED

Decision 4:

to appoint a Committee to investigate Rev FJ vanHulst's teachings regarding the law, and to report to Synod

Ground:

Synod deems the Committee's investigation into this matter incomplete.

ADOPTED

Synod decides to include the Committee's questions to Rev FJ vanHulst and his answers, being part of the Committee's Report, as an Appendix to the *Acts*. (Appendix 1, page 75)

Article 29

Acts of Closed Sessions

Synod decides to write *Acts* of these Closed Sessions (that is: what has been recorded above in Articles 24 -29) in the public *Acts*. The material will not be placed on Internet at this time. Synod goes into Open Session

Article 30

Remainder of Synod's agenda

Synod decides to meet again on Monday 15 June at 9 am, for the purpose of dealing with some practical and pressing Agenda items, and then adjourn to a date in September 1998.

Article 31

Adjournment

Rev J Poppe asks those present to sing Psalm 105:2,3. He then leads in prayer. At 3.30 pm the chairman adjourns Synod, to meet again on Monday.

MONDAY, 15 June 1998

Article 32

Re-opening

The chairman re-opens Synod, asks it to sing Psalm 74:1, 7 and 8, reads 2 Chronicles 22 and leads in prayer. The chairman observes that there is only one delegate from the church of Launceston.

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Article 33

Appointment of a Committee to carry out Decision 4 of Article 28 (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 28, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105, 122)

Synod appoints Rev P De Boer, elder A Siobe and Rev W vanderJagt to carry out the stated mandate. They must report to the churches' delegates two weeks before Synod reconvenes, as well as to Synod.

Article 34

Adoption of Acts

Synod adopts Articles 26 to 31 of the *Acts*.

Article 35

Request from RC Janssen

Committee 3 presents the following proposal:

Material:

Agenda item 8.8 - letter from the Church of Kelmscott, proposing to honour brother RC Janssen's request to be examined by Synod for the purpose of entering into the ministry.

Decision:

Not to grant the request of brother Janssen.

Grounds:

1. The churches have always observed the rule that the examination of a person wishing to become a candidate is conducted in the classical region of the church of which he is a member.
2. Should this brother be examined by a sister church federation, he will be eligible for call within all the sister churches, and therefore the advice he received 'not to get stuck' in the Netherlands does not apply.

ADOPTED

Article 36

Pulpit exchange

Committee 3 presents the following proposal:

Material:

Agenda Item 11.8 - Report of Deputies for Pulpit exchanges
Agenda Item 8.11 - Letter from the Church of Legana

Observations:

Deputies report that all visits were brought in accordance with the proposed roster. Deputies suggest that Synod should give attention to the question whether in view of the forthcoming vacancy in Legana more visits should be brought.

As for the normal schedule, Deputies offer the following exchange proposal:

Minister of:	1998	1999	2000
Mount Nasura			Tasmania
Byford		Tasmania	
Launceston	Metro/Albany		Metro/Albany
Legana		Metro/Albany	
West Albany	Tasmania		

Decisions:

1. to thank Deputies for their Report and discharge them;
2. to grant the request of the Church of Legana as formulated hereunder;
3. to appoint new Deputies with the mandate:
 - a) to make arrangements, in addition to the regular pulpit exchange as proposed by Deputies, for a visiting minister to serve the Church of Legana at least 6 times per year, two Sundays at a time;
 - b) to grant pulpit exchange as proposed by Deputies should Legana receive its own minister;
 - c) to arrange the above in consultation with the churches and their ministers;
4. to pay for travelling costs from the Synod Treasury

Grounds:

1. It is profitable for the churches to have pulpit exchanges.
2. During a vacancy the church concerned needs the help of other churches, and especially so when that church is located in an isolated place.

ADOPTED

Synod appoints Rev A Veldman as Deputy for Pulpit Exchanges.

Article 37

Indonesian churches (Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia) (refer Articles 73, 76)

Synod considers the question of financial support for P Njuka as recommended by Deputies in their Report (Section F, Recommendation 4). Synod decides that there is no need to make a decision at this moment.

Article 38

Adjournment of Synod

Synod decides to adjourn at the close of this morning's session, and re-convene at Launceston on Tuesday 7 September 1998, at 9 am.

Article 39

Adjournment

The chairman addresses Rev C Kleyn, who owing to his departure to Pretoria will be in our midst for the last time. Rev Kleyn responds in a word of farewell and good wishes. Elder A Mulder asks those present to sing Psalm 23:1 and then leads in closing prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Tuesday, 8 September 1998

Article 40

Re-opening

At 9 am the chairman Rev C Bouwman re-opens Synod, asks the brothers to sing Psalm 18: 1 and 8, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 23, and leads in prayer. He then addresses Synod with the following words:

Dear brothers of Synod,

After a break of some 10 weeks, we're assembled again in the building of our sister church in Launceston to continue the work that we left unfinished in our first session. All of us present at the first sitting found those two weeks very draining; I trust that by now each of us is sufficiently relaxed and refreshed to carry on with the work given to us by the churches.

To my knowledge, it is the first time in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia that a Synod has adjourned for a period of weeks before it reconvened in order to finish its task. It is fitting, then, that a word of special appreciation be directed to the host church for Synod 1998; for a second time the church in Launceston has had to find lodging for the delegates, for a second time this building had to be rearranged (and the room behind us assembled into a comfortable lounge!), for a second time a team of kitchen staff had to be organised. Be assured, dear brothers and sisters, that your labours are very much appreciated. We could only applaud your care for us in June, and –on the basis of that experience– look forward to another couple of comfortable weeks under your care!

I notice a number of new faces in this second sitting of Synod. A hearty welcome to the brothers J Everts, N Louw and F Postmus! We recognise that, in a way, you work at a disadvantage, for the rest of us have had earlier opportunity to look at the agenda. Yet we're sure that you'll overcome this handicap quickly enough. We also realise that behind the fact that some of you are here lie hidden some difficult circumstances. We are grateful that the churches can all be duly represented at this meeting of the churches, and trust that our time together can serve to mutual edification.

Since our adjournment in June, the church in Launceston has been busy digesting the conclusions of Synod's first sitting. We can appreciate that this takes time, and is at the same time a painful process. Throughout the bond of churches countless prayers have been sent to the throne of all grace, beseeching the Lord to grant to the office bearers and congregation of Launceston much wisdom and faithfulness. It remains our prayer that the Lord of the church will gather, defend and preserve His church, both in this place and throughout the land. Throughout the land we all want to stand beside all our brothers and sisters in Launceston, and continue to support in word, in deed, and in prayer.

The church of Legana, meanwhile, has seen her minister leave to take up his call in South Africa. Legana has extended a call to Rev Huizinga, who in turn is, I believe, still considering this call. May the Lord of the churches grant you, brother, the wisdom and courage you need to know where it is that He wishes you to serve. And we pray that the Lord will supply for the needs of His church in Legana.

Talk about South Africa: the brethren there are very aware of what Synod has been busy with in its first sitting. They thought it right that support be given to their sister churches in Australia by way of a delegate from South Africa attending our second sitting as Synod. I have received indication that Rev E Viljoen, minister of the Free Reformed Church of Capetown, is to arrive in Launceston tomorrow morning as official delegate from South

Africa to our Synod. For my part, I was much encouraged by the gesture of the South African brethren to offer their support to us in our situation in this manner.

Brothers, we need to set ourselves again to the work that's been given to us. In the first sitting of Synod we could, by the Lord's grace, work together in great unanimity. Though the item was difficult, there was very little of tension between brothers. It is my heartfelt prayer that we can work our way through the remainder of the agenda with the same spirit of unanimity. May our work in the remainder of Synod serve the churches well, both in terms of the content of the decisions we make as well as in the manner in which we make them. The churches look to us to give examples, in word and deed, of faithfulness to our Lord and Saviour and therefore love for the brethren. Let us pray for God's blessing with the words of Ps 67:1, and then be to work!
Synod sings Psalm 67:1.

Article 41

Credentials

The First and Second Clerks check the credentials handed in by the new delegates, elders J Everts and F Postmus from the Church of Launceston, and elder N Louw from the Church of Legana, and report that these are in order.

Article 42

Election of vice-chairman

In an election for a vice-chairman, Synod votes in Rev A vanDelden.

Article 43

Agreement with the Confession

The three delegates J Everts, N Louw and F Postmus, when asked to indicate their Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity, rise in their places.

Article 44

Letter of Greeting (refer Article 20)

The chairman reads out a letter of greeting from the Canadian Reformed Churches, dated 30 June 1998. Besides passing on greetings, the letter, which mentions regret for being late, acknowledges the extraordinary matters Synod had to deal with, and expresses the prayer that the Lord of the Church will bless Synod as it deals with them.

Article 45

Rules for Synods (refer Articles 47, 61, 65)

Committee 2 presents its Report.

Material:

1. Agenda item 8.3: The Church of Launceston requests Synod to decide that "in matters of principle, a motion or proposal shall be declared 'adopted' by a two thirds majority vote in favour or 'defeated' by a two thirds majority vote against. If the number of votes for or against the proposal or motion is less than the required two thirds majority, it shall be declared 'undecided'."
2. Agenda item 8.16: The Church of Mount Nasura proposes that *the Rules for Synods* be amended to provide that the *Acts* shall record fully the text of all proposals including those put before Synod but not voted on because another proposal in the same matter is adopted

Acts of Synod

3. Agenda item 8.19: The Church of Mount Nasura proposes that *the Rules for Synods* be amended to provide that the same delegate shall not be chosen to fill the position of chairman of Synod twice in succession
4. Agenda item 11.10: Report of Deputies for the Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod

The following proposals are tabled and voted upon:

Decision 1:

Not to accede to Launceston's request

Grounds:

1. In Article 31 of the Church Order the Churches have agreed to accept as settled and binding whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the word of God or with the Church Order.
2. A requirement of two thirds majority in matters of principle could make it very difficult, if not impossible, for Synod to make decisions on matters validly put on its agenda by churches or appellants. Synod is, however, asked to make resolutions and not to leave matters undecided.
3. The proposal could give rise to lengthy discussions on whether something is procedural or a matter of principle

ADOPTED

Decision 2:

Not to accede to Mount Nasura's proposal.

Grounds:

Synod always has the right to include in the *Acts* for future reference the text of any proposal not voted upon.

ADOPTED

Decision 3:

Not to accede to Mount Nasura's proposal.

Grounds:

1. The Church Order does not make the same rules for the positions of Synod chairman and Classis chairman.
2. Even though our bond of churches is small, there is no need to make a separate rule for the position of Synod chairman.

ADOPTED

Article 46

Closed Session

After lunch Synod sits in Closed Session to deal with an appeal.

Article 47

Rules for Synods (refer Articles 45, 61, 65)

Late in the afternoon Synod resumes in Open Session for further consideration of the Committee Report on *Rules for Synods*. Following the re-opening of Synod in evening session and the singing of Psalm 146:3, the discussion on *Rules for Synods* continues. As a result, Committee 2 is sent back with the instruction to take note of the various comments and criticisms made.

Article 48

Appeal and Correspondence regarding Article 95 of Synod 1996

Committee 3 presents its Report.

Its proposed decisions are amended and put to the vote, as shown.

Material:

Agenda Item 8.1: the church of West Albany appeals Article 95 of Synod 1996

Agenda Item 8.2: the church of Albany corresponds about Article 95 of Synod 1996

Agenda Item 8.13: the church of Byford corresponds about Article 95 of Synod 1996

Observations:

The Church of West Albany appeals Article 95 of Synod 1996, not because of its disagreement with the decision, but with the way in which the decision was reached. It argues that, as agreed upon in Article 31 of the Church Order, Synod should have made a decision on our ICRC membership on the basis of the appeals of Bedforddale and Byford. The Churches of Albany and Byford do not appeal, but write to Synod for its information.

Decisions:

1. to grant the appeal of the church of West Albany that Synod 1996 did not complete its task as agreed upon in Article 31 of the Church Order when it did not answer the appeals of the churches of Bedforddale and Byford
2. to receive the encouragement from the Church of Albany that "the present Synod as well as future Synods deal correctly with all appeals presented to them"
3. to receive as information that the Church of Byford "will resubmit its appeal should it ever become necessary to defend our position in remaining a non-member of the ICRC"

Grounds:

1. Article 31 of the Church Order gives anyone who has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly the right of appeal to the major assembly.
2. As a previous Synod has erred, an encouragement to alertness is in place.
3. The information from Byford is received because the appeals of the churches of Bedforddale and Byford to Synod 1996 were not dealt with.

ADOPTED

Article 49 (refer Article 66)

Rules for Church Visitation

Committee 2 presents its Report.

Acts of Synod

Grounds:

1. The churches have agreed in the Church Order how things ought to be done within the bond of churches. In Article 59 the churches have agreed that "Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by two authorised office-bearers." This is in line with commendations given in Scripture to travelling persons, eg, Romans 16:1f; Acts 18:27. The purpose of this Article of the Church Order is not to stipulate in final, absolute sense that each departing (communicant) member shall invariably receive an attestation to a sister church. The purpose of the Article is to regulate the way in which members may be recognised by sister churches within or outside the bond of churches. The practical benefit is that the receiving consistory is freed from the need to conduct a private conversation with the person requesting membership.
2. It is the duty of the office bearers to instruct members, who intend to move to a place where our Free Reformed Churches have no sister churches, to be faithful regarding their membership in the church of Jesus Christ. It remains the responsibility of the members who move to such a place to work with Articles 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession to seek and join the church of Jesus Christ.
3. If evidence comes to the fore that one of our sister churches is unfaithful in exercising sister relations with other churches, we have the opportunity and the duty to address this, using the Rules for sister relations.
4. Synod 1990 decided "to limit present contacts and relations with churches which are geographically close to our sister churches abroad..." and "to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches which are geographically close to us..." (Acts, Article 58). In this situation, it is inevitable that our sister churches will recognise churches geographically close to them, which we will not recognise. Mount Nasura has not demonstrated that the Lord demands that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia establish sister relations with all the sisters of, say, the Canadian Reformed Churches. We are not in a position to make a judgement about attestations our sister churches issue to members moving to their sister churches.
5. If the Free Reformed Churches of Australia can repeatedly say over the years that (a) given sister church(es) "give(s) evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order," we may expect that they have done well in adopting their various sister relations.

ADOPTED

Proposal 3:

Mount Nasura seeks to have Synod state that: "It issues a warning to all its sister churches that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia see that in its relations with sister churches the matter of third party relations can render a church unfaithful in its task of supervision and discipline. The sister relations which some of our sister churches have, or are seeking to establish, bring our relations with them into question."

Decision:

Not to accede to Mount Nasura's request.

Grounds:

1. While third party relations could render a church unfaithful in its task of supervision and discipline, this need not be the case. Nothing that Mount Nasura states gives evidence of unfaithfulness in our sister churches.
2. Although Mount Nasura states that the sister relations which some of our sister churches have, or are seeking to establish, bring the Free Reformed Churches of Australia's relationship with them into question, it does not provide concrete evidence to support this claim.

ADOPTED

Article 63

Formation of Classes (refer Articles 50, 54, 95)

Committee 3 presents its revised Report. After some discussion the Committee is sent back with the request to do further work.

Article 64

Instructions from the Churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 74, 98, 105, 122)

Synod goes into Closed Session to consider the Report of its Committee appointed in Article 33.

Article 65

Rules for Synods (refer Articles 45, 47, 61)

After re-opening and the singing of Psalm 46:1, Synod continues with the remainder of the Report. A number of amendments are adopted for inclusion in the Committee's proposal, which then reads:

Material:

Agenda item 11.10 - Report of Deputies for the Revision of the Rules and Procedures of Synod.

Decision 4:

1. to adopt the recommended *Rules for Synods* with the following amendments:
 - a) add to Rule 1.4: "Confidential matters must be clearly marked: 'For delegates only'. Visitation Reports will not be distributed."
 - b) add at the beginning of Rule 3.2 the words: "The vice-chairman shall assist the other Officers of Synod where needed, and prepare the Press Release of Synod"
 - c) alter Rule 3.3 to read: "Every Synod shall decide whether its chairman and first clerk will be appointed to an advisory committee"
 - d) delete proposed Rule 8.4
 - e) amend proposed Rule 8.7 to include the words "in each round of the debate"
 - f) in Rule 9 delete the words: "on the voices"
 - g) delete proposed Rule 8.11.5
 - h) add under Rule 10 the paragraph: "Deputies must make available at Synod for referral and consultation, copies of all correspondence, Minutes, and records of other work done. They should also submit the same to the Archivist."
2. to accept for Synod 1998 the newly adopted rules

Acts of Synod

3. to discharge Deputies, and thank them for all the work done
4. to include the text of the adopted *Rules for Synods* as an Appendix to the *Acts* (Appendix 12, page 214)

Grounds:

1. The recommended Rules serve the basic needs of Synod.
2. It is important that the convening church knows what to do with confidential material. It also needs to be avoided that confidential material comes into the hands of all office-bearers.
3. The experience of Synod 1998 has shown that it has merit to leave it to each Synod's discretion whether the chairman and first clerk are to be appointed to an advisory committee.

ADOPTED

Article 66

Rules for Church Visits (refer Article 49; Appendix 13, page 222)

Committee 2 presents its revised Rules. After minor amendment it is voted upon and

ADOPTED

Article 67

Presbyterian Church in Korea

Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.5.2.2 - Report of Deputies for relations with sister churches
- A letter of greeting received at this Synod (Article 20)

Decision:

To continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) in accordance with the established rules

Ground:

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

ADOPTED

Article 68

Canadian Reformed Churches

Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.5.2.3 - Report of Deputies for relations with sister churches
- Greetings received at this Synod (Articles 20, 44)

Decision:

To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches in accordance with the established rules

Ground:

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

ADOPTED

Article 69

Proposal from the Church of Byford, regarding the contact between the Church of Launceston and the local Reformed Church

Committee 3 presents its Report:

Material: Agenda Item 8.14

Decision:

Not to grant the request of the Church of Byford for Synod to "decide that the approach the Church of Launceston is taking in its contact with a local Reformed Church of Australia conflicts with the adopted Church Order, and is detrimental to the development of church relationships."

Ground:

The King's Bridge article written by Rev F vanHuijst to which the Church of Byford refers, gives reason for Byford's request when he writes about a meeting "to discuss what keeps us apart and whether we as local churches could find a way to move closer to each other", and adds that "Our Synod has her own responsibility in this area, but that does not take away our personal or local responsibility." However, this article alone is not sufficient to prove this to be the intention of the consistory. It is possible that the author of this article, out of enthusiasm, overstated his point so that it no longer accurately reflects the decision of the consistory.

ADOPTED

Article 70

Adjournment

Rev vanderJagt asks Synod to sing Psalm 46:3 and 5, and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Friday, 11 September 1998

Article 71

Re-opening

The chairman Rev C Bouwman asks Synod to sing Psalm 75:1 and 4, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 26, and leads in prayer. Elder J Everts is absent with notice. His alternate may be expected to arrive in the afternoon.

Article 72

Tolerance concerning Infant Baptism

Committee 2 presents its Report. After discussion the following amended proposal is tabled.

Acts of Synod

Material:

Agenda item 8.17 - letter from the Church of Mount Nasura on tolerance concerning infant baptism

Observations:

The Church of Mount Nasura:

1. informs Synod that a professor in a sister church defends the position that "tolerance can be exercised towards those who in good conscience err in some point of doctrine", in this case infant baptism;
2. urges Synod to instruct Deputies for sister relations to take up the matter with the Deputies of the sister churches concerned; and wishes to make clear to our sister churches that a person who promotes these views on compassion and tolerance in relation to fundamental doctrines can not be a teacher in Theology

Decision:

Not to accede to Mount Nasura's request

Ground:

The supervision of the doctrine of a college professor is the responsibility of his consistory and the General Synod through the board of the college. The Church of Mount Nasura does not indicate that it has taken this matter to the professor or his supervisors. For the Synod now to adopt Mount Nasura's judgement would be out of order and would be to lord it over others.

ADOPTED

Article 73

Indonesian sister churches (Gereja gereja Reformasi Indonesia) (refer Articles 37, 76)

Committee 2 presents its Report. Synod in Closed Session discusses some matters of a personal nature.

Article 74

Instructions from the Churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 98, 105, 122)

Synod continues in Closed Session on the Report of its Committee.

Article 75

Alternate Delegate from the Church of Launceston

Elder D Veltkamp enters Synod as alternate for elder J Everts. The chairman welcomes elder Veltkamp, and asks him to rise to indicate his Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

Elder Veltkamp rises in his place.

Article 76

Indonesian sister churches - Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia (refer Articles 37, 73)

Committee 2 presents its Report. After amendment it reads:

Material:

Agenda items 11.5.4.1 – Deputies Report, and 11.5.5.1 - Supplementary Report

Decisions:

1. to thank Deputies for their work, and discharge them
2. to appoint new Deputies with the following mandate -
 - a) to continue to visit the Synods of Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia, subject to available finance
 - b) to support the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
 - c) to financially support Pila Njuka (along with his wife) to study at Hamilton if it is considered responsible to do so, and to monitor his progress;
 - d) to encourage our churches and their members to provide the means of support for Deputies activities mentioned in 2(b) and 2(c)
 - e) to formulate a draft policy regarding the support to these churches, which is to include
 - (i) guidelines defining the nature of support to be given
 - (ii) a reporting framework for information back to the churches
 - (iii) a way of measuring the effectiveness of support given
3. to send delegates to the 1999 Conference of the Indonesian churches;
4. to continue sister relations with the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia in accordance with the adopted rules.

Grounds:

1. The Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order
2. The churches are in a position to support these sister churches in training future leaders and building up the congregations. For this reason visits to the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia are in place also.
3. Synod 1996 decided to support a student from the sister churches once Yonson Dethan had completed his studies at the Theological College in Hamilton. The recommendation both from Deputies and from the Synod of the Gereja-gereja Reformasi Indonesia is to support Pila Njuka.
4. Experience has shown that placing a student in a different culture can easily cause personal problems.
5. The Deputies Report mentions problems relating to providing support.
6. Since this Conference will deal with theological training in which we are involved, and since it will discuss a bond of all the Indonesian Churches from Sumba, Kalimantan Barat and Irian Jaya, which concerns us, it is good to send delegates.

ADOPTED

Article 77

Indonesian churches (Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir)

Committee 2 presents its Report. In Closed Session Synod hears a report from Deputies concerning some difficulties experienced during the past period. The Committee Report as amended on the floor of Synod reads as follows:

Acts of Synod

Material:

Agenda item 11.5.4.1 – Deputies Report

Decisions:

1. To thank Deputies for their work, and discharge them
2. To appoint new Deputies with the mandate:
 - a) if invited, to continue to visit the Synods of Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir, subject to available finance
 - b) to monitor and report developments in the Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir
 - c) to support these churches in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up their reformed character;
 - d) to provide limited support to Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him;
 - e) to encourage our churches and their members to provide the means of support for Deputies activities mentioned in 2(c) and 2(d)
 - f) to formulate a draft policy for the support of these churches, which should include guidelines defining
 - (i) nature of support to be given
 - (ii) a reporting framework for information back to the churches
 - (iii) a way of measuring the effectiveness of support given

Grounds:

1. The Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir needs to be stabilised before recommendations regarding sister relationships can be considered.
2. Previous Deputies had a mandate to support Yonson Dethan's theological training. It is appropriate to continue the support in a limited but meaningful manner.
3. The Deputies Report mentions problems relating to providing support.
4. The churches are in a position to help the Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir develop in a reformed manner. For this reason visits to the Gereja-gereja Masehi Musyafir are in place also.

ADOPTED

Article 78

Reformed Churches of Australia

Committee 3 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda Items 11.5.4.4 - Deputies Report, and 11.5.5.3 - Deputies Supplementary Report

Decisions:

1. to thank the Deputies for their work and discharge them
2. to appoint new Deputies to be an address to which the Reformed Churches can direct any questions concerning the letter of appeal
3. to monitor the *Acts of the Synod of the Reformed Churches*, to see if they have addressed any of the matters in the letter of appeal
4. to report to next Synod
5. to deny the Deputies request for face-to-face meetings.

Grounds:

1. Deputies completed the mandate given by Synod 1996.
2. Even though the Synod of the Reformed Churches considered Deputies letter of appeal to be too late and decided that the right procedure for submissions of appeals was not used (because it misunderstood the nature and purpose of the letter of appeal), the Deputies write: "We have clarified this matter with them." (Deputies Report, page 58, points 3).
3. The face-to-face meetings which Deputies propose would be in conflict with the decision of Synod 1996 "not to enter into official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the Reformed Churches at this time" (*Acts* Article 71, point 2), but instead, to authorise Deputies to send a letter of appeal. Synod decided this on the ground that "official contacts" would already mean that "we are working towards the goal of sister relations or union" (*Acts* Article 71, point 3, and Grounds c).

DEFEATED

An alternate proposal is tabled as follows:

Material:

Agenda Item 11.5.4.4 - Deputies Report, and 11.5.5.3 - Deputies Supplementary Report

Decisions:

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

Grounds:

1. Deputies have not completed the mandate given by Synod 1996. The appeal did not reach their Synod on time, and has not been dealt with by their Synod.
2. The request to have our concerns and appeals conveyed by a few face-to-face meetings is reasonable. Correspondence has been laborious and tedious. Dialogue took place between 1990 and 1992. In 1992 our Synod dealt with the common Report of dialogue. In 1994 the Reformed Churches of Australia Synod dealt with it. Since no more dialogue occurred, we waited until 1996 to react to their 1994 decisions. We would send an appeal, which we were late in sending, and it will now take until 2000 before the Reformed Churches of Australia can deal with it. This is a cumbersome process.
3. Face-to-face meetings have proven beneficial in the past. It prevents misunderstandings, which arise more easily in correspondence alone.
4. The Reformed Churches of Australia request it, and they have appointed Deputies for it so that they can respond to the concerns in our appeal.

ADOPTED

Article 79

Adoption of Acts

Acts of Synod

After resuming in Evening Session, and singing Psalm 87:1, 4 and 5, Synod adopts Articles 58 to 69 of the *Acts*.

Article 80

Address by Rev E Viljoen (refer Articles 56, 59, 92)

The chairman invites Rev Viljoen, delegate from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, to address Synod. (Note: The text of Rev Viljoen's address can be found in Appendix 2 to these *Acts*, page 96)

Article 81

Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika

Committee 2 presents its Report.

In the discussion Rev Viljoen answers a variety of questions on his churches.

Material:

Agenda items 11.5.2.1 - Deputies Report, and 11.5.2.5 - Deputies Supplementary Report

Decisions:

1. to continue sister relations with the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika in accordance with the established rules
2. to express thankfulness to these Churches for sending a delegate to this Synod
3. to authorise Deputies to send a delegate to their Synod, subject to available finance

Grounds:

1. The Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
2. Seeing that they also are a small federation of churches going through trying times, a personal representative to encourage them and exhort them as churches of God in this world is warranted (see Rule 4 of the Rules for sister relations).

ADOPTED

Article 82

Geneva Free Reformed Church (New Zealand)

Committee 4 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.5.4.3 - Deputies Report, and 8.24 - Letter from the Geneva Free Reformed Church, 30 May 1998

Admissibility:

The Deputies Report was commissioned by previous Synod, and so is rightly on Synod's table. Though received late, the letter from the Geneva Free Reformed Church comes from one church to the major assembly of other churches, via the appropriate Deputies. So it must be received.

Decision:

To note the information contained in the letter from the Geneva Free Reformed Church and acknowledge their decision to withdraw their earlier request for possible future affiliation.

Ground:

The Geneva Free Reformed Church is not interested in pursuing possible future affiliation with our churches.

In a letter dated 21 May 1996 they write: "We are writing to express interest in establishing formal contact with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia ... with a view to possible future affiliation."

In a letter dated 30 May 1998 they write: "We believe it is not appropriate for the Geneva Free Reformed Church to pursue further involvement with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia at this time. We hereby inform you of our consistory's decision to withdraw our former request of 21st May 1996."

ADOPTED

Article 83

Adjournment

Rev A Veldman asks Synod to sing Hymn 46:2, and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Saturday, 12 September 1998

Article 84

Re-opening

The chairman Rev C Bouwman asks Synod to sing Psalm 128:1, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 27, and leads in prayer. Elder J Everts is absent with notice. His alternate elder D Veltkamp is in attendance.

The chairman passes on greetings from Rev C Kleyn in South Africa.

Article 85

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer Article 89)

Committee 4 presents its Report.

After the morning tea break the chairman mentions the presence in the audience of Rev C Connors, minister of the local Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Because our Rules for Synods make no provision for the attendance of persons outside the bond of churches, the chairman asks Synod if there is any objection to his presence in the audience. Synod has no objection. The chairman welcomes Rev Connors.

After some further discussion on the RCNZ Report an amended proposal is tabled. The Committee agrees to withdraw its proposal in favour of this amended proposal.

As time is running out the discussion is adjourned.

Article 86

Adoption and Press Release

Synod adopts Articles 70 to 82 of the *Acts*. The Press Release for the period of 8 to 12 September is approved.

Article 87

Adjournment

At noon elder GJ Bosveld asks Synod to sing Psalm 84:1 and 5, and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Monday, 14 September 1998

Article 88

Re-opening

The chairman Rev C Bouwman asks Synod to sing Psalm 115:4 and 5, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 28, and leads in prayer.

All delegates are present.

Rev E Viljoen is also present.

Article 89

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer Article 85)

The amended proposal spoken of in Article 85 is tabled.

After further amendment it is put to the vote.

Material:

Agenda items 11.5.4.2 – Deputies Report, and 11.5.5.2 – Deputies Supplementary Report.

Decisions:

1. to thank Deputies for the work done and discharge them
2. to reaffirm gratitude for the faithfulness which Deputies have found in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand
3. to mandate Deputies to strive for sister relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:
 - a) continuing dialogue with them in order to (i) express our appreciation for the principled approach they have shown in dealing with the Reformed Churches of Australia, and to encourage them to continue to exercise sisterly admonitions over the Reformed Churches of Australia where needed, and (ii) explain to them by means of face-to-face meetings the difficulty that our churches have in establishing sister relations with them because of their sister relations with the Reformed Churches of Australia;
 - b) authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to be held, the LORD willing, in Wainuimata, New Zealand from 17th to 23rd October 1998, in order to convey greetings; and to take the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest with the New Zealand Deputies;
 - c) inviting delegates of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to our next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in Rule 6 of our *Rules for Synods* (Acts 1998, Appendix 3)
 - d) providing information to the membership of our churches about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Grounds:

1. As past Synods have stated, *"The relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia is an impediment for us to establish official relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand"* (cf Deputies Report to Synod 1996, Acts, Appendix B3, 5.3, p 101). As the Reformed Churches of New Zealand's Synodical and Correspondence Committee points out in a Report to their Synod (Mangere, 1986): *"Relationships must be true in all dimensions. ...This is*

being consistent with the principle of a true and faithful church and consequential thinking, as otherwise there would be a triangular problem when A and B establish close relationships while C who already has an intimate relationship with A still has principle objections to B. It will thus be quite obvious that the journey towards this goal for a mutually acceptable close relationship is going to be a long one where much patience and understanding is required."

2. Synod 1996 saw need to send a letter of appeal to the Reformed Churches of Australia in an effort to urge them to "return to a distinctly reformed direction", and is thankful that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand do the same.
3. Contact between our churches and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand is necessary if we are to work towards sister relations.
4. Our church members should be informed about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand so that they are prepared for sister relations if and when such a relationship is established.

ADOPTED

Article 90

Presbyterian Churches (refer Article 93)

Committee 3 presents its Report.

After being informed that there will be counter proposal on the table, Synod is adjourned for some time to allow delegates to study it.

Article 91

Re-opening and Adoption of Acts

Synod is re-opened at 7.30 pm and sings Psalm 97:6.

Synod adopts Articles 84 to 87 of the Acts.

Article 92

Response to Rev E Viljoen (refer Articles 56, 59, 80)

Rev A Veldman responds to Rev Viljoen's address to Synod, given in last Friday's Evening Session. (The text of this response can be found in Appendix 2 to these Acts, page 99)

Article 93

Presbyterian Churches (refer Article 90)

A counter proposal is tabled and introduced.

Material:

Agenda Items 11.5.3 and 8.9

Admissibility:

The letter from the church of Kelmscott is admissible inasmuch as the Deputies were given the mandate to report back to the churches.

Observations:

1. Deputies report that they could not complete their mandate. They do not report on the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the

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Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Deputies also do not deal with the concerns of covenanting and purity of worship

2. Deputies have gone beyond their mandate and on their own initiative propose that if the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia will agree to prepared statements regarding Fencing of the Lord's Table and Supervision of the Pulpit, Synod will acknowledge it as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ and offer sister church relations.
3. Deputies have included in their Report to Synod three papers, which served the Deputies in coming to their recommendations.

- a) As far as the matter of children in the covenant is concerned, Deputies conclude that *"Although there is the possibility that there are differences of accent, the Deputies have no indication that in the preaching or publications other (unscriptural) opinions about the position of the children in the covenant are taught or allowed to be taught."* Therefore the Deputies state that they *"do not consider this issue as being an impediment to recognising the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia."*

- b) As far as the matter of fencing the Lord's table, the position paper states: *"Inasmuch as the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia has not furnished us with more definite information concerning their practice of fencing the table, we are not in a position to make any concrete evaluation whether we can progress with our contacts. In this Report we have seen that there might be some serious inadequacies in the policies of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia regarding the admission of guests from other evangelical churches. This is a serious matter since it touches upon the purity of the Lord's Supper, which is one of the marks of the true church. We have also expressed the concern that the doctrinal barriers that prevent official recognition and unity of churches are overlooked when determining participation at the Lord's Table. This gives reason for further investigation whether the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia embraces the notion of interdenominationalism. This, too, is a serious matter, since it touches on the purity of doctrine, which is the second mark of the true church."*

Deputies state: *"The elders do not discharge their office sufficiently by an oral warning from the pulpit. ...We may conclude that only those guests should be admitted to the Lord's Table who the session/consistory is satisfied, on the basis of an authentic intimation from the minister or elder of his congregation, are members of good standing of another true church."*

- c) As far as the matter of Supervision of the Pulpit is concerned, the position paper concludes *'The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's open pulpit practice leaves open the door to preaching that is not "the whole council of God" and "doctrine of the Confession of faith". It does not safeguard the congregation from preaching that renounces "all doctrines, tenets or opinions whatsoever contrary to or inconsistent with the said doctrine". The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's practice of opening the pulpit to ministers of churches with which it has no fraternal relations is therefore a serious area of concern and carries such weight that the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia can only be recognised as a "true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ" when it fences its pulpits.'* Deputies state: *"It is the recognition of another Church as a true church that*

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

4. Regarding what weight the Free Reformed Churches of Australia should give to the areas of concern and whether all areas of concern must be cleared before the Free Reformed Churches of Australia can progress with contacts/relations, the Deputies state that the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's manner of supervising the Lord's Supper table and their Supervision of the Pulpit *"are two areas of concern, which are of such weight that they need to be dealt with before the Free Reformed Churches of Australia enter into sister relations with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.*
5. The church of Kelmscott has responded to the Deputies Report, giving reasons why they do not agree with the Deputies who do not consider the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's view of children in the covenant as an impediment to recognising them (the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.)
 - a. The Larger Catechism (Q/A 31) states: *"With whom was the covenant of grace made? The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed".*
 - b. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's practice of occasional pulpit exchange with Baptist ministers leads the Church of Kelmscott to *"seriously question the effective significance of both baptism and the covenant within the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia."*

Decision 1:

1. to adopt the statement which Deputies have drafted concerning the supervision of the Lord's Supper table with the emendation that the phrase *"another true church of Christ"* found in the last line of the statement, is to read *"...another church of Christ which displays the three marks of the church"*.

The amended statement thus reads:

The supervision of the table:

- a. The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's Supper should not be profaned (1Cor.11:27; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch.29.8).
 - Profaning the table of the Lord has serious consequences for both the individual and the congregation. The individual who eats the bread of the Lord or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner *"will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"* and *"eats and drinks judgment to himself"* (1Cor.11:27,29). God's wrath is poured out on the congregation where this is allowed to happen (1Cor.11:30).
- b. This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the church exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church.

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- Because no one is able to look into the heart, it is necessary for each individual to examine himself before coming to the table of the Lord (1Cor.11:28). Warnings from the pulpit play an important role in ensuring that individuals take this responsibility seriously. Those who eat and drink in an unworthy manner eat and drink judgment upon themselves. Thus it is important to emphasise the personal responsibility of all those who desire to attend the Lord's table.
 - Besides the individual's responsibility, our confessions teach that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. Both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith speak about admission to the Lord's table (HC Q&A 82; WCF 29.8). All those who show themselves to be ignorant and ungodly persons are not to be admitted to the Lord's table.
 - It is the officers of the church that have the responsibility of supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper. Both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith speak about their duty to exercise discipline, and the role that suspension from the Lord's Supper has in this (HC Q&A 85; WCF 30.4). The elders are to exclude those who lead an offensive life, in doctrine or conduct from coming to the table of the Lord. Thus there is also a corporate responsibility in preventing the Lord's table from being profaned.
- c. This supervision is to be applied to members of the local church as well as to guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.
- The elders do not discharge their office sufficiently by an oral warning from the pulpit. Unlike the call of the Gospel, the communion at the table of the Lord is not indiscriminately offered to all that are present. For this reason, the apostles guarded the table and excluded those from participation that confessed to be Christians but were living in sin (1Cor.5:11-13; 1Cor.11:27,30; 2Thes.3:6).
 - The elders exercise the keys of the kingdom by finding out whether or not a person has publicly professed his faith and by ascertaining the contents of such a confession. They shall also ensure that a godly confession is adorned with a godly walk of life. They are not asked to judge the heart of a member or a guest, but they are to admit on the basis of public profession and public conduct. As the Larger Catechism states, "Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of faith, may and ought to be kept from the sacrament by the power which Christ has left in His Church, until they receive instruction and manifest their reformation." (LC 173).
 - Both Presbyterian and Reformed churches have recognised the need for exercising supervision over guests who desire to attend the Lord's Supper. This supervision should extend to both their confession and way of life. This has led to the following rule for guests in the Free Church of Scotland: "An authentic intimation from a Minister or Elder, that a person is in full membership with the congregation in which that Minister or Elder officiates, is sometimes allowed to stand as sufficient ground for the temporary or occasional admission of the person to communion in another congregation." (The Practise of the Free Church of Scotland in her Several Courts, Rev. ed.; ch.1, part 2, p.8). The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia has adopted the following rule for the supervision of the Lord's table: "The session is responsible to see that no person openly known to be ignorant or delinquent in doctrine or life be permitted at the Table. Persons other than communicant members of the congregation, who the session are satisfied are members in good standing of other evangelical churches, are welcome at the Lord's Table." (The Handbook of Practise and

Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (1992), sec 2.18). Article 57 of the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia says, "The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the basis of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct." The emphasis here is on the fact that a guest requires a testimonial from an office-bearer of his local church, to ensure that he is a member in good standing. We may conclude that only those guests should be admitted to the Lord's Table who the session/consistory are satisfied, on the basis of an authentic intimation from the minister or elder of his congregation, are members of good standing of another church of Christ which displays the three marks of the church.

2. to adopt the statement which Deputies have drafted concerning supervision of the pulpit with the emendation that the last sentence *"Therefore only guest preachers ...invited to preach"* should be exchanged for the following: *"Therefore no one should be invited to preach except ministers or licentiates who have undergone the proper ecclesiastical examinations according to the rules of our respective churches."*

The amended statement thus reads:

The supervision of the pulpit

- a) The churches of the Reformation have recognised the true preaching of the Gospel as the first mark of the true church (Scots Confession Art.25; BC Art.27). The preaching and teaching in the church has a precisely defined content: the Word of God. The minister may only preach what is in accordance with that Word.
 - When the apostles went out to preach they preached not their own word, but the Word of God (1Thess.2:13). Paul spoke of himself and his fellow workers as ambassadors of Christ (2Cor.5:20). Paul teaches Timothy that for him to be a good minister of Jesus Christ he has to instruct the congregation in the things that he has received – the Old Testament Scriptures and the teaching of Paul (1Tim.4:6,11; 2Tim.1:13; 2Tim.3:14). Paul charges Timothy to instruct faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2Tim.2:2). In this way the true preaching of the Gospel would continue to be taught.
- b) The consequence of this for the true church is that not everyone can be allowed to preach. Only he, of whom the church can be assured that he will preach the doctrine of the Word of God, can be allowed to preach.
- c) In Presbyterian and Reformed churches this has led to the institution of an ecclesiastical examination of those who want to be ministers of the Word. It has always included an investigation of the doctrinal convictions of the candidate. There may be differences in the practical rules for this examination, but the main idea is clear: the pulpit should be fenced. No one should be invited to preach as a kind gesture, or because the congregation is curious what this preacher is thinking. The pulpit is not the place to be courteous or to satisfy curiosity. For the congregation should only hear from the pulpit the pure preaching of the gospel.
 - In the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia probationers are licensed to preach only after they have answered a series of questions. These questions require the probationer to affirm his belief in the Word of God, and His subscription to Confession of Faith. They require him to promise to adhere to,

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assert, maintain and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this Church, and to renounce all doctrines, tenets or opinions contrary with it. (The Handbook of the Practise and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, 1992 edition).

- In the Free Reformed Churches of Australia students are given the opportunity to speak an edifying Word after successfully completing a preparatory examination. It includes delivering a sermon at Classis (Synod or extra-ordinary Synod) and being examined on reformed doctrine (see the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, Art.5; Acts of Synod, 1996, Art.27). The student is also required verbally to affirm his belief in the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity, and to promise that he will teach nothing contrary to them.
 - Both federations of churches also have stringent procedures in place regarding the calling of ministers, their ordination, and their installation or appointment to a pastoral charge (see the Handbook of Practise and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia). The main purpose of these procedures is to ensure that only godly, capable men, who confess the Scriptures to be the Word of God and who subscribe to their respective confessional standards serve in the churches.
- d) It is the recognition of another Church as a true church that lays the basis for opening the pulpit to guest preachers. When a church is recognised as a true church its Gospel preaching is accepted as true and consequently its ministers can be recognised as faithful servants of God. After recognising a church it should be possible that ministers from that church are invited to preach. Therefore no one should be invited to preach except ministers or licentiates who have undergone the proper ecclesiastical examinations according to the rules of our respective churches.
3. to acknowledge that the doctrine of the church, as mentioned in mandates to Deputies by Synod 1990, 1992 and 1994 is implicitly addressed in the statements on fencing of the Lord's table and Supervision of the Pulpit.
4. to adopt and add a third statement regarding the position of children in the covenant as follows:

Statement regarding Children in the Covenant

When God established his covenant with Abraham, the father of all believers, he said, "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:7). Peter confirmed this when he said, "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). From this we conclude that God establishes His covenant, not only with believers and their elect children, but with believers and all their children.

When speaking about the children of believers, the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that they, "as well as adults belong to God's covenant and congregation. Through Christ's blood the redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit who works faith, are promised to them no less than to adults. Therefore, by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, they must be grafted into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers" (Q/A 74). The Belgic Confession speaks in the same vein

when it says, "We believe that these children [of believers] ought to be baptised and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to our children. Indeed, Christ shed His blood to wash the children of believers just as much as He shed it for adults" (Art 34).

The Westminster Confession of Faith states: "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptised into the visible church, but also to be to him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, or remission of sins. ...Not only those that actually profess faith in, and obedience unto Christ but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptised" (Chp 28). Similar thoughts are expressed in the Larger Catechism: "Unto whom is baptism to be administered? ...Infants descended from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptised" (Q/A 166). The form 'Of the Administration of the Sacraments' in the 'Directory for the Public Worship of God' states: "Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use and ends of this sacrament, showing...that the promise is made to believers and their seed; and that the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the church, have, by their birth, interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it...".

The Larger Catechism asks and answers the following: "With whom is the covenant of grace made? The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed" (Q/A 31). As proof text, reference is made primarily to Galatians 3:16 "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal 3:16). In this context, Paul affirmed that salvation comes, not through the good works of all Abraham's descendants, but through the good works of one of Abraham's descendants, namely, Jesus Christ. Although the promise was made with Abraham and all his seed, yet the promise focused upon the one descendant, Christ. With a view Christ's mediatorial work, God established the covenant of grace with Abraham and his posterity. Apart from Christ the promise would be void. Contrary to the thoughts of the Judaisers, against whom Paul contended, the introduction of the law four hundred and thirty years later did not annul that covenant promise of salvation through faith alone.

When the Larger Catechism (Q/A 31) states that the covenant is made with the elect, it does not deny what it expressly professes elsewhere (Q/A 166), namely, that all the children of believers are included in the covenant of grace. Neither do the words of Paul in Galatians 3:16 deny that all the children of believers are included in the covenant.

While the promise is sincerely made to all the children of believers, only those who through faith are grafted into Christ receive what is promised. (We are not speaking here of those children of believers who die in infancy). For Paul says that *"they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed"*(Romans 9:6-8). Paul goes on to speak about God's electing

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love. In this context, it becomes evident that only the elect who are grafted into Christ by faith *"are counted as [Abraham's] seed"* (Romans 9:8).

Inasmuch as all the children of believers are included in the covenant of grace, and therefore belong to the church of Christ (Heid Cat Q/A 74), the church must exhort and assist parents in fulfilling their duty to instruct their children in the doctrine of the Old and New Testament as soon as they are able to understand, and to have them instructed therein to the utmost of their power (cf. Form for the Baptism of Infants). Or as stated elsewhere, the parents are to *"bring up these children in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and in the nurture and admonitions of the Lord"* (Directory for the Public Worship of God, Of the Administration of the Sacraments, and first, of Baptism).

Grounds:

1. The statements regarding the Fencing of the Lord's Table and the Supervision of the Pulpit are based on Scripture and the Reformed Confessions.
2. In light of the statement in the Larger Catechism (Q/A 31) together with the occasional pulpit exchange with Baptist ministers it would be prudent to address this matter by means of a statement as well.
3. These statements resolve the problems associated with these areas of concern in a Scriptural and responsible manner.

ADOPTED

Decision 2

To offer the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia sister relations as a first step towards full unity if they can agree to the above mentioned statements about the Fencing of the Lord's Supper Table, the Supervision of the Pulpit, and the place of children in the covenant. This decision to enter into sister relations is to be confirmed by the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, upon agreement and implementation of the above mentioned statements.

Grounds:

1. Apart from the three areas of concern, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia gives evidence of faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confession.
2. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's agreement with the proposed statements takes away the concerns we have expressed.
3. The 1990 Synod considered *"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 an eventual organic unity, although a goal, cannot be expected to be achieved quickly and may need to develop slowly"* (Acts 1990, Art 77, Consideration 23).

ADOPTED

Decision 3

To appoint new Deputies with the following task:

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

Grounds:

1. It is good to communicate Synod's decisions regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in a personal way to avoid misunderstanding.
2. Although Synod is convinced that it expresses in the statements the Scriptural position regarding these three matters of concern, we are open to a dialogue with them about these matters on the basis of Scripture and confession.

ADOPTED

Decision 4

to assess the areas of concern with respect to the contacts which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have with the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. (These areas of concern are: the Supervision of the Lord's Table, the Supervision of the Pulpit, the position of children in the Covenant, Covenanting and purity of worship.)

This assessment should include:

- a. in what way the statements referred to in Decision 1 affect our relations/contacts with these churches
- b. how in a manageable and responsible way the Free Reformed Churches of Australia can fulfil their obligations towards these churches since they are geographically/culturally far away (cf *Acts 1994*, Article 111)

Grounds:

1. Our method of approach to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia will affect our approach to other Presbyterian churches.
2. Deputies were not able to complete their mandate regarding the Free Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, given by the previous Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 94

Free Reformed Church of the Philippines
Committee 2 presents the following Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.5.4.5 - Deputies Report, which proposes that correspondence be conducted with the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines, for the purpose of becoming better acquainted, determine whether we could assist them, and work towards the goal of sister-relations.

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Decisions:

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

Grounds:

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

ADOPTED

Article 95

Formation of Classes (refer Articles 50, 54, 63)

A revised proposal is tabled, discussed and amended. An alternate proposal is tabled and discussed. Synod decides to vote on the revised proposal first.

Material:

Agenda items 11.11 - Report of Deputies; 8.4 - the church of Launceston, in the context of Article 38 of Synod 1996 (formation of Classes), requests Synod to establish an annual conference of Free Reformed Churches; and 8.20 - the church of West Albany proposes that Synod agree in principle to establish two classes, the implementation of which will occur after Synod 2000

Decision:

1. to thank Deputies for their work and discharge them from their task;
2. to receive the Report of Deputies for the Formation of Classes for information;
3. not to grant the request of the church of Launceston to establish an annual conference;
4. to form either one Classis of all churches, or two Classes with five churches in each, effective after the 2000 Synod, the LORD willing;
5. to appoint Deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. to evaluate, using the proposal of West Albany, the Deputies Report and past Reports/submissions with the comments made on them, which model – one classis or two classes – is preferable;
 - b. to work out the details for the implementation of both one classis and two classes after Synod 2000. Deputies are to evaluate the practical arrangements for Classes:
 - the frequency of meetings of Classis (e.g. once, twice or thrice per year) and how this would affect the frequency of Synods;
 - the possible use of teleconferences or video conferences in place of face-to-face meetings;

- the number of delegates to Classis (e.g. a minister with one elder, or a minister with two elders) and the number and identity of delegates from Classis to Synod;
 - for the model of two Classes consider the composition of each classical resort (for example: three Perth churches with one Albany church and one Tasmanian church; or three Perth churches with the two Albany churches; and the two Tasmanian churches combining with the other three Perth churches)
 - by calculating the costs for the implementation of each model
 - whether it would still be necessary to use classis-churches and second appeal churches
 - how the Church Order will need to be revised
 - Deputies are further to explore what other details may require attention in the implementation of Classes, and supply recommendations
- c. to send their Report to the churches six months before next Synod so that the churches can have some input into this matter before the final Report is sent to Synod;
- d. to report to next Synod.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1996 instructed Deputies to report to the churches and gave no instruction to report to the next Synod. The Deputies, according to the wording of Synod 1996, understood this to mean that they were to leave any proposal for Synod to the initiative of the churches. As a result, the Deputies have supplied Synod with a Report of some options and the comments of the churches for its information, but there is no interaction with the purpose for which they were appointed, namely, the proposal of the Church at Kelmscott to Synod 1996 and to study this matter in light of past submissions to, and decisions of Synods. Moreover, the churches could have directed their proposals for the formation of Classis(es) directly to Synod upon being made aware of the manner in which the Deputies were carrying out their mandate in agreement with the wording of Synod 1996.
2. The churches have agreed in Article 28 of the Church Order that: "Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: *the Consistory, the (Classis) classis-church, and the Synod.*" A conference cannot replace an ecclesiastical assembly. There are other means to organise conferences, if desired.
3. The Church Order impresses on the churches the need for having Classes, for dealing with ecclesiastical matters of common concern, for appeals, and for helping in the proper government of the churches.

ADOPTED

Article 96

Adjournment

Elder J Bruning asks Synod to sing Psalm 62:1. He then leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Tuesday, 15 September 1998

Article 97

Re-opening

The chairman Rev C Bouwman asks Synod to sing Psalm 118 : 7 and 8, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 29, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present. Rev E Viljoen is also present.

Article 98

Instructions from the Churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 105, 122)

Synod goes into Closed Session. There are two Reports on the table - (1) an abbreviated version of the Report presented by the Committee, and (2) an alternate Report. After two rounds of discussion the chairman leads in prayer, seeking the Lord's guidance in how Synod should proceed in the matter. After some further consideration Synod decides to adjourn the discussion until Wednesday morning.

Synod resumes in Open Session

Article 99

Women's voting in the churches

Committee 2 presents its Report as follows:

Material:

Agenda items 8.5 - The Church of Launceston proposes that "participation in the voting for the election of office bearers in the congregation of Christ should no longer be withheld from the communicant sisters"; and 8.10 - The Church of Kelmescott's response to this proposal.

Decision:

Synod decides not to adopt Launceston's proposal.

Grounds:

1. Seeing the complex nature of the issue of women's voting in the church, Launceston's submission offers insufficient material for Synod to make a responsible decision.
2. Adoption of the proposal will bind the churches to allow women to vote in the church. There are indications that the matter of women voting in the church does not live in the midst of most of the churches, and that adoption of the proposal would cause great concern and even division.

An amendment is put and voted upon, as follows:
"That the words in Ground 1 be deleted"

DEFEATED

An amendment is put and voted upon, as follows:

"That Ground 1 be made to read: 'Seeing the complex nature of the issue of women voting in the church, there is insufficient material and Scriptural analysis in the submissions from the churches of Launceston and Kelmscott for Synod to make a decision.' "

ADOPTED

The amended proposal is voted on.

Material:

Agenda item 8.5 - The Church of Launceston proposes that "participation in the voting for the election of office bearers in the congregation of Christ should no longer be withheld from the communicant sisters".

Agenda item 8.10 - The Church of Kelmscott's response to this proposal

Decision:

Synod decides not to adopt Launceston's proposal.

Grounds:

1. Seeing the complex nature of the issue of women voting in the church, there is insufficient material and Scriptural analysis in the submissions from the churches of Launceston and Kelmscott for Synod to make a decision.
2. Adoption of the proposal will bind the churches to allow women to vote in the church. There are indications that the matter of women voting in the church does not live in the midst of most of the churches, and that adoption of the proposal would cause great concern and even division.

ADOPTED

During the discussion the chairman pauses for a moment to speak words of farewell to Rev E Viljoen, who is leaving Synod to travel back to South Africa; and presents him on behalf of Synod with a copy of prof J Faber's book 'Essays in Reformed Dogmatics'.

Article 100

Training for the ministry

Committee 3 presents its Report.

Following the inclusion of some minor amendments it is put to the vote as follows.

Material:

Agenda Items 11.6 - Report of Deputies; and 11.16 - Audit Report on the books of these Deputies

Decision:

1. to note that the Church of Mt. Nasura found the books of the *Deputies for Training for the Ministry* in order; and discharge the Church of Mt. Nasura of its mandate
2. to assess the churches \$ 39.00 per communicant member per year, for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton as from 1 July 1998
3. to discharge Deputies and appoint new Deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for the College in Hamilton, and forward these to the College

Acts of Synod

- b. continue correspondence with the Colleges of Hamilton and Kampen, in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
- c. publish relevant information concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the Colleges and the training of the students;
- d. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 of the Church Order, and as agreed in Article 50 of the *Acts of Synod 1992*;
- e. finalise and implement plans for inviting a guest lecturer from the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
- f. investigate whether the amount the churches contribute to the Hamilton College is appropriate.

Grounds:

1. Students from our churches study at the Theological College in Hamilton.
2. Support of theological students should continue as agreed in Article 18 of the Church Order.
3. It is important for the churches to have contact with the professors of the College to which the theological students of our churches are sent.
4. Synod Launceston 1985 (*Acts*, Article 58) decided that the churches will budget for amounts similar to those contributed by our overseas brothers and sisters.

ADOPTED

Article 101

Re-opening

Re-opening in evening session, the chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 147: 1 and 6. Elder F Postmus is absent with notice. There is no alternate delegate from the Church of Launceston.

Article 102

Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (refer Article 23)

Committee 2 presents its Report. Following amendment it reads:

Material:

Agenda item 11.5.2.4 – Deputies Report.

Decisions:

1. to continue sister relations with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. to thank the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland for being patient with us regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia; inform them of our decision with respect to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and ask them to stay in step with that decision;
3. to encourage the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland to remain faithful, and note with appreciation the assurance given at Synod, Berkel & Rodenrijs 1996: "to maintain the relationship of sister church with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, giving special attention to their questions as to developments within the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands"

Grounds:

1. The Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
2. A common approach towards the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia would be beneficial for both federations and prevent difficulties regarding third party relations;
3. Deputies of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland have expressed concerns about developments in their churches.

ADOPTED

Article 103

Adjournment

Rev P De Boer asks Synod to sing Psalm 87:1 and 4, and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Wednesday, 16 September 1998

Article 104

Re-opening

The chairman Rev C Bouwman asks Synod to sing Psalm 89:7 and 8, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 30, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 105

Instructions from the Churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 122)

Synod goes into Closed Session. After some discussion and the withdrawal of a counter proposal the matter is adjourned. Synod continues in Closed Session to deal with an appeal.

Article 106

Lanka Reformed Church

Synod goes in Open Session. Committee 2 presents its Report as follows:

Material:

Agenda item 8.21 - letter from the Church of West Albany regarding the Lanka Reformed Church

Observations:

1. The Church of West Albany proposes "that Synod instruct Deputies to reply to the Lanka Reformed Church that with regret The Free Reformed Churches of Australia at this juncture are not able to extend the help they request".
2. The church of West Albany gives as reasons a lack of available resources owing to involvement in Mission work, and the extensive church contacts already in place.

Decision:

Synod adopts West Albany's proposal, without endorsing its reasons

Acts of Synod

Grounds:

1. There is no proposal on Synod's table to extend the requested help.
2. Synod is unable to conclude from the available material that the churches lack the necessary resources.
3. The letter from the Lanka Reformed Church needs to be answered.

ADOPTED

Article 107

Request from Rev G VanRongen

Committee 3 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda Item 8.6 - Letter from Rev G van Rongen

Observation:

Rev van Rongen request Synod's permission to use the text of Synod decisions for a supplement to his publication *The Church Order of Dordrecht as revised by Synod 1994 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia with the standing decisions made by their respective Synods*.

Decision:

to grant the request of Rev G van Rongen

Ground:

The publication of a supplement to Rev G van Rongen's book is of benefit to the churches.

ADOPTED

Article 108

Closed Session

Synod continues with the matter of an appeal. The proceedings are recorded in the *Acts of Closed Sessions*.

Article 109

Civil Registration

Committee 3 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda Item 11.9 - Registration of marriage celebrants

Decision:

1. to discharge the Deputies, thanking them for the work done
2. to appoint new Deputies with the mandate to finalise and implement the formal registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and report to next Synod
3. to appoint Deputies, who will be known as: "Deputies to act as the secretary for marriage celebrants, Free Reformed Churches of Australia", with the following mandate:

Acts of Synod

- a. to register all ministers of the Word, upon request of their consistories, as marriage celebrants. This registration is to be done in accordance with the provisions of the Australian marriage act;
 - b. to be contact persons with the civil government in all matters relating to the marriage celebrants;
 - c. to report to next Synod
4. to instruct the second clerk of Synod to draw up a letter of authorisation for these Deputies. The wording of this letter may be adjusted by Deputies to satisfy the Attorney-General's Department.

Grounds:

1. Previous Deputies were mandated to "finalise and implement the formal registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia", but could not complete their mandate.
2. Deputies correctly point out that matters which need ongoing attention in the bond of churches are dealt with by Deputies.
3. A letter of authorisation according to legal wording is required, and the position of Synod clerk does not exist after Synod closes.

ADOPTED

Article 110

Synod Opening Procedure

Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 8.7 - Request from the Church of Byford that Synod refrain from adding meditations to the long standing practice of beginning each sitting day of our ecclesiastical assemblies with singing, Bible reading and prayer

Decision:

to accede to the request

Grounds:

1. Article 30 of the Church Order stipulates that the ecclesiastical assemblies shall deal only with ecclesiastical matters that are properly placed on its agenda.
2. The brothers have not been called together to listen to explanations of Scripture passages, however brief, but to deal with the matters at hand, and then go home again.

DEFEATED

A counter proposal is tabled and voted upon:

Material:

Agenda item 8.7 - Request from the Church of Byford that Synod refrain from adding meditations to the long standing practice of beginning each sitting day of our ecclesiastical assemblies with singing, Bible reading and prayer

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Decision:

not to accede to the request of Byford

Ground:

It should be left in the freedom of the chairman how he opens Synod in a Christian manner.

ADOPTED

Article 111

Appeal against the decision recorded in Article 89 of Acts 1996

Committee 2 presents its Report.

An amendment to delete Ground 3 is voted upon and defeated.

Material:

Agenda item 8.18 - appeal from the Church of Mount Nasura against the decision recorded in Article 89 of the *Acts of Synod 1996*

Decision:

to reject the appeal

Grounds:

1. Synod 1996's final decision can be seen as a modification to the Church of Armadale's original proposal. Synod would become unworkable if it could not make modifications to proposals.
2. The comments relating to Galatians 6:10 were already considered by Synod 1996;
3. Although it is true that the reference to Ephesians 4:11,12 in the 1996 decision is not appropriate, this does not alter the fact that it belongs to the task of the deacons to encourage and stimulate the congregation to show mercy towards those in the church as well as towards all men.

ADOPTED

Article 112

Reopening

Synod is re-opened in evening session, and sings Psalm 62:4

Article 113

Ecclesiastical Documents

Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.12 - Report from the church of Kelmscott regarding the Form for Emeritus Declaration

Decision:

Synod adopts the Form for Emeritus Declaration as proposed

Grounds:

1. Deputies appointed by Synod 1996 were not able to detect an inconsistency between this Form and Article 13 of the Church Order;
2. The fact that Article 13 says nothing about the involvement of either the Classis Church or the Deputies for Article 48 of the Church Order, does not make Article 13 inconsistent with the proposed Form, which is for the Classis Church, and which assumes the involvement of Deputies for Article 48.
3. Article 13 does not deal with the retirement procedure for ministers.

ADOPTED

(The text of the adopted Form can be found in Appendix 14 to these Acts)

Article 114

Nicene Creed

Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.7 - Report of Deputy for the revision of the Nicene Creed

Decisions:

1. to thank the deputy for the work done and discharge him.
2. to defer a decision regarding adoption of a revised edition of the Nicene Creed until the version adopted by the 1998 Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches is available.
3. to appoint a Deputy to report to Synod on this adopted version.

Ground:

The Canadian Reformed Churches have recently adopted a revised text of the Nicene Creed. It is better to wait with a decision on this matter until this text is available and looked into.

ADOPTED

Article 115

Archives and Library of Synod

Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda items 11.1 - Deputies Report; and 11.2 - Deputies for inspection of the Archives and Library of Synod Report.

Decisions:

1. to receive the Report of the Deputies for the Archives and Library of Synods, as well as the Report of the Deputies for the inspection of the Archives and Library of Synod;
2. to thank the Church of Mount Nasura for the care of the Archives and Library, as well as the Church of Byford for the inspection, and discharge them;
3. to thank the Librarian sister J VanderPlas, for the work done;

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4. to accept that *Acts* of the Closed Sessions of Synods 1992 and 1994 are lost;
5. to prepare an electronic version of the Index of Synod's Archives, to be available from the Librarian upon request;
6. to ask Deputies for Relations with other Churches to register with the Librarian, any unregistered *Acts* of Synods of other Churches that they may have in their possession as well as any *Acts* of Synods they may receive;
7. to add to the Instructions for the Archivist (Appendix K, *Acts* Synod 1992) the instruction to show in future Reports to Synod only those items that were added since their previous Report;
8. to include in the *Acts* a listing of only those items that were added to the Archives and Library since the 1996 Report;
9. to include the amended Instructions for the Archivist as an Appendix to the *Acts*; (see Appendix 11)
10. to re-appoint the church of Mount Nasura as Archivist, and the church of Byford for the inspection of Archives and Library

Ground:

The listing supplied in the Archivist's Report is voluminous and consumes significant resources both in its distribution to the churches and in reprinting it in the *Acts*.

ADOPTED

Article 116

Deputies for Articles 48 and 76 of the Church Order
Committee 3 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda Item 11.14 - Deputies for Articles 48 and 76 of the Church Order

Observation:

Deputies report that their only activity was for one of them to attend the church of Byford sitting as Classis for the church of Bedforddale in conducting the colloquium for Rev PKA De Boer.

Decision:

Synod receives the Deputies Report for information

ADOPTED

Article 117

Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order
Committee 2 presents its Report:

Material:

Agenda item 11.15 – Deputies Report

Decision:

To thank the Deputies and discharge them from their task.

Ground:

Article 66 of the Church Order requires that Synod appoints a church for the task it describes.

ADOPTED

Article 118

Convening Church for next Synod

Committee 2 presents its Report. After amendment it reads:

Material:

Agenda item 15 - Appointment of convening church, and place & time of next Synod

Decisions:

1. to appoint the church at West Albany as convening church for the next Synod
2. to convene the next Synod in June 2000

Grounds:

1. Synod accepted the recommendation to improve the rotation of Synod locations between different geographic areas.
2. The month of June has been an acceptable time of the year.

ADOPTED

Article 119

Adjournment

Elder J Eikelboom asks Synod to sing Psalm 119: 55 and 65, and then leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns Synod.

Thursday, 17 September 1998

Article 120

Re-opening

The chairman Rev C Bouwman asks Synod to sing Hymn 49, reads from Scripture 2 Chronicles 31, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 121

Church Visitation Reports

Synod goes into Closed Session to deal with Church Visitation Reports. Synod decides that the documents need not be returned to the First Clerk for destruction.

Article 122

Instructions from the churches (refer Articles 10, 13, 17, 24, 28, 33, 58, 64, 74, 98, 105)

Synod continues in Closed Session on this matter. A proposal is tabled and voted upon, as follows:

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Material:

1. The Instructions from the churches of Armadale, Byford, Legana and Mount Nasura. Legana request that the unpublished book of Rev F J vanHulst be accepted as background information. Since this work is unpublished, can be revised and can even be retracted, it is good to accept it for background information only.
2. Report of Synod's Committee (cf Acts of Synod 1998 Launceston, Article 28).

Evaluation:

1. Rev FJ vanHulst states: *"one should not tell their children too often that they must love the Lord. That can only frustrate them because it is not in them. From nature they hate God. Those who lay it upon the heart of their children that they must love the Lord sow seeds of hypocrisy. What you must tell is that the Lord loves them. This love of God includes that He accepts them unconditionally."*

The question is not whether children must love the Lord, but how they are taught to love the Lord. It is of first importance for parents to teach their children the love which the Lord has shown them. However, giving undue stress to the indicative (that God loves them) at the cost of the imperative (that they must love God) could distort the truth and bring one into a false dilemma. One must teach the children about God's love for them. *"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgements which the LORD our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand..."* (Deut 6:20-21). But the same portion of Scripture teaches us that we must tell our children to love the Lord. The so-called *"Shema Israel"* (Hear, O Israel) attained almost creedal status and was indelibly imprinted upon the hearts of all Israelite children. For the Lord said, *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children"* (Deut 6:4-7). Inasmuch as the summary of the law still applies to us in the New Testament, these words of Moses are no less pertinent for us today and are included when Paul exhorts parents *"to bring [their children] up in the training and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph 6:4). We must remember that God is pleased to work faith in our children by means of *"holy admonitions"* of the gospel and by means of *"discipline"* (Canons, III/IV, 17).

2. Rev FJ vanHulst states, *"Perhaps it is necessary, for all clarity, to point out the difference between living under the law and living with commandments."* *"You do not find a law in the New Testament. This new Christian life is not bound to a law. That would not be possible because we live, not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). What is the difference? It is this: a law is a list of commandments with sanction. It is the threat of punishment which makes the commandments into a law."* Thus, he says: *"In the New Testament no law is given to the believers. Those who have received the Holy Spirit have initially enough. The Lord Jesus had already promised the Spirit of truth would direct them the way of the full truth (John 16:13)"* He insists that *"...the heathen (Christian) get not a single law laid upon them! Not even the Ten Commandments."*
- a. While the term 'law' has various nuances in the New Testament, one should not make a distinction between the "law" and the "commandments." For Paul uses these

terms interchangeably: *"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," (cf also Matt 5:17-19). The Heidelberg Catechism does not make a distinction between the "law" and the "commandments" (Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 92).*

- b. Scripture teaches that there is a law for believers in the New Testament. In Matthew 5 quoted above, Christ upholds the law and even teaches the deep meaning of the law. He teaches that our righteousness must be greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees (Mat 5:20) who *"neglected the weightier matters of the law"* (Mat 23:23). For as we confess in Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 87 those who live contrary to the law of God will not be saved. In Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 91, we learn that the law is still in force as the norm for good works. The gospel of salvation by grace through faith does not make the law void as the norm for a sanctified life, as Paul teaches in Romans 3:31: *"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."* Paul also makes it evident that he earnestly desires in his inward self to keep God's law, which is holy, just and good. (cf. Romans 7:12-24). Elsewhere Paul shows that the law is still in force just as in the old dispensation, when he summarises the law, as Moses did before Him: *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"*. (Romans 13:9 cf. Lev 19:18).
- c. To preach the commandments as though Christians must keep them to earn their own salvation by their own ability definitely leads to legalism. Christ, however, not only redeems us, but also renews us. Therefore *"we must do good works"* (Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 86). God *"requires"* obedience to His law (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 94, 96, 99, etc). This obedience arises out of the earnest desire to show God our love (John 14:15) and to glorify Him through it (cf Mat 5:16 *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* Romans 2:21-24 *"You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You, who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written").* Thus preaching the covenant obligations must not be regarded as legalism, nor as an attempt to earn anything by one's obedience.
- d. The fact that believers have received the Holy Spirit, who writes the law of God upon their hearts, does not take away the need for (the strict preaching of) the law for believers. It is through the continual preaching of the law that the Holy Spirit writes the law of God upon the hearts of His people. For this reason the prophets of the old dispensation and the apostles in the new dispensation continued to keep God's people under the preaching of the covenant obligation (1 Cor 7:19; 1 John 2:3; 3:24; 5:2; 2 John 1:6; Rev 14:12; 22:14). *"So those who give or receive instruction in the church should not dare to tempt God by separating what He in His good pleasure has willed to be closely joined together. For grace is conferred through admonitions, and the more readily we do our duty, the more this favour of God, who works in us usually manifests itself in its lustre, so His work best proceeds."* (Canons, III/IV,17).
- e. As far as *"sanctions"* in the New Testament are concerned, they remain in effect for all of God's people. After listing the sins of the saints in Galatia, Paul warns them

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"that those who practise such things will not inherit the kingdom of God"(Gal 5:21). Paul did the same when he warns the saints in Corinth: *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Cor 6:9-10; cf. also Heb 6:1-4; 10:26ff). Paul repeats a similar exhortation to the saints in Ephesus and in Rome (cf. Eph 5:5,6; Romans 2:2-3; Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 87). In the Canons of Dort, we confess *"Just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so He maintains, continues and perfects it by the hearing of His Word, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats and promises and the use of the sacraments"* (Canons, V, 14).

3. Rev FJ vanHulst states *"The absolute impossibility for men to fulfil the covenant obligation drives the believer to Christ who must then do it for him. Christ fulfils the impossible demand of the covenant. With this, the obligation of covenant obedience falls away for those who believe in Christ."*

It is true that Christ fulfils the obligation in the covenant for the believer so that a believer's righteousness, upon which his justification depends, is derived from Christ. It is not true, however, that *"the obligation of covenant obedience falls away for those who believe in Christ."* The Spirit's work of sanctification induces and enables believers to fulfil the obligation of the covenant, as Paul teaches in Romans 8:3-4 *"He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* Paul says that *"we are created in Christ Jesus for good works"* which are those works done according to God's law (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 91). We also confess in Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 113 that *"not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any of God's commandments should ever arise in our heart."*

4. Rev FJ vanHulst concurs with the following statement: *"The regenerated does not have to be awakened to obey the obligation of the covenant. He does not want anything different. He cannot do anything different because, after all, he has been regenerated. He is a new creation. You do not need to come to him with a law. He looks for all the commandments. He gladly likes to fulfil them. This does not happen without struggle. But it does happen. That is the new obedience."*

It is far too optimistic a view of the regenerated man to say that he *"cannot do anything different, although "not without struggle."* For while those who are regenerated do begin to live according to all the commandments of God, that beginning is small (cf Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 114). Thus the apostle Paul says, *"For what I am doing, I do not understand. ...For what I will to do that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ...O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* (Romans 7:15,19,24). Elsewhere, Paul confesses that he has not yet reached the goal of perfection (cf. Phil 3:12). Because of indwelling sin that remains in us, Scripture repeatedly places the imperative of *"be holy"* besides the indicative of *"you are holy."*

Scripture teaches that due to indwelling sin even the regenerated can fall into sin and need to be awakened to new obedience. David was "a man after God's heart" (Acts 7:46). He nevertheless had to be awakened by Nathan the prophet from his disobedience to God's law concerning his sin with Bathshebah (cf. 2 Sam 11-12).

Furthermore, Scripture and confession teach that God comes to His people with a law. Christ said to his disciples, "...but whoever ... teaches them [i.e. the law or the commandments], he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:19). We confess (Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 115) that the law is to be strictly preached to the converted "so that...we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach the goal of perfection."

Decisions:

1. from the above, Synod concludes that Rev FJ vanHulst's teachings of regeneration and conversion affect his teachings on the law, and so distort the full biblical message
2. to forward this evaluation and decision to Rev FJ vanHulst and to the consistory of Launceston
3. to forward this and the previous evaluation and decision (cf Acts, Art 28 Decision 4) to the Church of Legana in answer to their request for advice

ADOPTED

Article 123

Adoption of Acts

Synod adopts the Acts of Closed Sessions.

Synod adopts Articles 104 to 119 of the Acts.

Article 124

Synod Treasurer's Report and Budget

Material:

Agenda items 11.3 - Synod Treasurer's Report; 11.3.1 - Draft Budget for Synod 1998 (dated 26 May 1998) and Revised Draft Budget for Synod 1998 (dated 4 September 1998); 11.4 - Auditors for Synod Treasury; 12 - Audit of Treasurer's books and discharge of Treasurer; and 13 - Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of Synod costs

Observations:

1. Synod's Treasurer prepared a Revised Draft Budget to take into account Synod's decision in June to adjourn to September. As shown, the Revised Draft Budget allows increased costs only for Budget items 1 to 15, totalling \$23,500 (from \$23,900 to \$47,400). Total Budget costs become as shown - \$61,200
2. The Draft Budget in Item 40 allows for 1 pulpit exchange per year to Tasmania (@ \$1500), while Synod decided to increase the number of exchanges to 6 per year. This will increase the estimate for this item to \$9,000; and total Budget costs to 68,700.
3. The Draft Budget makes no allowance for visits to the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia, the Philippines and South Africa, and an extra visit to Indonesia. These would add an estimated \$8000 to the Budget, making the total \$ 76,700.

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Decisions:

1. to accept the Treasurer's statement of receipts and expenditure for the period 1-2-96 to 31-1-98;
2. to thank the Treasurer for the work done and discharge him;
3. to receive the Report of the Auditors for the Synod Treasury;
4. to thank the Auditors for the work done and discharge them;
5. to delete items 18 (Bible Translation) and 34 (Revision Church Order) from the Draft Budget as being no longer necessary;
6. approve the inclusion of Deputies Travel costs mentioned in Observation 3;
7. to adopt the Draft Revised Budget as amended by Synod;
8. to adopt the cost sharing arrangement proposed by the Synod Treasurer.

ADOPTED

Article 125

Appointments

In Closed Session the Executive presents a Draft Appointments paper:

1. Publication of the *Acts* - the First Clerk
2. Archives and Library of Synods - the Church of Mount Nasura
Acts, Article 115
3. Inspection of Archives and Library - the Church of Byford
Acts, Article 115
4. Treasurer of Synod - Ad. Hordyk with JG Versluis as alternate
Acts, Article 124
5. Auditors for Synod Treasury - the Church of Kelmscott
Acts, Article 124
6. Deputies for Relations with Other Churches –

General Convener; Reverend C Bouwman

General Secretary: JL van Burgel

The duties of the General Secretary are:

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

- 6.1 Sister Churches - Canada, The Netherlands, Korea, South Africa
Acts, Articles 68, 102, 67, 81

Convener: Reverend C Bouwman

AMC Bruning
HJ Dekker
PO Posthuma
Alternate: GB Veenendaal

6.2 Other Churches (Reformed) - Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Reformed Churches of Australia, Philippines, Indonesia
Acts, Articles 89, 78, 94, 76, 77

Convener: Reverend W Huizinga
J Bosveld
Reverend PKA DeBoer
W Geurts
JL van Burgel
Reverend A van Delden
J van Dijk
Alternate: SH Terpstra

6.3 Other Churches (Presbyterian) - Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Free Church of Scotland
Acts, Article 93

Convener: Reverend A Veldman
J Bruning
H Olde
Reverend J Poppe
Reverend W vanderJagt
Alternate: P Terpstra

All Deputies will work under one umbrella. The various Deputies will do their own work and are responsible for their own Report to Synod. The three deputyships will meet together as needed to inform and consult with each other regarding their work. Deputies shall present their final Report for interaction and consultation by the full deputyship before sending it to Synod.

7. Deputies for Training for the Ministry -
Acts, Article 100

Convener: Reverend C Bouwman
M(urray) Plug
AT Schiebaan
A van Leeuwen
Alternate: R(ichard) Heerema

8. Deputy for the Nicene Creed - Reverend A Van Delden
Acts, Article 114

9. Pulpit Exchanges - Rev A Veldman, in consultation with his consistory
Acts, Article 36

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10. Deputies for the Civil Registration of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
Acts, Article 109

Convener: SC Fokkema
S Herbert

11. Deputies for the formation of Classes – the Church of Mount Nasura
Acts, Article 95

12. Deputy for Synod Audio Equipment - E 't Hart

13. Classis Church: the next church in alphabetical order.
Second-appeal Church: the preceding church in alphabetical order.

It should be understood that if another church is instituted, it will take its place in accordance with the alphabetical order in the table below:

	the Classis Church is	the Second-appeal Church is
for Albany	Armadale	West Albany
for Armadale	Byford	Albany
for Byford	Kelmscott	Armadale
for Kelmscott	Launceston	Byford
for Launceston	Legana	Kelmscott
for Legana	Mount Nasura	Launceston
for Mount Nasura	Rockingham	Legana
for Rockingham	West Albany	Mount Nasura
for West Albany	Albany	Rockingham

14. Deputies for Church Visits - The ministers (convener: Reverend A Veldman)
Alternates - the convener may request the consistory of the church neighbouring the one to be visited to appoint an experienced elder from its midst.

15. Deputies for Articles 48 and 76 of the Church Order –
Acts Article 116

Convener: Reverend PKA De Boer
PO Posthuma
Reverend A Veldman

16. Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order - the Church of Launceston
Acts, Article 117

17. Deputies for auditing the books of Deputies for Training for the Ministry
Acts, Article 100

The Church of Mount Nasura

18. Convening church for the next Synod
Acts, Article 118

the Church of West Albany

ADOPTED

Article 126

Questions after Article 41 of the Church Order

Synod resumes in Open Session.

The chairman asks the prescribed questions. All the churches answer the questions to the satisfaction of Synod.

Article 127

Censure according to Article 47 of the Church Order

The chairman states that there is no need for censure.

Article 128

Adoption of Acts and Approval of Press Release

Synod adopts Articles 120 to 132 of the *Acts*.

The Press Release is approved.

Article 129

Personal Questions

No delegate makes use of the opportunity.

Article 130

Presentations

The chairman expresses the appreciation of the delegates for the excellent organisation and care by the convening Church. On behalf of Synod he presents a number of book vouchers redeemable at Launceston's Church Bookshop as tokens of appreciation.

Article 131

Closing Address

The chairman Rev C Bouwman speaks the following words:

Dear brothers, the time is approaching that we put a close to Synod 1998. For four weeks we've laboured together – yes, it was four weeks; the longest by far, I'm afraid, in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. But before we part ways, I would like to reflect with you briefly on aspects of these four weeks.

The work we had to do was sometimes painful, sometimes exciting, sometimes daunting – but always brotherly. For that brotherly way we could operate together, I am, my brothers, thankful to the Lord with all my heart. Certainly, we all had to work at listening to the other and being big enough to accept correction, we all had to work at ensuring that our words and our tone were edifying, but when all is said and done it is the Lord, and He alone Who has graciously granted a spirit of unanimity and brotherly accord. Time and again we earnestly besought the Lord to grant this spirit of unanimity, and He in boundless mercy has granted so very much more than we had dared to hope. So many debates saw serious head-to-head discussions delightfully interspersed with healthy humour; who can forget that serious point made so vividly by the holy kiss?! The Lord has granted that we could walk together in brotherly love and mutual appreciation along the road of growth in

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the service of the Lord and in understanding His will for us. This is a blessing of God's grace that we ignore to our peril.

The last 10 to 15 years in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have been characterised by too much unrest in relation to contacts with other churches. So strong was the unrest that the churches in Synod could not find the way forward in relation to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia; we even left the International Conference of Reformed Churches in order to preserve peace in our own churches. But the Lord has granted that at this Synod we could make genuine progress in contacts with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia – and make that progress *together*. Sure, some of us would have preferred that we take three steps forward, others of us considered one step justified, but we've settled for two steps. That such a decision could be made, *together*, represents a historic moment in the life of our churches. May the Lord bless, for mutual edification; may the Lord bless so that the will to work together under the authority of God's Word, as was evident at this Synod, may translate into other positive benefits within the bond of churches. This, I submit, my brothers, is the challenge that flows from the goodwill and understanding God has granted to us in our weeks together. A window of opportunity is now open before us, brothers; let us, please, in the wake of this Synod, monopolise on the momentum of the brotherly appreciation and understanding the Lord has granted so that we overcome the differences that have troubled, eg, the *Una Sancta*.

But what will etch this Synod indelibly into the hearts and minds of us all is the sad reality that we had to investigate the teachings of one of our own – a brother in the Lord, a colleague in the office. That task was so difficult, so demanding, so draining; all of us in our own way cried in our hearts when the decision concerning our brother's doctrinal integrity had to be made – we did not *want* to make the decision we knew was necessary. But by strength the Lord has granted, we made the painful decision (be it with so many sins and weaknesses) in the firm conviction that this is what the Head of the Church required of His office bearers in these circumstances. So we learned anew how much we needed each other, we learned anew what we have in each other, we've tasted again the value of the bond of churches. East and West: by God's design we're geographically so very far apart in our big land. East and West: by our own failures, the great distance between us had developed into more than geographic alone. But God has set us side by side again, and by means of experiences we'd hope never to face again the Head of the Church has shown us that we need each other, that we love each other, that we belong together; East needs West as much as West needs East.

My brothers in the Lord, our ways part. You who remain in Launceston, and you in Legana too, have so very much work to do as a result of decisions made by this Synod. We want you to know, dear brothers in the Lord, that we in the West *pledge* to do what we can to support and to encourage you in the East as you continue with the task that the Head of the Church has sovereignly laid on your shoulders. Be assured that we will pray for you, time and time again, in the churches and in the homes. Be assured that we shall hear whatever request for help you feel you need to make, and shall do our best to give the help you require to the best of our ability. Be assured also that we shall not forget the minister God has joined to this flock, nor his family; they too remain in our hearts and in our prayers.

Let us all together ever remember –and remind each other of– the words God has set before us morning by morning in the weeks of this Synod. May I leave with you the last words we read this morning concerning the office bearer Hezekiah:

“...he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered” (II Chron 31:20f).

“So he prospered” – and all Israel was blessed. That, my brothers, is the only way forward for all of us, each in our own place: seek *God* with all heart as we carry out the office that the Head of the Church has entrusted to us. Then the congregations shall be blessed through our leadership – because God is faithful.

My brothers, I want also yet to express a personal word of thanks. You entrusted me with chairman's job, and you alone can judge whether I've met your expectations satisfactorily or not. I do wish to compliment you for putting up so patiently with my impatience and inexperience. I word of special thanks is in place to the brothers who sat on my right and on my left throughout the weeks of Synod. I know I was hard; the fact that I needed a second vice-chairman surely serves as evidence! Thank you, brothers Kleyn, vanDelden, Eikelboom and Poppe for the work you did in assisting a rookie in the chair!

Finally, a word of very special thanks needs to be extended to the members of the church in Launceston. To serve our needs so thoroughly, and then not once but twice – you very much have earned our deep respect and appreciation! I suggest, brothers, that a round of applause is certainly in place for all in the congregation who looked after us so very, very well.

I realise well that a physical token of appreciation would be in place for so many in the congregation ...

(then, ad lib) ... the chairman presents Launceston's consistory with a new wallclock for the consistory room ... and concludes by asking the Deputy-chairman Rev A Van Delden to close Synod.

Article 132

Closing

The vice-chairman Rev A Van Delden, on behalf of Synod, expresses appreciation for the chairman's capable leadership in chairing Synod in a brotherly and impartial manner. He asks those present to sing Hymn 40 : 1, 4 and 5 and leads in prayer.

The chairman closes the twentieth Synod of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

